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# The Journal of Christian Reconstruction



Symposium on  
the Reformation

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## COPYRIGHT

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*Symposium on the Reformation*

Andrew Sandlin, Editor

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A CHALCEDON MINISTRY

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### **Chalcedon Foundation**

P.O. Box 158

Vallecito, CA, 95251

U.S.A.

To contact via email and for other information:

**[www.chalcedon.edu](http://www.chalcedon.edu)**

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Rousas John Rushdoony, President

Andrew Sandlin, Editor

Walter Lindsay, Assistant Editor

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# THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

This journal is dedicated to the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1—to subdue the earth to the glory of God. It is published by the Chalcedon Foundation, an independent Christian educational organization (see inside back cover). The perspective of the journal is that of orthodox Christianity. It affirms the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original manuscripts (autographs) of the Bible and the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ—two natures in union (but without intermixture) in one person.

The editors are convinced that the Christian world is in need of a serious publication that bridges the gap between the newsletter-magazine and the scholarly academic journal. The editors are committed to Christian scholarship, but the journal is aimed at intelligent laymen, working pastors, and others who are interested in the reconstruction of all spheres of human existence in terms of the standards of the Old and New Testaments. It is not intended to be another outlet for professors to professors, but rather a forum for serious discussion within Christian circles.

The Marxists have been absolutely correct in their claim that theory must be united with practice, and for this reason they have been successful in their attempt to erode the foundations of the non-communist world. The editors agree with the Marxists on this point, but instead of seeing in revolution the means of fusing theory and practice, we see the fusion in personal regeneration through God's grace in Jesus Christ and in the extension of God's kingdom. Good principles should be followed by good practice; eliminate either, and the movement falters. In the long run, it is the kingdom of God, not Marx's "kingdom of freedom," which shall reign triumphant. Christianity will emerge victorious, for only in Christ and His revelation can men find both the principles of conduct and the means of subduing the earth—the principles of biblical law.

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Of the Reformation era of 1517–1564, John T. McNeill, in his standard work on Calvinism, asks rhetorically, “Where else does history show a transformation so rapid, so surprising, and so permanent?”<sup>1</sup> None, perhaps, except the period of Constantine’s settlement (AD 313), in which the Roman Empire was forced to come to terms with Christianity, transformed almost overnight from an outlaw religion to an establishment faith.

The Reformation was just what the term connotes: an attempt to reform the Western (Roman Catholic) Church. It was not an attempt to overthrow the inherited orthodoxy of Western Christianity which the Roman Church largely embodied,<sup>2</sup> and, not surprisingly, the reformers all considered themselves good Catholics. They were not “separatists”; they were excommunicated from the Church of Rome and did not leave its communion voluntarily. Like their reformist precursors—Wycliffe, Hus, and Savonarola—they were convinced that the church’s doctrines and practices represented apostasy from the biblical and ancient Catholic faith. They wished to correct those abuses and restore the church’s New Testament and patristic glory. What made the Protestant reformers different from many of their medieval reformist predecessors was their increased knowledge of the original literary sources of antiquity which their humanist education afforded them. All the reformers (notably Zwingli and Calvin) benefited from the heightened interest in humane letters at the heart of the classical revival.<sup>3</sup> This meant ready access not only to classical Greek and Roman literature, but also to the text of the Bible in its original languages. The Latin Vulgate of the Roman Church, which is the only biblical text most Roman Catholic priests and scholars could read, had become the ultimate standard of her ecclesiocracy, replacing, for all practical purposes, the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New

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1. John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (London, 1954), 3.

2. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels* (New York and Evanston, 1964).

3. Note E. Harris Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation* (New York, 1956), 145 f.

Testament. The pervasive slogan *ad fontes*—back to the sources—was humanism's axis of ecclesiastical and cultural critique, the standard by which it could judge the ailing late medieval world. This is precisely what the reformers did with the Christian Bible in its original languages: critiqued the contemporary church in terms of the biblical revelation. The Roman Church no longer held a monopoly on the sacred text. {2}

For the reformers, however, this classical humanism (which, while far from perfect, is not to be equated with the secular humanism of today) was not an end in itself but only instrumental inasmuch as it drove them back to the text of Holy Scripture, which they affirmed as divine revelation, God's infallible words by which all things are to be judged (this is the meaning of *sola Scriptura*).<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was just the medieval bent to obscure biblical authority in the church that elicited their criticisms. They were convinced that the accretions of ecclesiastical tradition had obscured the authority of the Bible in the church, and that the only sure path was to re-mine the unadulterated Bible as the ultimate source of divine truth and Christian behavior.

Another factor at the heart of the Protestant criticism was the Roman Church's diluted view of divine salvific grace. The medieval church had steadily eroded Augustine's emphasis on a monergistic salvation (God alone saves men; they do not cooperate with him in their salvation) and replaced it with a meritorious scheme by which God bestows the initial grace of justification but in which men's good works elicit the redemptive blessings of Christ's atonement.<sup>5</sup> Luther and Calvin, by contrast, proposed a sharply *judicial* denotation of the doctrine of justification.<sup>6</sup> Man is saved solely because of Christ's goodness (his law-keeping in life and death), not man's goodness; man appropriates justification exclusively by faith, which is itself a divine gift (this is the meaning

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4. Note the two essays in John Warwick Montgomery's (ed.) *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis, MN: 1974): Montgomery, "Lessons From Luther on the Inerrancy of Holy Writ," 63–94, and J. I. Packer, "Calvin's View of Scripture," 95–114.

5. Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification, The Beginnings to the Reformation* (Cambridge, 1986), 37–172.

6. Martin Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in ed. Timothy F. Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: 1989), 155–64.

of *sola fide*). The righteousness on which salvation depends is Christ's righteousness, as St. Paul emphasizes to the Philippians (3:4–9).

The effect of the doctrine of gratuitous justification was not to open the door to antinomianism, which Calvin abhorred,<sup>7</sup> but to restore a sense of the majesty of God's grace and elective purpose in his saints. In fact, the reformers, notably Calvin, abnegated the man-centered moralism of the medieval church, replacing it with the God-centered law of Holy Scripture. For Calvin and his heirs, it is biblical law, not canon law, to which man is obligated: "[W]hen holiness is made to consist in any thing else than in {3} observing the Law of God, men are led to believe that the law may be violated without danger."<sup>8</sup>

The Reformation sundered the unity of Western Christendom (just as the Great Schism had separated East from West in 1054). Though in some ways tragic, this sundering paved the way for what Abraham Kuyper called "multiformity," "that the church of Christ was bound to reveal herself in more than one form."<sup>9</sup> The various visible expressions of the church were properly seen as *more or less* in harmony with the true faith or practice, not as completely true or false depending on their relation to the Roman communion. While the Reformation and Counter-Reformation elicited anathemas (and counter-anathemas!), they did contribute to the dissemination of the orthodox faith, particularly in the great missionary age of the nineteenth century, in forms whose variants did not threaten historic Christianity: Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, etc. Thereby the orthodox faith was spread throughout the earth in slightly differing though not illegitimate molds.

A key consequence of the Reformation was its deliberate erasure of the medieval secular-sacred distinction. The medieval church had expanded the patristic notion that the most intense

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7. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1949), Bk. 3, Ch. 16.

8. *Idem.*, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, (Grand Rapids, MI: 1993), 2:251.

9. Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: [1898], 1980), 662.

holiness is achieved by those who retreat from the present world,<sup>10</sup> and the patristic accent on the sacerdotal ministry of the bishopric evolved into the common view that the Roman Catholic Church constituted God's kingdom on earth.<sup>11</sup> The rest of society and life was considered holy only in its relation to the institutional church. The truly religious life was only the ecclesiastical life, and preferably in the greatest possible isolation from the present world. The reformers challenged this sacrally monopolistic but sharply fragmented view of life. Of this challenge Holl notes:

Luther changed not only the content of the word "calling"; he recoined the word itself. What is new is that in his mature years, he sees the "call" of God exclusively in secular duties, i.e., he united just those two elements which for [Roman] Catholic thought were contradictions that could scarcely coexist. Only timidly had the viewpoint dared to present itself in [Roman] Catholicism that one could also heed the call of God in the world and in secular work. But by decisively including secular activities under this exalted viewpoint as a God-given obligation, Luther diverts to it all the religious energy {4} that heretofore was exhausted in "good works" alongside work in a vocation.<sup>12</sup>

What for the Roman Church were parallel but isolated activities—one's vocation and his "good works"—Luther united: one's vocation done for the glory of God *was* "good works." In this sense Dawson concludes "that the hallmark of the new Protestant culture is just this spirit of moral activism, which was based on intensive theological training, but which found expression in secular life—in war and business—no less than in the life of the Churches."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, while the reformers acknowledged the authority of the institutional church, their ecclesiological innovation posited the church under two forms: invisible and visible, with greatest emphasis on the former.<sup>14</sup> This led the

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10. Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (New York, 1981).

11. Philip Schaff, *Medieval Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1913), 13.

12. Karl Holl, *The Cultural Significance of the Reformation* (New York, 1959), 34, 35.

13. Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom* (New York, 1956), 12.

14. John M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven and London, 1963), 31–33.

Reformed in succeeding generations to deny the equation of the institutional church and the kingdom of God, holding instead that the church is an aspect of the kingdom, God's rule throughout the earth: "The Kingdom may be said to be a broader concept than the Church, because it aims at nothing less than the complete control of all the manifestations of life. It represents the dominion of God in every sphere of human endeavor."<sup>15</sup> This was a repudiation of the traditional—but mistaken—ecclesiocentric vision. Christ's kingdom must be established according to his word immediately in all spheres of life, not mediately in the institutional church to which all other spheres are subordinate. The family, church, state and other spheres are interdependent—but independent—spheres, all serving separate functions under biblical authority.<sup>16</sup>

It is particularly in this final sense that the modern Christian Reconstruction Movement is an heir of the Protestant Reformation. We live in a Western world whose enculturation of Enlightenment and Romantic liberalism has diluted and all but destroyed the Christian civilization of Northern Europe and the United States. The ecclesiocentric vision against which the reformers correctly reacted (but also somewhat retained) cannot combat the "holistic" secularism of modern culture which aims for nothing less than a full-scale cultural victory, the secularization of all areas of life.<sup>17</sup> Today's institutional church is indeed in need of biblical {5} reformation, but the need is no less urgent in the family, state, and other spheres. It would be a grave miscalculation to assume that a revival of medieval ecclesiocentrism, a mammoth institutional church—whether Roman or Protestant—would assuage the surging tide of secularism. A prominent secularist asks, "What, then, is the status of the Christian faith as we approach the end of the twentieth century? So long as it is maintained by its practitioners, it remains available in a culture where it is now one thing among others."<sup>18</sup> Just because the enemy's fundamental assault is wider than the church, so the faith must be wider than

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15. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids [1939], 1941), 570.

16. Expressed powerfully in Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1931).

17. H. J. Blackham, *The Future of Our Past* (Amherst, NY), 224, 225.

18. *Ibid.*, 224.

the church. A secular enemy for whom Christianity “remains available in a culture where it is now one thing among others” will not be overthrown by liturgical renewal, church-growth seminars, city-wide evangelistic crusades, and emotionally charged men’s meetings. To limit the reformation to the institutional church would be to ensure the victory of Christianity’s foes. The only hope is a radical (meaning *deeply rooted*) recovery of a full-orbed orthodox biblical faith, including the application of biblical law<sup>19</sup> and the expectation of earthly victory generated by a postmillennial eschatology.<sup>20</sup>

This too is a legacy of the Protestant Reformation.

The present symposium highlights the Reformation, not out of any polite antiquarian interest, but to assist our readers in the re-Christianization of modern life using the law of God as instrument.

**Rousas John Rushdoony** begins the current symposium with a reminder that a chief ideational legacy of the Protestant Reformation is the conviction that the church must always be reforming, and he reminds us that there is still much work to be done.

**Andrew Sandlin** shows that it is only on an explicitly Reformed and Van Tilian grounds that the contemporary Christian can do justice to the Protestant dictum of *sola scriptura*, while maintaining a healthy respect for ecclesiastical tradition.

The German and Swiss reformers gather the lion’s share of attention; but **David Estrada** indicates that the Spanish reformers, though less popular and touted, were blessed with certain gifts exceeding their Reformational peers.

**G. Joseph Gatis** explores the rationale for Samuel Sewall’s confession of a miscarriage of justice in his decisions at the much-heralded and {6} condemned Salem Witch Trials. Gatis highlights the extent to which these trials deviated from the biblical pattern of justice, while treating our well-intentioned forebears with sympathy.

**James M. Jarrell** briefly refutes the racialist Aryan heresy

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19. Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ, 1973).

20. Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (no location [The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company], 1957).

which, one notes with alarm, has made significant inroads among professed Christians.

The Reformed tradition is frequently criticized for paying insufficient attention to pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit) in general, and his vital work in the modern church in particular. **A. R. Kayayan's** historical study refutes this common accusation and presents an encouraging, pastoral treatment of this issue.

**Shawn T. Roberson** confronts the contemporary resistance to the "bloodiness" of the Christian faith with biblical evidence and rationale for the shedding of blood in animal sacrifice under the old covenant and Christ's once-for-all propitiatory blood-letting inaugurating the new covenant.

The atheistic philosophy of cosmic and biological evolutionism holds hegemony in the modern scientific and, increasingly, ecclesiastical communities. **Jean-Marc Berthoud**, however, shows why the biblical doctrine of God's direct creation of man and the rest of the universe is central to biblical faith and all of life.

**John B. King, Jr.** presents a careful exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15:45, one of the most intriguing verses in the Bible; and **Joseph P. Braswell**, a leading Van Tilian epistemologist and philosopher, evinces the epistemological impossibility of unbelieving philosophy from the Socratic tradition down to Kant.

The important socio-political work of eighteenth-century liberal author Francis Lieber (he was *classically* liberal, not liberal in the modern secular, statist sense) has been all but overlooked until recent years. Political scientist **Steven Alan Samson** dusts off Lieber's reputation for a new generation, exposing Lieber's firm accent on self-government and institutional liberty.

This symposium is rounded out by **John Fielding's** thoughtful, witty, and always incisive review of Michael Horton's *Beyond Culture Wars*. Fielding demolishes not only Horton's lackluster suggestions for Christian political involvement but implicitly indicts the entire evangelical social enterprise to boot.

Special thanks to Walter Lindsay for his painstaking proofreading, and Andrea Schwartz for her meticulous typesetting, and to both for their invaluable suggestions. They are true professionals, and a delight to work with.

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# THE REFORMATION

*Rousas John Rushdoony*

Over the years, my interest in and dedication to the premises of the Protestant Reformation have only grown. More specifically, I am thoroughly a Calvinist in my perspective because I believe that Calvinism is right in striving to be a totally faithful statement of the word of God. The Bible rather than the church must determine the faith because the Bible is the inscriptured word of the triune God, and infallibility belongs, not to the church, but to God and his word.

At the same time, I have come to recognize from my student days that reformation has been a recurring fact in the history of Christianity. An early instance of this, of an exciting kind, was the work of St. Athanasius, who, like Elijah, stood for the faith against the state and church of his day. The so-called “medieval” era had many reforms which revitalized the church and developed the implications of the faith. Calvin regarded some of these earlier reformers with great respect. More Protestants need to recognize and appreciate the steps taken by men of God over the centuries. Like us, they could not foresee the future; like the reformers Luther and Calvin, they had the limitations of their time, but their greatness was in applying the faith to the problems of time.

My concern is this: There is a danger that we may rest in self-satisfaction as heirs of the Protestant Reformation and fail to see the needed reforms of our time. For example, the majority of the Reformation churches are today modernistic and thus more radically derelict than was Rome in Luther’s day. Their faith is in humanism, not Christianity, in the state as savior rather than Jesus Christ. The departures from the faith that we now face are equal to and far greater than those that faced Luther and Calvin. The sources of theological thought are today no longer biblical. Authority now rests in reason.

Calvin in his day restored the radical outreach of the early church. Charity, health, education, marital problems, the elderly, the wayfarers, the strangers, and more were all aspects of the church's concern. The diaconate was a powerful agency of Christian government in meeting social needs and problems. Calvin's action in these spheres influenced Catholic action through St. Charles Borromeo. Once again the church was active, directly and indirectly, in the Christian government of most things in terms of God's word. {8}

Today, all these activities have become primarily statist spheres of concern. Health, education, and welfare are now departments of state, not of Christian action. The religion of humanism, whose church in most cases is the state, now seeks to meet all needs, and the church is mainly acquiescent. Only the Christian school and home school movements have to any significant degree challenged the statist monopoly and begun a reconquest.

In the sphere of law, humanistic law has replaced God's law, and we see as a result a breakdown of justice.

The Reformation churches need reforming! Our Lord said of the church of his day, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Mt. 23:27). But we must not waste time repeating what our Lord has already said. The *key fact* is not, whom have we criticized, but what have we done? What will we do?

We all need continually to be renewed, reformed, and revitalized by God and his word. Reformation is ether an ongoing fact or it is dead. To honor the Reformation is nothing if we ourselves are not constantly renewed and empowered by our Lord to do more. One look at the world should tell us that the greatest applications of reformation and renewal are still ahead of us. The best way to honor the past is to apply its victories to the present. The Protestant Reformation has no life apart from the people who profess to be its heirs, and we had better develop and apply the biblical premises of reformation.

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# THE SPANISH REFORMATION

*David Estrada*

When we think of the Protestant Reformation, our thoughts automatically turn to countries like Germany, Switzerland, England, Holland, the Scandinavian nations, and even to France. We seldom think of Spain as a country affected by the Reformation. Historians dismiss the subject by saying that the influence of the Protestant Reformation was hardly felt in Spain because of the deeply rooted Roman Catholic faith of the people, and because of the Inquisition which quickly moved in to extinguish any appearance of heresy on the Iberian Peninsula. To this we must say that only the resource of brute force and violence hindered Spain from becoming another trophy of the Reformation. The brilliant Roman Catholic historian Marcel Bataillon openly acknowledges that among all European countries, Spain was the nation best prepared for the Reformation. Had the Inquisition not occurred, Spain would have followed the course of other nations that embraced the Reformation.

## The Rediscovery of the Spanish Reformers

Very little was known about the Spanish Reformation until the middle of the last century when two scholars—one English, the other Spanish—collaborated in a joint attempt to rescue the works of the Spanish Protestants from oblivion. The enterprise, carried out between Luis Usóz y Río in Spain and Benjamin Baron Wiffen in England resulted in a twenty-volume collection of writings entitled *Reformistas antiguos españoles* (1847–1865), reproducing the original works of the leading Spanish reformers. Luis Usóz y Río's biography is indeed remarkable. Born in Madrid in 1806 into a wealthy noble family, Usóz studied philology in Spain and in Italy and was appointed professor of Greek Semitic languages at the University of Valladolid. He was one of the prestigious scholars

of the time. We do not know the details of his conversion to the Protestant faith but as a result of his friendship with Benjamin Wiffen, a Quaker, he showed great sympathy toward the religious principles of that group—to the point that he even translated some of the writings of William Penn. After his conversion Usoz dedicated all his time, his wealth, his talents, and his scholarly gifts to rescuing the works of the Spanish reformers. He traveled to London, Edinburgh, Paris, Augsburg, Amsterdam, Lisbon, and other cities searching for copies of old documents, while his secretaries copied the extant material kept at the British Library. {10}

Usoz laid the foundations for all future studies of the Spanish reformers. He was preparing material for a history of the Spanish Reformation when he died in London in 1865. His friend Wiffen<sup>1</sup> was working on biographical material when he also suddenly passed away, only two years later. It then fell to a friend of Wiffen's, a professor at the University of Strasbourg, Edward Boehmer, to continue the research. Boehmer published the material, together with important letters he was fortunate in unearthing, in a three-volume edition entitled *Biblioteca Wiffeniana* (London/Strasbourg, 1883–1904). Today, all the manuscript material, together with Wiffen's private library, can be found in a special collection in Wadham College, Oxford.

Towards the close of the century the German scholar Ernst H. J. Schäfer centered his research on the records of the Inquisition.<sup>2</sup> In 1880–81, the brilliant Spanish scholar Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo's *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* appeared. The fifth book of Menéndez y Pelayo's *Historia* is on the Spanish reformers. The work is very useful for the many sources he draws from, but it is extremely biased, and his negative comments are unworthy of a man of such intellectual caliber. An excellent study is that of

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1. Wiffen (1794–1867) was born in Woburn, in the country of Bedford. He visited Spain in 1839 and in 1842.

2. *Beiträge zur des Spanischen Protestantismus* (Gütersloh, 1902). Schäfer also published several articles, the most important of which was "Seville and Valladolid: die evangelischen Gemeinden Spaniens im Reformationszetalter," in *Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte*, vol. 78 (Halle, 1903).

Marcel Bataillon, *Erasme et l'Espagne* (Paris, 1937).<sup>3</sup> Bataillon's studies provide us with valuable cultural and religious background information concerning sixteenth-century Spain. In the last forty years several doctoral theses have greatly enlarged our bank of knowledge on the Spanish reformers. The subject of the Spanish Reformation has become a gold mine of valuable historical research. Today the open attitude of the Spanish Roman Catholic hierarchy facilitates access to important archives on the subject which in the past were inaccessible.

This study centers on three fundamental aspects of the Spanish Reformation. First I will make some brief historical references to mark the setting; second, I will summarize the theological position of the Spanish reformers; and, finally, I will discuss the irenic spirit of the Spanish Reformation, which I believe was its main contribution. {11}

### Historical Notes about the Spanish Reformers

The Inquisition not only meant the end of the Reformation movement in Spain, but also marked a dividing line between two forms of Roman Catholicism: one fairly evangelical, the other radically intolerant. It marked a *before* and an *after* in the religious history of Spain. At the close of the Middle Ages the type of Christianity prevailing in Spain was more militant, more independent, more evangelical, that is, more nearly Protestant, than that found in any other Christian nation. Twenty years before Luther nailed his theses to the church door at Wittenberg (Oct. 31, 1517), the Spanish church had already felt the purifying and regenerating influence of ecclesiastical reforms largely Protestant in spirit and aims.

Before the Inquisition succeeded in stamping out the Spanish Reformation movement in the early 1560s, Spain was a tolerant country and the rights of conscience were more highly respected there than in any other European country. King Afonso X, the Wise (1221–1284), considered it a great privilege to be the monarch of three ethnic groups with three separate religions: Spanish, Jewish, and Moslem. It was his express command that the

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3. In 1950 and 1965, Spanish editions appeared under the title *Erasmo y Espana, estudios sobre la historia espiritual del siglo XVI*, F.C.E., México.

