

# Infallibility: An Inescapable Concept

by

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To the Memory of  
Fred Mosley

September 21, 1921 – June 26, 1977

Faithful man of God, Christian man of art, and a champion of Van Til, who asked for this, the first of a series of studies in systematic theology.

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## 1. Infallibility: An Inescapable Concept

“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.” (Isa. 42:8-9)

God, in this word spoken through the prophet Isaiah, declares that when He speaks, His word surely and infallibly comes to pass. He declares moreover that He alone is God, and He will neither share nor give His glory to another. But in our day, as in Isaiah’s, many question this declaration; they reduce it to religious poetry, Isaiah’s rhetoric, or Hebraic imagery, and they deny to God His sovereignty and to His Word its infallibility. This denial is taking its toll of the churches, of society, and of individuals.

This toll is a very real one: the immediacy of the word is gone. Instead of the direct and inescapable word of God, a realm of cultural accretions, imagery, myth, and vagueness intervenes. A devout Christian woman who for many years had attended a church where the doctrine of infallibility was slurred over or rejected, reacted with radiant joy when, at a conference, the doctrine was set forth clearly and unequivocally. Instead of a “dullness” and “joylessness” in her faith, she now realized suddenly and happily that “the Lord is very near. Right here, His very words are speaking to me.” The clarity of that faith in the infallible word gives the believer an assurance, strength, and joy in the immediacy of God. Men have lived confidently in darker eras than ours in the confidence and victory of that faith, whereas today the oppression and the fear of evil are very near to men, and the force of God’s word is very remote.

The historian Friedrich Heer has described the estrangement of man from God in the thirteenth century as a result of faulty theologies:

The sense of great joy and inward freedom which the early Church derived from its possession of the Good News (which every one could read for himself), and its sense of union with the resurrected Lord, had long since been overlaid by feelings of terror and estrangement. Men at their prayers no longer raised their arms and turned toward Christ, their rising sun, but folded their hands in the attitude of serfs, serfs of God and of their sin. Where formerly the priest had celebrated the Mass facing the people, in proof of his accessibility, now he turned his back on them and retreated to the vastness of the sanctuary, separated from the people’s part of the church by a forbidding screen. Finally, the Mass was read in a tongue the people could not understand.<sup>1</sup>

Whenever people feel that God has no word for them, fear and terror begin to dominate society, and evil roams the streets unafraid. *If there is no immediate word from God, the immediate word of evil dominates men’s lives.* Today, the vitality and the joy is again being drained out of the

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Heer: *The Medieval World: Europe 1100-1350*. (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company, 1961). pp. 159f.

church, and its strength is ebbing fast. The open or the practical denial of the infallibility of Scripture is again exacting a deadly toll in society.

The doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture can be denied, but the concept of infallibility as such cannot be logically denied. *Infallibility is a inescapable concept.* If men refuse to ascribe infallibility to Scripture, it is because the concept has been transferred to something else. The word *infallibility* is not normally used in these transfers; the concept is disguised and veiled, but, in a variety of ways, infallibility is ascribed to concepts, things, men, and institutions.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a Jesuit geologist, was honest enough to speak of the “infallibility” of the evolutionary process. In speaking of the evolutionary process supposedly at work in the world, he wrote:

To bring us into existence it has from the beginning juggled miraculously with too many improbabilities for there to be any risk whatever in committing ourselves further and following it right to the end. If it undertook the task, it is because it can finish it, following the same methods and with the same infallibility with which it began.<sup>2</sup>

Because of his belief in the infallibility of evolution, Teilhard could feel confidence as he faced the future. He looked forward indeed, to an evolutionary pentecost, with “the coming of the *Spirit of the Earth*”:

The atomic age is not the age of destruction but of union in research. For all their military trappings, the recent explosions at Bikini herald the birth into the world of a Mankind both inwardly and outwardly pacified. They proclaim the coming of the *Spirit of the Earth*.<sup>3</sup>

Teilhard’s sorry trade is the infallibility of the sovereign, omnipotent God in His word for the infallibility of a blind, evolving process.

Infallibility concepts are all around us, a great variety of substitutes for the infallible word. *Democracy* is one such substitute. From ancient times its essential faith has been summed up in the Latin motto, *vox papuli vox dei*, “The voice of the people is the voice of God.” This new god — the people, or democracy — speaks infallibly in and through majorities. One liberal scholar, in affirming democracy, has emphasized this; Herman Finer, in *Road to Reaction*, has noted that

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: *The Phenomenon of Man*. With an Introduction by Sir Julian Huxley. (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1959). p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: *The Future of Man*. (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1964). See also C. Van Til, *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Evolution and Christ*. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1966). p. 147.

“in a democracy right is what the majority makes it to be.”<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, every movement towards democracy has been a direct or indirect attack on Christian orthodoxy. Because democracy has an explicit doctrine of infallibility, it is necessarily and logically hostile to a rival doctrine of infallibility, and the claims of Scripture are either implicitly or explicitly denied.

In passing, it can be noted that the philosopher Croce ascribed infallibility to the esthetic experience.

More important to us today is the Marxist dogma of the infallibility of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dr. Leo Paul de Alvarez has made an interesting analysis of Khrushchev’s anti-Stalin speeches. The initial attack on Stalin served an important purpose: it disassociated the new leaders from the crimes of Stalin. It was actually stated that Stalin’s writings, long official dogma, contained nothing worthwhile. The attack, however, involved certain dangerous concessions. The infallibility of the dialectical process and of the dictatorship had been seriously endangered. The Marxist theory of contradictions was immediately applied to repair the damage: society always progresses through contradictions, but socialist society does not have the dangerous and evil *class* contradictions. The contradictions in Soviet society were due to the fact that people reflected backward conditions of production. Stalin’s policies were correct, but the contradictions led to paternalism, to the cult of personality, and other problems. The problems of Stalinism sprang therefore out of a “rotten survival” in people’s minds. Supposedly, the Party had always been alert to the problem and had struggled against it. The conclusion of this rethinking was that the errors of Stalin became the sins of the people, and the Party’s infallibility was preserved. Khrushchev, in a speech of December 18, 1957, concluded:

...Stalin will take a due place as a dedicated Marxist-Leninist and a stalwart revolutionary. Our party and the Soviet people will remember Stalin and pay tribute to him.<sup>5</sup>

Infallibility has always been a basic faith in Marxist dogma, and much of the Marxist power stems from its intense belief in the infallibility of its basic faith.

This should not be surprising. For a man to live successfully, he must have an ultimate standing ground; *every philosophy is authoritarian*, in that, while it may attack savagely all other doctrines of authority, it does so from the vantage point of a new authority. This new authority is a basic pretheoretical presupposition which is in totality religious and which rests on a particular concept of infallibility. Every man has his platform from which he speaks. To affirm that foundation without qualification is an inescapable requirement of human thought.

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<sup>4</sup> Herman Finer, *Road to Reaction*. (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1945, 1963). p. 60. Finer holds that if the majority had voted Hitler into power, - and he states the majority did not - then Hitler’s regime would have been "the Rule of Law," *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev, "Forty Years of Great October Socialist Revolution" (Report to the Anniversary Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Nov. 6, 1957), in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press IX*, 45 (December 18, 1957) p. 9; cited in Leo Paul S. de Alvarez, *Sino-Soviet Ideological Relations, 1956-1957*, p. 52, unpublished ms., 1959.

It is a naive and foolish error to assume that “deliverance” from the doctrine of the infallibility of Scripture “frees” a man’s mind from the concept of infallibility. Rather, it means the adoption of a new infallibility as a rival and supposedly liberating concept. Thus Rousseau, in formulating his dogmas of democracy, plainly asserted the infallibility of the general will of the people. Rousseau emphatically asserted, after developing his doctrine of the will, that “it follows from what has been said above that the general will is right and ever tends to the public advantage.”<sup>6</sup> The infallibility of the general will as embodied in either the majority, the democratic consensus, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the folk, or an elite group is a doctrine which has dominated the world political scene in the twentieth century. War has become totalitarian because it has become the clash of infallible philosophies with mutually exclusive claims. The departure of modern man from Biblical faith has been an exodus to a new Egypt, another and an enslaving doctrine of infallibility.

Similarly, the departure of the Church of Rome from the single ultimate authority of Scripture has not been a denial of infallibility. Infallibility has rather been transferred to the church. First, it was held implicitly that the church is infallible, then explicitly so, and, with the First Vatican Council, the infallibility of the pope under certain conditions was asserted. If this infallibility should at some future date be denied, it will only be in favor of another infallibility concept.

Another infallibility concept, succinctly formulated by the Deists of the eighteenth century, is again with us. Alexander Pope declared, in his *Essay on Man*, “Whatever is, is right.” Existentialism has once again affirmed this faith. The validity of any transcendental law, of any standard outside of and beyond man, is denied by the existentialist. For him, reality “is” and there is nothing else; therefore, what is, is infallibly right. Standards, supremely Scripture, must be challenged as opposed to this new reality, in that they are ruled out of court by a presupposition of infallibility in the existential moment.

The new left, in terms of these existentialist premises, opposes the “Establishment” as an alien standard; it seeks revolution, not in terms of any purpose or goal, but simply to overturn everything except the infallible moment. Only man’s momentary antinomian will can be allowed to prevail, because it is by definition infallible.

Clearly, then, if the infallibility of Scripture is denied, it is denied only in order to ascribe infallibility to nature, to man, or to some aspect or institution of man.

And another necessity ensues. A necessary aspect of the doctrine of infallibility is the total self-consciousness of whatever or whoever is infallible.

For orthodox Christians, this means, as Cornelius Van Til has so ably pointed out, that *God is totally self-conscious*. There is no unconscious or subconscious mind in God, nor does the Almighty God sleep. He is totally self-conscious; there are no hidden potentialities in God. Man, on the contrary, is not totally self-conscious; there are hidden recesses in the mind of man, unrealized potentialities unknown to the person. Man cannot therefore fully determine what he is

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<sup>6</sup> J-J Rousseau: *The Social Contract*, Bk. II, Chap. III, para. 1.

or what he can do. Many retired people, freed from their work, develop sometimes surprising potentialities, but no man has ever fully known himself. Solomon observed that “Man’s goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?” (Prov. 20:24). The determination of man is not in man, nor does man even have a full self-consciousness about himself.

God, on the other hand, not only determines all things but is totally self-determined and self-conscious. There are no hidden potentialities in God, who knows Himself totally, and, therefore, when he speaks, speaks authoritatively and infallibly. An infallible word requires a totally self-conscious speaker who can speak in total knowledge of Himself and His abilities. Not surprisingly, Sartre saw this dilemma, and, at the beginning of his analysis of existential man, attacked the Freudian concept of the unconscious. What is repressed by the mind, Sartre held, is knowingly repressed in order to escape from difficulties.<sup>7</sup> There is much to be said for Sartre’s thesis, but the reason for his attack on the subconscious in a study of ontology is what concerns us. Sartre as an existentialist frankly states that the goal of man is to be god: “Man fundamentally is the desire to be God.”<sup>8</sup>

In the existentialist sense, “Man makes himself man in order to be God.”<sup>9</sup> A true god, however, must have full self-consciousness, and hence Sartre finds it imperative to deny the concept of the unconscious.

Thus, *an infallible word must come from a self-conscious source*, from one who speaks in full knowledge of himself and his abilities. But this is not enough: an authoritative and infallible word requires not only total self-consciousness but also total power — *omnipotence* — in order to speak the word and then bring it to pass. The God of Scripture, who is totally self-conscious and has no hidden potentialities, declares, “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). This no man can say, in that both lacking perfection and having hidden potentialities, man both changes and is in need of continuing change. Man grows and regresses. God, on the other hand, does not change, and, being omnipotent, can declare His word and bring it to pass. Hence the challenge issued through Isaiah: “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.” God, being omnipotent and totally self-conscious, can predict because His word is the controlling word. God’s word comes out of His unchanging and omnipotent being, and *the word of God is thus of necessity infallible. The only word the sovereign and triune God can speak is an infallible word.* To deny the infallibility of the word of God is inescapably to deny the God of Scripture. When the omnipotent God speaks, His word is of necessity infallible. This is the only kind of word that God can declare. Because God is God, it is utterly impossible for God ever to speak a word which is not infallible.

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<sup>7</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. (New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1956). pp. 50ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 566.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626.

Omnipotence plus total self-consciousness necessitates an infallible word. Therefore, anyone who denies the infallibility of Scripture is saying that God is not sovereign, that He can neither predestine nor predict. No prophecy can then come from God. Deny infallibility, and the only God that remains, if any, is a struggling, weak, and stammering God, incapable of knowing Himself or of issuing an eternal decree. This is not the God of Scripture.

A sovereign, predestinating, self-conscious God can declare *only* an infallible word. When infallibility then is transferred to some false god, these other attributes of God must be transferred also. Omnipotence and omniscience must then be ascribed to some new agency. Teilhard ascribed them to evolution, others to the dictatorship of the proletariat, to philosopher-kings, to the general will, or to whatever else is the new god of man and society.

Because the modern state, in all its variations, is based on Rousseau's concept of the infallible general will, it is moving steadily towards totalitarianism, seeking total power over man. Marxism openly gives us the dictatorship of the proletariat, plus total planning and control. Total planning is the statist version of predestination.

The doctrine of predestination is, of course, the doctrine of total planning and control. To hold to the eternal decree of God is to say simply that God from the beginning planned, predicted, and totally controls everything that comes to pass. The modern state, as the new god, seeks total control over man in order to speak an infallible word, in order to experiment with man and control him from cradle to grave. Planning is thus increasingly a necessary aspect of the modern state, because the modern state wants to predict, to prophesy, to control. The goal is total planning in order to prophesy, total control for total power.

Infallibility is thus an inescapable concept. What we face today is not an abandonment of the doctrine of infallibility, but its transfer from God to man, from God's word to man's word. But, Isaiah warns us, God declares, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another" (Isa. 42:8). Thus speaks the LORD, He Who Is.

We are therefore in a state of war, war between heaven and humanism, war between the Almighty God and the totalitarian state, war between God and the scientific planners, predictors, and controllers, war between God and all those who deny His infallibility. Such a conflict is a very uneven one, and there can be no doubt as to the outcome of this war.

God will not share His glory nor give it to another. Even as the builders of the Tower of Babel were confounded and scattered, even as Pharaoh and his host were destroyed and his troops swallowed up in the Red Sea, even as God declared His judgment on Amalek — and Amalek is gone — even as Assyria and Babylon, and the empires of old, were brought down to dust, so those who today deny His infallible word and ascribe infallibility to the things of man shall be brought low by the Lord of Hosts. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).  
"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

We have the infallible word of the infallible God. Let Christian men rejoice therefore, for our God is Lord of lords, King of kings, the mighty conqueror.

## 2. Infallibility and Immanence

The concept of infallibility, when denied to God and His word, does not disappear; instead, it is transferred to another area. Historically, as Christendom turned to Aristotle and to natural law, the concept of infallibility came into a new prominence as church, state, and school claimed it for themselves.