Bible be translated into Castillian and a copy of that thirteenth-century translation is still extant. During the Middle Ages the city of Toledo became one of the great centers of learning of the Western world, where Christians, Jews, and Moslems achieved an unprecedented degree of freedom and religious tolerance.

In preparation for the Reformation movement in Spain, the role played by Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros was to be decisive. This Franciscan monk, confessor to Queen Isabela, archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, undertook two important steps: the reformation of the clergy and the promotion of biblical studies. In the reform of the clerical orders, especially his own, he met with great opposition. In fact, Cisneros' reforms caused the withdrawal of over a thousand monks who left in order to avoid having to comply with the new rules. Nonetheless, and contrary to what was the case in the other European countries, the moral standards of the clergy were highly improved as a result of Cisneros' reforms. Having improved the morals of the clergy, he then took it upon himself to help them overcome their religious ignorance and lack of culture. The reading and study of the Bible were made a special feature in their training—something previously unheard of—and new schools of theology were established with courses in Bible exegesis. Cisneros' interest in the Bible culminated in the publication of the great Complutensian Polyglot Bible, issued in 1521, after nearly twenty years of work. {12}

In matters of doctrinal dispute and heresy, Cisneros was open-minded and showed great tolerance for those charged with heretical ideas. Proof of this is that after Savonarola had been condemned and burnt at the stake, Cisneros continued sponsoring the printing of Savonarola's writings, which according to Luther's own comments already contained the basic tenets of the Reformation. Thus, Cisneros' attitude and impulse gave to many the courage to hold to their own religious ideas, which, although not always entirely heretical, at least caused fermentation in later days.

The majority of our Spanish reformers studied at Alcalá and were great scholars of the Bible; their knowledge and mastery of the original languages was unsurpassed. Even today their translations of the Scriptures are regarded—both in accuracy and beauty of style—as the best ever made in Spain. Early in the

sixteenth century, Juan de Valdés translated the Book of Psalms, the Epistle to the Romans, and 1 Corinthians. In 1543, Francisco de Encinas produced a translation of the whole New Testament. The New Testament and the Book of Psalms were also translated by Juan Pérez de Pineda. Even Roman Catholic scholars admit that this rendering of the Psalms is the best ever made in Spanish. A few years ago I was fortunate to discover, in one of our libraries, an undocumented copy of Pérez's translation of the New Testament. As it appears, both Encinas' and Pérez's editions sold out almost immediately, because only a few years later when Casiodoro de Reina decided to translate the entire Bible he could not find a single copy of either and had to begin again from scratch.

Casiodoro de Reina's translation, printed in Basle in 1569, forty years before the *King James Version* appeared, is a jewel of our Protestant heritage. It is indeed remarkable how that in only ten years' time, and in the midst of very adverse circumstances, Reina was able to produce such an accurate and beautiful translation. The text was slightly revised thirty-three years later by Cipriano de Valera and reprinted in Amsterdam in 1602. Four centuries later this translation is still used in our Protestant churches. In our list of early Spanish Bible scholars we must not forget the name of Adrian Saravia, who had fled to England and became a member of the committee responsible for the translation of the Bible into English: the so-called *King James Version*.

So important and widespread was the reading of the Bible by the middle of the sixteenth century, that the Spanish Inquisition, in the *Index* of 1551, explicitly prohibited the printing and circulation of the Scriptures "en romance castellano o otra cualquier vulgar lengua." Roman Catholic translations were prohibited as well. Even Bonifacio Ferrer's 1478 {13} translation into Valencian came under fire. Despite the fact that Ferrer had been a devout Roman Catholic monk, the Inquisition ordered that all the extant copies should be burned. All that is left today of Ferrer's edition is one cover page containing the date and place of printing. As a result of the Inquisition, the Bible became an unknown book in Spain. Even at the middle of the last century when George Borrow, working under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society, offered the distribution of the Spanish Bible to the owner of a Sevillian bookstore, he was told, "Sir, this book is not known around this

area; there is no demand for it.”

Large numbers of converts to the evangelical cause came from the clergy and the nobility and were outstanding members of their community both in rank and in learning. Such were, for instance, Alfonso de Valdés, secretary to Charles V; Alfonso de Bernaldez, chaplain to the emperor, who suffered condemnation in 1537; Rodrigo de Valer, who laid the foundations of the church in Seville and was condemned by the Inquisition in 1541; Juan Gil, known as Doctor Egidius, a famous preacher of the cathedral of Seville; Constantino de la Fuente, another famous preacher of the cathedral who had also been chaplain to the emperor... Besides, whole monasteries and convents, especially those in the neighborhood of Seville and Valladolid, embraced the Protestant cause. Foremost among these monasteries was the Monasterio de San Isidro of Seville, whose converts were to become notorious reformers: Casiodoro de Reina, Antonio del Corro, Cipriano de Valera and Reinaldo Gonsalves Montanus, the famous author of *Artes Inquisitionis*, a book published in Heidelberg in 1567 and widely read throughout Europe.

We have evidence that Luther's Latin writings were already circulating in Spain as early as 1519. His *Commentary on Galatians* was translated into Spanish in 1520, and was soon followed by other works. In a letter to Luther, dated February 14, 1519, John Froben, the famous printer of Basle, informs the reformer that he has sent many of his books to Spain. Financed by Spanish Protestant merchants, Luther's treatises on *Christian Liberty* and *De Servo Arbitrio* were translated and printed at Antwerp and from there sent to Spain. Alarmed by the wide circulation the works of the Reformation were having in Spain, in 1521 Pope Leo X issued briefs to the Spanish authorities, requiring them to adopt measures to prevent the introduction into Spain of Luther's writings and those of his sympathizers.

The execution of Protestants in the principal cities of Spain was conducted under the joint auspices of church and state, combining the features of a religious festival and a popular holiday. The first *auto-de fé* {14} celebrated at Seville took place on the 24th of September, 1559, on "Our Lady of Mercy" 's day—ironic coincidence! The ceremony, a mixed representation of Roman triumph and the day of judgment, was solemnized in

the square of San Francisco. Here, on an elevated stage, under the gaze of the assembled multitude, their sentences were read aloud and they were delivered over to the civil power to be taken to the *Quemadero*, or place of burning. Twenty-one persons were sentenced to the stake that day, and eighty to severe penance. The inquisitors delayed the second grand *auto* for more than a year in hopes that the king would arrive to preside over the act. Unwilling to wait any longer, however, they went ahead without him and on the 22nd of December 1560, fourteen more—eight of which were women—were delivered to the flames in person, three in effigy, and thirty-four were sentenced to severe punishment. The fourteen who were burned alive firmly kept their faith, passing through the temporary pangs of a cruel martyrdom to receive a crown of glory in the eternal paradise of the blessed. In ten years' time, the Inquisition had succeeded in eradicating Protestantism in Spain. By 1570 practically all of the converts had either suffered banishment or martyrdom, and for the three centuries that followed no Protestant testimony existed in Spain.

To prevent the introduction of Protestant literature into Spain, officers were stationed at seaports and the passes of the Pyrenees for the purpose of searching every suspicious package, and even person. Also, the government had a wide network of spies in the main European roads and cities to detect and kidnap all Spaniards suspected of heresy. These were sent back to Spain and delivered to the Inquisition. Thus, even abroad the Spanish Protestants were not safe, which explains why they were constantly moving from one country to another. Nevertheless, despite the tight control of the Inquisition, large quantities of evangelical literature was smuggled into the country, particularly around the region of Seville. At that time Seville was the most important Spanish city. Besides its agricultural and industrial wealth, it was the main harbor for all ships that came from the West Indies. It was a city of cosmopolitan culture and its university was one of the most advanced centers of learning in Europe. More than in any other place in Spain, it was in this city where the Protestant cause was most successful.

It is not surprising, then, that it was also in Seville where the Inquisition exercised its most brutal and cruel repression. According to contemporary testimonies, in one single day two

hundred suspects were arrested in Seville and its neighborhood. In a short time the number of people under arrest had risen to eight hundred. Prisons, convents, even private houses were used for their confinement. To water down the horrors of the Inquisition, {15} some Spanish historians claim that the actual number of Protestants burned at the stake was not as high as some European authors seem to assess. Contemporary research will soon solve this polemic issue, and will also reveal something which until now has remained practically unknown: the vast number of evangelicals that lingered and died in the cruel prisons of the Inquisition. Many Spanish Protestants who tried to leave the country by ship were taken by Turkish pirates and imprisoned in northern Africa (with the hope of getting high sums of money for their rescue).

### The Theology of the Spanish Reformers

What was the doctrinal position of the Spanish reformers? Can we place them in any of the well-established Protestant denominations? Since the movement grew somewhat independently under the direct contact and influence of the Scriptures, we can detect some autochthonous traits which give the Reformation in Spain its own specific character and personality. Once in contact with the theological schools of the European Reformation, however, the Spanish evangelicals found themselves more at home with Calvinism. As Paul J. Hauben writes: “the majority of the Spanish Protestants were Calvinists.”<sup>4</sup>

Many Spaniards fled to Geneva. Juan Pérez gathered them into a congregation, forming a Spanish church, to which for some time he officiated as pastor. He was succeeded in this office by Casiodoro de Reina. From Geneva Pérez moved to Paris where he died at a very old age, leaving all his property to defray the expense of printing the Bible in the Spanish language—a task accomplished by Casiodoro de Reina in 1569.

Cipriano de Valera, the accomplished Greek and Hebrew scholar who revised Casiodoro de Reina’s translation of the Bible, was also a staunch Calvinist. He had been a monk at San Isidro, the famous monastery of Seville. The majority of the monks there embraced

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4. Paul J. Hauben, *Three Spanish Heretics and the Reformation*, Librairie Droz (Genève, 1967), XIII.

the Reformation; some died under the Inquisition, others—as was the case with Antonio del Corro, Casiodoro de Reina, and Cipriano de Valera—could escape to Geneva. After a short stay in Geneva, Valera traveled to England where he established his residency. After some time in Cambridge and Oxford, where he also taught, he moved to London where he devoted his time to writing and translating. His masterful rendering of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was printed in London in 1597. Prior to this, he had published his *Tratado para confirmar en la fe cristiana a los cuativos de {16} Berbería* (1594), a treatise to confirm the believers enslaved by the Moors in North Africa in their Christian faith. This work contains one of the most beautiful summaries of Reformed doctrine ever written by a Calvinist theologian. Its balance between doctrine and piety is unsurpassed. Another of Valera's works was a 600-page volume entitled *Two Treatises on the Pope and the Mass* (1588). This work enjoyed several editions, both in Spanish and in English.

The first congregation of Spanish refugees was established at Antwerp and was of solid Calvinistic persuasion. In the landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, the Calvinistic region of Germany, there were also Spanish congregations which had in the Heidelberg Catechism their official doctrinal confession. In southern France, especially the region of Lyon, Montpellier and Mountaban, the Spanish Calvinists found wholehearted support from the Huguenots. Albeit, of all European countries, England was the safest place for Spanish refugees, and although there was a Spanish Reformed congregation in London, yet a goodly number of them joined the Anglican church.

### The Irenic Spirit of the Spanish Reformers

As we study the Spanish reformers we are struck by what may be regarded as one of their most distinguishing traits: namely, the irenic spirit they showed in their lives and writings. The polemic and militant attitude of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, Beza, and other reformers finds no equivalent in the Spanish reformers. In their Calvinism we do not find coldness of doctrine, nor a mere intellectual exposition of the truths of the Bible. For them doctrine was inseparable from love and mercy. Doctrine was the channel

through which Divine love finds its way into man's heart. The spiritual warmth of Spanish mysticism and the Quaker-like attitude of the *alumbrados* left a stamp of positive doctrinal experience in their life of faith. Neither Juan Pérez nor Cipriano de Valera, the most relevant examples of Calvinism in the Spanish Reformation, could separate doctrinal exposition from doxological adoration. For Juan de Valdés, the sweetest of our reformers, theological exposition is synonymous with adoration and worship. In short, the Spanish reformers went a long way in making theology a matter of the mind, the heart, and the will. These were men of peaceful attitudes in their relationship with other leaders whose religious views were different from their own. For instance, Cipriano de Valera, the staunchest Calvinist of the Spanish Reformation, had in Jacob Arminius one of his closest friends. It was also taken amiss that the Spanish {17} reformers should express disagreement with the execution of Servetus. Theirs was Richard Baxter's maxim: "In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity."

Facing the ecclesiastical powers and the Emperor in Worms, Martin Luther appealed to the sovereign rights of the individual conscience with his "my conscience is bound to God's Word." Over and over the German reformers appealed to the right of conscience in their strife with Rome. Yet as soon as they achieved independence from the Roman authority, and gained control over vast regions of Europe, they forgot the noble and biblical cause of the rights of conscience and practiced a policy of intolerance towards the dissenting believers in their realms of influence. In this the Spanish reformers were far advanced. They showed remarkable respect for the rights of conscience and the principles of religious liberty. In his book on the Spanish reformers, Paul J. Hauben writes: "In Reformation Calvinism there was little or no room for a man, however able, who would or could not follow orders." According to Hauben, this is what happened with the Spanish Reformer Antonio del Corro, who was not willing to confine himself to the writings of Calvin and other leaders of the Reformation in their approach to the Scriptures.<sup>5</sup> For Antonio del Corro, the danger of both Lutherans and Calvinists was to make

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5. *Ibid.*, 18.

“gods and idols of their ministers.”<sup>6</sup>

Having fled from the Inquisitorial intolerance of Romish Spain, the Spanish reformers expected to find in the Protestant countries an evangelical atmosphere of religious liberty and tolerance. But this was not always the case: now and then there too they had to breathe the suffocating climate of dogmatic intolerance. The spiritual independence of the Spanish reformers was the cause of constant friction with the European Protestant leaders, especially the Calvinists. Besides, the Spaniards were always under the suspicion of *Servetism*. We must point out, however, that Calvin himself showed a different attitude: He always showed great respect for the Spanish reformers he came to know. Different indeed was the way Theodore Beza treated the Protestant leaders, with his unflinching accusation of their being “followers of Servet and Loyola.”<sup>7</sup> In England the mistrust—and even hostility—of the Puritans towards the Spanish Protestants was even greater. The open irenic spirit of the Spanish reformers contrasted {18} sharply with the doctrinal and personal belligerence of the European Protestant leaders.

The Spaniards never considered the achievements of Reformed theology as *final*, but as important contributions toward a fuller and deeper understanding of God’s word. Furthermore, for them the elaboration of a more perfect body of biblical theology could be achieved only under circumstances of tolerance and charity among believers. Antonio del Corro, in the introduction of his excellent commentary on Ecclesiastes, in a most moving way advocated a genuine biblical reformation within the framework of Christian charity among evangelicals. As an example of a truly irenic spirit among Christians, he mentions the Duchess of Ferrara, in whose conversion John Calvin played a decisive role, and whose subjects enjoyed a very tolerant form of Calvinism, unknown in other parts of Europe. As a result of her open attitude towards the people of different Christian confessions, an unprecedented ecumenical atmosphere was achieved. To accomplish this, the Duchess relied on the services of two Spanish reformers: Juan Pérez and Antonio del Corro. In their contacts and fellowship with believers of other

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6. P. Hauben, *op. cit.*, 25.

7. *Ibid.*, 41, 45, 51, 54, 93.

denominations, the Spanish reformers established a clear line of demarcation between the *man* and his *beliefs*.<sup>8</sup>

This irenic spirit of the Spanish reformers has been explained on three grounds: first, and foremost, as a result of their understanding of the gospel; second, as a consequence of their having suffered in their own flesh the religious intolerance of the Inquisition; and third, as having retained the Erasmian attitude they had discovered in the writings of that great humanist of Rotterdam. Nowhere in Europe was his influence so strongly felt as in Spain. The Erasmian influence on the Reformation in general cannot be overlooked. In many ways Erasmus prepared the way for the Reformation and was the forerunner of Luther and Calvin. The hearts of many people were made receptive to the seed of the gospel thanks to the groundwork of humanism. We must not overlook the fact that the leading European reformers had also been influenced, at some time or other, by humanist thought. This was certainly the case with John Calvin, Phillip Melanchthon, and Martin Bucer. Moreover, according to the French historian Marcel Bataillon, “it was in Spain where Erasmus harvested a more successful crop of disciples and where his books enjoyed unparalleled {19} popularity and influence.”<sup>9</sup> The positive influence of Erasmus on the Spanish reformers was certainly to be seen in their irenic understanding of the gospel.

Juan de Valdés constitutes another eloquent example of Christian irenism. Contrary to the militant and often aggressive attitude of the Lutheran and Calvinist reformers, Juan de Valdés avoided direct dialectical confrontations with Rome, and in the framework of a more peaceful atmosphere allowed the persuasive force of the Scriptures to pursue its converting effects. The sweet, gentle tone of his writing is far more powerful and convincing than the thunders and diatribes of the European reformers. An example of this is his *Diálogo de doctrina cristiana*. This work

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8. Speaking of Casiodoro de Reina, the Spanish reformer who translated the Bible into the Castilian language, A. G. Kinder writes: “Reina did himself no good by befriending people whose doctrines were regarded with suspicion. The practice has, of course, plenty of precedent in the Gospels, and Reina was doubtless able to distinguish between a man and his beliefs.” *Casiodoro de Reina*, 23.

9. M. Bataillon, *Erasmus y Espana* (México, 1979), 212.

was written shortly after his graduation from the University of Alcalá, and published by the university in 1529. To begin with, it is remarkable that a work containing the basic doctrines of the Reformation should ever have been published under the sponsorship of that famous university and the *nihil obstat* of the Archbishop of Toledo, the highest hierarchical authority in Spain. This itself is proof of how popularly the doctrines of the gospel had become known in Spain. Valdés' fascinating book was later forbidden by the Inquisition, to the point that no extant copy of it was known until 1925, when professor Bataillon discovered a copy in Coimbra, Portugal, and republished it in facsimile edition.

In the *Dialogo* three people take part. The main character is an Archbishop who teaches the great doctrines of Christianity to an ignorant priest and to a layman. The archbishop earnestly exhorts them to study the Scriptures, as the supreme authority on matters of salvation. He argues that any teachings not found in the word must be rejected as false. The Bible is the only rule of doctrine and practice. Salvation is by grace alone, on the merits of Christ—the only mediator between God and man—and is received by faith; good works are the evidence of genuine faith. The role which the *law* plays in salvation and in the life of sanctification, as Bataillon himself comments, “is most Calvinistic.” The *Dialogo* ends with these words by the layman: “I have fallen in love with your words ... Oh how wonderful it would be if these things, and in this manner, could be preached from all our pulpits!”

The second factor that contributed to the irenic spirit of the Spanish reformers was the direct experience they had of the Spanish Inquisition. The intolerance they had suffered in their native land made them long for liberty, freedom, and tolerance. The constant discussions maintained {20} among the different Protestant groups in their desire to reach minute doctrinal definitions often led to personal confrontations in which the most basic Christian charity was totally absent. For Reina and del Corro, the controversy between Lutherans and Calvinists on the matter of the Holy Supper was very carnal and personalistic. Though they both sided with the Calvinists, they very much opposed the manner in which the polemic was conducted. It is not surprising, therefore, to find in our Spanish reformers a greater congeniality with the more moderate leaders of the Protestant Reformation:

Bucer, Bullinger, and Sturm and even with some Anglican bishops.

The Spanish reformers suffered also as a result of the general prejudices and resentments Europeans held against Spain. As children of their time, to a certain degree these prejudices were shared by the Protestant leaders as well. In the specific realm of doctrine, the suspicion of Servetism and Arminianism was often the cause of distrust and misunderstanding. Casiodoro de Reina was often accused of Servetism as regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. The accusation could not be more false and more groundless. In the thoroughly Calvinistic *Confession of Faith* Reina wrote for the Spanish congregation of London, his Trinitarian convictions are clearly stated. Furthermore, in the title of his commentary to the *Gospel of John*, Reina affirms that his purpose in writing the commentary was to prove the divinity of Christ and the biblical grounds for the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet all this conclusive proof did not satisfy Beza, nor the other Calvinists. (They took offense at the fact that Reina stated that the word "Trinity" is not found in the Scriptures.) Reina never resorted to strong language nor distorted the arguments of his opponents in order to state the biblical position. In his argumentation and apologetics, he always kept an irenic tone and a loving Christian spirit. Even when referring to Servetus, his language was moderate and respectful. When Servetus was condemned and burned at the stake in Geneva, Reina expressed his strong disagreement with the sentence. Like the rest of the Spanish reformers he believed that the death penalty should not be imposed on heretics. We are told that whenever he passed near the place where Servetus had been put to death, "tears flowed from his eyes."<sup>10</sup> {21}

### The Independence of the Spanish Reformers

While recognizing the great gifts and personal talent of Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and the other Protestant leaders, the Spanish reformers never adopted a *servile* attitude towards them; they always vindicated independence in thought and action. As far as education, cultural preparation, and intellectual gifts are concerned, the Spanish reformers were very much on equal

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10. A. G. Kinder, *Casiodoro de Reina: Spanish Reformer of the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1975), 19.

terms with the European Protestant leaders. According to Thomas M'Crie: "More than in any other country in Europe, among the Spanish converts to the evangelical faith there was a greater proportion of illustrious people, both in rank and in intellectual knowledge."<sup>11</sup>

Casiodoro de Reina, "homo in literas educatus" as he refers to himself in one of his letters, studied at the universities of Seville and Basle and became one of the great scholars of the time in biblical languages. Once settled in England, our outstanding theologian and humanist Antonio del Corro was to become a professor of classics at Oxford. His scholarship was greatly appreciated and he could even claim Sir Philip Sidney—"one of the jewels of Queen Elizabeth's crown"—among his close friends. Pedro Galés, a bright Catalan Calvinist who had studied at Bologna and Paris, taught Greek and law in several Italian universities until he was accused and condemned of heresy in Rome. As a result of the tortures inflicted on him, he lost one eye but was able to escape from prison and flee to Geneva where he also taught for some time. Unfortunately, on his way to Bordeaux he was captured by the Inquisition and surrendered to Spain, where he died in prison of the Inquisition in Saragossa. So great was the hatred the Inquisition harbored toward him that in 1595 his remains were dug up and burned. Part of his library is still extant and contains an excellent collection of ancient documents. Juan de Valdés, very likely the greatest of our reformers, has become the center of attention of many contemporary scholars. According to Bataillon, "Juan de Valdés is one of the most authentic religious geniuses of the sixteenth century."<sup>12</sup>

It is indeed paradoxical that a country that had so strongly emphasized the study of the Bible should, only a few years later under the evil dictates of the Inquisition, end up totally forbidding the reading of the Scriptures. Philip II and his successors were successful in isolating the country from all Protestant influence. Anything with even the flavor of Protestantism was banned as evil and detrimental to the country. This fanatical prejudice {22} against anything Protestant lasted centuries. Gaspar de Jovellanos

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11. Thomas M'Crie, *La Reforma en Espana* (Buenos Aires, 1950), 142.

12. Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus y Espana* (México, 1979), 361.

(1744–1811) was one of our leading scholars of the Enlightenment. Statesman and author, he gained fame for his scholarly outlook and for his personal integrity. He was prominent in scientific studies and an able political and social reformer. He took it upon himself, as a member of the government, to draw up a plan for a much needed reform in agriculture, mining, and fishing. Jovellanos, a practicing Roman Catholic—“de misa diaria”—found his proposal rejected on the grounds that it advocated a series of reforms too much in line with those implanted in Protestant countries. But accusations did not stop there. He was also accused of “Protestant leanings” on account of having the writings of John Locke in his private library. With no trial, Jovellanos was banished to Palma de Mallorca where he spent eight years of exile.

The more we study the history of Spain, the more we realize the tremendous change the Inquisition and the Counter-Reformation wrought on the whole nation. Spain ceased to be the open-minded country it had been, to become the most intolerant and repressive nation of Europe. In the name of Christianity, the fundamental rights of man were abolished and death and banishment were imposed on those citizens who dared to disagree or vindicate the rights of conscience and the basic liberties of the individual. Only the tyranny of fascism, marxism, and present-day Moslem fundamentalism find a parallel with the horrors and suppression of liberties imposed by the Spanish Inquisition. How much tragedy blind fanaticism can bring to a nation! It seems that in the case of Spain, Tertullian’s saying—that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians—was not fulfilled. For centuries Spain remained a country of disguised Christianity where error, superstition, and ignorance found their way unchallenged—as was so graphically portrayed by Goya in his *Caprichos* early last century. As we gain knowledge of the Spanish reformers and the martyrs of the Inquisition, let us also learn from them and imitate them in their irenic understanding of the doctrine of the Reformation.

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# A PRESUPPOSITIONAL APPROACH TO ECCLESIASTICAL TRADITION<sup>1</sup>

*Andrew Sandlin*

*“Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the  
dead faith of the living.”—Jaroslav Pelikan<sup>2</sup>*

## Introduction

“We Baptists don’t believe in tradition,” remarked a wily minister with a twinkle in his eye: “It’s contrary to our historic position.” That humorous anecdote underscores a crucial fact about tradition: it is unavoidable. All churches—all religions in fact—possess traditions. The most ardent Pentecostal or fundamentalist that eschews the very word, manifests religious tradition—Pentecostal or fundamentalist tradition if no other—in his religious practice, ecclesiastical or otherwise.

As Tonsor recognizes, the inevitability of tradition in general, the human phenomenon of which ecclesiastical tradition is but a single species, constitutes a chief factor in the eventual destruction of revolutionary ideologies, so potent is its cultural force, for “both nature and culture make nearly impossible the complete

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1. A slightly shorter version of this paper was delivered at the 1994 Conference on Revival, Reformation, and Reconstruction Warsaw, Ohio. I must emphasize that this essay is a tentative attempt to come to grips with an extremely complex—sometimes convoluted—issue that has engaged some of Protestantism’s most adept minds. Consequently, I would be presumptuous to depict this paper as a definitive contribution to the issue of the relation between Scripture and tradition in the Reformed Faith.

2. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1971), 9.

destruction of tradition.”<sup>3</sup> Its force cements an otherwise atomistic society, and religion is one of its single key ingredients. It may seem odd, therefore, that a sector of the church so assertedly dedicated to the preservation of culture, Protestantism, would have such an apparently dim view of ecclesiastical tradition.

Almost all distaste for ecclesiastical tradition on the part of Protestants and radical reformers<sup>4</sup> issues from a reaction to the accumulated unbiblical traditions of Roman Catholicism and, to a lesser extent, Eastern {24} Orthodoxy. It is difficult, in fact, to avoid the conclusion that the attitude toward tradition by the early reformers and subsequent Reformed orthodoxy was shaped almost entirely by a negative reaction to Romanism. But if from our historical vantage point our sixteenth- and seventeenth-century forebears lacked an objective, dispassionate assessment of tradition, we can forgive their iconoclastic fervor; for they were convinced—as we should be convinced—that as an objective and authoritative truth deposit, Holy Scripture may have no rivals, as it did and does in Romanism.

To this point I have used the word *tradition* as though its meaning in this context were self-evident, but it is not at all clear that its definition even in such an ecclesiastical context is unequivocal. If, for instance, I say, “It is our church’s tradition always to partake of the sacrament of communion *after* the public confession of sin and recitation of the Apostles Creed,” few Protestants would raise objection to either the designation of such actions as tradition or to the employment of the term in that context. On the other hand, if I remark, “Tradition requires of our church to offer homage to the Blessed Virgin and to venerate images,” I would suffer more than raised eyebrows from a virtually all-Protestant audience. In the first instance, tradition refers merely to the ordering of certain practices either mandated in the Scriptures or explicative of the Scriptures. The term *policy* or *practice* could not validly be substituted for tradition, because these actions and their ordering involve much more than discretionary activity: we believe the

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3. Stephen J. Tonsor, “The Inevitability of Tradition,” *Modern Age*, Spring, 1994, 229.

4. By radical reformers I refer to the Anabaptists, Quakers, Pentecostals and, to a certain extent, fundamentalists. Further, it almost goes without saying that objection to ecclesiastical tradition is a hallmark of cults.

Bible *requires* public confession of sin and the partaking of the sacrament, and *implies* the necessity of public profession of faith as well as the partaking of communion after such profession of faith and after the confession of sin. In the second instance, however, tradition seems to imply much more—it assumes there is some binding authority inherent in tradition itself, or perhaps even that tradition is an independent source of divine revelation, or at least in some way of God's will.

The two usages employed above instance a distinction the reformers and their immediate heirs understood, wittingly or not, and a distinction their Roman counterparts were less likely to observe. The Reformed recognized there is a vast difference between tradition as an inescapable feature of religion, and tradition as an independent source of religious authority. This distinction, they judged, issued from Scripture itself.

### Tradition in the Scriptures

Biblically, tradition is either that which is handed down from one person or one generation to another, or, in its verb form, the act of handing down {25} itself. Although tradition seems essential to the preservation of the Jewish faith (e.g., Ex. 12:26 f.; Isa. 59:21), the Greek words communicating the idea of tradition in the New Testament are found rarely in the Septuagint, and the word itself is not found in the Hebrew in the sense under consideration.<sup>5</sup> The majority of usages of the term *tradition* in the New Testament are unfavorable. Five times in Mark 7, for example, tradition (*paradosis*) is contrasted unfavorably with the message of the Law; it constitutes a Judaic appendage to—and eventually a substitute for—God's inscripturated old covenant document. Christ reprimands the Pharisees thus: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mk. 7:9). St. Paul reminds the church in Gal. 1:14 of his misguided reverence for Jewish tradition. In Col. 2:8 he refers to and excoriates the spurious "revelations of the elemental spirits

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5. Charles B. Williams, "Tradition," in ed. James Orr, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1939), 5:3004.

of the universe,"<sup>6</sup> perhaps a sort of Gnosticism into which some of the Colossians had fallen.

The commendatory usage of tradition in Scripture seemingly always connotes the transmission and preservation of the faith as disclosed in objective divine revelation. Hence St. Paul exhorts the believers to "keep the ordinances [traditions]" that he had transmitted to them (1 Cor. 11:2), to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15).<sup>7</sup> The contrast between tradition favorable and unfavorable is that the content of the former is limited to the Scriptures themselves, while the content of the latter contains a mixture of biblical and unbiblical dogma and regulations. On the face of it, this distinction seems not only too neat, but also too optimistic, as though the maintenance of tradition is nothing more than the preservation of the text of Scripture. It must be recalled, however, that the Scriptures speak with equal frequency and clarity of the transmission of the faith itself. In St. Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall {26} be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), the object of transmission seems to be not merely the divine revelation communicated to him, and the text of Scripture, but the Christian faith itself. This is the obvious denotation in Jude 3, in which the writer notes that "the faith which was once delivered to the saints" must be defended against sly but pernicious attacks.

If we combine these two denotations of tradition, we derive a definition which conceives of it as the faithful transmission of the Christian faith as circumscribed exclusively by the Holy Scriptures. (This is, I suspect, not coincidentally the idea the reformers had in mind.) The Bible again and again exhorts Christians to transmit

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6. K. Wegenast, "Teach, Instruct, Tradition, Education, Discipline," in ed. Colin Inge Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids [1978], 1986), 3:775; cf. this sound, succinct discussion of the etymology of the Greek terms for tradition.

7. "Before 2 Thess. 2:15 is seen as a classic proof-text for the Roman Catholic principle of tradition (namely both written and oral tradition), it should be borne in mind that *paradoxeis* here does not consist of a fixed canon or writings handed down and supplemented by oral tradition, but refers to the apostle's written and oral admonitions to the church, which the church has duly accepted (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6)." *Ibid.*, 774.

the faith untarnished and undiluted to their own generation and especially generations subsequent.

### Tradition in the Patristic Church

It is not surprising, then, that the patristic church maintained a high view of tradition. Those are gravely mistaken, in fact, who assume that an indispensable role accorded to ecclesiastical tradition was a phenomenon emerging only in the later patristic church, as though the apostles and very early church fathers were nothing more than bare biblicists and that their immediate successors polluted the fount of primitive Christianity with human traditions. From almost the very first, “catholic tradition” was held in high esteem. Schaff observes of the second- and third-century church:

Besides appealing to the Scriptures, the fathers, particularly Irenaeus and Tertullian, refer with equal confidence to the “rule of faith;” that is, the common faith of the church, as orally handed down in the unbroken succession of bishops from Christ and his apostles to their day, and above all as still living in the original apostolic churches, like those of Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, and Rome. Tradition is thus intimately connected with the primitive episcopate. The latter was the vehicle of the former, and both were looked upon as bulwarks against heresy.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, perhaps, the *chief* service to which the patristic church put tradition was as a bulwark against heresy. Florovsky notes of the orthodox battle with the early heresy of Arianism:

The dispute with the Arians was centered again in the exegetical field,—at least, in its early phase. The Arians and their supporters have produced an impressive array of Scriptural texts in the defense of their doctrinal position. They wanted to restrict theological discussion to the Biblical ground alone. Their claims had to be met precisely on this {27} ground, first of all. And their exegetical method, the manner in which they handled the text, was much the same as that of the earlier dissenters. They were operating with selected proof-texts, without much concern for the total context of the Revelation. It was imperative for the Orthodox to appeal to the

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8. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Ante-Nicene Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1910), 525.

mind of the Church, to that “Faith” which had been once delivered and then faithfully kept. This was the main concern, and the usual method, of St. Athanasius.<sup>9</sup>

It is perhaps difficult for us moderns suckled on Renaissance and Enlightenment ideals and the resultant pluralism and atomization, to conceive of the importance the early church fathers attached to “one holy catholic church.” Both the Great Schism between the East and the West, and the Reformation in the West, destroyed the unity of the Christian church. Previously a cardinal tenet of religion was the unity of the faith in the church, preserved generationally in tradition. Tradition was not merely a correlate or appendage to the faith of the church; it was in fact the very essence of the institutional representation of the church: “Pelikan notes that the orthodox consensus of tradition that shaped patristic Christianity—East and West—consisted of catholicity, confessionalism, and antiquity.<sup>10</sup> For example, ‘In the usage of Eusebius, the terms orthodox, ancient, and ecclesiastical were almost interchangeable.’<sup>11</sup> The patristic church did not sharply distinguish between Scripture and tradition, the teaching of the apostles and that of the ecumenical councils, for it assumed the faithful transmission of Christian tradition was in fact nothing more than fidelity to Scripture itself. It did not seem to occur to them that what we Protestants term *sola scriptura* could conflict with the views of the church catholic.”<sup>12</sup>

### Tradition in the Reformation and the Roman Response

In time, of course, such a conflict was apparent—at least to some willing to take on the authoritarian Papacy of medieval Romanism. It is not difficult to see how the *essential* devotion to tradition conduced readily to a devotion to tradition as an almost independent source of revelation, or at least an independent authority. This incremental emergence of an independently authoritative tradition coincided with an increase in the authority

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9. Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, and Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, MA, 1972), 80.

10. Pelikan, *op. cit.*, 332–339.

11. *Ibid.*, 336.

12. Andrew Sandlin, “Orthodoxy,” *Calvinism Today*, October, 1993, 22.

of the church, since the church was seen as the repository of the {28} genuine Christian tradition. It was against this concept of tradition that the reformers' dictum of *sola scriptura* was leveled.

The reformers did not depict Scripture as simply a valid form of inscripturated tradition and thus attempt to re-capture and sanitize tradition for a Protestant cause,<sup>13</sup> probably because they accepted the Roman definition of tradition as unwritten, in contradistinction from Scripture. When we peruse the writings of the reformers, in fact, we detect on the face of them what appears to be a quite distinct break with *all* doctrinal and ecclesiastical tradition. Calvin, for example, wishes to "fix the boundary of [the church's] wisdom where Christ has made an end of speaking" in his word,<sup>14</sup> and accords to the infallible Holy Spirit the place the Romanists accord to an infallible church. Yet it cannot be forgotten that

The phenomenon of Tradition ... had already become apparent in the theology of the Reformers in their acceptance of early church dogma, as well as in the crystallization of their own doctrinal Tradition in written creeds.<sup>15</sup>

Recall, moreover, that the reformers' frequent employment of the writings of the early church fathers to accuse the medieval Roman church of defection from true catholicism is itself a reliance on tradition. After all, if *sola scriptura* entails the repudiation of all tradition whatsoever, an appeal to the church fathers hardly seems necessary.

The Roman Catholic Church codified its response to the Reformation hostility to the authority of ecclesiastical tradition at the Council of Trent. In its fourth session it set forth the authority of oral tradition:

... seeing clearly that this [divine] truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the

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13. Gerhard Ebeling, *The Word of God and Tradition*, trans. S. H. Hooke (Philadelphia, 1964), 108. The two works by Ebeling cited in this essay require a much more extensive treatment than the limitations of the topic of this essay admit.

14. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. 4, Ch. 8, Sec. 13.

15. Ebeling, *op. cit.*, 104.

apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand: [the Synod] following the examples of the orthodox fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety and reverence, all the books of both the Old and New Testament—seeing that one God is the author of both—as also the said [unwritten] traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of {29} mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.<sup>16</sup>

This systematization of the regnant Roman idea of tradition reveals a subtle but obvious shift in the role of tradition from ancient catholic orthodoxy, which did indeed see tradition as an integral part of the faith, recognizing it not only as the vehicle for the transmission of the faith, but in some sense as the faith itself, and did not equate it with separate, independent sources of authority. In fact, as Cunningham observes of the church fathers:

They speak, indeed, often of tradition, and traditions; but then it has been conclusively proved, that by these words they most commonly meant the sacred Scriptures themselves, and the statements therein contained.<sup>17</sup>

While this assessment because of its polemical context may be

16. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids [1931], 1990), 2:80.

17. William Cunningham, *Historical Theology* (Still Waters Revival Books, Alberta [1882], 199d), 1:186. The general thrust of this assessment has been verified by Kelly: "... [T]he reader should be placed on his guard against an ambiguity inherent in the word [tradition]. In present-day idiom 'tradition' denotes the body of unwritten doctrine handed down in the church, or the handing down of such doctrine, and so tends to be contrasted with Scripture. In the language of the fathers, as indeed of the New Testament, the term of course conveyed this idea of transmission, and eventually the modern usage became regular. But its primary significance ... viz. authoritative delivery, was originally to the fore and always remained prominent. Hence by tradition the fathers usually mean doctrine which the Lord or His apostles committed to the Church, irrespective of whether it was handed down orally or in documents, and in the earlier centuries at any rate they prefer to employ other words or phrases to designate the Church's unwritten traditional teaching ... [W]hile Scripture (i.e., the Old Testament) and the apostolic testimony are formally independent of each other, these fathers seem to have treated their contents as virtually coincident," J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York, 1960 ed.), 30, 3d, 34. Note in addition the comments of Herman Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1968), 15–24.

somewhat exaggerated, it points to an essential truth about the role of tradition in patristic Christianity—it was enveloped in a profound respect for the Holy Scriptures as the only source of objective revelation and the final court of appeal. Cunningham reminds us, moreover, that

They [the fathers] sometimes appealed, in arguing against the heretics, to the doctrines and practices which had been handed down from the apostles, especially in the churches which they themselves had founded. But besides that there was more, not only of plausibility, but of weight, in this appeal in the second century than there could be at any subsequent period, it is evident that they employed this consideration merely as an auxiliary or subordinate argument, {30} without ever intending, by the using it, to deny, or cast into the background, the supremacy or sufficiency of Scripture; and that they employed it, to prove the absolute and certain truth of their doctrines, as to disprove an allegation very often made then, as now, in theological discussion, that they were new and recently invented.<sup>18</sup>

That is, the fathers employed the unbroken consensus of the church as a weapon against heresy, not with the assumption that this tradition is objectively authoritative, but *with the assumption that a doctrine with historical attestation is less likely to be wrong than one of recent origin*. Herewith the general outlines of the patristic conception of tradition become clearer: since the faith which the church espouses is founded on the infallible and authoritative word of God in Holy Scripture, that faith is valid. Admittedly they were somewhat naive in assuming that there could be no discrepancy between what the Bible itself actually teaches and what they believed (a naiveté shared by some modern fundamentalists), but the early fathers cannot seriously be enlisted as predecessors of the Tridentine dogma that unwritten tradition occupies a place alongside Scripture as an independent, objective authority in the church.

A cardinal tenet of Reformed bibliology developed in reaction to the Roman exaltation of tradition is the *sufficiency* of Scripture. This tenet was given confessional expression by the great body of the Reformed church, of which the statement by the Westminster

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18. Cunningham, *loc. cit.*

Confession of Faith that “nothing at any time is to be added [to Scripture], whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men”<sup>19</sup> is but the most prominent example. A prime exponent of this tenet later in the seventeenth century was the Reformed dogmatist and polemicist Francis Turretin, who in characteristic fashion states: “... [W]e [Reformed theologians] give to the Scriptures such a sufficiency and perfection as is immediate and explicit. There is no need to have recourse to any tradition independent of them.”<sup>20</sup> Turretin argues for the sufficiency of the Scriptures on explicitly biblical grounds.<sup>21</sup> He takes 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Dt. 4:2; and Ps. 19:7 to teach the absolute sufficiency of Scripture; argues that “[n]o fit reason can be given why God should wish one part of his word to be written and the other to be delivered by spoken voice”<sup>22</sup>; and cites the fathers [!] in support of his view. He admits, however: {31}

... we acknowledge that tradition is formal and active because the oracles of God were committed to the church as their keeper and proclaimer. But the tradition is not material and passive, implying some doctrine delivered in addition to the Scriptures (which we deny). So we have the Scriptures through tradition not as the source of belief, but only as the means and instrument through which they have come down to us.<sup>23</sup>

Turretin, then, accords tradition an *instrumental* function, the means by which the Scriptures and the faith are preserved, but not the source of the faith itself. Note too that he dissents not merely from the Roman Catholic view of the role of tradition, but from the actual Roman *definition* of tradition.

The question of the relative merit of tradition among the Reformed was also answered at length last century by the justifiably revered Princetonian Charles Hodge, who makes several concessions to the viability of tradition. First, he acknowledges that tradition appears within the biblical revelation itself: “The revelation of God

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19. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, ch. 1, sec. 6.

20. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1992), 136.

21. *Ibid.*, 136–138.

22. *Ibid.*, 139.

23. *Ibid.*, 142.

in his Word begins in a fountain, and flows in a continuous stream ever increasing in volume. We are governed by this tradition of truth running through the whole sacred volume.”<sup>24</sup> Second, Hodge notes the existence of a “traditionary teaching flowing through the Christian Church from the day of Pentecost to the present time.” This, according to Hodge, is “the common faith of the Church, which no man is at liberty to reject and which no man can reject and be a Christian.”<sup>25</sup> By this description Hodge refers to what we call Christian orthodoxy. He justifies this use of tradition on two grounds: (1) that “what all the competent readers of a plain book take to be its meaning, must be its meaning,” and (2) that since the Holy Spirit promised to lead his church into all truth, whatever they “agree in believing must be true.”<sup>26</sup> Significantly Hodge contends that this “common faith” comprehends “only essential doctrines; that is, doctrines which enter into the very nature of Christianity, and which are necessary to its subjective existence in the heart, or which if they do not enter essentially into the religious experience of believers, are so connected with vital doctrines as not to admit of separation from them.”<sup>27</sup> This constitutes a sort of Reformed fundamentalism, apparently essential to ward off Papist contentions that {32} tradition includes any number of unbiblical elements, as well as biblicist tenets that would undermine the faith by appeal to the Bible.

Hodge, in addition, concedes doctrinal development: “All Protestants admit that there has been, in one sense, an uninterrupted development of theology in the Church, from the apostolic age to the present time.”<sup>28</sup> He is intent, of course, to insist that the truths progressively affirmed were elicited from the text of Scripture itself—in other words, they were there all the time—in contradistinction to the claims of Rome that the church is endowed with the capacity and responsibility to posit new doctrine not found in Scripture. In fact, Hodge turns this

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24. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1981 reprint), 1:113.

25. *Ibid.*, 113, 114.

26. *Ibid.*, 114.

27. *Ibid.*, 115.

28. *Ibid.*, 116.

concept of doctrinal development against Rome itself, validating Luther's somewhat novel understanding of an exclusively forensic doctrine of justification by appeal to doctrinal development.<sup>29</sup> He concludes that the church "understands the great doctrines of theology, anthropology, and soteriology, far better now, than they were understood in the early post-apostolic age of the Church."<sup>30</sup> Naturally, one suspects Hodge is convinced additional light on doctrinal issues will emerge from the study of Scripture in time.

Although Hodge opposes the Roman Catholic concept of tradition on the grounds that (1) it cannot be proven that tradition was ever intended to serve as an independent authority, (2) that God never promised the sort of supernatural intervention in history that this view of tradition requires, (3) that there exists no ultimate criterion by which to differentiate spurious traditions from legitimate traditions, (4) that "common consent" as a form of tradition which Protestants do support is quite different from the view of tradition held by the Romanists, and (5) that tradition is not suited to serve as a rule of faith since it is not objective,<sup>31</sup> his clinching argument is that it "subverts the authority of the Scriptures."<sup>32</sup> He reminds his readers that it was precisely this undue stress on tradition that rendered the Pharisees so culpable by our Lord. Tradition therefore may become positively inimical to the faith if it begins to undermine the authority of Scripture by serving as a rival authority.

The irony will not be lost on the astute listener that I have opted to cite three chief theologians from the Reformed tradition [!] in order to combat the Roman Catholic dogma that ecclesiastical tradition is vested with independent divine authority. But the irony is mollified by the {33} understanding that it is just *this* sort of use of tradition as one of those uses that is not at all objectionable, since it is enlisted merely to argue that what the Reformed do believe is expressed in or deduced from Scripture.

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29. *Ibid.*, 118.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, 122–128.

32. *Ibid.*, 128.

## Tradition in Modernist Protestant Thought

It is perhaps only in a recognition of the deleterious effects produced by a rationalistic usage of the dogma of *sola scriptura* that the necessity of a valid and workable view of tradition becomes apparent. I take as an example a “conservative” (i.e., somewhat neo-orthodox) liberal, Gerhard Ebeling, a church historian and dogmatician whose profound and brilliant treatment of the issue of the relation between Scripture and tradition is clearly heretical (it is well to remember that almost all heresy is profound and brilliant; profundity and brilliance are no impediments to—and are often the chief selling points of—heresy).

Ebeling notes that it was only with the relatively recent emergence of the discipline of historical criticism that the problems inherent in the idea of tradition came to light. Of course, the reformers had leveled their criticisms of the use to which the Roman Catholic Church had put tradition, but their objections were largely unrelated to the nature of tradition itself. “It is only when criticism enables us to see the process of transmission in its true perspective,” declares Ebeling, “that we become aware of the powerful influence exerted by Tradition, and can realize more clearly the part which historically conditioned traditions have played in history.”<sup>33</sup> The phrase “historically conditioned traditions” carries the weight not only in Ebeling’s comment but also in a theologically liberal attitude toward traditions in general. It presupposes the quite modern recognition that history is not objective; that religious traditions are colored by the cultural and philosophical climates of which they are a part; and that, consequently, it is impossible to address the concept of tradition apart from a consideration of these broader factors that allegedly influence religious tradition as much as religion itself. Not surprisingly, as a result of this enterprise, “the phenomenon of Tradition has been historicized and its validity called into question.”<sup>34</sup> After all, if religious tradition is inextricably interwoven with cultural, philosophical, and other factors, it is quite possible that it is those “alien” factors, and not religion itself, that are most crucial in shaping the tradition. {34}

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33. Ebeling, *op. cit.*, 105.

34. *Ibid.*

As a result, historical criticism seemingly stripped away the pretensions of absoluteness in tradition and laid bare its inescapably historical and therefore relativistic character. Traditions were seen to be little more than human, and often self-serving, conventions, religious and noble conventions at times, but conventions nonetheless. Of course, in its earliest criticisms of tradition, the first disciples of Enlightenment sounded a lot like the reformers themselves, thundering against the Romanists who dared to add human tradition to the unadulterated word of God. But what stands out as distinctive of the Enlightenment onslaught against tradition was that it was driven not by a respect for the ruling authority of the word of God, but by an animosity for tradition itself. This animosity became painfully and flagrantly clear when it became evident that Scripture and the Christian faith are themselves tradition, and the more recent Enlightenment “historicists” like Ebeling overturn orthodoxy along with tradition. This is evidenced strikingly in Ebeling’s observation that the reformers’ denial of the authoritative role of tradition subverted the authority of Scripture itself.<sup>35</sup> Ebeling’s assumption, of course, is that the traditional view of verbal inspiration is primarily a dogmatic—rather than strictly biblical—facet of the faith and therefore no less vulnerable to the criticism of tradition than any other dogma, holding as he does that “it would be ... meaningless to attempt to deduce directly from Scripture a proof of the *sola scriptura* principle, since such a proof, if it is to be convincing, must take for granted the very thing which has to be proved, namely, the canonical authority of Scripture.”<sup>36</sup>

No less significant is Ebeling’s reminder that the heirs of the formal principle of the Reformation—he lists Pietism, Enlightenment, and historical criticism—utilized this very principle of *sola scriptura* to destroy Protestant orthodoxy:

[Wie can see that each of these in its own way and within its own limits, adopts a relation to the points of view which were implicit in the principle of the orthodox dogmatic pattern itself. In this way they were committed to the hermeneutic problem contained in *sola scriptura*, and thus abandoned the standpoint of orthodox

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35. *Ibid.*, 106.

36. *Ibid.*, 114, 115. cf. 119.

dogmatic, of which the hermeneutic principle consists ...<sup>37</sup>

The cluster of modern approaches to the Bible set in motion both by an abstract and inorganic application of *sola scriptura* and by Enlightenment have consequently all served eventually to undermine both biblical {35} authority and the orthodox faith. I speak most obviously of “higher criticism,” or the historical-critical method, which has mesmerized even evangelical scholars.<sup>38</sup> Less obvious, though hardly less pernicious, is the hazard posed by “lower text criticism,” which, as liberal Harold DeWolf notes, cannot be isolated from “higher” historical criticism. He is perplexed that conservatives are solicitous to employ the very form of (“lower”) criticism intimately tied to “higher” criticism which eviscerates the orthodox Christian faith.<sup>39</sup>

We should never be lured therefore into assuming that a “high” view of Scripture, or even of the necessity of an intently exegetical theology, constitutes *ipso facto* a sound relation to Christian orthodoxy. In this context, Ebeling notes what may seem to us today as an odd, reserved, and even obscurantist approach of some of the early fathers to exegesis and the exegetical arguments of heretics:

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37. *Ibid.*, 114.

38. J. Ramsey Michaels observes: “Most evangelicals who teach the Bible at the college or seminary level have made their peace with biblical criticism to a degree that was never possible in the older Fundamentalism. Careful attention has been given not only to biblical languages and the historical-grammatical understanding of what the biblical texts say, but to hermeneutics, that is, the attempt to translate the biblical message into categories which address today’s questions and concerns. This has led to a disinterest in proof-texting and a candid acknowledgment that priority has been assigned to some aspects of the biblical revelation over others. It has also fostered attempts to distinguish critical theories about the Bible which are arbitrary and speculative from those which genuinely illumine our understanding of how God’s Word took shape in history,” Michaels, “Inerrancy or Verbal Inspiration? An Evangelical Dilemma,” in ed. Roger Nicole and Michaels, *Inerrancy and Common Sense* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1980), 51. The extent to which the historical-critical method has subverted the Faith in evangelicalism is chronicled in Harold Lindsell’s troubling, if flawed, accounts *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1976) and *The Bible in the Balance* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1979), ch. 7 and *passim*.

39. Harold DeWolf, *The Case For Theology in Liberal Perspective* (Philadelphia, 1959), 51, 52. For a fuller treatment of this subject, consult Theodore Letis, “B. B. Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy and Biblical Criticism,” *American Presbyterians*, Vol. 69, No. 3 [Fall, 1991], 175–190.

There was no expectation whatsoever [in the patristic orthodox view of tradition] of new and revolutionary insights from scriptural exegesis.<sup>40</sup>

I cannot resist the temptation to interrupt the citation to point out that it is the *liberal* theologian criticizing ancient catholic *orthodoxy* on the grounds that the latter is not sufficiently exegetical. He continues:

Here, once again, we encounter the confusion of the results of the process of tradition with the original content of tradition. Therefore it becomes questionable whether the appeal to the apostolic writings {36} can render any service whatever in the controversy with heresy, that is to say, at the point at which reliable knowledge of the apostolic tradition becomes a crucial problem. Tertullian renders a very skeptical judgment about the possibility of persuasion by scriptural exegesis in dogmatic controversies. Ultimately opinion is pitted against opinion, and nothing is decided. Suspicion is aroused by the fact that it is precisely the heretics who desire to wage the struggle on the field of the Scriptures and appeal to the word of the Lord, "Seek and you shall find." Tertullian opposes the view that a person who believes still has anything more to seek. As he formulates the matter in a surprising antithesis, it is faith that brings salvation, and not the searching of the Scriptures ... We must have this faith if we wish to occupy ourselves with the Scriptures in any meaningful way at all. This is the reason we should not allow ourselves to become engaged with the heretics in any exegetical dispute whatsoever. Heretics have from the outset no right to the Scriptures because they do not have the true faith. Scripture [according to Tertullian] is not the criterion of what we are to believe, but faith is the criterion of how we are to understand Scripture. Faith is the only normative and necessary guide to interpretation ... The battle of the early Catholic fathers for the apostolic writings as the source of knowledge of the apostolic tradition ends, paradoxically, in the sacrifice of Scripture as a decisive authority. At the moment at which the authority of the New Testament canon began to be accepted, it already no longer functioned as a decisive critical norm for the determination of the apostolic tradition.<sup>41</sup>

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40. Gerhard Ebeling, *The Problem of Historicity*, trans. Grover Foley (Philadelphia, 1967), 49.

41. *Ibid.*, 49, 50.

I must assert tendentiously (see page 46) that what we perceive in Tertullian's attitude toward the heretics is what we may term a presuppositional approach to the relation between Scripture and tradition; and, not surprisingly, it displeases Ebeling, for it contains "a historical error, because the tradition which claimed to be apostolic did not stem from Christianity alone."<sup>42</sup> In other words, he dislikes the fact that the orthodox did not allow exegesis of Scripture to rule in their debate with heretics, but rather *presupposed* the validity of orthodoxy on the contested points. Ebeling the liberal would rather have had the orthodox appeal to Scripture *alone*, seemingly the Protestant principle. But Ebeling, no doubt, opposes this presuppositional approach of the orthodox for the very reason they employed it: it prevents the overturning of orthodox doctrine by exegetical appeals to Scripture. Indeed, it is a ploy of an arid, "scientific" liberalism to exalt exegetical theology at the expense of a dogmatic and systematic theology.<sup>43</sup> {37}

Ebeling pinpoints the manifold flaws and inconsistencies of the more recent Roman Catholic conception of tradition, chief among which is its decision to eviscerate its very own Tridentine decrees on the authority of tradition by the dogma of the assumption of Mary, for whose acceptance on traditional grounds no argument could credibly be made.<sup>44</sup> Ebeling is equally solicitous, however, to criticize the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, suggesting, "The fact that the phenomenon of tradition becomes a theological problem in a very compelling way in the form of the scriptural principle [of *sola scriptura*] can be overlooked only so long as we view the New Testament canon as being from the outset a divinely inspired book, a priori distinct from every other type of tradition."<sup>45</sup> But this is precisely the historic, orthodox view of Scripture, and thus the numerous problems a consideration of tradition apparently poses for Scripture are valid only on the presupposition that Scripture is not in fact the revealed word of God. Ebeling is convinced that to affirm the orthodox view of Scripture is perforce to assert

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42. *Ibid.*, 53.

43. *Idem.*, *Word*, 140.

44. *Idem.*, *History*, 53–60.

45. *Ibid.*, 61.

that the Bible ... represent[s] an ontologically quite different type of literature, subject to fundamentally different conditions of development and, hence, also to different rules of understanding and interpretation than is the case with any other human literature. But then what shall we do with the historical relativity of the Bible and the humanity of its language? If we understand God's revelation as revealed doctrine, then what we finally have ... is the difficult situation of a doctrine of inspiration which erects a wall around the Bible and instead of risking an interpretation of the Bible, basically only recites it. Such a doctrine understands the Bible not as a message to the world but as a secret teaching for the initiated.<sup>46</sup> {38}

Ebeling is contending, of course, that the orthodox doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture must be jettisoned if Scripture is to retain relevance for modernity. In typical neo-orthodox fashion, he wishes to shift revelation to the subjective-objective event of the divine-human encounter.<sup>47</sup> That his abandonment of the orthodox view of inspiration may destroy any sort of biblical authority whatever and so render irrelevant [!] any question of the relevance of Scripture as the word of God has perhaps not occurred to Ebeling. Moreover, the suggestion that the orthodox view of inspiration which absolutizes a time-bound document cancels the possibility of history- and culture-transcending relevance can

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46. *Ibid.*, 72. Ebeling's argument may cause us to give pause over an unlimited, abstract, and "scientific" application of the historical-critical method to the exegesis of Scripture, for it is difficult to argue with the contention that if the Bible is a unique and supernaturally inspired book, we can expect that our method of interpreting it cannot be identical to the method employed in interpreting every other book. Pelikan notes: "... when the problem of the relation between Scripture and tradition became a burning issue in the theological controversies of the Western church, in the late Middle Ages and the Reformation, it was at the cost of the unified system. Proponents of the theory that tradition was an independent source of revelation minimized the fundamentally exegetical content of tradition which had served to define tradition and its place in the specification of apostolic continuity. The supporters of the sole authority of Scripture, arguing from radical hermeneutical premises to conservative dogmatic conclusions, overlooked the function of tradition in securing what they regarded as the correct exegesis of Scripture against heretical alternatives," Pelikan, *op. cit.*, 119. It is not at all clear that the reformers understood that what we refer to as grammatical-historical exegesis may be employed to undermine orthodoxy, nor did they assume that their exegesis was tendentious with reference to orthodoxy.

47. Ebeling, *Historicity*, 74–80.

be argued only on the grounds that God does not control history and shape culture. It is altogether sensible, however, to assert that a document immersed in human language, culture, and history may constitute the infallibly revealed word of God if language, culture, and history are divinely shaped, among other designs, for the purpose of conveying the very word of God (cf. pages 45 - 46).

Nonetheless, the most important lesson we can learn from the theologically liberal agenda of sequestering Scripture from all tradition is that it must of necessity culminate in the repudiation of orthodox Christianity itself. Thus, in a series of lectures in 1953 Ebeling noted:

This Protestant orthodoxy, which did not recognize its historical relativity and for this reason alone could maintain that it was absolutely and unchangeably orthodox, disintegrated once and for all during the course of the eighteenth century with the advent of cultural changes which did away with the historical foundations of that orthodoxy. If today someone overlooks this and still thinks he can call himself orthodox, he is nevertheless no longer orthodox in the sense of Protestant orthodoxy ... And if anyone believes today that he can uphold the orthodox doctrine of inspiration and make it the shibboleth of orthodoxy, he is simply not aware that he does this in quite another fashion than did orthodoxy. Within Protestant orthodoxy the doctrine of verbal inspiration has meaning only because of the metaphysical Aristotelian presuppositions which orthodoxy drew upon ... Of course, those who today emphatically uphold the orthodox doctrine of inspiration do not know or understand anything about this philosophical background which attaches to the classic orthodox doctrine of inspiration and the sacrifice of which would reduce the doctrine of verbal inspiration to nonsense. Similarly, it is nowadays considered orthodox to keep theology free from every connection with philosophy, while the characteristic trait of classic orthodoxy was the intensive employment {39} of philosophy for theology, specifically the Aristotelian scholastic philosophy which at that time reigned in equal measure in Catholicism and Protestantism. This is the fundamental reason why Protestant orthodoxy no longer exists even as a possibility; these Aristotelian intellectual presuppositions are no longer taken for granted as general and obvious truths.<sup>48</sup>

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48. *Ibid.*, 30, 31.

Despite the ignoble condescension with which he paints the exponents of orthodoxy, Ebeling is quite justified in alerting us to the serious naiveté of modern conservatives who wish “to keep theology free from every connection with philosophy.” The accuracy of that charge, however, does not extricate him from self-defeating traps of his own inventions: (1) If the orthodox Protestant view of Scripture must be scrapped in the twentieth century because of the demise of the “metaphysical Aristotelian presuppositions which orthodoxy drew upon,” what prevents us from contending with logically equal force that *Ebeling’s* theories must be scrapped because there is every reason to suspect that the historicism on which they presently rest will one day be disproven (in the parlance of Gilbert Chesterton, he ends up undermining his own mines); most importantly, however, (2) If we must jettison the orthodox Protestant view of Scripture because it presupposes an “alien” philosophical orientation, how can we justifiably stop with the view of Scripture? Why not debunk the entire Christian message? For it no less than the orthodox Protestant view of Scripture was conceived inextricably in historical circumstances and its writers fashioned their doctrine on the anvil of “alien” philosophies. One thinks immediately of St. John’s *logos* doctrine, with its patently Hellenic cast. May we argue that the *logos* doctrine is no longer crucial for the faith? This is precisely the tack of modern and post-modern liberalism in general, docetically shearing away the historical kernel from the supposed transcendent message of the faith, and finally being left with ... nothing. This inclination to attack orthodoxy on the grounds that it consists of alien (usually Greek) philosophical elements is unfortunately not limited to the neo-orthodox and theological liberals. Eminent evangelicals like Clark Pinnock have jumped into the fray, denying the timelessness, immutability, omnipotence, and omniscience of God on the grounds that the orthodox understanding of God rests on Greek philosophical suppositions, while, according to Pinnock, the Bible {40} contradicts orthodoxy. Pinnock wants to be a biblicist in opposing orthodoxy.<sup>49</sup>

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49. Clark Pinnock, “Between Classical and Process Theism,” in Ronald Nash, ed. *Process Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1987), 313–327. We should not be led into overlooking Pinnock’s deviation from orthodoxy by his recent conversion to certain tenets of Reconstructionism; see Robert V. Rakestraw, “Clark H. Pinnock:

The beguiling nature of the proposal to isolate the message of the Christian faith from tradition is highlighted in Ebeling's penetrating questions:

Must not all theological reflection be conservative in the sense that it holds irrevocably fast to the traditional witness to Jesus Christ, and at the same time progressive in the sense that it witnesses to the freedom of the Christian kerygma from the very limited and transient form of the secular and cultural situation? ... Can theological reflection ever be positive and conservative in the sense of a basic, unreserved, and uncritical acceptance of anything that advances a claim to be a witness to revelation? Similarly, can theological reflection ever be progressive and liberal in the sense of theory of progress derived from a philosophy of history or in the sense of a criticism of tradition which is itself basically very uncritical, because it lacks self-criticism and considers its own position absolute?<sup>50</sup>

The first impulse of those schooled in the Reformation dictum of *sola scriptura* is to applaud the insights of each of these questions. Does not the declaration that the power of the Christian message must be emancipated from “every limited and transient form of the secular or cultural situation” inspire every orthodox Protestant to stand up and cheer? Do we not equally wish to assert the freedom of the word of God over all historical human systems? Is not this the essence of *sola scriptura*? That it should give us pause that these words are uttered by an enemy of the orthodox Christian faith is not merely *ad hominem* reasoning. For this Enlightenment effort subverts the Christian message by seemingly exalting the Christian message at the expense of the tradition of which it is a part. It does this, paradoxically, by so immersing the Christian message in tradition that it can relativize that message just as it relativizes everything else—except, of course, its own bold assertions, its protests to the contrary notwithstanding. It says that because the gospel is itself a tradition, but because that

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A Theological Odyssey,” *Christian Scholar's Review*, XIX:3 [March, 1990], 263. American evangelical Jack Rogers attributes different views among evangelicals on the sufficiency and reliability of Scripture to philosophical influences. See Jack Rogers, “The Church Doctrine of Biblical Authority,” in ed. Rogers, *Biblical Authority* (Waco, TX, 1977), 22–44.

50. Ebeling, *Historicity*, 32.

tradition is relative and not inherently authoritative, it can {41} function in any number of traditions, even if those traditions are not orthodox.<sup>51</sup>

It is possible then to posit not only post-biblical tradition, but Scripture itself as the sort of tradition so imbedded in “alien” philosophical suppositions as to render them useless to succeeding generations. The orthodox response to that agenda is to assert that the Hellenic character of the New Testament, for example, not to mention the Greek language itself, was a specially designed vehicle for conveying divine propositional revelation. Similarly, though in a derivative and subordinate sense, the “scholastic” form of Protestant orthodoxy is the divinely shaped milieu for an accurate expression of Reformed truth. It does not follow that this scholastic *form* is infallible or beyond criticism any more than the Greek language and Hellenic thought-forms are infallible and beyond criticism. They are both, however, suitable for functioning as vehicles to convey, in the case of Greek, the infallible word of God, and, in the case of “scholasticism,” the fallible but accurate doctrinal formulations of seventeenth-century Protestant orthodoxy. This Protestant view patently assumes something about God: He controls history.

### A Presuppositional View of the Relation between Scripture and Tradition

To discover a viable Reformed view of the relation between Scripture and tradition, I believe it necessary to appeal to the writings of an individual seemingly far removed from the controversy, the late Reformed apologist Cornelius Van Til. What, indeed, has Van Til to do with this issue? The answer is, plenty. For an understanding of his epistemology, anthropology, and apologetics furnishes a distinctively Reformed—and, more importantly, biblical—answer to these vexing questions. Particularly critical for the issue of the relation between the authority of Scripture and the role and inevitability of tradition is his interpretation of the Reformed philosophy of history. Van Til’s philosophy of history is an aspect of his broader philosophy of religion, in which the

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51. *Idem.*, *Word*, 146.

doctrine of predestination occupies a vital role. Indispensable to Van Til's apologetic is the statement in answer to Question 7 of the Shorter Catechism, that God "foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." Thus, for Van Til, primary contingency in the universe is an impossibility.<sup>52</sup> Secondary contingency arising from secondary causes is an inevitability and preserves an authentic human {42} responsibility, but Van Til follows the Reformed tradition in affirming that the existence of every aspect of the universe derives from God's decree. But this decree is not impersonal; it is designed for a specific purpose, and thus natural revelation of which history is a vital part serves God's covenantal designs,

Natural revelation, we are virtually told, was from the outset incorporated into the idea of a covenantal relationship of God with man. Thus every dimension of created existence, even the lowest, was enveloped in a form of exhaustively personal relationship between God and man. The "ateleological" no less than the "teleological," the "mechanical" no less than the "spiritual," was covenantal in character.

Being from the outset covenantal in character, the natural revelation of God to man was meant to serve as the playground for the process of differentiation that was to take place in the course of time ... The forces of nature are always at the beck and call of the power of differentiation that works toward redemption and reprobation. It is this idea of a supernatural-natural revelation that comes to such eloquent expression in the Old Testament, and particularly in the Psalms.

Here then is a picture of a well-integrated and unified philosophy of history in which revelation in nature and revelation in Scripture are mutually meaningless without one another and mutually fruitful when taken together.<sup>53</sup>

Christian tradition is one aspect of natural revelation. It was never intended to operate independently of Scripture, and vice versa. We immediately detect in this schema the possibility of a solution to the apparent impasse between what are often judged to

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52. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1967 ed.), passim.