Within the church it developed into the doctrine of papal infallibility (and, in some cases, the divine right of presbytery, and like concepts). Although the doctrine had deep roots in scholasticism and the “medieval” church, it was not formally defined until the First Vatican Council in 1870:

We, adhering, faithfully to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith — with a view to the glory of our Divine Savior, the exaltation of the Catholic religion, and the safety of Christian peoples (the Sacred Council approving), teach and define as a dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra* [that is, when — fulfilling the office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians — on his supreme Apostolical authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church], through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, is endowed with that infallibility, with which the Divine Redeemer has willed that His Church — in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals — should be equipped: And therefore, that such definitions of the Roman Pontiff of themselves — and not by virtue of the consent of the Church — are irreformable. If anyone shall presume [which God forbid!] to contradict this our definition; let him be anathema.<sup>10</sup>

This statement has been cited, not only to illustrate the development of a non- Biblical doctrine of infallibility, but also to call attention to the fact that it is the most modest of all such claims in the modern world. Men have given undue attention to this papal authority as an example of an obsolete and authoritarian belief in the supposedly rational and scientific climate of the modern era. In this they have simply revealed their own hostility to the church. Without giving assent to this dogma of papal infallibility, let us analyze its relative modesty. P. J. Tenor has commented on the meaning of the dogma:

For the correct understanding of this definition it is to be noted, in the first place, that what is claimed for the pope is infallibility merely, not impeccability or inspiration. In the next place the infallibility claimed for the pope is the same in its nature, scope, and extent as that which the Church as a whole possesses; nor does his *ex cathedra* teaching, in order to be infallible, require to be ratified by the Church’s consent. The pope teaching *ex cathedra* is an independent organ of infallibility. In the third place, infallibility is not attributed to every doctrinal act of the pope, but only to his *ex cathedra* teaching; and the conditions required for

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<sup>10</sup> Henry Bettenson, editor: *Documents of the Christian Church*. (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1947). p. 383.

ex cathedra teaching are mentioned in the Vatican decree: (a) The pontiff must teach in his public and official capacity as a theologian, preacher, or allocutionist, not in his capacity as a temporal prince or as a mere ordinary of the diocese of Rome. It must be clear that he speaks as spiritual head of the Church universal, (b) Then it is only when, in this capacity, he teaches some doctrine of faith or morals that he is infallible. (c) Further it must be sufficiently evident that he intends to teach with all the fullness and finality of his supreme Apostolic authority, in other words that he wishes to determine some point of doctrine in an absolutely final and irrevocable way, or to define it in the technical sense. These are well-recognized formulae by means of which the defining intention may be manifested, (d) Finally for an ex cathedra decision it must be clear that the pope intends to bind the whole Church, to demand internal assent from all the faithful to his teaching under pain of incurring spiritual shipwreck (*naufragium fidei*), according to the expression used by Pius IX in defining the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.<sup>11</sup>

There are thus some limitations on papal infallibility. As Fr. James F. Wathen has pointed out, “Whereas the Supreme Pontiff’s authority is co-extensive with his jurisdiction, his infallibility is not.”<sup>12</sup> However, the infallibility of the church flows out of papal infallibility in Roman Catholic doctrine: “The Church, as the source and cause of salvation, stands on the Papacy as a building stands on its foundation: its Imperishability derives from the Papacy, from the Infallibility of the Papacy,” and the same is true of the church’s infallibility.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, “our notion of Infallibility should include only what we are required to believe and nothing else.”<sup>14</sup> Wathen’s arguments, as he then develops them, would be disputed by some Roman Catholic theologians, but that fact illustrates the problem: the doctrine of papal infallibility is a limited doctrine and its meaning is open to debate. Thus, while not agreeing with the most conspicuous example of a modern doctrine of infallibility, we must all the same call attention to its limitations. These limitations exist because the doctrine is to a large degree tied not only to a tradition but to a historic faith and a supernatural revelation. The restrictions imposed by that history and revelation are severe ones.

When we come to the doctrine of the infallibility of the state, the restrictions quickly disappear. The doctrine of the divine right of kings appeared when Christian doctrine still imposed some hesitation on royalist philosophy, but the claims were still very extravagant. Hume has called attention to the practical application of the doctrine in the reign of Elizabeth I of England when Parliament protested the granting of various economic monopolies to men favored by the crown:

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<sup>11</sup> P. J. Tenor, “Infallibility,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII. (New York, N.Y.: The Encyclopedia Press, (1910) 1913). p. 796.

<sup>12</sup> James F. Wathen: *The Great Sacrilege*. (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1971). p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, -p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

These grievances, the most intolerable for the present, and the most pernicious in their consequences, that ever were known in any age or under any government, had been mentioned in the last parliament, and a petition had even been presented to the queen, complaining of the patents; but she still persisted in defending her monopolists against her people. A bill was now introduced into the lower house, abolishing all these monopolies; and as the former application had been unsuccessful, a law was insisted on as the only certain expedient for correcting these abuses. The courtiers, on the other hand, maintained, that this matter regarded the prerogative, and that the commons could never hope for success, if they did not make application, in the most humble and respectful manner, to the queen's goodness and beneficence. The topics which were advanced in the house, and which came equally from the courtiers and the country gentlemen, and were admitted by both, will appear the most extraordinary to such as are prepossessed with an idea of the privileges enjoyed by the people during that age, and of the liberty possessed under the administration of Elizabeth. It was asserted that the queen inherited both an enlarging and restraining power; by her prerogative she might set at liberty what was restrained by statute or otherwise, and by her prerogative she might restrain what was otherwise at liberty; that the royal prerogative was not to be canvassed, nor disputed, nor examined; and did not even admit of any limitation: that absolute princes, such as the sovereigns of England, were a species of divinity: that it was in vain to attempt tying the queen's hands by laws or statutes; since, by means of her dispensing power, she could loosen herself at pleasure: and that even if a clause should be annexed to a statute, excluding her dispensing power, she could first dispense with that clause and then with the statute. After all this discourse, more worthy of a Turkish divan than of an English house of commons, according to our present idea of this assembly, the queen, who perceived how odious monopolies had become, and what heats were likely to arise, sent for the speaker, and desired him to acquaint the house, that she would immediately cancel the most grievous and oppressive of these patents.

The house was struck with astonishment, and admiration, and gratitude, at this extraordinary instance of the queen's goodness and condescension. A member said, with tears in his eyes, that if a sentence of everlasting happiness had been pronounced in his favor, he could not have felt more joy than that with which he was at present overwhelmed. Another observed, that this message from the sacred person of the queen was a kind of gospel or glad tidings, and ought to be received as such, and be written in the tablets of their hearts. And it was further remarked, that in the same manner as the Deity would not give his glory to another, so the queen herself was the only agent in their present prosperity and happiness. The house voted, that the speaker, with a committee, should ask permission to wait on her majesty, and return thanks to her for her gracious concessions to her people.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> David Hume: *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Abdication of James the Second, 1688*, Vol. IV. (New York, N.Y.: Harper, 1852). pp. 336f.

The kings of England were “a species of divinity” (even though not always sane, nor housebroken)! Cromwell, who recognized the popular faith in kings, dismissed a proposal to place Charles Stuart (later Charles II) on the throne, saying, “He is so damnably debauched, he would undo us all....Give him a shoulder of mutton and a whore, that’s all he cares for.”<sup>16</sup> Yet, after Cromwell’s death, when Charles II was placed on the throne, a trial of “the regicides” was held. The court refused to consider the case against Charles I as a traitor to the people of England in terms of the original feudal character of the throne. Instead, the modern doctrine of the divine right of kings was used to rule any and every act against the crown as morally, religiously, and legally wrong. This was clear in the opening remarks of Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Chief Baron of the Exchequer and presiding judge:

The trial opened on Tuesday (October 9, 1660) with the presiding judge’s charge to the jury. Bridgeman traced the legal position of the monarchy from the earliest times, showing that no single person or community of persons has any coercive power over the King of England; that the King was supreme Governor, subject to none but God, and could do no wrong, and that if he could do no wrong he could not be punished for any wrong.<sup>17</sup>

Related to this idea of the king’s divinity was the belief in the healing power of “The King’s Touch.”<sup>18</sup>

After 1688 this concept of divine right was transferred to Parliament. Even as Bridgeman had held that Charles I could “do no wrong,” so in 1946 the Attorney General of England, Sir Hartley Shawcross, M.P., declared, “Parliament is sovereign; it may make *any* laws. It could ordain that all blue-eyed babies be destroyed at birth.”<sup>19</sup> This is an explicit assertion of Parliament’s sovereignty; it is also implicitly an assertion of infallibility, since it recognizes no sovereign power or law beyond Parliament.

In the Soviet Union the issue of infallibility came to the fore in the aftermath of Khrushchev’s speech of February 25, 1956, attacking the work of Stalin. This step gained the new rulers some popularity, but it raised serious questions with respect to the Marxist faith in the infallible working of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the manifestation of historical process. Second thoughts, prompted by Chinese Communist critics, led to some serious misgivings:

If even an “outstanding Marxist-Leninist,” the leader of the Party, can become a victim of these contradictions, then surely all other leaders of the Party may become similarly divorced from the actual conditions of society. And is it not

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Hill: *God’s Englishman: Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*. (New York, N.Y.: The Dial Press, 1970). p. 179.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Morrah: *1660, The Year of Restoration*. (Boston, MASS: Beacon Press, 1960). p. 184.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159. See also John B. Wolf: *Louis XIV*. (New York, N.Y.: Norton, 1968). p. 280.

<sup>19</sup> Clarence Manion: *The Key to Peace*. (Chicago, IL: Heritage Foundation, 1951). p. 91.

possible then for the Party and the Government to become isolated from the people? These questions were not answered in the 5 April editorial, but they were answered later, and the answer was yes, indeed it was possible. But such an answer struck at the foundation of orthodox Communist theory itself, which held that no such possibility could ever occur. The Party, at least, was infallible in its knowledge of the historical process.<sup>20</sup>

As a result, there was some backtracking, and, in his 1957 speech on the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution, Khrushchev restored Stalin to his “due place as a dedicated Marxist-Leninist and stalwart revolutionary. Our party and the Soviet people will remember Stalin and pay tribute to him.”<sup>21</sup>

In every modern state, in varying degrees, there is a working doctrine of the infallibility of the state. There is a hesitancy about an open formulation of the concept, but it is nonetheless present. Those who hold to democracy, to the belief that the voice of the people is the voice of God (*vox populi, vox dei*), look to the people’s voices in its lowest expression, in “the masses,” in groups, prisoners, perverts, and others who are held to be representatives of “the people” rather than of “vested interests.”

Talmon has cited the opinions of Mazzini and others to illustrate the belief in the infallibility of the people:

“The spirit of God can only descend upon the gathered multitudes. It is for them to say what they believe or do not believe.” “We believe in the infallibility of the people,” but “we put no trust in men.” Only the totality of the individual people is God’s Church. Rulers, party leaders, parties themselves may err. “The mass can never err.” Individuals may often seduce and exercise an evil influence on the masses, but they can never in the last resort completely deprave or stifle man’s conscience. Sooner or later the real good nature of the people re-asserts itself. And the men of conscience “are in the majority, and that majority has always the superiority of a purer sentiment, of better sense, of a calmer conscience,” over those who separate themselves “from the people.”<sup>22</sup>

After Rousseau, the belief in the infallibility of the people also meant the infallibility of an elite who can incarnate the general will of democratic society. This elite can know the democratic consensus better than the ballot box and thus are the supposed expression of the infallibility of the social order. This was the belief of the leaders of the French Revolution:

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<sup>20</sup> Leo-Paul S. de Alvarez: *Sino-Soviet Ideological Relations: 1956-1957*, p. 34. Unpublished ms.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>22</sup> J. L. Talmon: *Political Messianism, The Romantic Phase*. (New York, N.Y.: Praeger, 1960). p. 258.

It was to be a Committee of the most faithful and most ruthless. This was the conception underlying the regime of the Committee of Public Safety and Jacobin dictatorship, a regime designed to make the Revolutionary purpose triumph at all costs, and not to realize liberty in the sense of free self-expression; a system which replaced the principle of popular choice by the principle of the infallibility of the enlightened few in the central body acting in a dictatorial manner through special agents appointed by themselves.<sup>23</sup>

It should be noted that such non-Christian scholars do not hesitate to use the word *infallibility* in describing the authority of the modern state and its ruling elite. A prerogative of God has been appropriated by the state. Moreover, the state, like God, increasingly claims total jurisdiction over every area of life and an omniscience in every sphere. The state has become the new agency in whom man lives and moves and has his being (cf. Acts 17:28). Man now addresses his prayers and petitions to the state, which he believes to be his hope of salvation.

The school no less than the state lays claim to infallibility. An infallible organ is beyond criticism. Christians hold the Bible to be its own interpreter and thus its own standard. It is the characteristic of an infallible organ or agency that it is free from external constraint, criticism, or judgment. All of these aspects of the doctrine have been incorporated into the dogma of academic freedom. This dogma had its origins in the “medieval” era and has since been greatly expanded. The academy, it is held, is beyond criticism by any standard extraneous to itself. Teachers and professors are ostensibly free to teach whatever they choose, in contempt of the trustees of the school, because their profession gives them an immunity. The clergy’s immunity before the civil courts in earlier centuries was a very limited one. The new clergy of the schools claims total immunity from all jurisdictions, even in the face of the most ridiculous performances. Thus, in a Cranston, Rhode Island, high school, in 1972 a teacher of “an innovative social studies program called Economics and Politics in the Community,” George O’Neill, invited a prostitute “to speak with” his forty pupils. In the uproar that followed, “A teacher, who asked not to be identified, said that 99% of the faculty and most of the pupils who understand the situation support O’Neill. It’s a question of academic freedom.”<sup>24</sup> The teacher can do no wrong, clearly. Examine again the claims made in Parliament for Elizabeth I, that her “prerogative was not to be canvassed, nor disputed, nor examined; and did not even admit of any limitation.” Is not this the thesis of “academic freedom”? A teacher can strip herself naked in a sex education class: it is academic freedom. A professor can incite students to revolutionary violence: it is academic freedom. By virtue of their teaching office, such people are supposedly beyond criticism, and their every absurdity has some esoteric and infallible meaning which vindicates them always.

Infallibility is not an obsolete doctrine. It is very much with us. It has simply been transferred from the word of God to the word and institutions of man.

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<sup>23</sup> J. L. Talmon: *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*. (New York, N. Y.: Praeger, 1960). p. 119.

<sup>24</sup> “School in Uproar Over Invitation to Prostitute,” in the *Los Angeles Times*, Tuesday, March 14, 1972, Part I, p. 21.



### 3. The Dependent Word of Man

Friedrich Nietzsche gives us a telling example of the infallibility concept and its inescapability. In Nietzsche we have a denial of the God of Scripture, and of the god of Hegel, the modern deification of history as it incarnates itself in the totalitarian state. Nietzsche is also hostile to all morality: good and evil, good and bad, must be dropped in favor of a life beyond morality. Even more, man and life must be negated, and the Superman is the one who negates all things. As Nietzsche observed, “The sight of man now fatigues — What is present-day Nihilism if it is not *that*? — We are tired of *man*.”<sup>25</sup>

All the same, Nietzsche *wrote*; he *spoke*, and, however much he denied all other values, he did not deny the validity of *his* word. Nietzsche waged war against the idea of an objective, created, and given world, and against the concomitant idea also of an objective, God-given and absolute moral order. In line with all modern philosophy, after Descartes and especially in terms of Kant, Nietzsche was emphatic in his denial of an objective and real world. The *only* world is the world of the mind of autonomous man and of the appearances his mind synthesizes. In Nietzsche’s words:

It is of cardinal importance that the *real world* should be suppressed. It is the most formidable inspirer of doubts, and depredator of values, concerning the *world which we are*: it was our most dangerous *attempt* heretofore on the life of Life.

War against all the hypotheses upon which a real world has been imagined. The notion that *moral values* are the *highest* values, belongs to this hypothesis.

The superiority of the moral valuation would be refuted, if it could be shown to be the result of an *immoral* valuation — a specific case of real immorality: it would thus reduce itself to an *appearance*, and as an *appearance* it would cease from having any right to condemn appearance.<sup>26</sup>

No “things-in themselves” exist, only the knowing mind.<sup>27</sup>

It follows, therefore, that since there is no objective framework of reference, and no things-in-themselves, that the only error man can make is to assume that knowledge has an actual correlation with a real world which leads to an accurate understanding thereof. Knowledge is for Nietzsche the freedom of the mind from an objective reality and its ability, even as it is conditioned by things, to condition them in turn.

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<sup>25</sup> F. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, 12; in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*. (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library), p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> F. Nietzsche: *The Will to Power*. (New York, N.Y.: Frederick Publications, 1960). p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

As a result, the more a man severs himself from God and the world as objective realities, the more clearly he speaks and, in fact, becomes *infallible*.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche wrote of his composition of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* in these terms:

Can any one at the end of this nineteenth century possibly have any distinct notion of what poets of a more vigorous period meant by inspiration? If not, I should like to describe it. Provided one has the slightest remnant of superstition left, one can hardly reject completely the idea that one is the mere incarnation or mouthpiece, or medium of some almighty power. The notion of revelation describes the condition quite simply; by which I mean that something profoundly convulsive and disturbing suddenly become visible and audible with indescribably definiteness and exactness. One hears — one does not seek; one takes — one does not ask who gives: a thought flashes out like lightning, inevitably without hesitation — I have never had any choice about it. There is an ecstasy whose terrific tension is sometimes released by a flood of tears, during which one's progress varies from involuntary impetuosity to involuntary slowness. There is the feeling that one is utterly out of hand, with the most distinct consciousness of an infinitude of shuddering thrills that pass through from head to foot; — there is a profound happiness in which the most painful and gloomy feelings are not discordant in effect, but are required as necessary colors in this overflow of light. There is an instinct for rhythmic relations which embraces an entire world of forms (lengths, the need for a widely extended rhythm, is almost a measure of the force of inspiration, a sort of counterpart to its pressure and tension). Everything occurs quite without volition, as if in an eruption of freedom, independence, power and divinity. The spontaneity of the image and similes is most remarkable; one loses all perception of what is imagery and simile; everything offers itself as the most immediate, exact, and simple means of expression. If I may recall a phrase of Zarathustra's, it actually seems as if the things themselves come to one, and offered themselves as similes. ("Here do all things come caressingly to thy discourse and flatter thee, for they would fain ride upon thy back. On every simile thou ridest here to every truth. Here fly open before thee all the speech and word shrines of existence, here all existence would become speech, here all Becoming would learn of thee how to speak.") This is *my* experience with inspiration. I have no doubt that I should have to go back millenniums to find another who could say to me: "It is mine also!"<sup>28</sup>

For Nietzsche thus, his writing was an expression of divinity, a revelation, and inspiration. *Thus Spake Zarathustra* apes in style the Bible and ancient epics; it is about as successful as Ossian and Joseph Smith.

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<sup>28</sup> F. Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*, "Thus Spake Zarathustra: A Book for All and None," 3; in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, pp. 99-101.

As against “the immaculate perception” of those who want a valid scientific knowledge of things-in-themselves, Nietzsche offered the true way as “Dare only to believe in yourselves — in yourselves and in your inward parts! He who does not believe in himself always lieth.”<sup>29</sup>

In twentieth-century existentialism this means that the only truth is existential truth, the dictates of one’s own being as expressed without the influence of God, man, society, morals and mores, or anything external to the biological impulses of the man. Infallibility now means total separation from the external world, and from the past and future. History cannot be allowed to condition the existential moment.

For Sartre this means freedom from personal history. He denied Freud’s idea of the unconscious, of the Id, Ego, and Superego, in favor of “a free, translucent consciousness.”<sup>30</sup> Psychological determinism could not become for Sartre a primary factor in the mind of man. It is the free mind of autonomous man speaking in the existential moment that has true knowledge. In fact, Sartre held, “Knowledge puts us in the presence of the absolute, and there is a truth of knowledge. But this truth, although releasing us to nothing more and nothing less than the absolute, remains strictly human.”<sup>31</sup>

Sartre and Nietzsche did not use the word infallibility, but this is what they were talking about. For Sartre, the goal of man is to become god, and this is attainable only on existential grounds, although a meaningless and futile passion even in attainment. The same is no less true of Nietzsche.

In fact, basic to the drive of modern philosophy is this goal of philosophers to become gods. As a result, modern philosophers, like the Greek thinkers, and Aristotle’s pupil, Alexander the Great, have hated or avoided women as a drag on their divinity. This was emphatically true of Nietzsche, who despised marriage, and no less true of his follower, Adolph Hitler, whose life and works are echoes of Nietzsche. Nietzsche wrote:

It is an accepted and indisputable fact, so long as there are philosophers in the world, and wherever philosophers have existed (from India to England, to take the opposite pole of philosophic ability), that there exists a real irritation and rancor on the part of philosophers toward sensuality.... There similarly exists a real philosophic bias and affection for the whole ascetic ideal; there should be no illusions on this score. Both these feelings, as has been said, belong to the type; if a philosopher lacks both of them, then he is — you may be certain of it — never anything but a “pseudo”.... Every animal, including *la bete philosophe*, strives instinctively after an optimum of favorable conditions, under which he can let his whole strength have play, and achieves his maximum consciousness of power;

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<sup>29</sup> F. Nietzsche: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Part II, XXXVII, in *ibid.*, pp. 133f.

<sup>30</sup> Hazel E. Barnes, in “Translator’s Introduction” to Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. (New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1956). p. xxxvi.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

with equal instinctiveness, and with a fine perceptive flair which is superior to any reason, every animal shudders mortally at every kind of disturbance and hindrance which obstructs or could obstruct his way to that *optimum* (it is not his way to happiness of which I am talking, but his way to power, to action, the most powerful action, and in point of fact in many cases his way to unhappiness). Similarly, the philosopher shudders mortally at *marriage*, together with all that could persuade him to it — marriage as a fatal hindrance on the way to the *optimum*. Up to the present what great philosophers have married? Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant, Schopenhauer — they were not married, and, further, one cannot *imagine* them as married. A married philosopher belongs to *comedy*, that is my rule; as for that exception of a Socrates — the malicious Socrates married himself, it seems, *ironice*, just to prove this very rule... So many bridges to *independence* are shown in the ascetic ideal, that the philosopher cannot refrain from exultation and clapping of hands when he hears the history of all those resolute ones, who on one day uttered a nay to all servitude and went into some *desert*; even granting that they were only strong asses, and the absolute opposite of strong minds. What, then, does the ascetic ideal mean in a philosopher? This is my answer — it will have been guessed long ago: when he sees this ideal the philosopher smiles because he sees therein an *optimum* of the conditions of the highest and boldest intellectuality; he does not thereby deny “existence,” he rather affirms thereby *his* existence and *only* his existence, and this perhaps to the point of not being far off the blasphemous wish, *pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus fiam!*...<sup>32</sup>

In the above passage, Nietzsche also cites Buddha favorably with Buddha’s contempt for life. Nietzsche is emphatically the great yea sayer to death and destruction, not to life.

Nietzsche’s savage hatred of women, because the pull of sex is a reminder of humanity and of dependence, a difficult thing for a would-be god to admit to, is apparent in work after work. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, he gave as women’s only use “recreation” for the warrior’s play: “all else is folly.” However, Warrior-man, or Superman, should go in to a woman only with care: “Thou goest to women? Do not forget thy whip!”<sup>33</sup>

This latter remark was apparently commonly used by Nietzsche before he wrote *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, because a year earlier a woman he loved intensely, but who did not return his love, Lou Salome, had Nietzsche and Paul Ree assume the place of animals in harness to a cart, while she sat in the cart with a whip!<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Nietzsche’s contempt for marriage was in part

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<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, 7; in Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-108.

<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Part I, XVIII; in *Ibid.*, pp. 80f.

<sup>34</sup> H. F. Peters: *My Sister, My Spouse*. See photograph after p. 160. (New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton, 1962).

dishonest; women had repeatedly refused his marriage offer.<sup>35</sup> Usually this means, however, that a man has asked where he is sure of refusal, so that he can cherish a resentment against women.

A great many more philosophers than Nietzsche named have not married, and, unlike Nietzsche, more than a few have not even pretended to try. (Some have been homosexual as well.) Why this avoidance of marriage? Nietzsche has given us part of the answer. The autonomy claimed by modern philosophy from God has, as Sartre plainly states, the goal of becoming god. Now God needs no helpmeet: man emphatically does. To need a helpmeet, to be dependent on a woman, to be delighted with her, rely on her, be easily hurt or moved by her, is the mark of a man, a creature. Human dependency is in every direction, natural and supernatural, on God and man, on the earth and on air, on plants and on animals, on superiors and inferiors. Marriage in particular makes the fact of this dependency intensely personal. Feminists are under the illusion sometimes that, because Christian faith requires authority to be given to the man, the woman is placed in a position of dependence on the man, rather than vice versa. Nothing could be more wrong. On the human scene, the greater the authority, the greater the dependence, because human authority, to the extent that it increases, also increases human dependence. The dependence of a worm on the world and on other worms is far less than that of a man on the world and on other men. The greater the authority of any man, the more dependent he is on a great number of persons, things, and factors. Every increase of authority is at the same time an increase in dependency. A hermit has little authority and a minimum dependency; by separating himself from other men, he has also separated himself from authority over them. A general is of necessity dependent on more people to maintain his authority and purpose than is the private, who, having little authority, also needs others less to do his limited duties. All men are interdependent, and no man is born out of nothing, but the more man advances in authority, the more his dependence grows. The same is true of civilization: advancement means an increased dependency. Men in a backward country are less dependent on one another and on foreign trade than in a highly developed one, where specialization leads to greater interdependence as well as greater power and authority. It is an illusion of the ignorant and the foolish that independence from other men comes with increased authority. This illusion is a part of the mythology of autonomous man and his will to forsake the human condition. It is also an important factor in the ready decay of humanistic power. Human authority collapses when it denies independence. There is thus a marked difference between God's absolute and autonomous being and authority, and man's created and dependent being and authority. Man's word, moreover, is a dependent word: it depends on his oath, i.e., upon the name, authority, and fear of the judgment of the sovereign God. Epistemologically, man's word depends on the certainty and trustworthiness of God's word and world. Man's word is a totally dependent word, and God's word is a totally independent, sovereign, and infallible word, which man's word can never be. When man claims such an infallible word, he must play god and must deny independence, and his most basic personal dependence is on woman. But to deny his dependency is to deny his manhood without becoming a god. Few philosophers are as honest as Gautier's character in a novel, who cries out, "Why am I not God, since I cannot be a man?"<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>36</sup> Theophile Gautier: *Mademoiselle De Maupin*. (New York, N.Y.: Modern Library), p. 91.

The existentialist faith, however, stresses this goal of independence for men and women, and the result is not only a studied immoralism but a sense of infallibility and a radical self-righteousness. The modern mood is the ultimate in phariseeism as a consequence. In the various men's magazines which stress nudes, the brief interviews with the nude models almost always stress existential humanism with all its *self-righteousness*. As one such girl of 21, describing her deliverance into the new faith, declared:

I'm discovering my own integrity in L.A., discovering that I'm really a very honest person. And I like that. I like almost everything...in fact, I love everything! I have no hang-ups about sex. With the right man and with the right, relaxed attitude, sex is the most exciting thing I know. There's got to be more to a man, of course, that just a nice body: I've been to bed with men who were incredibly good-looking and said goodbye to them the next morning not even wanting to see them again. When you're just horny and want to get laid, you find the best-looking, most virile man you can. But to get it all together, you need the body *and* the mind."<sup>37</sup>

For Nietzsche, the fear of *involvement* with woman was very great. For contemporary existentialism, sex, for man and woman alike, is depersonalized; it is a form of masturbation with another being, and some have held solitary masturbation to be the highest form of existential sex. Betty Dodson has praised masturbation, writing, "Socially institutionalized dependent sex is depersonalizing... Masturbation can help return sex to its proper place — to the individual." A professor, Dr. Joseph Lo Piccolo, has "written a nine-step masturbation program."<sup>38</sup> For many others, fornication and group sex are best without emotional involvement, i.e., when impersonal and physical in the main. However, in using and depersonalizing others, such people have only depersonalized themselves. Their pure fountain of existential infallibility is the old fountain of sin and self-righteousness. The end of Nietzsche was madness, but, as Lou Salome saw very early, his philosophy was always madness.

The dependent creature can speak only a dependent and fallible word.

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<sup>37</sup> "Georgia Girl," in *Penthouse*, vol. 5, no. 10, June, 1974, p. 86.

<sup>38</sup> Linda Wolfe, "Take Two Aspirins and Masturbate," in *Playboy*, vol. 21, no. 6, June, 1974, p. 164.

## 4. Infallibility and Meaning

Because God is the absolute creator of all things, and because nothing exists outside of Him or apart from His creating decree, all things have their existence and their meaning from their sovereign creator, God. God, having no unconscious aspect in His being, is totally self-conscious and purposive in all His ways, so that all creation is a universe of total meaning. There is not a meaningless fact or atom in all creation, nor an event, nor any facet or aspect of anything that is not marked by total meaning. The meaning of most things elude us. We do not understand the meaning of mosquitos, for example, or the hairs that fall from our head, nor of the often unhappy events in our lives, because we tend to look for their meaning in terms of ourselves. The meaning of all things is theocentric — God-centered, not man-centered — which means that of necessity things are meaningless if we try to read them in terms of man, in terms of ourselves. We do not create them, govern them, nor more than slightly, in a limited area and manner, influence them; they are of God's ordination. Attempts to read the meaning of things humanistically are thus erroneous, futile, and blasphemous.

All the same, however, men insist on trying to force their meaning on history and to ascribe a totally humanistic meaning to events and things. If meaning is derived from man, then man's "creative" man is also spontaneously infallible; his every expression is an expression of original meaning. If man is ultimate, then man is creative, and his expressions have a naturally ultimate and infallible character.

It is this premise which undergirds, for example, Sigmund Freud. For Freud, the study of man's dreams was important. Dreams, being less censored than conscious thought and speech, are an expression of the spontaneous and creative mind, the *id* and the *ego*, and therefore infallible. The "truth" about man thus is not to be derived from the Bible — from a source extraneous to man — but from man's unconscious and spontaneous mind as it expresses itself in dreams. Dreams thus had a total and infallible meaning for Freud: man was to be known, and his meaning understood in terms of his dreams. Infallibility was thus transferred by Freud from God to man's unconscious mind, and meaning became an aspect of the unconscious as against the conscious mind.

For Marxism, with its doctrine of the infallibility of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist state became the new vehicle of infallibility. Alexander Dolgun reports what other prisoners have also confirmed, that the Marxist state insists on infallibility. When arrested, Dolgun was told by his communist inquisitor, Sidorov, after Dolgun protested that the charges against him were false, "You say we have made a mistake. I tell you we never make mistakes."<sup>39</sup>

According to Scripture, all things have total meaning in terms of God. For humanism, all things are either meaningless, or else all things must derive their meaning from man, or from an agency of man. In terms of this, communist regimes ascribe total meaning to all things in terms of the

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<sup>39</sup> *Alexander Dolgun's Story, An American in the Gulag.* (New York, N.Y.: Knopf, 1975). p. 13. cf. p. 107.

attitudes and views of the communist state. The illustrations of this are many. For example, George Tenno was, during World War II, a commander in the navy of the Soviet Union,

...assigned as intelligence liaison officer with the British during the war, and often traveling on convoys bringing supplies in through Archangel and Murmansk. On his last return trip he became very friendly with the captain of the British cruiser he was assigned to. This man was promoted to vice-admiral after the war. In 1948, recalling George's fondness for a certain brand of British pipe tobacco, the vice-admiral had sent a Christmas card to Moscow, with a pouch of the tobacco. At this time George was undergoing special training. His English was excellent and he was going to be sent to the United States as a spy.

But the MGB decided that this Christmas message from a British viceadmiral smacked of conspiracy. They arrested both George and his wife, Natalie. For two years he was interrogated and had a very bad time. Finally he was sent to Dzhezkazgan, and Natalie to a camp in the far north, both with twenty-five years for high treason.<sup>40</sup>

For the communist regime, there could be no meaning except the total meaning of dialectical materialism. In terms of this total meaning, no independent, harmless act between a capitalist and a communist was possible. The Christmas card and tobacco pouch thus had total meaning as evidence of conspiracy.

In a humanistic world, because it is not undergirded by God's total meaning, either meaninglessness or man's total meaning will govern. The result is tyranny, in that man's every act is then interpreted by the arbitrary purposes of the state.