53. *Idem.*, "Nature and Scripture" in ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley, *The Infallible Word* (Philadelphia, 1946), 259–261.

be the competing claims of Scripture and tradition. Scripture and nature (of which human history and tradition as an aspect thereof are a part) are complimentary—not competing—aspects of divine revelation. It is not a question of Scripture versus tradition, but of both Scripture *and* tradition—in proper relation—as indispensable elements of a single overarching covenantal divine plan.

Since history flows under the decree of the sovereign God, and since his church is a leading agency in the advancement of his kingdom, God suits the events of history to serve his purpose for the church, as Singer, a disciple of Van Til avers:

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Like the birth of Christ, so the Church, that great company of the elect, that institution at the very heart of the historical process in all ages, is the great divide of history to which all other events relate. Scripture also indicates clearly that all events in both ancient and modern history, refer in some way, known to God alone for the most part, to the life and work of the Church. These events are not only related with the birth of Christ, but have an immediate bearing on the Church in their own day. They all serve God's purposes as regards His will for the elect, for it is through this divinely ordained institution, the Church, that the events of history derive their meaning and purpose.<sup>54</sup>

Since tradition has “an immediate bearing on the Church,” we can expect not merely that it operates according to God's sovereign decree (as indeed does all of history), but moreover that it is specially suited to serve as an enrichment to the church. Of course, this is not to say that tradition occupies the *same* role as Scripture in the church, only that it *no less than* Scripture occupies a role in the church. They are both divinely suited to the ends for which they were intended. It is only when man intrudes himself autonomously into this impeccably balanced divine relationship that it becomes insuperably problematical. Indeed, both Roman Catholic traditionalism and theologically liberal reductionism suffer from the same religious ailment—the exercise of autonomy.

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54. C. Gregg Singer, “The Nature of History,” in ed., Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Faith and Modern Theology* (New York, 1964), 23d. See also Singer, “A Philosophy of History,” in ed. E. R. Geehan, *Jerusalem and Athens* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1971), 334, 335.

The decree of papal infallibility, for instance, is only the logical corollary of an institution committed to the view that it is the exclusive representative of God on earth. When the Council of Trent reified its view of coordinate sources of objective authority (Scripture and unwritten tradition), what it really was asserting is that it was an autonomous religious institution and the agency of divine revelation on earth, since it considered itself the infallible, institutional guardian of divine truth and the infallible arbiter of the meaning of Scripture. In this action it belied its commission of the original sin, the sin of autonomy. Van Til, significantly enough, reduces the error of Romanism in its supraexalted view of tradition to the sin of autonomy and concomitant denial of divine predestination:

The bearing of this conception of tradition on the questions of authority and its relation to reason must now be drawn. The hierarchy of the church in general, and of the pope in particular, is not to be thought of as itself subject to the final and comprehensive revelation of God. There is no place anywhere in the whole of Roman Catholic thought for the idea that any human being should be wholly {44} subject to God. On the contrary, the position of Rome requires the rejection of the counsel of God as all-determinative.<sup>55</sup>

No less does Van Til oppose the idea of human autonomy pervasive among modern man, chief among whom is the theological liberal, who, as Ebeling, undermines the authority of Holy Scripture by reducing it to a culturally conditioned human document:

As the idea of a closed canon [i.e., in Reformed orthodoxy] seeks to identify something as absolute in a sea of relativism, so it separates this identified object from all relations of significance with human experience. It sets off the Bible as a mechanical something over against human experience, to have an all-controlling influence on this experience. It wants the Bible to be the standard of human life. It lifts this standard of life out of contact with life and then expects it to have an all-important bearing on life. It wants all of life to be regulated rationalistically by a hard and fast pattern that is not adjustable as human experience accumulates.

Thus the idea of the sufficiency of Scripture as well as that of its

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55. Van Til, *Defense*, 138.

necessity is charged with being both irrationalistic and rationalistic. This charge is based upon the assumption of the ultimacy of man. Thus man's ultimate irrationalism requires that he charge the Christian position with rationalism because it holds to God who controls all things. Thus man's ultimate rationalism requires that he charge the Christian position with irrationalism because it holds that God controls all things by his counsel that is itself above and prior to and therefore not involved in the "relativity" of history.<sup>56</sup>

Contrary to Ebeling, therefore, the affirmation of verbal inspiration and Christian orthodoxy is possible, not in spite of the fact that they are expressed in philosophical thought forms alien to modern culture, but because the thought forms in which these dogmas were explicated were specially designed by the all-controlling God of history to serve that very purpose. The fatal flaw of the view of Ebeling and other "historicists" is not that Scripture and orthodoxy are "historically and culturally conditioned," for they surely are, but that God specially conditioned history and the cultures to serve as the vehicle for supernaturally revealed truth and its ecclesiastical solidification. The thought forms in which this "tradition" is expressed, no less than the Hebrew thought forms in which the Old Testament was expressed and the Greek thought forms in which both the New Testament and ancient catholic theology were expressed, were {45} predestined by God as the Author of history to effect his purposes for his church. The "historicists" must posit both Scripture and orthodoxy as relative so they can posit *themselves* as absolute.

The relativization of orthodoxy on the grounds of "historical and cultural conditioning," therefore, is seen simply to be an extension of the expression of human autonomy. To assert that history and culture relativize orthodoxy is to assert that God does not control of history. The Calvinist can recognize the valid subordinate role of tradition precisely because he knows God is in control of history. Predestination secures the derivative role of ecclesiastical tradition. To be sure, this does not legitimize all

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56. *Idem.*, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1969), 65. Van Til's criticism of G. C. Berkouwer's later approach to Scripture involves a repudiation of the "cultural conditioning" argument. See Van Til, *The New Synthesis Theology of the Netherlands* (no location: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1975), 62–77.

tradition of all kinds, for God has not chosen to speak infallibly in human tradition as he has in Holy Scripture. Tradition does not fulfill the same role in the church as does Holy Scripture, the latter of which is the touchstone by which all human ideas, practices, and tradition are tested.<sup>57</sup>

It will be perceived that this Van Tillian approach—that is, a consistent Reformed approach—conduces a great deal to the correction of the error of the subordination of Scripture to tradition and the church by the Roman Catholics on the one hand, and the subordination of Scripture and {46} orthodoxy to cultural and historical relativism on the other. For we contend that since the predestinating God “controls whatsoever comes to pass” and that history is the “playground” for God’s processes,

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57. To those who argue that a recognition of obvious error in ecclesiastical tradition in the process of the transmission of the Faith from generation to generation refutes the claim that tradition can function as a subordinate authority, I offer Van Til’s response to those who argue that since the autographs of the Bible have not come down to us infallibly “we have no identifiable revelation of God after all.” He notes: “There would be no *reasonably reliable* method of identifying the Word of God in human history unless human history itself is controlled by God. The doctrine of Scripture as self-attesting presupposes that whatsoever comes to pass in history materializes by virtue of the plan and counsel of the living God. If everything happens by virtue of the plan of God, then all created reality, every aspect of it, is inherently revelational of God and his plan. All facts of history are what they are ultimately because of what God intends and makes them to be. Even that which is accomplished in human history through the instrumentality of men still happens by virtue of the plan of God. God tells the stars by their names. He identifies by complete description. He knows exhaustively. He knows exhaustively because he controls completely ... Such a view of God and of human history is both presupposed by, and in turn presupposes, the idea of an infallible Bible; and if such a God is presupposed then it is not a matter of great worry if the transmissions are not altogether accurate reproductions of the originals. Then the very idea of ‘substantial accuracy’ or ‘essential reliability’ has its foundation in the complete control of history by God. Then it is proper and meaningful to say that God in his providence has provided for the essentially accurate transmission of the words of the original.

“Without such a view of history as wholly controlled by the plan of God the idea of an essential dependability would be without foundation. If history is not wholly controlled by God, the idea of an infallible Word of God is without meaning. The idea of an essentially reliable Bible would have no foundation. In a world of contingency all predication is reduced to flux,” Van Til, *Theory*, 28, emphasis in original. What is said here of the “essential dependability” of the extant texts of Scripture may be said equally about tradition. The assumption of divine control of history renders unnecessary an infallible or infallibly preserved tradition. That it be reliable is sufficient.

no aspect of the temporal may be absolutized. Romanism absolutizes tradition, and therefore the church, as the arbiter of interpretation. Enlightenment liberalism (self-contradictorily, of course) absolutizes the fact of historical conditioning. By contrast, Reformed orthodoxy recognizes God and his revelation as absolute. Because God creates history as the “playground” for his purposes, we can have confidence that the historical (and, therefore, cultural and philosophical) bed in which both the biblical revelation,<sup>58</sup> and, in a subordinate sense, catholic and Reformation orthodoxy rests, is divinely created as the subjective vehicle for the objective communication of the Scriptures and transmission of the faith.

Further, we can follow both the early orthodox fathers and Hodge in boldly positing “the common faith of the Church,” that is, “certain fixed doctrines among Christians ... which are no longer open questions,”<sup>59</sup> no longer open, in fact, to the possibility of refutation by exegesis, for we believe that the God who controls history has so superintended our forefathers that the doctrinal formulations that they hammered out in the anvil of controversy are in fact essentially what the Westminster Confession of Faith terms “good and necessary consequence” of Scriptural statements. Like Tertullian, therefore, we do not open exegetical debate with heretics who wish to employ *sola scriptura* to obviate orthodoxy, not because the Scripture is not absolutely authoritative and sufficient, but because the God who controls history has allowed his church to elicit from the absolutely authoritative and sufficient Scriptures the incontrovertibly fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

## Objections

Opponents of predestination will naturally object to the interpretation of the role of tradition set forth in this essay. That such an opposition rests the orthodox formulations of the Trinity

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58. Benjamin Warfield defended against attacks on the inspiration of Scripture that the differences of authorial style militate against biblical inspiration by noting that the same God who inspired the writers controlled them and history in such a way as to secure that their spontaneous writings constituted his inspired word. See Benjamin Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1948), 156–158.

59. Hodge, *op. cit.*, 114.

and Christology on nothing more than the determinations of man spawned by chance should give them {47} pause. The most egregious result of a denial of a Reformed view of tradition on the basis of a denial of predestination, however, is that it undercuts the Christian Scriptures and faith themselves no less than orthodox tradition; for if God cannot or will not secure an accurate interpretation of the core of the faith in history by the church we have no reason to believe he could or did secure the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures. If divine predestination is denied, the universe rests on chance; and if the universe rests on chance, the Christian faith is a mockery and we are of all men most miserable. This denial of Christian predestination is always hypocritical, however, for as Rushdoony remarks, “[P]redestination is an inescapable concept... This belief [a denial of predestination] has not been held by any religion or philosophy, although it has been nominally professed as a means of undermining some particular faith ... [W]hen the doctrine of predestination is denied, it does not disappear. Where denied to God, predestination then accrues to some other agency, nature, man, or the state.”<sup>60</sup>

Other critics may suggest my view absolutizes tradition, that it comports more easily with what Niebuhr<sup>61</sup> has depicted as the “Christ of Culture” view than with the Augustinian and Calvinistic “Christ the Transformer of Culture View.” Such an objection represents a serious misreading of the essay. To assert that traditional core orthodoxy is divinely shaped is not to argue that the cultures (much less their assumptions and mores) in which such orthodoxy arose and in whose thought forms and terminology that orthodoxy is expressed are infallible. It is merely to assert that since God is the Lord of history no less than eternity he has created the cultures in such a way that they may function as suitable conduits for the expression of orthodoxy. Nay, he pointedly *designed* such cultures for such function. biblical faith and orthodoxy are therefore not the servants of human culture; rather, human culture under the predestinating hand of God is the servant of biblical faith and orthodoxy.

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60. Rousas John Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule* (Vallecito, CA, 1983), 345.

61. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951).

Ardent Protestants may argue that this idea assumes *ipso facto* the validity of all tradition and a concomitant dissolving of *sola scriptura*. This assumption is equally false. The thesis comprehends only, as Hodge notes, the traditional beliefs constituting the core elements of the faith: mainly orthodox Trinitarianism and Christology, *sola scriptura*, and *sola fide*. The conclusion of this essay insinuates not merely that the decisions of the church catholic addressing matters other than core elements of the faith {48} are not binding and that decisions by separate bodies within Christendom (Romanism, for example) are not to be classed as authoritative, but also that even the valid, divinely shaped tradition of which the early church councils are comprised is ever subordinate to Holy Scripture, the “only rule of faith and practice.” This, in fact, is the view expressed in the Westminster Confession (1.6):

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human action and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.

Thoughtful critics may infer that the Reformed perspective on tradition I set forth is a two-edged sword inasmuch as, if practiced consistently, it necessarily commits Reformed believers in the future to decisions of ecclesiastical consensus at variance with historic orthodoxy. Two observations militate against this objection: First, the recognition of the subordinate authority of universally orthodox tradition in no way commits one at any time to affirmation of any dogma at variance with explicit biblical teaching. The Bible alone is ultimately authoritative. Second, the Reformed hold that since God controls history, a consensus decision of the church undercutting historic orthodoxy is an utter impossibility; God has promised to preserve his church not from

all error, but from such error as would eviscerate the faith itself (Mt. 16:18; Ac. 20:29, 30; Eph. 5:27).

Most misguided are the objections of (usually liberal, but occasionally cultic) antitraditionalists, whose pretended neutrality is a patent farce. As noted in the introduction, tradition is an inescapable concept; and even those religions, ideologies and cultures decrying tradition—instanced hyperbolically but frighteningly in George Orwell's *1984*—create their own tradition, if it is nothing more than the attempt to obliterate tradition. {49}

### Conclusion

It is a distinctively Reformed—and *only* a distinctively Reformed—approach that can offer adequate solutions to the question of the relation between Scripture and tradition as they function in the church. It is Calvinism's unswerving allegiance to the sovereignty of God as exercised in his work of the absolute predestination of "whatsoever comes to pass" that furnishes a key to the solution to this thorny issue. Scripture alone is the infallible and objective authority in all spheres of life, yet God has promised not only preservation of the church, and the Scriptures as its covenant document,<sup>62</sup> but also orthodox doctrine itself. This Reformed view generates not merely assurance about the accuracy of what we now believe, but also confidence of increasing confessional unity and uniformity among the true church catholic. We can possess such confidence precisely because God controls history. I conclude with an apposite citation from Van Til:

The message of Christianity must ring out clearly in the modern tumult. If Christianity is to be heard above the din and noise of modern irrationalism and existentialism, it must think in terms of its own basic categories. If it has to import some of its materials from the enemy, it cannot expect effectively to conquer the enemy. It is the Christian Faith that alone has the truth; this should be its claim.<sup>63</sup>

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62. See Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended!* (no location: The Christian Research Press, 1956).

63. Van Til, *Theory*, 23.

# CONFESSIONS OF A WITCH HUNTER:

## *Judge Samuel Sewall's Confession of His Role in the Salem Witch Trials*

*G. Joseph Gatis*

Samuel Sewall was perhaps the most famous judge of the American Puritan era. His views were recorded in voluminous court records, (including the infamous Salem witch trials), his diaries, and his numerous tracts.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1674, he was commissioned as judge in May 4, 1691, with these words, “let us serve our generation according to the Will of God, and afterwards fall asleep.”<sup>2</sup> After he “fell asleep,” however, history awoke to render a verdict on his role in the Salem witch trials.

### Introduction: The Manner and Content of Sewall's Public Confession in the Witch Trials

#### The “How” of the Confession— The Manner of Sewall's Recanting

Into the ivy-covered cedar meeting house of South Church of Boston Judge Samuel Sewall entered to experience a defining moment in his career in jurisprudence. Sewall passed his written confession to one of the Puritan ministers, then proceeded to take

1. See, for example, Suffolk County Probate Court, Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England: *Samuel Sewall Esq.; Judge for the Probate of Wills, and Granting Letters of Administration, with the County of Suffolk; Purposes, God Willing, to Wait upon that Business, at his Dwelling House in Boston, Every Second Day of the Week* (Boston, 1715).

2. Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Samuel Sewall of Boston* (New York, 1964), Prologue.

his seat in the pew as he was accustomed. As the minister began to read the confession, Sewall manly stood up in the presence of the congregation. The confession, read aloud by the minister, implored forgiveness from his onlooking peers. Sewall's role in the condemnation of twenty souls in Salem's witch trials enslaved him in wrenching guilt.<sup>3</sup> His chosen means of catharsis was public recantation. What motivated the recantation? Was the recantation merely a religious phenomenon or a catharsis reasonably explained by the science of psychology? Or, does an analysis of Sewall's act require an intersection of the disciplines? Although historians chronicle Sewall's recanting, historians appear reticent to analyze the mind set from which the recantation derives. {52}

### The "What" of the Confession—The Written Recantation

At the crucial turning point in his social existence, Sewall perhaps redeemed himself from the harshest verdict of history when he stood before Boston's South Church while his words were read aloud to his peers:

Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and family; and being sensible, that as to the guilt contracted upon the opening of the late commission of Oyer and Terminer at Salem (to which the order for this day relates) he is, upon many accounts, more concerned than any that he knows of, desires to take the blame and shame of it, asking pardon of men, and especially desiring prayers that God, who has an unlimited authority, would pardon that sin and all other his sins, personal and relative; and according to his infinite benignity, and sovereignty, not visit the sin of him, or of any other, upon himself or any of his, nor upon the land. But that He would powerfully defend him against all temptations to sin, for the future and vouchsafe him the efficacious, saving conduct of his word and spirit.

Sewall was alone among the judges in this confession. Later the same year, Salem jurors asked public forgiveness along with several ministers.<sup>4</sup> Under no ecclesiastical stricture, canon law, or coercion

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3. Mary Caroline Crawford, *The Romance of Old New England Churches* (Boston, 1904), 101.

4. Theodore Benson Strandness, *Samuel Sewall: a Puritan Portrait* (East Lansing, MI, 1967), 76.

Sewall voluntarily humbled himself before peers over whom he was promoted as judge. His lonely abasement self-inflicted, he bowed into the posture of a confessor.

### Analysis: The “Why” of the Confession— Sewall’s Motivation

Unfortunately, no extant work adequately delves into the motivating forces which culminated in Judge Samuel Sewall’s break from his fellow jurists to admit he committed irreversible error in Salem—he could not bring back the innocent he condemned. Neither religious dogma, theological formulae, nor modern psychoanalytic matrices can fully label every rubric in the human psyche. The separate disciplines of religion, ethics, and psychology each fall short of a full purview of Sewall’s motivation to lay himself bare before his peers. The answer is not “either, or” but “both, and”—the disciplines of psychology, ethics, and religion intersect to disclose Sewall’s motivation as an outworking of his whole person. His act of public confession on January 14, 1696 in Boston’s South Church was an outcropping of religious, moral, and psychological seeds. {53} Sewall’s confession derived from the intersection of the religious, moral, and psychological dimensions of his psyche.

### The “Who” of the Confession—Sewall’s Psychological, Moral, and Religious Underpinnings

#### *His Critics and His Character*

Sewall had critics—they accused him being “commonplace,” “mercenary,” “selfish,” and “sordid,” especially in marriage matches. Chamberlain, who wrote the lengthiest biography of Sewall, defends Sewall on every charge. Sewall’s uncommon character, the character to swallow his pride by voluntarily admitting wrongdoing before his peers, was self-evident. Although Sewall was rich by the standards of his day, he loved money no more than “most people around him.” Further, he demonstrated the same frugality of his New England associates. Moreover, the concern for the violation of the rights of the falsely accused is anything

but selfish. Chamberlain applies a maxim of Lafochefoucauld to Sewall—"seeking one's own, careful of the rights of others, is never selfishness." Regarding Sewall's marriage, he married rich, being rich. This was, Chamberlain defends, the custom of the times.<sup>5</sup> The Puritan vernacular of his age codifies the spirit of Sewall's diaries—"he was a man in whom grace and nature had long striven together for mastery, and that each had several falls."<sup>6</sup> Sewall was far from perfect, but no record implies that he was socially dysfunctional. Accordingly, social dysfunction was not the motivation of his public confession.

### *His Temperament*

Sewall was an exact Puritan in deportment. In exterior, perhaps no one was more Puritan. In his college life, in council, in the meeting house, and in social life—be maintained a "grave, granite temper."<sup>7</sup> Sewall's rigidity is evidenced by his stern discipline of his children. Wendell, in his seminal work on Cotton Mather, a friend and contemporary of Sewall, cites an excerpt from Sewall's diary:

1692, Joseph [Sewall's eldest child] threw a knop of brass at his sister Betty on the forehead so as to make it bleed and swell; upon which, and for his playing at Prayer time, and eating when returning thanks, {54} I whipped him pretty smartly. When I first went in he sought not to show and hide himself from me behind the head of the cradle.<sup>8</sup>

Despite an apparent rigid exterior, a deeper look into Sewall's psyche reveals he was far from melancholy in his temperament. Rather, Chamberlain argues "by nature Sewall was not a Puritan." Chamberlain calls Sewall a "robust Englishman; led of his blood towards good dinners, merry wassail out of deep, silver-rimmed horns, as Saxons had done long before Harold had at Hastings; fond of merrymakings; a snatched kiss under the holly; a lover of little

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5. N. H. Chamberlain, *Samuel Sewall and the World He Lived In* (Boston, 1898), 307.

6. *Ibid.*, 304.

7. *Ibid.*, 306.

8. Barrett Wendell, *Cotton Mather—The Puritan Priest* (New York, 1891), 30, 31.

children gleesome in the Twelfth Night dances ...”<sup>9</sup> The apparent discrepancy between Sewall’s exterior and interior life may reveal a studied balance—an adaptable versatile personality which suits particular social surroundings. Or, the discrepancy may reveal a personality over-sensitive to surroundings, that “caves in” to various social pressures. Winslow, however, another biographer of Sewall, sees no discrepancy between his outward demeanor and apparent emotional surges. Rather, Winslow describes Sewall with a consistent, pervading optimism:

Samuel Sewall indulged in no Jeremiads.<sup>10</sup> He was by nature not inclined to look on the world around him with a disapproving eye. New England had been kind to him, and in his comfortable prosperity he lived on an even keel.<sup>11</sup>

Although Winslow’s work is thorough, it does not appear to penetrate the depth of Sewall’s psyche as incisively as Chamberlain’s. Upon inclusion of the evidence of the criticism of Sewall’s detractors, Chamberlain’s record, Winslow’s record, and Sewall’s diaries, Sewall appears to have experienced emotional surges more extreme than average. These apparent surges, however, fall short of what the modern field of psychology would call “manic depressive.” Accordingly, emotional instability was not the overriding motivation for Sewall’s recantation.