The purposes of the state, moreover, are not open and known to man as are the purposes of God by means of His infallible word. Because of the doctrine of evolution, a cosmic purpose and meaning are denied. Sociology, a humanistic principle, denies meaning, since Comte, in favor of technology. There is no good or evil in the universe, nor purpose, nor meaning. There is only the immediate and pragmatic demand of the state — utilitarian, opportunistic, relativistic, and unpredictable. Meaning is thus *ad hoc*, for the moment, if such a thing can be called meaning. It is existential, governed by the needs of the moment, and subject to no law. As a result, such a demand or act of state or of man is infallible: it is beyond appeal. The Marquis de Sade insisted that every act of perversion, crime, or violence was an infallible act, required by Nature, or by the biological urge of the moment. There could thus be no condemnation of any act of existential man, nor any law over man. The only offense for Sade was Christianity, with its insistence on an infallibility apart from man and his biological urge.

For the modern state, infallibility is similarly existential. The needs of the moment dictate the law of the moment, against which there is no law. The infallibility of the existential state is a logical development of all forms of Hegelianism — Marxist, Fascist, and democratic. The

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 338f.

moment alone is real, and the moment is total and infallible. There is no other god than the moment, and the actor who seizes the moment is its infallible prophet.

There is thus no defense against humanism and its tyranny apart from the infallible word of God and an unwavering stand in terms of the sovereign and total decree of the triune God of Scripture.

## 5. The Canon of Covenant Law

A sovereign, omnipotent, and omniscient God can speak *only* an infallible and inerrant word. Because of the very nature of His being, God's *every word* is an infallible and inerrant word. Man can speak only a tentative word, because he cannot infallibly predict, govern, or determine the future. Man's every word is thus a tentative statement, even when he speaks of his own existence. Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* — I think, therefore I am — was delivered as an assured and inerrant starting point for man. Here was an infallible starting point for man which was ostensibly an autonomous one, free from the supposed problems of God's inscriptured word. Descartes began with the fact of sheer existence; he assumed that thinking by this supposedly autonomous "I" or person was sound, objective reasoning, a tremendous act of faith and contradicting the obvious fact of man's total depravity, his twisted reasoning, and his subjective perspective. Moreover, the fact of sheer existence and some kind of thinking did not establish any grounds for his presupposition of autonomy. Descartes' existence and thinking were derivative and conditioned factors, so that, instead of being a starting point, they were themselves a chain of consequences. Moreover, why should Descartes' *thinking*, his *cogito*, have priority over his parent's *cogito*, and that of any possible son? If it be said that thinking or reason in all men is capable of that which Descartes ostensibly accomplished, then the autonomy of Descartes' reason is denied in favor of a Reason common to all men, or some Power behind that common Reason. Then too, Descartes' assured starting point proves to be a very tentative one indeed, and a very great act of faith. If the autonomous mind is the starting point and is ultimate, then what common ground is there with any other mind? Other minds are then reduced to aspects of our own experience and as creations of our own sovereign mind.

Fallible man can speak only a fallible word; man the creature can utter only a limited and tentative word, however much he may strain after a self-created certainty. Man's words are many and various; our minds change over the years, as do our tastes and perspectives. Even in heaven or in the new creation, man's word will be a limited word and always restricted to that which God chooses to have man know (Deut. 29:29).

God's word is of necessity not only infallible, but it is a binding word. Every word of God is law, because it in some sense binds man, is authoritative over him, or declares infallibly what God has done in the history of His covenant dealings. To limit the law to the Pentateuch is a serious error; in antiquity, the words of a king were binding words. Much more so, the words of God are binding words. They are law.

The Bible, in fact, is divided into two sections, the Old Testament and the New (or renewed) Testament, witnessing to the two great stages of covenant history. The Bible as a whole is God's covenant word or law, His declaration of the history and nature of His covenant.

A covenant book is thus a canonical book: it is the rule of faith, its law. The books of the Bible are canonical because they are covenantal. If our view of the covenant is antinomian, then we have neither a covenant nor a canon, only a book for vaguely spiritual and moral counsel. It is then not in essence an infallible word.

While Scripture has many words, it is in essence *one word*, and is so spoken of in Deuteronomy 4:2. With the close of the canon, the *words* now stop (Rev. 22:18-19), and the one, unified word remains. Judgment is promised in Revelation 22:18-19 to all who add or detract from the one word, because an altered covenant law is no longer the law itself but a human substitute for the law.

Thus, where the law is denied, the canon soon becomes a “problem,” and discussions ensue about the value or place of this or that portion of Scripture. Because antinomianism breaks the link between the ideas of an infallible canon, which is covenant, law, and gospel, all in one, a sovereign God whose salvation is not the destruction of law but the declaration of the righteousness of His law in demanding atonement, and in requiring of the atoned that “the righteousness of the law...be fulfilled” in them (Rom. 8:4), antinomianism quickly becomes weak and flabby in its use and defense of Scripture. It has no sovereign word from the sovereign God, only a beautiful story and some touching appeals by a begging god. Scripture gives us no such word. The answer to the Great Antinomianism is clear cut: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). It is that *every word* that man must hear, believe, and obey. It is the infallible word, and there is not another kind of word from God.

Infallibility is an inescapable concept and fact; it is the locale of infallibility which is in question. The canon or rule of life and faith is either from God or from man. It is either the canon of covenant law, or it is the canon of man’s word as law.

## 6. The Command Word

A very common opinion today holds that the Bible is inspired where it speaks of faith and morals, but fully a product of its times where it touches on matters of history and the sciences (or the natural world). We are thus told by many that they are genuinely orthodox even while denying the historicity of Genesis 1-11, the historicity of Jonah, and various statements which seem to set Scripture at odds with modern science. The Bible, they say, is infallible where faith and morals are concerned, but history and nature are outside its province.

The recent origins of this opinion are neo-orthodox and Barthian. The roots, however, go back into neoplatonism and its contempt of material reality and finally into ancient Persian dualism. Implicit in this doctrine, called *inspiration fundamentalis*, is a division of reality into two spheres. Van Til has observed, with respect to this theory,

This theory appears very attractive to many serious-minded Christians today. In the first place, it fits in with the common distinction made by modern thought between religious and scientific truth. It is commonly held that the two are quite distinct from one another. Science is then supposed to deal with the spatio-temporal world, while religion deals with the moral and spiritual values that are thought of as being independent of spatio-temporal facts. In the second place, if one accepts the theory of fundamental inspiration, one can let Biblical criticism have its own free course; it is then maintained that all the religious truth taught in Scripture remains untouched even if criticism should prove the non-historicity of many of the facts recorded in Scripture.

With respect to this theory it ought to be observed at once that it is itself a part of the whole non-Christian scheme of interpretation of life. In the first place, the whole distinction between religious and historical truth is absolutely false from a Christian point of view. The resurrection of Christ is an historical fact and upon it, together with other historical facts, the truth of the religion of Christianity depends. Redemption has been historically mediated. It was in history, by historical persons, that sin was committed. It was therefore also in history, by the Son of God assuming a human nature and paying the penalty for sin on the cross, that sin is removed. We need, therefore an authoritative interpretation of the once-for-all significance of these redemptive historical facts. There is no Christian religion apart from history.

Here again, Barth and his school are on the side of Modernism. Barth, as well as the Modernists, is virtually indifferent to the historicity of the facts of redemption. That is, the real significance of redemption, according to Barth is ideational rather than historical. In the incarnation, Christ only touches history as a tangent touches a circle. Redemption is, according to this point of view, a process by which men are taken out of the historical and made something super-historical. It is no

wonder that, with such a conception of history, Barth and his school are indifferent to Bible criticism, and ridicule the theory of an infallible Bible.<sup>41</sup>

Such a doctrine in effect raptures a man out of history even while he is in it. It makes the faith non-historical and hence irrelevant. For all such, it is not only history and nature which are outside of God, but also faith and morals ultimately.

The reason is simply the doctrine of God implied in this theory. God does not speak infallibly regarding history and nature, we are asked to believe. Such a God is not sovereign, nor is He literally then the maker of heaven and earth and the determiner of all history. He is a figure outside of creation, giving moral and religious counsel to an alien world.

Not surprisingly, the advocates of this theory are uniformly antinomian. If they profess to honor God's law, it is on a selective basis: laws against murder, but not necessarily capital punishment for murder, laws against adultery, but not the death penalty for it; laws against theft, but no laws for restitution; and so on. Such a principle of selective obedience is not obedience to God but rather obedience to our own selective and superior reason and conscience. Instead of a sovereign God, we have a sovereign man. Scripture is reinterpreted to remove its offense, while still used to substantiate man's claims to be the humble and obedient servant of God.

If God is indeed our Lord, and maker of heaven and earth, then He can speak only infallibly about nature and history. His word is then a binding law, and the operating premise of man in every sphere of life and thought. Our eschatology will then reflect His lordship. An infallible word which deals, as the Bible plainly does, with history and nature implies the manifest duty of man to exercise dominion in those spheres in the name of God.

*The Bible is a command word.* We are regularly told by antinomians that God, for example, does not require us to tithe any longer; rather, He supposedly wants our free-will gifts only. Of course, any decision to tithe involves man's will also, and his free exercise thereof, but the tithe makes clear, as the whole law does, what the will of God is, and what our duty is. We can obey or disobey, but to set the terms of obedience, and the nature of the obedience, by our will is to deny God's sovereignty and His sovereign claims over us.

Because the Bible is a command word, it is not designed nor does it speak to satisfy our curiosity, but rather to declare God's purpose and law, and to command our faith in and obedience thereto. The command word of a sovereign God can only be an infallible word, and a law word. The Bible does not seek a rational man's assent, because this rational man is a myth. It speaks to a fallen and depraved man whose need is the word of life, and the way of life, Jesus Christ, and the law of that life and person.

A command word is an impossibility for the *inspiratio fundamentalis* doctrine: its god cannot speak such a word. To say then that we believe one aspect of Scripture — its teachings concerning faith and morals — but not another — its teachings concerning history and science

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<sup>41</sup> Cornelius Van Til: *An Introduction to Theology*. Vol. II. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1947). pp. 147f.

— is to deceive ourselves and to lie to God. By setting ourselves up as judges over what is true and untrue in His word, and by ruling Him out of nature and history in any sovereign sense, we deny that He has *any* infallible word for man in any sense. Man lives in nature and history; he acts in nature and history. If man is more active in nature and history than God is, then it is the word of man which rules us, quite logically. Such a God can only tell us to *leave* the world, not how to exercise dominion over it. The word of man then becomes the command word for history and nature.

## 7. Infallible Man

Salvation is a concern common to all political theorists and activists, because the world as it exists is obviously not right. Political theories are thus presented as plans of salvation, although they are not labelled as such. Basic to all non-Christian political thought since Plato is the attempt to save man by political efforts on the part of man through the state. God and the supernatural are ruled out as inadmissible: what saves man must come from man.

This means statist power. Since an authoritative, binding, and saving word from God is ruled out, it means an authoritative word from man. That word must be the Right Word, the binding word. Rousseau raised this question at the beginning of *The Social Contract*:

However strong a man, he is never strong enough to remain master always, unless he transform his Might into Right, and Obedience into Duty. Hence we have come to speak of the Right of the Strongest, a right which, seemingly assumed in irony, has, in fact, become established in principle. But the meaning of the phrase has never been adequately explained. Strength is a physical attribute, and I fail to see how any moral sanction can attach to its effects. To yield to the strong is an act of necessity, not of will. At most it is the result of a dictate of prudence. How, then, can it become a duty?<sup>42</sup>

Man needs a standard, a criterion for Right, Duty, and Justice. What the sovereign God of Scripture had once provided needed now to be succeeded for Rousseau by a new sovereign with a new word. This new sovereign was for Rousseau “the body politic,” or the state, i.e., the state as the totality of its people. It is the people who are sovereign, but the people in social contract, organizing a state. By definition this sovereign power is the inerrant voice of the people:

Now, the Sovereign People, having no existence outside that of the individuals who compose it, has, and can have, no interest at variance with theirs. Consequently, the sovereign power need give no guarantee to its subjects, since it is impossible that the body should wish to injure all its members, nor, as we shall see later, can it injure any single individual. The Sovereign, by merely existing, is always what it should be. But the same does not hold true of the relation of subject to sovereign. In spite of common interest, there can be no guarantee that the subject will observe his duty to the sovereign unless means are found to ensure his loyalty.<sup>43</sup>

Here we have the exaltation of the state into the truly Grand Inquisitor of all history: the state is infallible, but the people are not, and means must be found to “ensure the loyalty of the people.”

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<sup>42</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau: “The Social Contract,” Book I, Chapter III, “Of the Right of the Strong,” in Sir Ernest Barker, editor: *Social Contract, Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau*. (London. England: Oxford University Press, (1947) 1958). p. 244.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, “Of the Sovereign.” Bk. I, Chap. VII, p. 260.

In Rousseau's words, "it may be necessary to compel a man to be free." Freedom in this sense is the freedom of the "political machine" to fulfil its goals.<sup>44</sup> Rousseau stresses this again and again: the state incorporates and incarnates the general will, which is infallible; the individual will cannot set itself against the general will. "The general will is always right and ever tends to the public advantage."<sup>45</sup>

There can be no freedom for anyone or any institution from this omnipotent, indestructible, inerrant, and infallible general will. The church must emphatically be brought into submission to it. Like Hobbes, Rousseau demanded that "all should be brought into a single political whole, without which no State and no Government can ever be firmly established."<sup>46</sup>

Rousseau's state is a corporate and mystical body. It is a merger of the Christian ideas of the church and of God to constitute a divine-human order on earth. The political order was converted by Rousseau into man's new God, Savior, and church. Infallibility was thus transferred from God and His word to the general will and its political order.

Rousseau's legislator is thus one who "must, in every way, be an extraordinary figure in the State. He is so by reason of his genius, and no less so by that of his office. He is neither magistrate nor sovereign. His function is to constitute the State."<sup>47</sup> This great man who lays down the foundations for the democratic state which incarnates the general will is a man-god who has "no contact with our nature" and is something of a god, or, if more than one, gods. The experts who thus create this new social order are, like Plato's law-giver and Machiavelli's founder prince, more than ordinary human beings:

In order to discover what social regulations are best suited to nations, there is needed a superior intelligence which can survey all the passions of mankind, though itself exposed to none: an intelligence having no contact with our nature, yet knowing it to the full: an intelligence, the well-being of which is independent of our own, yet willing to be concerned with it: which, finally, viewing the long perspectives of time, and preparing for itself a day of glory as yet far distant, will labor in one century to reap its reward in another. In short, only Gods can give laws to men.<sup>48</sup>

Here we see the genesis of the new gods, the intellectuals and the scientific socialist experts. We cannot understand the arrogance of the intellectuals and the scientific experts unless we realize that modern political thought has called them into being as the new gods of creation.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, "Whether the General Will Can Err," Bk. II, Chap. III, p. 274.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, Chap. VIII, p. 429.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. III, Chap. VIII, p. 292.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 290f.

Rousseau required “a purely civil profession of faith,” i.e., faith in the state as lord rather than in the God of Scripture. “Any man who, after acknowledging these articles of faith, proceeds to act as though he did not believe them, is deserving of the death penalty.”<sup>49</sup> The state is the order of salvation. Hence, “anyone who dares to say ‘Outside the Church there can be no salvation,’ should be banished from the State.”<sup>50</sup>

Rousseau’s ideas, despite all their contradiction, met with a ready response because man’s faith was now in man as incarnated in the state. Condorcet saw the future as a happy road of progress, because the West, meaning the humanistic thinkers of the West, had discovered “simple truths and infallible methods.”<sup>51</sup>

John Stuart Mill, in *On Liberty*, presented the individual as sovereign, over himself and over his own mind at least. Herbert Spencer held that every man has the freedom to do all that he wills, provided that he did not infringe on the same freedom of any other man.

Infallibility in all this was not denied. It was transferred from God and His word to Nature and the laws of nature, and then to the state or to individual man. Spencer’s future society is a millennial picture, not unlike Marx’s perfect communism. The new man lives then in a new estate made possible by the new freedom of the true state. For Spencer, the new infallibility was in the evolutionary process.

The new infallibility has had its prophets. Claude Henri de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte each saw himself as the inspired prophet of a new age for mankind. Saint-Simon wrote of “the voice of God” issuing “through his mouth,” and of himself as the messiah of the new creed.<sup>52</sup> Comte saw himself as both the new prophet and pope of the post-Christian era. More than that, he saw himself as being identical with the Great Being or God, i.e., Humanity and its general will. Rousseau’s legislators were asserting their presence! Mazzini saw himself also as mankind’s prophet-savior, although he also identified the messiah with the whole people of the nation which moved into the new age. Hegel asserted the infallible nature of the new state and its absolute power. Proudhon, affirming man’s absolute liberty, declared that man must remake himself by defeating and killing the God of Scripture. Only then could man realize himself.

In more recent years, the plain-speaking of these earlier humanists is gone, but the presumption and faith still remain. Skinner is no less Rousseau’s godman than Comte, and the same is true of countless other scientists and intellectuals.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, Chap. VIII, pp. 437f.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 439.

<sup>51</sup> Dante Germino: *Modern Western Political Thought: Machiavelli to Marx*. (Chicago, IL: Rand, McNally, 1972). p. 164.

<sup>52</sup> Frank E. Manuel: *The Prophets of Paris*. (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, (1962) 1965). p. 142.

In brief, infallibility is *not* a doctrine limited to theological studies. It is a fact of contemporary life, with the new gods claiming for themselves that power which properly belongs only to God.

Therefore, any discussion of infallibility which confines itself to a discussion of what theologians have said is blind to the problems of our time. The new infallibility doctrine confronts us in art, politics, and the sciences. Failure to challenge these rivals of God and enemies of His word and kingdom is faithlessness and incompetence. To sit idly by while these new doctrines of infallibility parade their pretensions and to assume that a Sunday morning assertion concerning Scripture suffices is cowardice and desertion.

## 8. The Infallible Act and Word

At the very heart of the doctrine of infallibility is the aseity or self-being of God. God's every word and act is infallible, not because it meets some standard of accuracy and truth and passes that test, but because God's word is the ultimate word, and there is nothing beyond God whereby we can judge, test, or prove God's word. God is emphatic: "I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45: 14, 18, 21, 22). Not only are all things made by Him (Gen. 1:1, John 1:3), but all things can be truly understood and tested only in terms of His word.

There is nothing outside of God to determine God or to condition or affect any word or act of God. Whatever God is, does, or says is ultimate, absolute, and infallible, because He is God, "and there is none else." God is not governed, predestined, nor is He influenced, by anything outside of Himself.

Every effort therefore to *prove* infallibility implies another standard, and it undercuts the infallibility of God and His word. Our purpose thus is not to prove infallibility but rather to strip men of the evasions which obscure the doctrine. It is an inescapable doctrine. Man denies it to God only to assert it for himself. The pretensions of man's "doubts" must thus be exposed, and its claims confounded.

God's word, being an uninfluenced and self-determined, or God-determined, word is the only pure word, the only word which is beyond circumstances. Our words are circumstantial, motivated by the needs of the circumstance or situation, but God's creative word creates history and all circumstance and also His written word then governs all history and circumstances.

When man therefore denies God, man seeks to achieve his own infallible word and act, the gratuitous words and act which are beyond circumstances. This means an unmotivated word and act. This means thus living beyond causality, i.e., escaping from the matrix of creation into a situation of self-transcendence. Hence the proliferation of senseless, causeless crimes, of what one psychiatrist called "rebels without a cause."

Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), called by Shattuck "the impresario of the avant-garde," was a champion of the gratuitous act, "l'acte gratuit," as the means to human freedom. Uncaused wickedness was for him (as for the Marquis de Sade and others) a liberation, because uncaused wickedness manifests a purely disinterested act, unmotivated evil. Because such an act is performed only to satisfy a totally personal whim, it becomes a free, uncaused, and therefore divine, act. In that act the perpetrator becomes a god. Because the act has no external reference, and no relationship to the situation, to gain or loss, to good or evil, it is ostensibly a pure act, a free act, or an infallible act or word.

Apollinaire thus found the opportunity to set forth this faith in pornography. In *Onze mille verges*, the hero is a presentation of this liberation by pure evil. (God being good, the anti-god finds his "deity" in pure evil.) His hero, Mony, after a life of frightful evil, is sentenced to death. He then rapes savagely a twelve-year-old girl who decides to yield her virginity to the condemned man. Following this act, Mony strangled the little girl, after gouging out her eyes,

while she screamed hideously. Already under death sentence, he had nothing to fear, and his act was thus pure evil, uncaused evil.<sup>53</sup>

In terms of this, the rise of “senseless” crimes becomes more understandable. The “pure” or uncaused act of evil is a declaration of independence from God and man. It is a denial of the limitations of creatureliness and an affirmation of autonomy. Such an act of pure evil becomes a necessary act whenever a man seeks to demonstrate his independence from God and man: it is his “necessary” escape from the act conditioned by God’s requirements and man’s demands and pressures. The nemesis of this pure act of evil is its necessity: God’s every word and act are totally and absolutely self-caused; God never needs to prove Himself. The man whose passion it is to become god must work to effect his pure act of evil, and it can only be a sporadic act. The rest of his life is governed by creaturely necessities which finally overwhelm him: he must eat, sleep, live in a world of supplies provided by others, and, finally, he dies. Thus, his “pure” act of evil is a necessary and occasional act, and it bears the stamp, because of its necessity and its nature of rebellion against God, as anything but a pure and free act.

However, the man whose passion it is to become god tries only the harder to become capable of the pure act and the pure word. The rise of pornography is basic to this quest. Because God declares that His word is the good and the holy word, the anti-god muse pronounce the evil and the profane word. Modern pornography, beginning with the Marquis de Sade, and coming into its own after World War II, is a religious concern. It is man’s attempt to declare a pure word describing a pure act.

In pornography we have, *first*, a radical concern for lawlessness. The appeal of pornography is its far-out violation of moral law. The more intense the separation from God’s law, the more successful is the pornography in this new perspective. The greater the distance from the moral and the decent act, the greater the supposed freedom, and hence the actual pleasure. *Second*, in pornography there is no concern for other people. The interest is in self-gratification and self-expression. Thus, just as the radical violation of God’s law proclaims a supposed independence from God’s law, so the radical contempt for the sexual partners indicates a supposed independence from other people. The sexual partner thus cannot be loved: the partner is used and hated.

Dr. Robert Stroller, a professor at the U.C.L.A. School of Medicine, has written in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* that, except for a few rare individuals, most human sexuality is generated by hostility. People are least loving when “making love.”<sup>54</sup> This is clearly true of modern existential man. He cannot love another person, because autonomy and the passion to be god require an independence from love and the dependence love creates. Hence, what modern man calls love is really sexual exploitation.

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<sup>53</sup> Roger Shattuck: *The Banquet Years, The Arts in France, 1885-1918*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books (1955) 1961). pp. 304f.

<sup>54</sup> “Is Sex Neurotic?” in *Time*, January 3, 1977, vol. 109, no. 1.

But even sexual exploitation establishes the fact that the exploited is *needed*. Hence ultimate sex becomes solitary sex — masturbation. A socialist magazine thus presents masturbation as the basic aspect of women’s liberation. Classes in how to masturbate are held for women, with a textbook on the subject, and the entire class masturbates as directed. We are told that “Masturbation is one of the few acts going that can truly stand alone, and it requires only a quorum of one.”<sup>55</sup> E. Shorter has shown that masturbation is in the main a modern phenomenon.<sup>56</sup> It is a product of the world of Descartes, the world in which man is ostensibly autonomous and is his own universe. In such a world, solitary sex, dependent not on a partner but the individual’s imagination and body alone, becomes ultimate sex. Pornography is in essence masturbatory literature; when it leads to any sexual act involving others, it is still a totally self-centered act.

*Third*, pornography is concerned with exploratory sex, with discovering the potentialities for still more lawless forms of sexuality, and it derives its pleasure from such “discoveries” and acts. The anti-god must have unlimited potentiality, and hence no boundaries can be placed on the form that the sexual act exploits. The pages of such publications as *Penthouse* report continually on the ostensible ecstasies of new devices, new forms of lawlessness and perversion, and new reaches of the pornographic imagination in sex.

Many of these letters and accounts are to be taken as fiction, although by no means all of them. In any case, the intent is the same. By formulating and expressing their evil imagination, they are finding an ostensible freedom in the pure word, the lawless, the uncaused word. More and more, the forms of devised pornographic evil depart from anything which can be called a physical sexual urge. This adds to their pleasure. They become thereby a purer evil and an uncaused act, the gratuitous and pure word expressed by letter or book. Such writings, as examples of the pure word, become like a Bible to many millions, who read them eagerly in order to gain stimulus to soar into their own realm of the pure word, if only in imagination, or the pure act in performance.

Profane language meets a like purpose. Profanity is less and less what it once was, an outburst of anger or frustration. Such profanity is caused by an event and is not free. Modern profanity and obscenity are increasingly uncaused and gratuitous. For many people, the more causeless and outrageous the situation, the better the obscenity. Thus one young man, supposedly an artist but in reality a social parasite, walked up to a middle-aged woman coming out of church, whom he had never seen before, and told her that what she needed for salvation was liberation. You can be free, he told her, if you copulate with me on the grass, or else open up my fly here and now and suck me. If not, you will be a slave to your mythical God and to middle class hang-ups, he added. He defended his words on the grounds that he was promoting true religion — freedom for man — and took off before the police were called; there was nothing “dirty” about his words, he insisted, and it was her reaction which was “dirty”: his was the pure and liberating word.

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<sup>55</sup> Mopsy Strange Kennedy, “The Sexual Revolution Just Keeps on Coming,” in *Mother Jones*, December 1976, vol. I, no. 9, p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> Edward Shorter: *The Making of the Modern Family*. (New York, N.Y.: Basic Books, 1975). pp. 76,98, 102, 114-116,251.

Enough has been said to indicate that man's attempts at infallibility have social consequences. The provincialism of the church, whereby it regards the doctrine of infallibility as something having reference only to the Bible, is a deadly one. It is a tacit denial of the sovereignty of God. Because God is sovereign, there is nothing in all creation which can be understood in anything other than theological terms. All reality is inescapably a theological fact. There is no valid interpretation for anything except in terms of God and His infallible word. Every non-Christian category of thought is thus either a falsification or misapplication of God's word, or an attempt to use God's meaning while denying God, and it is thus an anti-word. Because every unbeliever is an antichrist, so ultimately every word of the unbeliever becomes an anti-word, a word against God and His meaning, which is the only meaning. It becomes a word in defiance of God, a word declared to establish man as his own god. It is this that finds expression in the ideas of the pure act and the pure word of the anti-Christian man.

## 9. The Infallible Movement

One of the more interesting statements by Sartre is his declaration that for existentialism “all human activities are equivalent.” Because there can be, for existentialism, no valid outside determination of man, and man must be freed from all influences of religion, society, family, and school, from past and future in order to have full freedom and sovereignty in the present moment, all things are equal, because all things are equally meaningless. For existentialism, Sartre holds, “it amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations.” The only valid goal is to be truly free from all outside determination and to be fully self-conscious as an autonomous being. In terms of this goal, it is likely that “it will be the quietism of the solitary drunkard which will take precedence over the vain agitation of the leaders of nations.”<sup>57</sup> The leader of nations will be influenced by people and events; the drunkard will be the better existentialist, because he will be influenced only by his own desire to drink.

The existential moment is the present as lived by man when he divorces himself from the past, from men and society, and from all considerations of God and good and evil. Such a man, having “recognized” his freedom, will be beyond good and evil ostensibly. He will live in the existential moment beyond judgment, because the existential moment is always infallible.

What existential man wills and does is of necessity infallible, because no legitimate standard is held to exist which can judge man and declare any variations from his actions to be mandatory. The necessary act and the infallible act is what existential man does. Beyond him, there is by definition nothing. Existential man says in effect, I am the man-god, and beside me there is none else.

The same applies to every thought and word of existential man: what existential man thinks and says is infallible because there is no standard, law, or God for him to rule that anything he thinks and says is not inerrant. The self-expression of existentialist man is thus an infallible expression. Infallible man speaks an infallible word which is also for him the only word in the universe.

The moment is always infallible, and because existential man refuses to bow down to God, time, history, and society, he lives without reference to the past and future in an eternal now. God’s eternity is beyond time; existential man’s “eternity” is the moment, the eternal now.

Guillaume Apollinaire, barely twenty, wrote portions of a novel in which he had a character declare, concerning the coming new man:

On my arrival on earth I found humanity on its last legs, devoted to fetishes, bigoted, barely capable of distinguishing good from evil — and I shall leave it intelligent, enlightened, regenerated, knowing there is neither good nor evil nor God nor devil nor spirits nor matter in distinct separateness.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness*. (New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1956). p. 627.

<sup>58</sup> Roger Shattuck: *The Banquet Years*, p. 253.

This emphasis on the ultimacy of the moment has led to what Kenneth Keniston has called the cult of the present. In this faith, the here and now is everything. Experience divorced from eternal standards of judgment, activity and adventure for their own sake, and a heedlessness about the future mark this cult of the present. There is a search for total meaning in the present, but this total meaning eludes existential man. Drugs are very important to existential man, because drugs provide the Nirvana of the moment. Attempts to suppress the drug traffic are failing, because narcotics represent too basic a need for moderns. They provide an escape from God and society, from reality, from past and future and from time itself for existential man. Narcotics provide the illusion of an eternal now and feed the sense of infallibility, the sense of being a god.

This quest, in the true spirit of existentialism, is both a search for meaning and “the desire for self-expression.” However, as Keniston notes, “this is rarely a desire to remedy wrongs or to reform society.”<sup>59</sup> Sartre is not true to his existentialism in his social concern: he is closer to the leader of nations than to the drunkard.

This search for the infallible moment by existential man is a failure. The denial of God’s world of meaning means, not a new meaning, but no meaning.

Yet characteristically a philosophy of absolute freedom, based on a denial of any necessary relationship with the past, is usually a philosophy of the absurd; the signs of this freedom are not joy and triumph, but nausea and dread; and its possessors are not the creators but the Strangers and Outsiders of the universe. Few men, young or old, ordinary or extraordinary, can live contentedly, much less joyously, without some relationship to time other than total freedom.<sup>60</sup>

No man is able to make or be his own universe. The existentialist’s infallible moment thus proves to be a step into hell. The goal of existentialist man is “to have no other law but mine.” This means rejecting God, man, and nature, because nature, as God’s creation, has “a thousand beaten paths” all leading up to God.<sup>61</sup>

The infallible moment is thus an illusion, but it is an illusion which is central to the life of modern man. It is a concept which has had widespread influence among supposed Christians. It is thus necessary to cut the ground out from under rival doctrines of infallibility in order to leave fallen men — both those outside the church and those within — without excuse.

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<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Keniston: *The Uncommitted, Alienated Youth in American Society*. (New York. N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, (1960) 1965). pp. 182f.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>61</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre: *No Exit, and Three Other Plays*. (New York, N.Y.: Knopf Vantage Books, (1946) 1955). p. 122. These lines are from the play, *The Flies*.

Moreover, we should remember that the charismatic movement, with its emphasis on “revelations” and experience, has in many cases deep inner links with existentialism. The periodic rise of charismatic movements in history is closely linked with the prevalence of the cult of the present.

## 10. Who Speaks the Word?

As we have seen, the doctrine of infallibility is not restricted to the Bible. Man is in all his ways and in all his being the creature of God. Every category of his life and thought is determined and conditioned by that fact. Man is therefore God's covenant-keeping man, or, in a revolt, is a pretended god who seeks to reproduce God's being and life in his own person. Man will therefore in his rebellion seek to establish his independent word as the sufficient word. His autonomous word is said to be beyond good and evil, because his word establishes what is good and evil for himself, and for the moment only. Not even the word of existential man can bind him.

In analyzing the question of the infallible word, we must recognize that, in essence, there are three possible answers to the basic question of the ultimate and necessary word. How do we know, and what is the source of authority? Who speaks the binding and infallible word, in brief? We can answer, *first*, that man alone speaks the word; *second*, that God and man are both capable of speaking the creative and ultimate word; or *third*, that God alone speaks creatively, authoritatively, and infallibly.