### *His View of the Value of Human Life*

Sewall’s hierarchy of values prioritized life and liberty, in that order, above all others. Sewall’s sense of priority of values protrudes in his diatribe {55} against slavery, “The Selling of Joseph—A Memorial.” Sewall viewed life and liberty as singular gifts of God; therefore, both life and liberty should be cherished. Liberty, “in real value next unto life” according to Sewall, should not be surrendered. Further, liberty should not be deprived from

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9. N. H. Chamberlain, 306.

10. A “Jeremiad,” in Puritan parlance, was a particular variety of homily that derived from the prophet Jeremiah. As Jeremiah preached to an apostatizing Israel, Puritan ministers resorted to this variety of address to call an “apostatizing” colony to spiritual resurgence.

11. Winslow, 81.

others, including slaves.<sup>12</sup> Sewall did, however, couch his counsel that liberty should not be voluntarily surrendered or involuntarily taken from others with the proviso “but upon the most mature considerations.”<sup>13</sup> Mature considerations included the practice of indentured servitude and the taking of prisoners, but only in a “just” war. The legal institution of indentured servanthood allowed a party to surrender their liberty for a maximum of six years in exchange for room, board, right of passage, if necessary, to the Bay Colony, and some severance compensation. Sewall’s view of the taking of prisoners in a just war derived from Deuteronomic texts<sup>14</sup> and the Augustinian doctrine of just war.<sup>15</sup> Sewall’s view of slave traders imaged Moses’ view articulated in Exodus 21:16, “he that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.” Sewall, like Moses, viewed slave trading as “stealing” human beings. Moses placed such high value upon human life that he prescribed the death penalty for kidnappers.<sup>16</sup>

Further, Sewall substantiated his opposition to slavery on theological grounds. Because Sewall presupposed that humankind stemmed from common ancestral progenitors, the biblical Adam and Eve, Sewall concluded that humankind consisted of “siblings.” Siblings, sharing a universal parenthood, should respect the life and liberty of each other. “All,” according to Sewall, “are cousins, and have equal right unto liberty, and all other outward comforts of life.”<sup>17</sup> The environment, with all its bounty, “God hath given ... with all its commodities unto the sons of Adam.”<sup>18</sup> Sewall, however, did not hold that the universal fatherhood of Adam secured, as

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12. Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph—A Memorial* (Northampton, 1969), 16–17.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Deut. 20:10–18.

15. For Augustine’s doctrine of “just” war, see Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982); the Puritan branch of the Protestant Reformation imported the Augustinian view of a just war.

16. For an excellent treatment of the lexicography, grammatical structure, and syntax of the Hebrew text of Exodus 21:16, see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem, 1987).

17. Sewall, *op. cit.*, 16ff.

18. *Ibid.*

German theologian Harnack argues, universal redemption; rather, Sewall saw biological offspring of Adam as equal before law.<sup>19</sup> {56}

To Sewall, every moral and legal issue was either white or black, right or wrong. Sewall approached his religious book, the Bible, with far more reverence than a corporate attorney approaches statutes on corporate law. A corporate attorney approaches statutes to interpret them in the light most favorable to his or her client; Sewall approached his religious statute book with one hermeneutic objective—to find the one “correct” interpretation. In this spirit, Sewall lays down the law from Ac. 17:26–29:

And hath made of one blood, all nations of men, for to dwell in all the face of the earth, and hath determined the time before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: that they should seek the Lord.

Sewall compares the care that the colonists would exercise in buying and selling a horse with the care that some colonists bought slaves:

Tis pity there should be more caution used in buying a horse than there is in purchasing men and women whereas they are the offspring of God and their liberty is from God.<sup>20</sup>

Sewall forcefully warns the colonists that his religious book of legal statutes is of everlasting equity. Accordingly, Sewall sardonically warns the colonists, “caveat emptor.”<sup>21</sup> Capital punishment underscores the atrocity of kidnapping and slavery.

These Ethiopians, as black as they are, seeing they are the sons and daughters of the first Adam, the brethren and sisters of the last of Adam, and the offspring of God, they ought to be treated with a respect agreeable.<sup>22</sup>

Such advocacy significantly repelled the tide in Massachusetts away from the institutionalization of slavery.

Further, commensurate with Sewall’s high view of the value

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19. Radical abolition, however, has not been the Reformed consensus. Slaves converted to Christ were to remain slaves, obedient to their masters (*cf* 1 Pet. 2:11).

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Samuel Sewall, *op. cit.*, 16–17.

of human life, at least one recorded episode implies personal compassion. Sewall displayed great compassion for John Hull, who, when King Philip's War broke out, on his own credit financed soldiers' wages and supplies. Hull died terribly in debt, his estate amounting to less than a third of the claims of his creditors.<sup>23</sup> Sewall apparently helped Hull through his troubled times.

Sewall's view of the high value of human life informed his motivation to recant of his role in the Salem witch trials. Because of his high regard for human life, his tendency to dehumanize was minimal. Further, modern forces that tend to depersonalize—technology, TV, violence, and gratuitous {57} sex—were absent from Sewall's stark culture. One of Sewall's motives to confess was his valuation of precious human life—this valuation proceeds from religious, moral, and psychological criteria.

### *His Epitaph*

Sewall approached ethical questions from an “all or nothing” modality—moral issues were either black or white. Sewall implies his moral inflexibility:

And therefore I am against entering into a way never yet gone in, not beaten, and therefore not likely to be the King's Highway. Innovations are to be suspected, and avoided.<sup>24</sup>

Although this rigidity may appear Procrustean to the modern ethicist, George Edward Ellis is correct in his praise for the stern integrity of Sewall. Sewall's tombstone inscription is fitting: “he fell asleep in full hope of a glorious resurrection through faith in Jesus Christ. Living in an age of extraordinary events and revolutions, he learnt this truth, that all is vanity which is not honest ...”<sup>25</sup> Honesty

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23. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Builders of the Bay Colony* (Boston, 1930), 181.

24. *The Letter Book of Samuel Sewall*, September 5, 1724, (Boston, 1886), II, 173.

25. George Edward Ellis, *An Address on the Life and Character of Chief Justice Samuel Sewall: Delivered in the Old South Church, Boston, Sunday, October 26, 1884. On occasion of the erection of tablets in the Church, commemorative of its line of ministers, and of Samuel Sewall and Samuel Adams* (Boston, 1885); N. H. Chamberlain, *Samuel Sewall and the World He Lived In* (Boston, 1898), 308. Compare Cotton Mather's eulogy for Mrs. Samuel Sewall in his sermon, *The Valley of Baca: The Divine Sovereignty, Displayed and Adored; more Particularly, in Bereaving Dispensations of the Death of Mrs. Samuel Sewall Esq.; which Befell Us, on the 19th Day, Seventh Month, 1717.*

is more valuable than prestige. Sewall, by confessing publicly, evidenced he had balanced position, prestige, and power on the one hand and integrity on the other. Conclusively, he weighed a clear conscience of greater value than the security of the status quo. Sewall confessed to clear his conscience; his conscience had religious, moral, and psychological dimensions.

### The “Why” of the Confession—The Function of Sewall’s Perception of Religious Law

Puritanism was both personal and formal in dimension<sup>26</sup>—formal Puritanism is that movement in its “creeds, politics, manners, and its other visible on-goings.”<sup>27</sup> Personal Puritanism comprises the same formal elements found in the individual, “as elements of character are colored by the party’s personality.”<sup>28</sup> A key component of the Puritan political agenda was religious substantive law. Religious substantive law played a significant role in informing Sewall’s conscience of the evil of his contribution to the Salem witch trials.

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26. What was Puritanism? Puritanism was an inter-denominational movement to continue the Calvinistic Reformation of Christianity in the United Kingdom and later the British Crown colonies. Calvinistic reformers as early as John Jewell and Thomas Cartwright in the late sixteenth century were English Puritan luminaries. Key seventeenth century luminaries included Stephen Charnock, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, and Thomas Boston. Puritans sought an intellectual, moral, and spiritual “clean-up” of institutionalized Christianity. Their standard of purity was the Bible, solely the Old and New Testaments without the Apocrypha, unlike Catholicism which included the Apocrypha. Their comprehensive but concise articulation of their ideology was the Westminster Confession of Faith, written by a symposium of 120 Puritan scholars from 1643–48. Although this Confession formulated a Presbyterian church government, Separatist Puritans, Congregationalist Puritans, and Anglican Puritans embraced the basic theology of this Confession. The end of Cromwell’s Lord’s Protectorate in 1660 marked the end of Puritan hegemony over British political, social, and ecclesiastical institutions. Although Jonathan Edwards, whose revivalist influence began in earnest in 1739, has been designated the last American Puritan, Puritan hegemony over Massachusetts reached a nadir in the 1690s, when some Puritan ideologists migrated from Massachusetts to Connecticut to found Yale.

27. N. H. Chamberlain, *Samuel Sewall and the World He Lived In* (Boston, 1898), 305.

28. *Ibid.*

### *Substantive Puritan Law*

The Massachusetts Bay Colony's legal development was unfettered by the hostilities of the Puritan revolution in England. Unhampered by the factionalism, the colony became an apotheosis of a society structured by religious law. More than anywhere else, the Puritan concept of the reformation of the world led directly to a theory and practice of law as a means of religious transformation of society. In England in the 1640s and 1650s, for instance, over ten thousand pamphlets were published arguing for legal reforms.<sup>29</sup> New England Puritans carried the torch of legal reform further than their counterparts across the Atlantic. {59}

As a source of law, the New England Puritans looked to their sacred writings:

Whatsoever ordinance of the Old Testament is not repealed in the New Testament, as peculiar to the Jewish Paedagogie, but was of moral and perpetual equity, the same binds us in these days, and is to be accounted the revealed will of God in all ages, though it be not particularly and expressly mentioned in the writings of the New Testament ... the Scriptures of the New Testament do speak little in these cases; only the Scripture of the Old Testament do give direction and light about them.<sup>30</sup>

When Sewall stood on January 14, 1696 while his confession was read, he stood not only a religious figure but also a legal one. The religious law that had shaped his professional training at Harvard College and his jurisprudential stance had moral "teeth" to chew on his entire psyche. Religious law played a part in Sewall's motivation to stand and retract his illegitimate juridical opinions. Sewall's response to the morality of religious law propelled him to leave the "slavery" of unlawfulness into the "liberty of lawfulness."

### *The Cohesive New England Social Order*

When the Puritans erected their "city upon a hill" in the 1620s,

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29. Sermon to the House of Commons, 1641, quoted in Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of the Revolution: The Autohography of Western Man* 291 (1938), as quoted by Harold J. Berman, "Religious Foundations of Law in the West: An Historical Perspective," *Journal of Law and Religion*, Volume 1, Number 1, Summer 1983, 30. Berman, 30.

30. *An Apology of the Churches in New England for Church-Covenant* (London, 1643), 8, as quoted by John F. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament* (Princeton, 1969), 143.

they established a colony distinct in political texture from the other colonies. Conflicting interest groups in New York and Pennsylvania vied for their interests in the political and economic arena.<sup>31</sup> The southern royal colonies endured class violence and a subsistence crisis. Further, fear of the growing black population in the south solidified the white aristocracy.<sup>32</sup> Social unrest, however, was rare in the Bay Colony; rather, Massachusetts was remarkably cohesive socially. Differences revolved around religious issues, such as the Half-Way Covenant, and policy concerns, such as the regulation of navigation to appease the British Crown.<sup>33</sup> biblical law provided a social emulsifier for the colony. Additionally, the comprehensiveness and severity of biblical law raised the moral concerns of the colonists.

As an emulsifier, biblical law pervaded the school system in Massachusetts. Since the ideological indoctrination began at an early age for {60} all children, the society developed an ideological commonality that bound the colony together. Unlike Pennsylvania, where the Dutch Reformed taught their children in Dutch, Quakers taught their children according to their creed, and the Swedish Covenant churches taught their children according to their creed and in their language, only a small minority of the Massachusetts colonists differed from the Puritan creed and all spoke English. Commonality in creed and language was unique to Massachusetts.<sup>34</sup>

January 14, 1696 was day of contrition for the whole colony—a day of “Solemn fasting and prayer” for what might have been done amiss “in the late tragedy, raised among us by Satan and his instruments, through the awful judgment of God.”<sup>35</sup> The colonist Sewall was not only a religious being but a social being. Being emulsified with the homogeneous Puritan society, he became estranged from his own people by what he done to them in the

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31. William Pencak, *War, Politics, and Revolution in Provincial Massachusetts* (Boston, 1981), 2.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, 2–6.

34. Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, *The Puritan Oligarchy—The Founding of American Civilization* (New York, 1947).

35. Theodore Benson Strandness, *Samuel Small: A Puritan Portrait* (East Lansing, 1967), 76.

Salem witch trials. Separated from his society, he sought to tear down the barrier between himself and his society by means of public confession. Fundamental to every human being is the need to belong—essential to Sewall's sense of belonging was his public confession. Public confession was a purgation of the horror of being alone—a way to blast away the lonely past of sitting in judgment on one's people and betraying them by putting their innocent to death.

### The "In Re" of the Confession—The Tragic Superstitions

Shakespeare's depiction of the three witches of *MacBeth's* may appear entertaining to the modern reader, but to the colonists of Massachusetts Bay, the depiction was not far from reality:

*First Witch:*

Round about the cauldron go;  
 In the poisn'd entrails throwe—  
 Toad, that under the cold stone  
 Days and nights hast thirty-one  
 Sweltered venom sleeping got  
 Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

*All:*

Double, double, toil and trouble;  
 Fire, burn; and, cauldron, bubble. {61}

*MacBeth:*

Infected be the air whereon they ride,  
 And damned all those that trust them.

N. H. Chamberlain, using the caldron and condiments as a conceit, relates that:

... into that Salem caldron, out of the hands of that Puritan age and people, were poured some of the most mixed, unreachable, and poisonous motives of which probably the human mind, in its most occult relationship to the human body, has as yet shown itself capable of emitting.<sup>36</sup>

36. N. H. Chamberlain, *op. cit.* (Boston, 1898), 158.

Tragically, the bubbles in Shakespeare's portrayal turned to blood, and the "smoke of this witches' incense" casts a dark cloud over New England's history.<sup>37</sup> According to this lore, women had "teats" on their bodies which imps or animal "familiar" came to suck at night. These "familiar" came in the form of cats, birds, dogs, and snakes.<sup>38</sup> In the same vein, Ewen introduces his excellent work on *Witchcraft and Demonianism* as follows:

Of wrathful witches this same pamphlet tels,  
 How most of all on simple folke they worke.  
 What wonders to, they may atchiue by spels,  
 God weede them out in euery cell they lurke,  
 God weeds them out, but Satan stil doth hatch  
 fresh Imps, whereby of al sorts he may catch.<sup>39</sup>

The belief in the existence of witchcraft and accusations commensurate with this belief, derived from several sources. First, they derived from direct biblical teaching. John Wesley would later say in 1768 that "giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible."<sup>39</sup> Sir William Blackstone, chronicler of the common law, wrote in 1765 that "in general there has been such a thing as witchcraft, though one cannot give credit to any particular modern instance of it." Second, false accusations of corrupt ministers perpetuated the belief in witchcraft. Third, medical doctors ascribed some diseases to supernatural origin, which gave rise to accusations of witchcraft. Fourth, the statutory law that forbade witchcraft obviously presupposed its existence. Fifth, misunderstanding in cases of great mortality of children and livestock—often, such loses were ascribed to witchcraft. Sixth, demented individuals would sometimes "confess" to {62} being witches. Seventh, the populace would hold mental degenerates as credible sources.<sup>40</sup>

Although ideologically Sewall believed in witches, much of the lore of the day went far beyond the sacred writings he held dear.

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37. *Ibid.*

38. David D. Hall, *Witchhunting in Seventeenth Century New England* (Boston, 1991), 6.

39. C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933), preface.

40. C. L'Estrange Ewen, *op. cit.* (London, 1933), 138.

Sewall, in recanting, returned from a line he had crossed from his religion into superstition. His refusal to hear “spectral” evidence that is, testimony of sighted phantasms, visages, and specters—demonstrates his departure from superstitious lore. Sewall’s confession marked a raising of evidentiary standards above the fantastic and ridiculous.

### The “In Re” of the Confession—Group Hysteria

The socio-political community was “ripe” for some outlet for pent-up group anxiety. With the loss of the colony’s charter, a communal apprehension descended upon the colony’s group consciousness. The “sore” and “apprehensive” community was ripe for an “acting out.” The psychology of the community fixated upon a simplistic “solution” to the anxiety. Eradicate the evil in the colony; surgically remove the tumor from the sick social organism! If the cause of God’s “curse” was found and removed, the community would “feel better.” The community was feeling “out of joint” because their political future hung in the balance, the community sought a simplistic “out”—“Burn the witches!” Out of a slough of an unknown transition, a “good” mob materialized to blame the “evil” Satan worshipers.<sup>41</sup> The Salem witch burning was a fixation hysteria *en masse*.

Further, socio-political community had evolved. A new generation of Puritans had been hardened by King Philip’s War. The maneuvers of that war brought many of the new generation in touch with the uncivil cruelties of the wilderness. Backsliding into a mild barbarism forged by war and wilderness, the new generation was far more prone to violence than the earlier. Additionally, the new generation suffered from less education than their forebears.<sup>42</sup>

The socio-political community was spiritually hung-strung. Puritanism, with its incessant introspection, produced a mind taut with spiritual tension. The vibrations of the spiritually taut psyche of the community were unnaturally acute.<sup>43</sup> High-strung temperaments are given to behavioral extremes and perceptual biases. Spiritually, the witch trials were an “honest {63} but fierce

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41. *cf.* Chamberlain, 161.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

outburst of fanaticism.”<sup>44</sup> Religious “mobocracy” is a poor substitute for good government.

The socio-political community was corporately paranoid. At Gloucester, for instance, the citizens actually shut themselves up in their fortress to prepare for an imminent attack by demons in force. Any accusation was equivalent to an indictment. Accused parties were guilty until proven guilty. Indictments were equivalent to sentences. Those awaiting trial were denied bail.<sup>45</sup>

Mob mania is a frightening phenomenon. Consider Hitler and the Jews. The demonized and consequently persecuted minority becomes an opposite “pole” for the tyrannical majority. Through manipulation by group defamation, Nazi society became polarized—“us” against “them.” “Because ‘they’ are evil, ‘we’ must be good. Because ‘they’ are demonic, ‘we’ must be angelic.” The minority’s scarlet letters and albatrosses as neck ornaments make the majority feel “good.” Group paranoia became the cement to glue together a homogeneous Nazi society. The threat, real or imagined, of a common enemy fosters strong alliances. Tragically, the Puritan society degenerated into the mania of group paranoia. The paranoia aroused Puritan society to look for a common enemy, even if there was none—consider the barricading of the stockade at Gloucester from the advancing demons. Some societies degenerate to the left, disintegrating into anarchy. Other societies degenerate to the right, tyrannizing minorities.

What sick, warped minds like Stoughton’s may do! Although Sewall joined the bandwagon mania commandeered by Stoughton, at least Sewall later came to his senses. Sewall’s return to sanity underscores the depth of the evil of character assassination, smear campaigns, “black-balling,” false accusation, and prejudiced jurists. Ignorance, error, prejudice, and bigotry combined into a leviathan of starved terror, seeking whom it might devour. {64}

The name “Reginald Denny” has become a synonym for “mob hysteria” of late, but history is replete with group hysteria phenomena.<sup>46</sup> Sewall, caught up in the whirlwind of the Salem

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44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, 163.

46. A illuminating study of hypochondriacal delusions is E. Steinebrunner, *Archivfur-Psychiatrie-und Nervenkrankheiten*, 1976 Vol. 222(1) 47-60.

phenomenon, returned to his senses. A return to sanity motivated his public confession.

### The “In Re” of the Confession—Mock Examination of Witnesses

The following is an example of interrogation by Simon Willard of an alleged “witch” common to the “trials.” In the following “fact-finding proceeding,” a child of eight years of age is questioned:

Question: how long have you been a witch? Ever since I was six years old. how old are you now? Near eight years old; brother Richard says I shall be eight years old in November next. Who made you a witch? My mother. She made me set my hand to a book. How did you set your hand to it? I touched it with my fingers and the book was red; the paper of it was white. She said she had never seen “the Black Man, i.e., the Devil,—but she had touched the book, and so Become the Devil’s own in Andres Foster’s pasture, and that her mother, cousin, and aunt among others were there.

Question: What did they promise to give you?

Answer: A black dog. Did the dog ever come to you? No. But you said you saw a cat once—what did that say to you? It said it would tear me in pieces if I would not set my hand to the book. She said further, her mother baptized her, and the Devil or “black man” was not there as she saw, and her mother said when she baptized her, “thou art mine forever and ever, Amen.”

But Martha Currier defended herself with an honest woman’s anger. She denied everything in every particular; that she had ever seen or dealt with the Devil, or hurt any one. She said to the magistrates, “It is a shameful thing that you should mind these folks who are out of their wits;” and turning to her accusers, now

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Conducting a meta-analysis of 101 cases dating from 1973 and 100 cases dating from 1912, Steinebrunner concluded: first, delusions as to reference, religion, and persecution were stable. Second, over time, hypochondriacal delusions significantly increase while megalomania and eretomania decrease.

Third, with increasing age, delusions of special descent, paranoid identity change, and erotomania decrease. Further, after age thirty, delusions of special descent, paranoid identity change, querulant paranoia, and erotomania did not occur. *Ibid.* Individual hypochondriacal delusions combined with group hysteria could produce unique phenomenon. Group or social hypochondria may apply to the psychology of the Bay Colony in 1692.

resting from their fits a little, cried, "You lie! I am wronged." Her courage threw the great crowd into an uproar; and the {65} record closes in these words: "The tortures of the afflicted were so great that there was no enduring of it, so that she was ordered away, to be bound hand and foot with all expedition; the afflicted in the meanwhile, almost killed, to the great trouble of all spectators, magistrates, and others."<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, the magistrates were told by one of the witnesses, out of court, that the accused confessed to her that "she had been a witch 40 years."<sup>48</sup> She also deposed that she afflicted persons by pinching them; that she had not image or "puppet" of these persons by her, but that she went to them, not in her body, but in her spirit, and that her mother carried her to the place of mischief. Being further asked, "How did your mother carry you when she was in prison?" she replied, "She came like a black cat." How did you know it was your mother? The cat told me so; that she was my mother.<sup>49</sup> The "confession" of another infant of the same mother runs thus: "Have you been in the Devil's snare? Yes. How long has your brother been a witch? Near a month. How long have you been a witch? Not long. She afterwards added to her last answer, 'about five weeks.'<sup>50</sup> This kind of travesty literally led innocent souls to their deaths.