*The first* view holds that man alone speaks the infallible word. There is said to be no God, or, if God exists, He is a God who remains outside of man's purview. He is not God over man and universe and is an outsider to it. Man thus has no standard beyond himself. For an existentialist such as Sartre, God is by definition no problem to his philosophy, but other people are. How can men, each seeking to be a god, tolerate one another? In a world of rival gods, conflict is inescapable. Sartre offers "inter-subjectivity" as the answer, but this possibility is not developed into anything other than a hope.

Man as god, speaking the infallible word, cannot speak the word of knowledge concerning creation. Since he has no authoritative standard other than himself, he must have an exhaustive knowledge of all reality before he has any knowledge at all. Because he has denied that reality has any God-given law and order in and over it, he must examine that reality totally before he can pronounce a word of knowledge concerning it. As a result, no knowledge is possible.

Nietzsche, in declaring his independence from God, was forced thereby to deny all knowledge, and the idea of truth. In the end Nietzsche annihilated everything, including himself. Man became an island in a shoreless sea, hearing no voice but his own and committed to suicide. Since life itself could not be a criterion for Nietzsche, he had to reject the life force itself finally as an alien standard and good. Suicide was thus his ultimate counsel.

To deny God is ultimately to deny man, life, knowledge, and everything else. God is the only creator and sustainer of all things: when He is denied, everything is denied. The result is a world without meaning, only total negation.

Few people have realized this more clearly than Karl Barth. As a thoroughly modern man, he was in principle opposed to the sovereign God of Scripture, who alone speaks authoritatively and creatively, and whose every word is therefore an infallible and inerrant word. Barth belonged to the world of Descartes; for him the God of Scripture was anathema. On the other hand, Barth

was horrified by the abyss opened up by Nietzsche, or, more accurately, by Feuerbach and the whole tradition of modern thought. When man alone speaks, then man is doomed. The world of suicide opens up, and the apocalypse of modern man in a worldwide conflict. Barth wanted neither God alone nor man alone, neither the word of God nor the word of man. Barth's hope was for something in between, something which would give man his Cartesian freedom and autonomy to speak the authoritative word in the name of God. God would thus provide the insurance policy to undergird man's word. For Barth, therefore, God is very important, not in Himself, but as a foundation for man's freedom. God is for Barth a limiting concept, not the sovereign and omnipotent being.

The result was the *second* possible answer, i.e., that God and man are both creative, and both speak creatively in Scripture. The word of God is here in the Bible, but it is a hidden, subjective word, appearing only in the divine-human encounter. It is not God in Himself that interests Barth; if such a God exists, He is unknowable. He is not a matter for belief or unbelief. He is not our concern. Only a relational concept of God exists in Barth, a God whose function it is to underwrite man. The liberal theologian Wingren is right: "In Barth's theology man is the obvious center. The question about man's knowledge is the axis around which the whole subject matter moves." He adds that this is very plainly manifested in what Barth has to say about God's law.<sup>62</sup>

Barth's concern was not salvation: he was too much a universalist for that. His concern was with saving the possibility of knowledge. His man is modern man, man in epistemological crisis, not Biblical man. Barth's man is without a Biblical doctrine of sin; rather, he is modern man, who has a problem establishing how he can know, and who has a desire for knowledge without responsibility.

The Bible for Barth is simply a means whereby man can establish his own word in the name of God; it is not the infallible word of the God whose law is binding upon man. It is man's word for Barth which must be spoken and must be heard. But, as Wingren notes,

Man without means of contact with God is not the kind of man described in the biblical writings. This man without means of contact with God is the modern, atheistic man for whom the question of knowledge is the one essential question whenever the conception of God is discussed.<sup>63</sup>

For Barth, sin is the impossible possibility, a notion which makes formal use of the doctrine of sin but preserves man in his autonomy and freedom. Man and God have one being for Barth. Man's fall thus is not from something ordained by the absolute God, but from himself. Salvation is not new life but new knowledge, and it is in essence a rise in the scale of being. Barth's language is one of encounter and correspondence, not atonement and salvation.

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<sup>62</sup> Gustaf Wingren: *Theology in Conflict, Nygren, Barth, Bultmann*. (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1958). pp. 34f.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

Rudolf Bultmann tried also to preserve man from the abyss of self-deification. His answer was to de-mythologize Scripture to gain the true word. He began by declaring that the scientific worldview must be strictly accepted. Anything which purports to come from the eternal realm is strictly mythological. By de-mythologizing Scripture, we can then recognize that realized eschatology is its true message. Man's religious quest must not be directed to a fixed point outside himself but to himself and his own awareness and certainty. As Wingren comments,

In regard to the concept of guilt we have established that a peculiar "egocentricity" dominates Bultmann's thinking on this point. This is due to the influence of Heidegger. Guilt is lack of self-realization, just as salvation is self-realization. Human life (*Dasein*) has fallen, but it has fallen exclusively from itself. When man searches and chooses among the possibilities which meet him in the hour of decision, he is seeking his own existence.<sup>64</sup>

Where does God come into the picture for Bultmann? The modern worldview of science prevails; the supernatural and the beyond are ruled out, and man is autonomous, his only hope being himself. Having done this, Bultmann appeals to security in "the unseen beyond, in God."<sup>65</sup> But this is the very God he has ruled out! Bultmann then turns on science and technology as the true demons who give man a false sense of security, when man's true state should be no security whatsoever. Like Tillich, he affirms as the Protestant Principle a perpetual insecurity, i.e., a perpetual anxiety neurosis, and a St. Vitus' Dance in no man's land.<sup>66</sup>

Bultmann does not want the God of Scripture nor His infallible world. He "de-mythologizes" it in order to strip God of all authority. It is man's word which he upholds, but, like Barth, he sees suicide inherent in man's word, so he then de-mythologizes man. How do we then have knowledge? Man's word is undermined to a degree, and God's word radically so. Our knowledge, which, as for Barth, is our justification, comes by de-mythologizing! As Bultmann wrote:

Indeed, de-mythologizing is a task parallel to that performed by Paul and Luther in their doctrine of justification by faith alone without the works of the law. More precisely, de-mythologizing is the radical application of the doctrine of justification by faith to the sphere of knowledge and thought. Like the doctrine of justification, demythologizing destroys every longing for security. There is no difference between security based on good works and security built on objectifying knowledge. The man who desires to believe in God must know that he has nothing at his own disposal on which to build this faith, that he is, so to

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131f.

<sup>65</sup> Rudolf Bultmann: *Jesus Christ and Mythology*. (New York, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). p. 40.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 40, 42, 65.

... speak, in a vacuum. He who abandons every form of security shall find the true security.<sup>67</sup>

Biblical man, who is not in Bultmann's vacuum, believes that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). God, as the only security, is never abandoned by Biblical man. But Bultmann's man finds his security in himself: God and "the unseen beyond" provide him with an insurance policy and prevent man from collapsing into meaninglessness, or so Bultmann hopes. His God and man are really one: "The question of God and the question of myself are identical."<sup>68</sup> This is not pantheism: Bultmann's God is not real enough for that; Bultmann's God is a limiting concept.

Barth and Bultmann do not rescue knowledge; they do not give us an authoritative and infallible word. Rather, in their views God is dissolved, and man is left in a void. All views which deny the sovereign God lead to what Cornelius Van Til has so aptly described as an "integration into the void."

The *third* possible view is that only God speaks authoritatively and creatively, whereas man speaks analogically. Man thinks God's thoughts after him. God determines man, eternity, time. Man's role is to do God's will, to understand all things in terms of the word of God. It does not destroy history to make eternity determinative (as Reinhold Niebuhr claimed), any more than our inability to walk up the side of a wall destroys our ability to walk. Man is not God, he is God's vicegerent, called to obey God and to work out the implications of the image of God in that obedience.

Van Til has spoken of the Cainitic wish that there be no God. Instead of yielding to the Cainitic wish for the death of God, we work on the premise of the absolute God in His inscriptured word. The Cainitic wish seeks to eliminate God, and instead it eliminates meaning and man. Man dissolves himself into the void of meaninglessness whenever he seeks to dissolve God.

Those whose theology is informed by the second approach do not preach a Biblical doctrine of salvation. They preach psychology or self-salvation. Those who hold to the sovereign and triune God of Scripture have the sure and infallible word of God to proclaim. It is the word upon which all words must be founded.

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

## 11. The Word of Dominion

Van Til has described very clearly the basic issue and area of conflict between Biblical and modern thought:

That issue may be stated simply and comprehensively by saying that in the Christian view of things it is the self-contained God who is the final point of reference while in the case of the modern view it is the would be self-contained man who is the final point of reference in all interpretation.

For the Christian, facts are what they are, in the last analysis, by virtue of the place they take in the plan of God.<sup>69</sup>

Man's thinking, however abstract, has a personal frame of reference. Thus, whatever conclusions man may come to with respect to the cosmos and life, it is one by which a person is the ultimate point of reference. Van Til, has shown us plainly the implications of this:

In the last analysis every theology or philosophy is personalistic. Everything "impersonal" must be brought into relationship with an ultimate personal point of reference. Orthodoxy takes the self-contained ontological trinity to be this point of reference. The only alternative to this is to make man himself the final point of reference.<sup>70</sup>

In order to maintain himself as the ultimate point of reference, fallen man must deny the word of God. For God to speak an infallible word means that God is the ultimate point of reference and the ultimate Person and authority. For man to have the freedom to be that authority and point of reference means that of necessity the infallible word of God must be either openly denied or its authority nullified by reinterpretation. The word of dominion must be preserved for man.

Van Til has described the marks of this fallen man, the covenant-breaker and champion of man's word as against God's word. *First*, this would-be autonomous man "thinks of himself as the ultimate judge of what can or cannot be." As he interprets facts or events, he allows no other word to interpret, govern, or predict history. *Second*, this lawless man denies that God, if He exists, can control and determine any and all phenomena. There can be no word of authority, dominion or predestination from God. *Third*, it is held that "man's thought is, in the final analysis, absolutely original." If there is any determination or interpretation in history, it is by man. *Fourth*,

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<sup>69</sup> Cornelius Van Til, "Introduction," in Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield: *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948). p. 18."

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

The facts of man's environment are not created or controlled by the providence of God. They are *brute* facts, uninterpreted and ultimately irrational. The universe is a *Chance* controlled universe. It is a wholly open universe. Yet, at the same time, it is a closed universe. It is so in this sense: it cannot be what Christ says it is, namely, created, governed, and redeemed by him. In this one respect the cosmos is closed — there can be no such God as the Bible reveals. This is the universal negative of the open-minded men of philosophy and science.<sup>71</sup>

Fallen man strips God from the universe and denudes it of law and meaning in order to be free to play god therein, and to issue his own law and meaning. Man can speak only the word of dominion in an empty universe, a cosmos awaiting man's spirit to move over it and to provide it with form and meaning. Man therefore wills that the cosmos be a chaos so that its order will become the product of his own life-breathing word. Man does not approach reality in any spirit of neutrality: he approaches it either as God's covenant-keeping man or as a covenant-breaking man whose will it is to be his own god. There is thus inescapable conflict as to who speaks the word of dominion, the infallible word which is the ultimate point of reference. Van Til has written:

In saving us *from* sin, Christ saves us *unto* his service. Through the salvation that is ours in Christ by the Spirit, we take up anew the cultural mandate that was given man at the onset of history. Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we want now to do all to the glory of God...

The cultural mandate is to be fulfilled in our handling of the facts or events of our environment. Man must subdue, to the service of Christ, the earth and all that is therein. As the Christian constantly does so, he is constantly conscious of the fact that he is working on God's estate. He is not himself the owner of anything, least of all himself. He is the bondservant of God through Christ. Therein lies his freedom. Those who still think of themselves as owners of themselves and think of the world as a grab-bag cannot properly evaluate the situation as it really is. Unbeknown to them, they too are working on God's estate.<sup>72</sup>

As usual, Van Til puts his finger clearly on the basic point. Man was created for God's service, to be His priest, prophet, and king and to make of this earth God's developed and glorious kingdom. This calling is basic to man's nature. Fallen man does not abandon this calling. Instead, he seeks to convert it to his own perverse goal, to establish the kingdom of Man with man as god and as the ultimate point of reference. The beginning of that revolt is the question, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). The authoritative and infallible word, the word of dominion, the tempter held, is not from God but from the creature. The task of exercising dominion and subduing the earth will be made easier, he held, if man begins by denying God's word and asserting his own word as the word of knowledge and the word of dominion. By reserving the

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<sup>71</sup> Cornelius Van Til: *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture*. DenDulk Foundation. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1967). p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. If.

tree of knowledge to Himself, God reserved dominion to Himself. God declared thereby that the interpretation of facts and the moral character of all things was determined by His word. God's word is the word of dominion because His is the creative word. Having made all things, He has established the character, meaning, and purpose of all things. Good and evil are determined by His being and purpose, so that the ultimate point of reference in all things is God and His word, the binding word and the word of dominion.

The tempter's belief was and is that the creature, in order to fulfil his calling to dominion, must exercise it independently, i.e., that the image of God in man requires man to be god. Man must therefore become his own source of the word of dominion; man must declare that things are good and evil insofar as they serve or do not serve man's purpose and glory. Man must begin the construction of his true kingdom, the kingdom of Man, by declaring that he himself is the tree of knowledge, the source of the word of dominion. It is not the triune God out of whom the river of life proceeds, and who is the source of the tree of life (Rev. 22:1-2), but man himself.

Note that Van Til points out, "In saving us *from* sin, Christ saves us *unto* his service." Arminian salvation serves fallen man; it "frees" him supposedly from the consequences of the fall to pursue his own independent way in building the kingdom of Man. But salvation is not merely fire insurance, and preaching which stresses heaven and hell as motives for salvation is clearly humanistic and serves the interests of fallen man. It is worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). The call to salvation is a word of command from the sovereign God to cease from our self-service and self-worship and to serve and worship Him. It is the word of dominion which rescues us from the evil and anarchy of the kingdom of Man to the service of the kingdom of God.

Thus, wherever this creation mandate (or cultural mandate) is ignored in preaching and in the plan of salvation, it should not surprise us that the infallible word is subtly replaced or altered into the word of man. Fire insurance establishes no responsibility.

As a result, while Harold Lindsell's very able and conscientious defense of the infallible word is to be commended, the history he recounts should not surprise us.<sup>73</sup> Men whose idea of salvation is a self-serving one will soon have only a self-serving word. They can tolerate no other word.

This is exactly what we see. If the world is not to be viewed as God's kingdom, God has no dominion word and law for it; then man's dominion word is the answer. If there is no dominion word of sovereign grace in salvation, then there is no dominion word for any realm.

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<sup>73</sup> See Harold Lindsell: *The Battle for the Bible*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976).

## 12. The Word of Flux

The infallible word for humanism cannot be an unchanging word; it is an essential aspect of the new faith that the infallible word must be a changing word, the word of flux.

This faith was very early formulated in the United States by Octavius Brooks Frothingham (1822-1895), a champion of the Religion of Humanity. Frothingham declared,

The interior spirit of any age is the spirit of God; and no faith can be living that has that spirit against it; no Church can be strong except in that alliance. The life of the time appoints the creed of the time and modifies the establishment of the time.<sup>74</sup>

Frothingham held that, *first*, the true god is humanity, and his spirit is “the interior spirit of any age.” This means that, like Rousseau’s general will, the spirit of the age is the voice of god, *vox populi, vox dei*. For Frothingham, humanity is in essence one and “has but one life.” This one life is “the common pulse” of any age, and “to be alienated from humanity, to have no share in the common vitality is death.”<sup>75</sup> *Second*, this common pulse is the infallible will, voice, and word for that age. Thus, for any man, church, or state to disregard that living, infallible word is death. *Third*, this infallible word is exclusively a contemporary word, infallible for the present, and no more. Every new moment creates its own “creed of the time” and re-orders life in terms of that infallible “spirit of the age,” but it cannot bind the future, which has its own voice and creed. *Fourth*, each new word must modify “the establishment of the time.” Church, state, family, school, and everything else must be changed continuously in terms of this infallible word.