The legitimacy that fueled the orgy of hangings dissipated with time. "Spectral" evidence is testimony in pertaining to specters. Specters are visible incorporeal spirits, especially ones of a terrifying nature.<sup>51</sup> Spectrally, "the study of ghosts, phantoms, and apparitions," was more the source of the legitimacy than the Congregationalists' theology.<sup>52</sup>

47. Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, 164.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

51. *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, Second Edition, (New York, 1987), 1832.

52. *Ibid.*, 1833; at the execution of George Burrough, John Willard, John Proctor, Martha Carrier and George Jacobs, several ministers were present with Sewall—Cotton Mather, Simms, Hale, Noyes, and Chiever. When the number of accusations grew to include more and more persons of good reputation and upright life, even the wife of the Governor, Mather concluded that "many

Thomas Brattle, for instance, was not in minority in 1693. In his famous letter dated October 8, he wrote:

Those Wenches being present, who plaid their juggling tricks, falling down, crying out, and staring in Peoples Faces; the Magistrates {66} demanded of them several times, who it was of all the People in the Room that hurt them? One of these Accusers pointed several times at one Captain Hill, there present, but spake nothing; the same Accuser had a Man standing at her back to hold her up; he stooped down to her Ear, then she cried out, Aldin, Aldin afflicted her; one of the Magistrates asked her if she had ever seen Aldin, she answered no, he asked her how she knew it was Aldin? She said, the Man told her so.<sup>53</sup>

Brattle ridicules the whole episode and remarks “that the reasonable part of the world, when acquainted herewith, will laugh at the demonstration, and conclude that the said S.G. are actually possessed, at least, with ignorance and folly.” Further, Brattle singles out the Reverend Nicholas Noyes for being so gullible.<sup>54</sup>

Clearly, Sewall had much to burden his conscience—hearsay, reported phantasms, imaginations, and outright lies. The discovery phase of these investigations turned fact-finding into a nauseating farce. Sewall sought to purge his conscience of a travesty of evidentiary analysis.

### The “In Re” of the Confession— The Barbaric Torture

The history of the means to extract confessions is sordid. Although the Anglo-American evolution is less shocking than the

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unsearchable cheats were interwoven into the doleful business.” Mather lamented that “a good name, obtained by a good life, should not be lost by mere spectral accusations.” The notorious Special Court of Oyer and Terminer was disbanded in October of 1696; the Superior Court replacing it on January 3, 1697 formally adopted a more sane evidentiary standard. When the Superior Court was asked by the jury what weight should spectral evidence carry, the Superior Court responded “as much as Chips in Wort”—less than worthlessness. Theodore Benson Strandness, *Samuel Sewall: A Puritan Portrait* (East Lansing, 1967), 74; Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Carlisle, P.A., reprint edition), I, 212.

53. Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story—Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Boston, 1993), 186–87.

54. *Ibid.*, 188.

Continental, violent practices to induce confession on both sides of the Channel would make even the most extreme Christian sect shudder. The means regularly sanctioned to acquire confessions borders on the barbaric.<sup>55</sup> The suggested figure of 300,000 executions throughout Europe and the British Isles during the seventeenth century is perhaps conservative. But the horror of nineteen {67} deaths on the gallows and one under heavy stones in New England is small in proportion.<sup>56</sup>

By English law, an adult male might be “pressed” to the point of death. The unfortunate male who refused to respond to an arraignment with the plea of “yea” or “nay” would be brought three times before the sentencing court and told the penalty. If he remained recalcitrant, the prisoner would be bound hand and foot on the floor of his cell. Heavy iron weights were put on his body. The first day he was to receive three morsels of the worst moldy bread. The second day he was to receive three cups of stagnant water found nearest the prison walls. But, each day weights were added to his body until he was literally crushed to death. The Puritans maintained an ironic grim thrift even in the cost of imprisonment and torture. The prisoner or the prisoner’s estate was charged for the torture implements, room, board, security expenses, and court fees.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, the Puritans again forgot their Bibles—Moses prescribed no prisons, only temporary custody in six cities of refuge for those accused of murder. Any

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55. H. Richard Uviller, Evidence from the Mind of the Criminal Suspect: A Reconsideration of the Current Rules of Access and Restraint, 87 Colum. L. Rev. 1137, 1140, October, 1987; The goals of limitation of coercion, physical or otherwise, is to ensure that confessions are reliable expressions of the truth. The privilege against self-incrimination “tap the roots of the basic stream of religious and political principle.” This privilege sets limits to the individual’s atonement to the state. And further, it philosophically upholds the principle of individual autonomy by “equalizing” the individual and the state. Barry C. Feld, Criminalizing Juvenile justice: Rules of Procedure for the Juvenile Court, 69 Minn. L. Rev. 141, 157 (1984). Feld continues his discussion of the impropriety of requiring an accused party to testify against themselves: “one of its purposes is to prevent the state, whether by force or by psychological domination, from overcoming the mind and will of the person under investigation and depriving him of the freedom to decide whether to assist the state in securing his conviction.” *id.* at 157.

56. Ola Elizabeth Winslow, *Samuel Sewall of Boston* (New York, 1964), 114.

57. Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, 171–172.

other malefactor, according to Moses, was either fined, flogged, or suffered capital punishment.

The English courts utilized torture in years 1540 to 1640 in at least 81 cases.<sup>58</sup> The use of torture ended, however, with the advent of the Puritan revolution in 1640. But during this period, no privilege against self-incrimination was created.<sup>59</sup> With a rash of sexual immorality in the early 1640s, in the winter of 1641–42, Governor Bellingham sought counsel from ministers and local magistrates on use of “violence” to compel confession. Bellingham asked, “may a magistrate extract a confession of a capital crime from a suspected and an accused person? Ralph Partrich answered in terms consistent with common law and Congregationalist Puritan dogma:

I conceive that a magistrate is bound, by careful examination of circumstances and within probabilities, to sift the accused; and by force of argument to draw him to an acknowledgment of the truth. But he may not extract a confession of a capital crime from a suspected person by any violent means, whether it be by an oath imposed or by any punishment inflicted or threatened to be inflicted, for so he may draw forth an acknowledgment of a crime from a fearful innocent. If {68} guilty, he shall be compelled to be his own accuser, when no other can, which is against the rule of justice.<sup>60</sup>

Bradford transcribed excerpts from his response and that of Charles Chauncy into his manuscript. To Bradford and the others involved, the issue was more pressing than academic. In September of 1642, Thomas Granger of Duxbury was executed on his own confession to repeated acts of bestiality.<sup>61</sup>

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58. John H. Langbein, “The Historical Origins of the Privilege against Self-incrimination at Common Law,” 92 Mich. L. Rev. 1047,1085, March 1994.

59. *id.* at 1100–1102.

60. *id.* at 1102.

61. *id.* at 1102–3; William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, at 317–18,

(Samuel E. Mirison ed., 1952); Wigmore asserted that the maxim *nemo tenetur* was an old and established ecclesiastical practice. John H. Wigmore, *Nemo tenetur Seipsum Prodere*, 5 Harv. L. Rev. 71, 83 (1891). In 1532, the Archbishop of Canterbury examined John Lambert for heresy, of which he was later convicted. Lambert argued that “no man is bound to accuse himself.” In 1533, Parliament enacted a new statute on the punishment of treason, “any persons

When the judges of Salem led by Chief-Justice Stoughton reverted to physical torture, they retrogressed legally and morally.<sup>62</sup> Sewall, regressing with them, realized his folly. Accordingly, Sewall's confession proceeded from colossal dimensions of moral and legal error. A public purgation of his errors was Sewall's chosen means of retraction. {69}

### The "In Re" of the Confession— The Possible Gender Factor

The evil of witch hunting had a tragic gender dimension. On a ratio of 4:1, women were accused of witchcraft more than men. Further, the men so accused were often sons or husbands of alleged witches. The fullest chronicle of gender-biased patterns is Carol Karlsen's *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman*. Women were

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presented or indicted of any heresy, or duly accused by two lawful witnesses, may be cited, arrested, or taken by a church official who sat in ecclesiastical court, other of the King's subjects to answer in open court. In 1537 the statute was amended under Edward, providing that no person "shall be indicted, arraigned, condemned or convicted" for treason unless he be "accused by two sufficient and lawful witnesses, or shall willingly without violence confess the same." In 1584, Puritans Wiggenton and Blake refused to answer the questions of the High Commission. Wiggenton states that he had not received a copy of the charges or the names of his accusers. Blake responded with a lecture about compulsory self-incrimination. *id.* at 119.

In 1587, Henry Barrow, a separatist leader, insisted on the right to face the witnesses against him. *id.* at 119. In 1588, hard-hitting, easy to read, pseudonymously written (the author never discovered, called himself, "Martin Marprellate") tracts appeared which ridiculed prelate. One suspected author was Wiggenton, who when arrested refused to answer on ground that "I account it as unnatural a thing for me to answer against myself, as to thrust a knife into my thigh. *id.* at 120.

In 1580, another suspected author, John Udall, may have been the first person to claim a right of silence in a common law proceeding. John H. Langbein, "The Historical Origins of the Privilege against Self-incrimination at Common Law," 92 Mich. L. Rev. 1047, 1085, March 1994.

62. The Chief Justice at Salem was a strident, hardened Puritan version of, perhaps, Senator Helms. His jury instructions are particularly noteworthy: "the Devil could not appear in the form of any one who was not in league with him. It followed, therefore, as the Devil had appeared in the form of many of the accused, according to the eye-witnesses there, the defendants must be guilty." Stoughton maintained the righteousness of his cause to the end, resigning rather than compromise his personal jihad against the demonized minority. Like Lt. William Cally after MyLai, Stoughton maintained not only his innocence but his righteousness. N. H. Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, 169.

particularly vulnerable because of the particular social order of the Bay Colony. Legal, political, ideological, and economic authority rested exclusively with men.<sup>63</sup>

A striking case of theological blame-shifting was Zachary Dibble of Stamford Connecticut in 1669. Sarah Dibble accused Zachary of physical abuse but Zachary denied, claiming that her bruises were the result of acute “witchcraft.” Although the court rejected his counter-claim, Zachary’s allegation implies how commonplace witch labeling was.<sup>64</sup>

The gender factor raises yet another blemish on the ugly head of the witch hunts. Although Sewall, as a man of his day, may not have been cognizant of particular injustices to women, his confession belies an awareness of the injustices done to humanity as a whole. From this sordid episode, Sewall sought catharsis when he stood before South Church in Boston to recant.

### Conclusion: The Interplay of Religious, Moral, and Psychological Factors

There are no journal entries in Sewall’s journal for the months of April, May, and June, 1696, when the hysteria was at its height. Sewall’s entries concerning the proceedings were few, brief, but revelatory. As Chamberlain observes: “He evidently was ashamed, cast down, full of sorrow, and probably afraid of personal prosecution and loss of property and of the survivors suing for damages.”<sup>65</sup> Sewall believed the death of several of his young children was “caused” by his role in the witch condemnations.<sup>66</sup>

Although Sewall confessed alone, he was not the only soul agonizing over the shedding of innocent blood. Michael Wigglesworth, for instance, expressed dire concern: {70}

I fear (among our many other provocations) that God hath a Controversy with us about what was done in the time of the

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63. David D. Hall, *Witchhunting in Seventeenth Century New England* (Boston, 1991), 6–7.

64. *id* at 7; morally, it was fitting for Zachary to suffer the penalty for being a witch himself, presupposing, of course, his accusation was false.

65. N. H. Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, 168.

66. Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, 173.

Witchcraft. I fear that innocent blood hath been shed; and that many have had their hands defiled therewith. I believe our Godly Judges did act Conscientiously, according to what they did apprehend then to be sufficient Proof: But since that, have not the Devil's impostures appeared? and that most of the Complainers and Accusers were acted by him in giving their testimonies. Be it then that it ... was done ignorantly. Paul, a Pharisee, persecuted the church of God, shed the blood of God's saints, and yet obtained mercy, because he did it in ignorance; but how doth he bewail it, and shame himself for it before God and men afterwards.<sup>67</sup>

Sewall, therefore, was not alone in his strident remorse.

A profitable religious parallel in an analysis of Sewall's motivation to confess publicly is the tradition of Kenyan youths of Okiek. Kratz contrasts religious confession between Western Catholic tradition and the tradition of Okiek youths in Kenya. The final ritual component just prior to the ritual climax of circumcision of the males or excision of the females is public confession of social debts. This qualifies the initiate for the ritual climax. The religious functionary presiding over the event publicly questions the initiate, then announces the "social debts" to the assembly. The interrogator then creatively recasts the "sins" of the initiate into a narrative transformation. The recasting is the symbolic ritual act of absolution of past "sins." The humiliation of the initiate before the amused assembly serves as a milestone for the initiate, purging the initiate of past sins and ushering the initiate into absolution and maturity.<sup>68</sup>

Kratz' study opens a window, perhaps, into Sewall's psyche. His humiliation before his peers served to purge of his past and usher him into a new era of absolution and maturity. The trauma of public humiliation<sup>69</sup> was not only a form of self-punishment, but a psychological wall erected to impede his ability to turn back

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67. Michael Wigglesworth, letter to Increase Mather in 1704, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 8, 4th ser., 646; Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story—Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Boston, 1993), 183.

68. Corinne A. Kratz, "Amusement and Absolution: Transforming Narratives During Confession of Social Debts," *American Anthropologist* 1991 Dec. Vol. 93(4): 826–851.

69. What stark irony to compare Sewall's humility with the attitude of many federal judges. The common adage, "you are never closer to God than when you are in the presence of a federal court judge sitting on the bench," rings true.

and look at his ghastly past. Ultimately, however, Samuel Sewall's public confession ignited through the intersection of the religious, moral, and psychological dimensions.

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## THE MODERN ARYAN HERESY

*James M. Jarrell*

*We believe in the preservation of our Race, individually and collectively, as a people as demanded and directed by Yahweh.*

*We believe that Adam, man of Genesis, is the placing of the White Race upon this earth. Not all races descend from Adam. Adam is the father of the White Race only. (Adam in the original Hebrew is translated: "to show blood in the face; turn rosy.") Genesis 5:1*

*We believe that the true, literal children of the Bible are the twelve tribes of Israel, now scattered throughout the world and now known as the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Teutonic, Scandinavian, Celtic peoples of the earth.<sup>1</sup>*

These statements have been quoted from the Aryan Nations platform. What is noticeable, and in fact what the Aryan Nations is known for, is their tremendous focus on race. Yet the most amazing aspect of this belief is that they attempt to justify it by appealing to the holy word of God. For them, the Bible commands them to do everything in their power to preserve their race. And, therefore, anything is condoned which helps to promote the Aryan race, even violence. But the questions we, as Christians, must ask ourselves are: Is this what the Bible really says? Does the Bible condone racism in any manner? Does the Bible support the claim that the Aryan race is God's chosen people? And if not, who

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1. The Aryan Nations Platform. Available at "<http://www.stormfront.org/stormfront/an.htm>."

are God's chosen people? The answer to these questions lies at the heart of the Christian Faith.

The answer to all is "No." In fact, it would seem to this observer that the Aryan Nations is preaching a false doctrine, heretical at its foundation. Their primary belief that the white race is God's chosen people biases all their other doctrines. Therefore, every other belief they hold must come forth from and reflect their underlying presupposition. They must even interpret the Bible on these terms. This therefore makes man the starting point and reduces their theology to the original sin of mankind (Gen. 3:6).

Some good can be said of Aryan Nations. For instance, also included in their statement of beliefs is a great respect for the law of God. They state, "We believe that the present world problems are a result of our disobedience to Divine Law."<sup>2</sup> This declaration is not only true, but {72} supported by the Scriptures. All of our blessings and cursings are a result of our obedience or disobedience to God's law. Our country, by abandoning God's law, has become ever more pagan, and in the process has dismantled the foundations of a healthy society. Public education is failing, crime is rising, and abortion continues to plague our country. From a Christian standpoint the only solution is to acknowledge Jesus Christ as sovereign and to return to his law as the basis for our society (Dt. 30:16; Lev. 26:3-12; 1 Kin. 2:3).

Unfortunately the Aryans base the rest of their theology upon a false presupposition—simply that race is the deciding factor in salvation. Hence all their doctrines proceed and are interpreted from the belief that the white race is God's chosen race. Instead of starting from the standpoint of God, they use the white man as their foundation and thus all things must be interpreted in terms of him. Thus many of their doctrines, although derived from the Bible, are twisted in order to conform to the belief that the white man is the measure of all things.

A case in point is their translation of the Hebrew word for "man," *adam*. In accord with their belief that Adam is the first of the white race upon this earth, they translate the Hebrew word *adam* as "to show blood in the face; turn rosy."<sup>3</sup> This is fallacious. First,

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2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

the original meaning of the word is uncertain. *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* acknowledges, “The etymology of the root has not as of yet been satisfactorily explained.”<sup>4</sup> *The New Bible Dictionary* says, “Though attempts have been made to determine the etymology of the name, there is no agreement, and the fact that the original language of mankind was not Hebrew renders such theories academic.”<sup>5</sup>

Second, neither of the two major theories about the word’s etymology supports a translation as extreme as the Aryans’. *Adam* is related to the Hebrew verb *adorn*, “to be red,” and therefore probably relates to the original ruddiness of human skin.<sup>6</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that Adam’s skin was white. The presence of red in the skin could possibly refer to Arab or Hebrew skin. Alternatively, the word may have another meaning because *adam* is also related to the Hebrew *adamah* or “ground.” Given the context of Genesis, it is quite possible that the word relates more to the ground (*adamah*) from which God created Adam. “The {73} play on words in Gen. 2:7 and 3:19 between *adam* and *adamah* ‘ground, earth’ has not been overlooked in the search for an etymology of the former. The name Adam is given to the human creature believed to have come from the *adamah*.”<sup>7</sup> “It has also been suggested that Adam is a derivative from *adamah*, ground and describes man as earth born.”<sup>8</sup> *The Complete Dictionary of English and Hebrew First Names* translates it thus as well.<sup>9</sup> *The Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible* declares of *adam*, “of red earth,” and that the Hebrew word *adam* is connected with *adamah*, “soil, tillable red earth.”<sup>10</sup> The writer of Genesis is clearly emphasizing the creation of man, man

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4. *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, 1962)

5. J. D. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1962)

6. *Nelson’s Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament*, edited by Merrill F. Unger and William White, Jr. (Nashville, TN, 1980), 239–241.

7. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, editor-in-chief (New York, 1992), 62.

8. *A Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by James Hastings (New York, 1963), 36.

9. “Adam—from the Hebrew meaning ‘earth.’” Alfred A. Kolatch, *Complete Dictionary of English and Hebrew First Names* (New York, 1988), 6.

10. O. Odelain and R. Segueineau, *Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible* (New York, 1981), 11.

(adam) being formed from the ground (*adamah*). The New Bible Dictionary goes on to say, “It is clear, however, that the use of the word *adama*, ‘ground,’ in juxtaposition to the name Adam in Gn. ii. 7 is intentional, a conclusion reinforced by Gn. iii. 19.”<sup>11</sup> And the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* says, “The Bible does not explain the etymology of the name, it merely draws attention to the similarity between the terms *adam* (man) and *adamah* (earth, soil) for the purpose of stressing certain ontological relations (since the name stands for the thing itself): by his origin (2,7) and his end (3, 19.23) man is associated with the earth, which forms his natural habitat and which he is to make productive.”<sup>12</sup> For the Aryans to base their doctrine that “Adam” is the father of “the White Race only” on the original meaning of the word, *adam*, for which there remains no solid evidence, is quite amazing.

Another error in their theology comes about in the statement that “Not all races descend from Adam. Adam is the father of the White Race only.”<sup>13</sup> Certainly the Bible contradicts this. In Ac. 17:26 the text clearly states that God “hath made of *one* blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth” (emphasis added). Commenting on this verse, Matthew Henry states:

He made the first man, he makes every man, is the former of every man’s body and the Father of every man’s spirit. He has made the nations of men, not only all men in nations, but as nations in their {74} political capacity; he is their founder, and disposed them into communities for their mutual preservation and benefit. He made them all of one blood, of one and the same nature; he fashions their heart alike. *Descended from one and the same ancestor, in Adam they are all akin, so they are in Noah*, that hereby they might be engaged in mutual affection and assistance, as fellow-creatures and brethren.<sup>14</sup> (emphasis added)

All men everywhere descend from Adam. Adam is not just the father of the white race but of all mankind.

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11. J. D. Douglas, *op. cit.*

12. Louis F. Hartmen, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible* (New York, 1963), 34.

13. Aryan Nations Platform.

14. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Acts to Revelation* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 184.

The Aryan belief that Adam is the father of the white race only also contradicts Romans 5:12, “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” And who was this man, responsible for bringing sin and death into the world? 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us, for “in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” Adam was the man responsible for this sin. He, by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, poisoned all mankind (Gen. 3:6). This in turn left no hope for man except through our Savior Jesus Christ. All men are sinners. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, the claim that “Adam is the father of the White Race only” is inconsistent for not all men are of the white race, yet through Adam all men are sinners. It is through descent from Adam that his sin is imputed to mankind, so to say that Adam is the father of the white race only is to say that members of the white race are sinners and members of other races are not. Adam, as the representative of the human race (Rom. 5:23), committed the first sin. And in order for Adam to be representative of the human race, he had to be the first of the race, just as Jesus Christ is the firstborn of the godly. If not all men descend through Adam, then not all men are sinners, a point which is inconsistent with biblical theology.

To make up for this inconsistency, the Aryans seem to go to the opposite extreme. Their platform continues, “We believe that there are literal children of Satan in the world today. These children are the descendants of Cain, who was a result of *Eve’s original sin*, her physical seduction by Satan” (emphasis added). In order to solve their philosophical problem, the Aryans allocate original sin to Eve, therefore implying that the white race is sinless. If only the white race descends from Adam, it logically follows that Eve must have had relations with another man to bear Cain. Thus, the Aryans impute original sin by Eve to all humanity, except the white race. Therefore those who are sinners, the literal children of Satan, are the {75} descendants of Eve through Cain, not Adam. The white race is thus kept pure and referred to as God’s “chosen and faithful.”

But this is inconsistent with biblical history. The Bible states, “And *Adam knew Eve* his wife; and she conceived, and bare *Cain*, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord” (emphasis added).