In one form or another, this faith confronts us on all sides in the modern age. John Dewey, for example, denied the validity of any faith which accepted a body of “intellectual propositions” on the authority “of revelation from on high.” Any formal, unchanging creed was for him untenable. Faith for him was a tendency toward action. To adhere to any body of doctrine based on an external authority was for Dewey a “distrust in the power of experience to provide, in its own ongoing movement, the needed principles of belief and action.” To look to something external to man and his experience for authority was anathema to Dewey’s dogmatic position. Instead, he held, “Faith in its newer sense signifies that experience itself is the sole ultimate authority.”<sup>76</sup>

This deification of man’s private and collective experiences has led in our time to a new dogmatism. Parents, teachers, and youth reject any reasoning, preaching, or stand which does not give priority to experience. They declare to those who disagree, “You don’t know anything about

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<sup>74</sup> O. B. Frothingham: *The Religion of Humanity*. (New York, N.Y.: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1875. Third edition), pp. 7f.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>76</sup> John Dewey, in Albert Einstein and others: *Living Philosophies*. (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, (1930) 1941). p. 21.

life, because you haven't experienced" this or that. Women declare that no man can condemn abortion, because men do not experience childbirth. Homosexuals insist that people who condemn homosexuality have no right to do so: until they rid themselves of their "hang-ups" and undergo the experience "without prejudice" (i.e., favorably), they supposedly have no right to judge. I heard a prominent theologian declare that we could condemn no sin unless we too had experienced it! The standard thus is experience.

For Dewey, any faith based on the supernatural was a philosophy of escape, and "Philosophies of escape have also been philosophies of compensation for the ills and sufferings of the experienced world."<sup>77</sup> Dewey's great indictment of the Bible as God's revealed and infallible word is that it is a supernatural word, "and the supernatural signifies precisely that which lies beyond experience."<sup>78</sup> Experience is Dewey's yardstick. In terms of experience, he rejects moral codes based on religious supernaturalism. They are for him meaningless, because they lack the infallible vocabulary of experience. "Contrast with such ideas [of religious supernaturalism], deeply imbedded in all Western culture, gives the philosophy of faith in experience a definite and profound meaning."<sup>79</sup> If your eyes and mind fail to light up in terms of this definite and profound meaning of the philosophy of faith in experience, it is clear that you have not shared Dewey's own religious experience and mystical trust.

How is it "now possible to put trust in the possibilities of experience itself"? Dewey is inviting us to come to the altar of humanistic religion, and his altar call is a simple one:

The answer to this question supplies the content of a philosophy of experience. There are traits of present experience which were unknown and unpossessed when the ruling beliefs of the past were developed. Experience now owns as a part of itself scientific methods of discovery and test; it is marked by ability to create techniques and technologies — that is, arts which arrange and utilize all sorts of conditions and energies, physical and human. These new possessions give experience and its potentialities a radically new meaning.<sup>80</sup>

Today Dewey's faith in scientific experience is less well received. The anti-technological temper of humanism in the 1970s rejected Dewey's trust in science, but it has by no means altered or dropped his faith in experience as ultimate. It has simply given a primitivistic view to experience and has stressed raw, unpremeditated experience rather than scientific experience.

Dewey's philosophy tended to require this shift. The thrust of Dewey's faith was hostility to any idea of fixity or law outside of man. Change he saw as the essence of experience. Valid experience meant a total commitment to unprincipled change, i.e., change ungoverned by any

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23f.

word or standard external to man and his experience. Change was feared, Dewey held, because it was seen as “the cause of disorder, chaos, and anarchy. One chief reason for the appeal to something beyond experience was the fact that experience is always in such flux that men had to seek stability and peace outside of it.”<sup>81</sup>

For Dewey, it was wrong to “search for *the* meaning of life and *the* purpose of the universe. Men who look for a single purport and a single end either frame an idea of them according to their private desires and traditions, or else, not finding any such single unity, give up in despair and conclude that there is no genuine meaning and value in any of life’s episodes.” This quest for a universe of meaning must be replaced with a purely humanistic and experiential “plurality of interconnected meanings and purposes.”<sup>82</sup>

At this point an ironic fact takes over in Dewey’s thought. Dewey was very much a part of the modern intellectual tradition and its contempt for the bourgeoisie. The term *bourgeoisie* has become so great a catch-all for liberal and radical anathemas and spites that its definition is almost impossible. However, it does mean in essence an exploitive middle class, prizing its own experience of freedom and holding a materialistic outlook. Only one aspect of the older bourgeois is missing from this description — its productivity, something detested by the liberal tradition. However, this productivity apart, nothing more nearly approximates the liberal-caricature of the bourgeois than these intellectuals themselves, their children, John Dewey, and the products of his educational philosophy. We live today in the world of the humanistic bourgeoisie, a generation for whom its own experience is ultimate and for whom self-satisfaction goes hand in hand with a contempt for everything that challenges self-satisfaction.

It must be noted that Dewey hoped that experiential man would combine knowledge and social needs with his life of experience:

I would suggest that the future of religion is connected with the possibility of developing a faith in the possibilities of human experience and human relationships that will create a vital sense of the solidarity of human interests and inspire action to make that sense a reality.<sup>83</sup>

This represents a radically unrealistic hope and a senseless confidence. Having made experience ultimate, how could Dewey expect man, who thereby renounced God, to give way to his neighbor? If God cannot take priority over our experience, how can another man? If “experience itself is the sole ultimate authority,” and men are taught so, how will they then be persuaded to give way to society and the state? Dewey tried to depreciate the individual and his consciousness; he tried to make the true domain of experience the collective experience of the Great Society. However, having made the individual the new ultimate, he could not then persuade him to surrender his ultimacy to the state, a more jealous god than the God of Scripture.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Having made man's experience ultimate, he was asking the new god, man, either to commit suicide, or, at the very least, to castrate himself. The results have been very different.

According to the old Greek myth, the god Uranus was castrated by his son Cronus. Cronus was later in turn dethroned by his son Zeus. Each god being his own law in Greek humanism, each was in turn subject to overthrow of the next moment in time and its new god. The same is true of the world of John Dewey and of all humanists. Sartre was set aside as the voice of yesterday by the generation he instructed, and Dewey's generation despised the pedestrian and old-fashioned sense of order and responsibility Dewey imbibed from his Christian heritage.

When men deify themselves and their experience, they forget that they thereby provide the intellectual apparatus for a newer god to destroy them in the name of flux, in the name of the newer infallible word of the moment — themselves. The result is the perpetual war of the false gods, a war between the generations, and a war within the generation.

## 13. The Word and History

The continuing effect of Platonism and neoplatonism on the church has had a deadly consequence on its view of Scripture. In this view, there are two substances of diverse natures which make up reality — ideas (or spirit, mind, form, or soul) and matter. These two are in an uneasy union in history. In varying degrees, thinkers in this tradition see spirit or ideas as basic, higher, and superior, and matter as lower and inferior. For some theologians in the Thomistic and Arminian traditions, the fall affected man's body, not his mind, so that whatever error may occur in the mind is a product of the body and its corrupting influence.

Such a view is clearly hostile to Scripture, which sees man as a unity, totally God's creation. Man, instead of being of two (or three) substances, is of one only, namely, created being. The difference is not between Spirit (God, and, in part, man) and matter, but between the uncreated being of God and the created being of man and the universe; man's problem, therefore, is not matter, his body, and materialistic concerns, but sin, his rebellion against God and His law.

Because of the Greek influence on the thought of the church, there was a depreciation of history. If it is the realm of the spirit which is basic, then a concern for the world of matter represents a lower and less spiritual (and hence less worthy) concern. It is a popular humanistic myth to declare that history began with the Greeks, and with Herodotus. On the contrary, it began with Scripture, and in Israel. The Greek historical writings are in essence anti-historical; they represent in embryo what later became explicit in Hegel — the imposition of an idea on history. The idea does not belong to history any more than spirit belongs to matter: it makes something out of history. In Herodotus' case, we miss the point of his books if we fail to see that they are written *against* time and history. He began Book I, *Clio*, with the words, "This is a publication of the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, *in order that the actions of man may not be effaced by time...*"<sup>84</sup>

Biblical history, however, sees the world and time as God's creation, and as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). The problem is not time or matter but sin which alters man's moral nature. Time and history are intended by God to be the arena wherein covenant man exercises dominion, subdues the earth, and extends the kingdom of God into every realm of life and thought. Jesus Christ restores man to this calling. Time and history do not efface the actions of men, as Herodotus held, but, to the contrary, give opportunity and scope for the actions of godly men to manifest the glory of God's rule and realm by means of faith and obedience to God's law.

The church very early became a prodigal son, however, preferring the husks of Greek philosophy to the riches of the Father's house. The implications of adopting the Greek view of mind and body were enormous for Biblical study and interpretation. In Father Vawter's words,

It was all too easy to press the analogy to the conclusion that the literal meaning of a text — 'the flesh' — was not only not the reality of the Scripture but might even be a hindrance or at best an irrelevance to its 'soul' the spiritual or

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<sup>84</sup> Henry Cary, translator: *Herodotus*. (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1879). p. 1.

allegorical sense that lay hidden beneath it. It is surely not by chance that where allegorism flourished not only in practice but as an ideal, such philosophy as existed to provide a framework for systematic thought was platonist.<sup>85</sup>

Unfortunately, Vawter falls prey to the same kind of thinking. Such thinking is endemic to the church. Among fundamentalists, it means that “the true meaning” of the law is a spiritual and allegorical one, hidden in the colors of the tabernacle furnishings, the number of animals sacrificed, and so on. This is in line with Jerome’s interpretation of Ecclesiastes; for Jerome, it was a counsel to asceticism and thus a manual for those who chose to remain virgins. Mention of food and drink in Ecclesiastes Jerome saw as referring to Christ’s body and blood. Again, when, in the feeding of the multitude, Christ bade the hungry crowd to sit on the ground, Jerome saw this as a command to trample down the fleshly pleasures of the world.<sup>86</sup>

Wherever the material world is depreciated, such view of Scripture will proliferate. Since there is either no meaning, or only a limited meaning, to the material realm for such people, they will seek the true or higher meaning in a “spiritual” realm, in allegories, forced typologies, and the like. When my *Institutes of Biblical Law* was first published, more than a few churchmen held it to be a disaster, because it materialized what Christ had come supposedly to spiritualize. I was repeatedly told, by telephone and in person, that the Old Testament represents a lower and hence materialistic revelation and a plan of salvation, and hence the emphasis on law, whereas the New Testament gives us a spiritual and higher way than law, namely, faith and love; life in the Holy Spirit in an antinomian sense.

The Second Vatican Council gave us an interesting sight: papal infallibility was not dropped, but Biblical infallibility was shelved. The truth of Scripture which is without error was limited to whatever is “for the sake of our salvation.” This inerrant truth is not to be found in the Bible as such. In Vawter’s words,

Moreover, as the *relatio* for the finished schema made clear, the Biblical truth proclaimed by the Council to be free of error is not simply isolable in propositions and expressions. It is both the word and deed of God: the whole of salvation history.<sup>87</sup>

The word of God thus becomes a non-historical word; it is an existential word, an experience, a spiritual moment. Just as the church is for Vawter the continuation of the incarnation, so for him also the true word of God is a continuing spiritual experience:

Is it not proper to think of Biblical inspiration in this way, as continuing to reside in the belief and understanding of the communities of faith, perpetuated by the same spiritual life by which they live and following the natural laws and

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<sup>85</sup> Bruce Vawter: *Biblical Inspiration*. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972). p. 46.

<sup>86</sup> See J.N.D. Kelly: *Jerome*. (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1975). pp. 151f., 224.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146-148.

structures which the Spirit has assumed? If we may so think, then perhaps we have a final enunciation of what is meant by divine condescension and adoption of the words of man, in the full context of the people of God.<sup>88</sup>

Vawter is a modernist, and his words are an amazing witness to the pride of man. For modernism, the incarnation is not a literal union of God and man, and the Bible is in no literal sense the written word of God. However, what is not true of Christ becomes true of the church: it is the living, present incarnation, a continuous incarnation. Again, what is not true of the Bible is true of the communities of faith, in whom, “in the full context of the people of God,” the inerrant word resides in their belief and understanding. For Vawter, “the final quality” of Scripture is in this “dynamic” continuation of the word:

The same principles may serve to justify the final quality that we would like to ascribe to inspiration, that is, what we have termed its permanent and dynamic character, responsible for the continued power that the word has to evoke response in the believer. Without denying the obvious once-for-allness involved in the literary fixation of the Bible, we must at the same time acknowledge that it is the continuous reinterpretation of the Biblical word in the life of the believing community that constitutes it effectively God’s word to man. By inspiration we should understand not only the spiritual influence responsible for the Bible’s origins but also that which sustains it as a medium of speech.<sup>89</sup>

Such a view is in line with the existentialism of Barth and Tillich. It needs no sovereign and absolute God who speaks the necessary and infallible words; rather, it cannot tolerate such a God. As a result, it rules such a God out of history in any necessary and determinative sense. History must be man’s realm. Without God, however, history soon loses meaning: it becomes the world of brute factuality, of meaninglessness and purposeless events. Preaching becomes psychological in content, geared to the existentialist needs rather than to the will of God. It therefore disposes of God and history and is gradually forced into the private universe of man’s mind: there, in that narrow confine, the infallible word of the new god speaks to the echo chambers of empty man.

*The Shepherd of Hermas* is a very poor guide to Scripture, but this early writing from the church, dating perhaps before A.D. 140, still reflects an interesting view of Christ: “This great tree which covers plains and mountains and all the earth is the law of God which was given to all the world. And this law is the Son of God, who has been preached to the ends of the earth.”<sup>90</sup>

Because the Bible is the infallible word of God, it sets forth the righteousness of God in His law. Because Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, He is also the law of

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169f.

<sup>90</sup> Graydon F. Snyder, translator, editor: *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 6, *The Shepherd of Hermas*. Similitude VIII, 3. (Camden, N.J.: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1968). p. 119.

God in person. If we deny God, then we deny the word, the law, and the incarnation. There is then no literal, very word of God in history nor for history. God being silent, man therefore speaks. In his speaking, man may mask his nakedness and clothe himself in Scripture, but it is still man who speaks, and his word is nothing.

## 14. The Infallible Word

Dr. Cornelius Van Til has called attention to the fact that Jesus Christ used the terms *law* and *Scripture* as synonymous. Citing Psalm 82:6, our Lord called it *law*. “This proves that the term ‘Law’ was, for Jesus’ purpose, identical with Scripture as a whole. And of this Law, or Scripture, Jesus then says that it cannot be broken. It is therefore the final court of appeal.”<sup>91</sup>

If God be God, then His every word is of necessity law, because His every word is the authoritative and ultimate word. There is no word, law, power, or standard beyond God by means of which God and His word can be judged.

Van Til makes this clear in the course of his discussion of the righteousness of God:

With the righteousness of God we signify the self-consistency of the divine Being. God is a law unto Himself. He is the absolute self-existent personality and therefore, at the same time, absolute law. God does not have a law, but is law. His self-conscious activity regards with absolute complacency the eternal lightness of relationship between the various aspects of multiplicity that are found with the divine Being. He cannot and does not tolerate any subordination of any one aspect of His Being to any other aspect of His Being. The attributes and the persons of God are all on a par.<sup>92</sup>

It is therefore destructive of the Biblical doctrine of God to oppose or exalt one aspect of God over or against another. We cannot oppose grace and law; men may do so, but in God’s being they are in unity and not in subordination to one another. Similarly, in God’s being love and justice are not contraries but equal aspects of His being and are in essential unity. To say “God is love” (I John 4:8) is scriptural, but it denies Scripture if we mean therefore that in God love is more basic than law, justice, jealousy, wrath, grace, or any other attribute of God’s being. Thus, when Scripture contrasts any of these terms, it either has reference to man’s use of them or to man’s relationship to them under God’s economy.

Van Til illustrates this by reference to II Corinthians 3:6, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” The contrast here is not between grace and law, nor a materialistic dispensation versus a spiritual one. “The ‘letter’ as spoken of by Paul, refers not to Scripture as a whole, but refers to ‘the ministration of condemnation,’” that is, to the Pharisaic externalism. Thus, “the contention... that the Bible was never meant to be taken as a book that should be interpreted literally” is invalid.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Cornelius Van Til: *An Introduction to Theology*, II. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1947). p. 144.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 214.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 136.

The misuse of Scripture condemned by Paul was not a faithful obedience to the literal meaning of Scripture but a reinterpretation of that meaning in terms of man's word, will, and thought. We must, on the contrary, "make Scripture the standard of our thinking, and not our thinking the standard of Scripture."<sup>94</sup>

It is to the advantage of apostate man to deny or wrongly divide the word of God. If the Bible is reduced to a non-literal meaning and made anything other than the very word of God, the result is a very different kind of God. God then has no sure and certain word because God Himself is an uncertain and unrealized being. Those who pretend to exalt God by declaring Him to be unknowable and hence unnameable are thereby undermining the deity of God. Greek philosophy, for example, assumed the utter unknowability of God. As Van Til observes, "An apostate man has every reason for teaching the unnamability of God. If God is unnameable then he cannot name anything in the world. Only if God is unknowable can man think of his own knowledge as autonomous."<sup>95</sup>

God can be named, but not by man. For man to name God means that man's autonomous mind establishes the categories of definition. The definitive and ultimate word is then the word of man. For man to define God would mean that man would then classify God in relationship to himself and would understand and judge God, as well as to name Him, in terms of man's infallible word. This is at the heart of the evil of idolatry. Some forms of idolatry seem, superficially examined, to be very noble; some, in fact, show the influence of Biblical thought. At heart, however, idolatry defines God, whether by word, graven image, picture, or philosophic thought, in terms of man's autonomous mind and man's defining and creative word.

The people of Israel wanted, in the person of Moses, a definition of God: What was His name? By this they meant a definition of God in terms of man's requirements and being. God refused to so name Himself. In terms of man, He is beyond definition, because He is not to be defined by anything external to Himself as a criterion over Himself, but in terms of His own Being. Scripture defines man in terms of the image of God; hence, apostate man is fallen man: he has fallen from God's norm. Of a contemptible sinner, we say, "He's not much of a man," because man is not defined by his own existence. We cannot name, define, or know God in terms of anything external to Himself, and hence we cannot judge God, because God and His word are the criterion of all judgment. We can truly say of a man, "He's not much of a man," but we can never so speak of God, that He is not much of a God.

As a result, God answered Moses, not as Israel would have wished, but by declaring Himself to be God: that was His name, He Who Is, the self-existent one.

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 210.

<sup>95</sup> Cornelius Van Til: *Christ and the Jews*. (Nutley, N.J.: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968). p. 8.

unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations (Ex. 3:14-15).

This means, *first*, that man cannot name or define God: God names Himself, I AM THAT I AM. Where man does any naming, as Adam was required to do in Eden (Gen. 2:19-20), it is either as a covenant-keeper, working to understand the world under God and in terms of God's purpose as creator, or as a covenant-breaker, seeking to establish the meaning of creation in terms of man's autonomous and ultimate word (Gen. 3:5).

*Second*, God defines Himself by His self-revelation. The naming, defining, knowing word is thus the word of God. Man's word, when autonomous in intent, is unable to create reality or impose its own determinative meaning on reality. All things having been made by God, serve and obey His word and purpose.

*Third*, this means that Scripture is the necessary word. God makes Himself knowable and all creation knowable by means of His sovereign and infallible word. God's word is the word of salvation, but it is also the word of knowledge, basic to epistemology. It is the word of law, love, wrath, grace, justice, judgment, and more. It is the word which establishes the meaning of life, time, and history.

*Fourth*, God's word is the unchanging word. He is "the same yesterday, today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). He declares, "For I am the LORD; I change not" (Mal. 3:6). He is the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." As He was then, He is now and forever. "This is my name for ever." His word is thus the infallible word, because He is the absolute and omnipotent God, whose every word is truth.

*Fifth*, God then made clear to Moses that He did not answer to Moses or to Israel: they answered to Him. Hence, Moses had to "go" at God's command, and Israel had to stand up to Pharaoh in terms of God's requirement that Israel must serve God, not Pharaoh (Ex. 3:16-20). Israel could serve neither Pharaoh nor itself: it must serve the Lord, and if Pharaoh (or Israel) stood in God's way, He would stretch out His hand and smite him. This is no less true today. The Scripture is not a problem to be resolved by man, nor a mere subject for research and speculation. It is God's infallible command word: we either obey it or are condemned by it.

## 15. Moloch Man and the Word of God

As we have seen, every philosophy has either explicitly or implicitly an infallible word. This infallible word is in some sense man's word (Gen. 3:5), man as the pretended god of creation. This claim to infallibility is masked behind scientific and philosophical jargon, but it is still there. As Tyrmand notes with respect to communism,

In order not to fall into utter ludicrousness, communism conceals its infallibility behind the inviolability of the laws of history and the class struggle, of which it calls itself the sole binding discoverer and interpreter.<sup>96</sup>

Implicit claims to infallibility are as old as history and go back to the fall of man. The rabbis of old made the voice of the rabbi the voice of God and gave it priority over Scripture, i.e., over the Torah. Thus we read in 'Erubin 21b the declaration,

My son, be more careful in [the observance of] the words of the Scribes than in the words of the Torah, for in the laws of the Torah there are positive and negative precepts [and the penalties vary]; but as to the laws of the Scribes, whoever transgresses any of the enactments of the Scribes incurs the penalty of death.<sup>97</sup>

In terms of this principle, to be a rabbi, and to have a seat on the Sanhedrin required a particularly subtle mind and legal ability. Rab Judah is cited as declaring, "None is to be given a seat on the Sanhedrin unless he is able to prove the cleanness of a reptile from Biblical texts."<sup>98</sup> Such methods of judgment are very much with us in our contemporary American courts!

We have in the same treatise an example of this use of law in dealing with the law of giving one's seed to Moloch. The knowledge of the meaning of this law of Leviticus 18:21 is excellent. Moloch means king, *melech*; the vowels of the word *bosheth*, shame, are introduced to make *melech* into *molech*, or *moloch*. The Talmud states,

R. Hanina b. Antigonus said: Why did the Torah employ the word Moloch? To teach that the same law applies to whatever they proclaimed as their king, even a pebble or a splinter.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Leopold Tyrmand: *The Rose Luxemburg Contraceptives Cooperative, A Primer on Communist Civilization*. (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1972). p. 64.

<sup>97</sup> Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, editor: *The Babylonian Talmud, Sedar Mo'ed*, II, 'Erubin 21b. (London, England: The Soncino Press, 1938). p. 149.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, *Seder Nezekin*, III. Sanhedrin 17b. p. 87.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, III. Sanhedrin 64a., p. 438.

Whatever a man makes king or lord over himself is a Moloch: this can be an idol, the state and its ruler or king, or himself. Modern statism is clearly a form of Moloch worship, and state schools receive the sacrifice of children from parents who are lawbreakers before God.

However, like modern churchmen, the rabbis could find “legitimate” grounds for breaking the law while retaining their “innocence” through legal technicalities. Thus, we are told,

He who gives of his seed to Molech incurs no punishment unless he delivers it to Molech and causes it to pass through the fire. If he gave it to Molech but did not cause it to pass through the fire, or the reverse, he incurs no penalty, unless he does both.<sup>100</sup>

We can understand why our Lord condemned all such interpretations, declaring, “Full well ye reject [or frustrate] the commandments of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9).

The purpose of all this, from ancient times to the present, with rabbis, judges, communists, theologians, and pastors, is to substitute man’s word for God’s word. The goal is *action in history*, the development of the kingdom of Man rather than the kingdom of God. *The word of God is frustrated and rejected by any teaching or interpretation which does not lead to the action required by God.* Whether or not we profess, as did these rabbis, the Scriptures to be God’s infallible word is meaningless, if with our interpretation, teaching, and preaching we frustrate or reject the action commanded by God. Thus, the net result is the same, whether we frustrate God’s word in the life of man by means of modernism, dispensationalism, or antinomianism. We have today over 50 million adults in the U.S. who profess to believe in the Bible from cover to cover. They claim to believe every word of it and obey very little of it, on supposedly good “evangelical” grounds. The good news of the gospel now is interpreted to mean that God does not mean what He says!

But Williams is right: “A man cannot reject any word of God without in principle rejecting every word of God.”<sup>101</sup> We must therefore say that most churchmen today have in principle rejected every word of God. Their reasons are as false and godless as those of the ancient rabbis.

Hillel set aside the law of the Sabbath year by means of a legal fiction. A certified agreement that the creditor could claim his due was substituted for the remission of debt and the law of return in the Jubilee year. The same kind of legal fiction is employed by churchmen today, in the name of Christ.

The infallible word of God is not an abstract or a theoretical word. It is God’s commanding word. It requires us to believe and obey Him and His word. It declares to covenant man, This do, and ye shall live (Deut. 8:1). The word is given, not that man might have fire insurance, nor, though it is the word of salvation, is it given primarily for man’s salvation, but rather that God’s purposes be fulfilled or put into force. All the priorities of Scripture have to do with God and His

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, III. Sanhedrin 64a. p. 437.

<sup>101</sup> Norman V. Williams: *Verbal Inspiration*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1955). p. 18.

kingdom. We are to seek “first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” and only then will our own needs be met by God (Matt. 6:33). These priorities must govern our lives and our prayers, as the Lord’s Prayer makes clear, for it *begins and ends* with God’s kingdom:

...Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen (Matt. 6:9-10, 13).

If the word of God does not lead us to faith, prayer, and action in terms of these priorities, then, like the rabbis of old, we are using the word of God to mask another word, our own word. We may profess to believe the infallible word of God, but it is our own “infallible” word which lurks behind the facade of faith.

The doctrine of the infallible word is thus not simply an ecclesiastical doctrine. It is basic to life. To limit the Scripture to the role of a church book is to deny it and then to substitute man’s word as law for everyday life.

The infallible word is a silencing word: it silences the pretensions of Man and summons men and nations to hear God’s word, and then to speak, act, and govern in terms of it. God declares through Isaiah,

Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment (Isa. 41:1).

When the Lord speaks, “let all the earth keep silence before him” (Hab. 2:20), because His word alone is the infallible and governing word, the word of truth. Therefore, “Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD” (Zech. 2:13).

His word is the determining word: “it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa. 55:11). Such a word cannot be shelved; man can be, have, and will be shelved by the judgments of God, but His word endures and stands in judgment over them. Because the word of God is the word of life, it will lead either to faith and action, or to judgment and death.

The infallibility of Scripture is thus more than an academic question. At heart is the question, who is God, man or his Creator? And who shall issue the command word for the whole of life, thought, and action, God or man? It is an order to the false rabbis in the pulpits, and the would-be gods in pews and podium, to abdicate, *for God will be God*. Let Moloch man beware.

## 16. Infallibility and the World of Faith

In the April 7, 1967, issue of *Time Magazine*, an article on “East Germany” spoke of the heir apparent to the communist dictator of East Germany in these words:

Ulbricht obviously cannot last forever as East Germany’s leader. His heir apparent is a pretty good copy of the original. He is Erich Honecker, 54, a Communist since his youth, whose philosophy is more or less summed up in two of his more famous statements: “The party has never erred,” and “The only book worth reading is Stalin’s *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*.”<sup>102</sup>

For a time, I carried that clipping with me in my travels, citing it to clergymen and seminarians in conversations. The constant reaction was one of indifference. No relationship between Honecker’s faith in the infallibility of the Communist Party and the theological doctrine of infallibility was seen by any.

I became thereby freshly aware of the extent and depth of our saturation with the world of Kant, Barth, and Niebuhr. In this perspective, the world has two kinds of factuality. On the one hand, there is the realm of brute factuality in the physical and historical world, and, on the other, the realm of faith, myth, and ideas, where facts are facts of faith, not of history. For such people, *infallibility*, like the virgin birth and the resurrection, is a fact of faith, not of history. These two realms of faith and history have a meeting point, after Descartes, in the autonomous mind of man. The mind of man is the controlling and creative agent which gives “reality” to both realms, and the reality of these two very different worlds exists in the mind of man, which alone give both of them reality and meaning.

The roots of this concept are older than Kant and Descartes. They go back at least to the ancient Greeks and their concept of two alien substances, matter and ideas. The two substances have become more and more separated since then, so that the realm of ideas (or, the world of faith) now touches only the realm of matter in the mind of man.

As a result, the theological mind has isolated theology more and more from the world of matter and action into the world of faith. Marxism seeks the imposition of the realm of ideas onto the world of matter. It seeks to remake the world of matter, the kingdom of Necessity, into the kingdom of Freedom, a realm ruled by the idea.

Except where influenced by Marxism, however, modern theology seeks to separate itself from the kingdom of Necessity and to develop in “purity” the kingdom of Freedom, or of Faith. A major wing of modern theology is fundamentalism, which is Arminian or neo-Thomist in theology, and rationalistic in apologetics. Its answer is the rapture, the escape into the world or realm of faith, and then the supernatural union of the two hostile realms in the millennium.

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<sup>102</sup> “East Germany,” *Time Magazine*, April 7, 1967, p. 26.

Because the two realms are seen as *naturally* alien, the relationship between the two requires some special act. For the fundamentalists, it is the second coming alone which can bridge the gap between faith and history. A supernatural act is required. For the Barthians and others, there is no supernatural act *of God*, but there is a similar act in the mind of man whereby the two alien worlds, the irreconcilables, meet by the will and grace of autonomous man.

For this reason, Honecker's statement does not interest the clergy. They do not live in a unified creation but in a metaphysically rather than morally divided world. They do not see God's word and creative will as the inescapable factor in every area of life, so that no fact or interpretation can exist outside of God. No idea or fact exists apart from the triune God. Man, by his desire to be his own god, determining good and evil for himself (Gen. 3:5), does not create a new realm of being; he does not add a single metaphysical fact or idea to creation. Man's attempt is a moral fact: it is an immoral act of rebellion against his Creator, the covenant God.

In that rebellion, man misuses God's creation, including himself. Men change the truth of God into a lie (Rom. 1:25); they do not create new truths or new facts. They attempt rather to pervert God's creation into a witness for their denial of the Creator.

Having denied the sovereign and triune God, and having denied that man must live by *every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (Matt. 4:4), they insist that man's hope is man himself, and the word of man. Hence, they declare, "The party has never erred," man is infallible, Power to the People, and much, much more in the same vein.

The issue is the word of God, or the word of man. Whose word shall prevail? If we limit the word of God to the realm of faith, we have denied it. The word of God is His infallible word and law for the whole of creation, for every man. His word is the binding word for every realm, and His law governs all things. Any man who attempts to build a theology on any other foundation than the sovereign and triune God whose word governs all of creation "is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great" (Luke 6:49).

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Rousas John Rushdoony (1916–2001) was a well-known American scholar, writer, and author of over thirty books. He held B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of California and received his theological training at the Pacific School of Religion. An ordained minister, he worked as a missionary among Paiute and Shoshone Indians and as a pastor to two California churches. He founded the Chalcedon Foundation, an education organization devoted to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctively Christian scholarship to the world at large. His writing in the Chalcedon Report and his numerous books inspired a generation of believers to be active in reconstructing the world to the glory of Jesus Christ. Until his death, he resided in Vallecito, California, where he engaged in research, lecturing, and assisting others in developing programs to put the Christian faith into action.

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Chalcedon (kal-SEE-don) is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctly Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested ministers, scholars, and laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: “Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man....” This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative: Christ alone can announce that, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1). The Chalcedon Foundation publishes books under its own name and that of Ross House Books. It produces a magazine, Faith for All of Life, and a newsletter, The Chalcedon Report, both bimonthly. All gifts to Chalcedon are tax deductible. For complimentary trial subscriptions, or information on other book titles, please contact:

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