Cain is Adam and Eve's son. And Adam's original sin is imputed throughout history to him. And through Adam, sin is also imputed to the white race. The Bible's position is that one race is no better than another. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). To state that Eve and not Adam is the bearer of original sin is to imply that Christ's atonement is of no worth to the white race. For what does a sinless people need of a savior? If the white race has yet to fall, as the Aryans seem to imply, then Christ's death on the cross is meaningless. No sin, no savior. Not surprisingly, the Aryan Nations Platform includes no statement about the saving grace of God. For the Aryans to imply such a thing is extremely dangerous and—dare I say—heretical.

The Platform also goes on to state that, "the true, literal children of the Bible are the twelve tribes of Israel, now scattered throughout the world and now known as the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, Teutonic, Scandinavian, Celtic peoples of the earth." Yet the twelve tribes of Israel were descended through Shem (Gen. 11:10–26; 1 Chron. 1:24–27). He, according to Scripture, is the father of the Semitic nations, not the Aryan. Matthew Henry in speaking of the blessings conferred upon Shem in Gen. 9:26 declares, "It is intimated that the church should be built up and continued in the posterity of Shem, for of him came the *Jews*, who were for a great while, the only professing people God had in the world"<sup>15</sup> (emphasis added).

The white or Aryan race is thought by most biblical scholars to have descended through Japheth. Easton's *Bible Dictionary* proclaims, "He [Japheth] was the progenitor of many tribes inhabiting the east of Europe and north of Asia (Gen. 10:2–5)."<sup>16</sup> It goes on to say,

It is important to notice that modern ethnological science and reasoning from a careful analysis of facts, has arrived at the conclusion that there is a three-fold division of the human family, corresponding in a remarkable way with the great ethnological chapter of the book of Genesis (10). Setting aside the cases where the ethnic names employed are of doubtful application, *it cannot*

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15. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Hendrickson Publishers, 199d), 60.

16. M. G. Easton, *Easton's 1897 Bible Dictionary* (Thomas Nelson, 1897).

*be questioned that the author [of Gen. 10] has in his account of the sons of {76} Japheth classed together the Cymry or Celts (Gomer), the Medes (Madai), and the Ionians or Greeks (Javan), thereby anticipating what has become known in modern times as the 'Indo-European Theory' or the essential unity of the Aryan (Asiatic) race with the principal races of Europe, indicated by the Celts and the Ionians. Nor can it be doubted that he has thrown together under the one head of "children of Shem" the Assyrians (Asshur), the Syrians (Aram), the Hebrews (Eber), and the Joktanian Arabs (Joktan), four of the principle races which modern ethnology recognizes under the heading of "Semitic." Again, under the heading of "sons of Ham," the author has arranged "Cush," i.e., the Ethiopians; "Mizraim," the people of Egypt; "Sheba and Dedan," of certain of the Southern Arabs; and "Nimrod," or the ancient people of Babylon, four races between which the latest liturgistic researches have established a close affinity (Rawlinson's Hist. Illustrations).<sup>17</sup> (emphasis added)*

Since the twelve tribes descended through Shem, and not Japheth, the twelve tribes are of Semitic origin. To claim that the twelve tribes are descended from the Aryan race is to revise the Bible and history to fit into a preconceived notion about race. It is because the Aryan Nations focus heavily on the white race, oftentimes implying that it is sinless and pure, that they must make the Aryans the chosen race of God. The conclusion then follows that Aryan Nations is rejecting the saving power of Christ. Thus in order for the Aryans to be saved, they must take the place of the Hebrews as God's chosen people. However, no man can be saved except through Christ. To deny his saving power is to deny God's salvation and thus to damn oneself (Mt. 11:27, 16:16; Lk. 10:22, Jn. 3:15–16, Ac. 4:12).

Yet another problem with the theology of the Aryan Nations is their characterization of the Jews as their mortal enemies, the children of darkness.<sup>18</sup> The question we must address is, are the Jews the children of darkness? And if they are not, who are the children of darkness? Jn. 3:19 states, "And this is the judgement, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light." Accordingly, we can only understand darkness

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17. *Ibid.*

18. Aryan Nations Platform.

in terms of the light. But what is this light? The light of course is the messiah, Jesus Christ. Jn. 8:12 tells us, "Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Jesus Christ is the light of the world, those who follow him and his teachings are considered to be in the light, all others are in darkness. Therefore it becomes clear that the determination of whether one is in the light or the {77} darkness is determined by one's relationship to Jesus Christ. To follow Christ and obey his commandments is to be in the light; to reject Christ is to cover oneself with darkness. The race of a person has nothing to do with the spiritual state of that person. However, since the Aryans seem to reject Christ's salvation, their determination of light and dark must be determined by their presupposition, namely that the Aryans are the chosen people. Yet, many Jewish Christians in this world have accepted Christ and bowed down before him; does this mean that these people are still God's enemies? Nothing could be further from the truth. "He that practices sin is of the devil; for from the beginning the devil sins. To this end the Son of God has been manifested, that he might undo the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8).

The Aryan platform also states that "there is soon to be a day of judgement when Christ's Kingdom (government) will be established on earth, as it is in heaven." This seems to be a garbled version of Reformed Postmillennialism. It implies that Christ's kingdom will be brought about on earth by a day of judgement or conflict in which the members of the church suddenly overthrow Satan and his powers. But the postmillennial view maintains that Christ's kingdom will be established gradually in history and not brought about by a great day of judgement and conflict. The kingdom will be brought about by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the word of God, not through conflict and physical war. Greg Bahnsen puts it thus, "Evangelical Postmillennialism maintains that the advance of Christ's kingdom in the world will take place in terms of the present, peaceful and Spiritual power of the gospel rather than through a radically different principle of operation, namely Christ's physical presence on the earth using

violence to subdue opposition.”<sup>19</sup>

The Aryan Nations’ beliefs are at the foundation racism. I, as a Christian, find it extremely offensive that they claim to base their beliefs upon the word of God. The original sin of mankind, the desire to be as gods (Gen. 3:5), is at the heart of racism. For racism is the desire to be lord over someone else. It is an attempt to promote one’s race over another. Certainly, in a relativistic society, this is a logical outcome. For if no God exists, then rule is promoted by the strong. And the weak are either enslaved or destroyed. Hence, in a relativistic society, one race can, in theory, be better than another. Thus, only when man is at the center of a religion can racism exist. Man, therefore, must replace God to enable the {78} power of racism. The Aryan Nations have replaced the worship of God with a worship of race.

The Bible clearly states, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). All mankind, through Adam, has sinned. Thus, no man is spiritually better than another. It is only through the grace of God that any of us can be saved from his fury. There is nothing that man can do to redeem himself before God. Without the atoning blood of Christ, we are all sinners damned to hell. Therefore, for the racist to use the Bible to justify his hatred of another race is ludicrous.

In fact, the Bible never indicates that race is related to salvation. This was one of the sins of Israel. They felt their membership in the physical race of the Jews would save them. Therefore they, too, believed they were God’s chosen people. Paul writing to the church in Rome refuted this sentiment. He states, “not all who are descended from Israel are Israel ... in other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring” (Rom. 9:6–8). Clearly, Paul is refuting the Jewish heresy that the physical race of the Hebrews was to be saved. It has never been the physical “offspring,” but the spiritual. For by grace we are saved through faith (Eph. 2:8). Physical descent has absolutely nothing to do with one’s status before God. One must, given the strength by God, “repent and believe the Good News” (Mk. 1:15).

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19. Greg L. Bahnsen, *A Synopsis of the Evangelical Postmillennial Position*. Available at “<http://www.chesco.com/~topcat/bahnsen1.html>”

In the Bible, there are two types of people, the saved and the unsaved. This is what matters. To concentrate on the color of one's skin is to forsake God's saving grace for a humanistic doctrine of reality. Skin color does not save anyone; only Christ can do this.

The Aryan Nations beliefs are what R. J. Rushdoony has called the, "New Racism."<sup>20</sup> The New Racism follows from the idea of evolution, which has taught that man is evolving out of the lower life forms. Therefore, life forms must adapt or be destroyed. It is easy to see how groups like the Aryan Nations can develop. If man is evolving, certain forms of life (blacks and Jews) must be lower or less developed than others (whites). The goal becomes the survival of the fittest. The higher life forms must do everything in their power to survive, even if it means destroying the lower life forms. This is clearly illustrated in the Aryan Nations platform: "We believe in the preservation of our Race, individually and collectively, as a people as demanded and directed by Yahweh. We believe our Racial Nation has a right and is under obligation to preserve itself and {79} its members." Therefore, all other races not descended from Aryan lineage are deemed the enemies, the literal children of Satan and the children of darkness. The Aryan Nations version of Christianity is closely related to evolution. As Christians we cannot accept this as simply another version of Christianity. This is heresy. We as a people of God have a responsibility to speak against these things. Christianity is not about race, but the good news of Jesus Christ. Our service, duty and loyalty is not to our race, but to Christ the King. Nothing less can be accepted.

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20. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, CA, 1991), 60.

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# [THERE IS A] REFORMED DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*A. R. Kayayan*

*Ed. Note: This article was adapted into its present form from  
Mr. Kayayan's English translation.*

*“Our senses are so feeble that we could never understand a  
single word that God says to us, unless we are illuminated by  
His Holy Spirit, for carnal man cannot comprehend heavenly  
things.”—John Calvin*

## Preliminary Remarks

The present article is a translation and slight expansion of a chapter of our study in French on the Holy Spirit and Christian experience<sup>1</sup> That essay dealt with the nature of Christian experience, attempting to prove that there is indeed an indisputable and solid Reformed theological tradition of the Holy Spirit. The debate around him—both his person and his work—has nothing in common with scholastic, cerebral and sterile discussion. On the contrary, in interpreting the Holy Spirit's operations, Reformed theology is intimately, and even warmly, related to the most genuine Christian religious experience. If Reformed theology is orthodox, foreign to *orthofixism* or to *orthostatism*, it has from the very beginning been involved in serious healthy discussion of the subject. It is its privilege to enjoy the “right of the first-born”

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1. A. R. Kayayan, *Essai Sur Le Saint-Esprit et l'Experience Chrétienne*, Perspectives Réformées (Palos Heights, 1989).

in this realm or discipline, and has no need to envy those later *aficionados of the Spirit who, with too much ease to be trusted in the least, have monopolized the matter.*

My aim in this essay is primarily pastoral. Such is, or must be, the obligation of all biblical and theological writings—to be “pastoral” in intentions and in application. The French reformer John Calvin, master of all evangelical theologies, serves as the primary example. He has once and for all discerned the deep biblical nature of Christian piety, and his prodigious ministry has been devoted to putting it into practice for the benefit of the church of Jesus Christ.

Therefore if the reader of this paper is merely interested in academic satisfaction, or looking for a theoretical and falsely “objective” study, he will be utterly disappointed while reading the following pages. In John Calvin, we have learned that the Christian minister practices sound theology foremost with the aim of becoming a better pastor, in order to {82} shepherd the flock of the divine shepherd. Both Calvin’s teaching and his exceptional and exemplary life in the service of Jesus Christ for the *Soli Deo Gloria* (expressed in his most moving phrase “*my heart, o God, I offer Thee promptly and sincerely*”) will for many more years to come benefit innumerable generations of Christians, all those who, as believers and witnesses, attempt to live up to the requirements of a genuine spiritual experience, seeking the light which reveals its true nature.

Who would therefore dare to characterize the French reformer as a “nasty” person? Alas, it has been done in the family which bears his name!

The present article will briefly examine a modern Reformed theologian and some of Calvin’s writings, followed by a bird’s eye view of Reformed symbolical writings, then make relevant concluding remarks, assessing again the justified title of the present essay. Indeed, there is such a thing as a Reformed doctrine of the Holy Spirit!

Among the plethora of modern Reformed exegetes mention must be made of Frederick Dale Bruner and his remarkable A

*Theology of the Holy Spirit.*<sup>2</sup> In the original French we had also devoted a few lines to the pneumatological studies of a British New Testament scholar, James Dunn. For the sake of simplifying my text I will not discuss his position, although, in my opinion it is a highly valuable one.<sup>3</sup>

### Richard Gaffin

It is to a modern Reformed theologian, a specialist in the New Testament, that we now draw our attention.

Richard Gaffin, Professor emeritus of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia is undoubtedly one of the ablest exegetes in the line of orthodox Reformed tradition.

In his study on the subject<sup>4</sup> he develops the major New Testament ideas, in the line of solid Reformed tradition, with competence and authority. The work of Christ in its totality, he observes, consists of *providing* and communicating to the church the gift (baptism) of the Spirit. The manner in which the gospels record the ministry of the preparation and preaching of John the Baptist leaves no doubt on this matter. {83}

In his essentially christocentric message on the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke from the perspective of the ultimate accomplishment of the promise to the Fathers, therefore linking in the most intimate manner the outpouring of the Spirit with the major events of Christ's ministry, particularly with his resurrection and ascension. Further, Professor Gaffin establishes a parallel between the water baptism of Jesus at the Jordan and the Spirit baptism on the day of Pentecost. At Jordan, the Father had granted to Jesus the Spirit in view of his messianic ministry and the church's redemption. On the day of Pentecost, the same Spirit, which was already granted to Jesus as a reward for this accomplished work,

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2. Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1970).

3. James Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London, 1970), and the article "Spirit, Holy," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Westminster, 1983).

4. Richard Gaffin, "Contemporary Hermeneutics and the Study of the New Testament," *Westminster Theol. Journal*, Vol. XXXI, 1969, No. 2, 129-144; Richard Gaffin, *The Holy Spirit and Charismatic Gifts* (Reformed Ecumenical Synod, 1977).

was also given to the church. Notice the link between the church receiving the Spirit and becoming *the* body of Christ. Gaffin sees the necessary presence of the Spirit given to the church, in contrast to the dangerously individualistic gift with the familiar hypothetical results in the present day charismatic movement. In 1 Corinthians 15:45 the Apostle Paul comments on the same theme. Risen and ascended to heaven, Christ has become the Spirit who now grants life. In virtue of his exaltation, he has attained the *pleroma*, the *total* fullness of the Spirit, in a way that both Christ and the Spirit may be identified in the same operation without confusion of their distinct persons. This operation consists of the eschatological dimension which already here and now is granting life to the church and is enabling her to become the first fruits of the final harvest of the kingdom.

Although the work which grants new life in its totality may be envisaged as future, for instance in the bodily resurrection of the faithful, nevertheless Christ is already present among us in terms of his mediatorial office. Pentecost was the occasion manifesting the Christ-Spirit to the church, granting her the new life. Seen from this standpoint, it means that from now on the Spirit also is present and active in the community of the covenant on the basis of the redemption accomplished in Christ. Therefore, it is in this sense also that one has to understand John's "the Spirit was not yet come," for Christ had not yet been glorified. We may be allowed to add from our part that the gift of the Spirit is nothing more than the gift of Christ himself which he offers to his church. In virtue of his suffering, his death and his exaltation, he has become what he is now presently. Thus, the outpouring of the Spirit constitutes the culminating point of his work of redemption.

Seen again from another angle, Pentecost makes of the church the new people of the covenant. The gift of the Spirit (baptism) made the body of Christ (the church) into the location of the indwelling of the body of Christ, *i.e.* the church became the locale of God's indwelling. {84} Consequently, those who are incorporated in it partake of the Spirit's gift of baptism.

At this point let us remark that according to the Reformed interpretation of the operation of the Holy Spirit, participating in and benefiting from him means being engrafted into God. This is the opposite of the illegitimate engrafting of God into ourselves,

as unfortunately is the case of non-reformed interpretation of the baptism of or in the Holy Spirit, be it protestant or other.

Such an understanding explains clearly that whatever happened at Pentecost was not an experience or model which can or must be qualified as “post-conversional” and which we are now requested to seek at every cost! Gaffin calls on Herman Ridderbos, the Dutch exegete of the New Testament, for whom Pentecost is part of the *history of salvation* but not of the *Ordo-Salutis*. It was the *ef hapax*, the famous once-and-for-all accomplishment of salvation, not a model to be repeated constantly and renewed systematically. The baptism of the Spirit on Pentecost was a unique event in the course of the history of redemption. Therefore Pentecost must not be presented as a paradigm which makes it a model for subsequent personal-individual experiences. The significance of Pentecost is again clearly stated in the note with which Luke concludes his gospel: “*They were constantly in the Temple, praising God.*” For those who did not “benefit” from it, *i.e.* from Pentecost, it is 1 Corinthians 12:13 which allows an adequate explanation as well as the elucidation of the baptism of and in the Spirit. To be united to Christ implies our participation in the Spirit; the same Spirit whom the Christ personally received. This union also implies the believer’s participation—we have to insist that it is by faith and hope—in his death, resurrection and ascension.

Further, Gaffin compares the gift of the Spirit to the gifts called *charismata*. He notices that there exists a notable difference between the gift of the Spirit and the *charismata*, as well as between the work of the Spirit of which the church in its totality has experienced and benefits from, and the acts or ministries which have been entrusted to her. He links the first one to the salvation revealed and accomplished in Christ, the second, to various operations which belong to diverse ministries. It is precisely to these latter that reference is made in the often debated text of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

Prophecy and speaking in tongues have a merely temporary and partial character. They merely pave the way for works of more permanent value, such as faith, hope and love. Relying on the list in Romans 12:3, 1 Corinthians 12 and {85} Ephesians 4, pretending them to be “charismatic gifts,” and distinguishing them from the gifts of the Spirit which will be termed as “non-

charismatic” displays a very serious error in understanding the whole biblical message of Redemption accomplished once and for all and applied by grace, through faith. The use of the term *charisma* as such as the key is the proof of what Gaffin advances. In the New Testament the term is exclusively of Pauline origin. It does not apply only to the variety of gifts received in the community, such as the ones received in view of the functioning of ministry, for example in Romans 12:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:4, but also according to 2 Corinthians 1:11, to the apostolic experience, when he was personally rescued from a serious danger. In 1 Corinthians 7:7 celibacy, under given circumstances, is regarded as a charisma. The ability with which Timothy is endowed to exercise his ministry is also called charisma (see 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). The use of the plural in Romans 11 probably has in view the privileges of the Old Covenant. It is also necessary to examine its presence in Romans 5:15–16. In Romans 6:23 it is obvious that the charisma is applied to eternal life itself. Therefore, we need to recognize that this term has a rather flexible character, because, according to New Testament usage, it carries several meanings and has various nuances and shades. Each charisma is the manifestation of the *charis* (grace) of God. Given the fact that in her origin and her aim the church exists only in pure grace (*charis*), she then, in all her aspects and in each manifestation of her life, can be seen as a charismatic church; not in the secondary and so often adulterated meaning. That meaning, which Pauline theology will never substantiate, serves rather to justify illegitimate application to individual experience. *Our life in faith is the gift of grace*. Therefore to qualify certain gifts as “charismatic” and exclude others from the global range will excessively limit, dangerously deform, and jeopardize the whole Pauline teaching. In the same vein, to distinguish between *gifts* and *fruits* of the Spirit is to operate with a schematization totally foreign to the thinking and teaching of the great apostle. In reality, the terms “charismatic” and “Christian” are entirely interchangeable.

In his concluding remarks, Gaffin rightly asks a certain number of pertinent questions. Is it legitimate, based on a limited exegesis of the baptism of the Spirit to the speaking of tongues and prophesying, to justify or to legitimate doctrines which are not scriptural? To speak of a “Baptism of the Spirit” which follows

conversion is to betray a deep misunderstanding of the work which the Spirit has undertaken and is faithfully pursuing, his “holistic” global operation in the economy of our salvation. Such an interpretation at the very least is too obscure, and at the {86} very most denies the fullness of the salvation achieved by Christ. The charismatic trends and movements among Roman Catholics tell us of the return of medieval mysticism in the same church. A religious experience which is pre-conceptual and non-rational was precisely the characteristic of such mystical experiences. (In our view, the Jewish convert to Roman Catholicism, Simon Weil, so much in vogue nowadays among protestant seekers of “deeper spirituality,” is a good example of such *pre-conceptual understanding*; even though unconsciously heir of old gnosticism, precursor, too, though maybe unconsciously, of a sort of New Age spirituality). Gaffin remarks that we need to reexamine the phenomenon in terms of polarization between what is rational, which we must not identify with rationalistic, and the irrational. Nevertheless, he also strongly stresses, and rightly so, the fact that modern charismatic movements confront us with an essential biblical truth: faith and experience are not limited to the unique forgiveness of sins but extend themselves also to the newness of life.

### John Calvin

The reputation of John Calvin as the theologian *par excellence* of the Holy Spirit need not be made here. We will not attempt to give even an adequate account of the doctrine as developed by the genial French reformer. The lines below are more of a tribute paid to the “pastor” who did theology in order to better shepherd the flock of the Divine Shepherd. It is through him that we have come to understand the real, biblical nature of Christian experience. If a simple expression would suffice to characterize the teaching of the reformer, we will borrow it from another French author, a non-protestant, the French Jansenist Blaise Pascal. Pascal has rendered to us a tremendous service in making an essential distinction between *the geometrical mind and the mind* (or spirit) of refinement. Such a distinction is most welcome in a day when the creators of much theological jargon (and ecclesiastical blather)

have obstinately chosen the former at the expense of the latter. It has resulted in the irresponsible sacrifice of the major to the minor.

Now, it is a mind of refinement which characterizes the entire teaching of the reformer. One will not encounter in him a quantitative spirituality, an arithmetical pietism, a mathematical account of religious experience, nor a geometrical concept of Christian life. On the contrary a deep, global and total understanding of religious experience, which cannot be reduced to a quantified schema, prevails in his teaching as well as his piety. Such is not {87} the case among the modern, almost without exception, “dealers” and “manipulators” of the SPIRIT. Those who, according to a witty expression of Martin Luther, “have swallowed the Holy Spirit with feathers and all the rest!” An unfortunate analytical approach to matters pertaining to the realm of the Spirit has resulted in the “thingification” (the correct term being “reification”) of the spiritual experience of modern charismatics. We readily admit that the bottom line of the issue relating to the Holy Spirit, his operation, the charismata he grants, and the nature of Christian experience lies in a fundamental distinction between two mindsets, one of which is purely materialistic, despite its pretense to be a spiritual one (for, as Cornelius van Til has reminded us powerfully, the more one becomes spiritualistic, the more he will be carnal; the other side of the coin of false spirituality is a crude carnal fleshly materialism).

Indeed, the higher we try to rise and attempt to attain heavenly summits in our still sinful nature, the sooner we fall down, like the mythical figure of Icarus, whose waxen wings melted under the heat of the sun to which he dangerously approached. Our alternative is to choose either the geometrical mind or to belong to the company of the saints and the giants of the past who have witnessed to the Spirit of refinement and have been true to his permanent gifts, granted in the course of a very ordinary yet consistent pursuit of sanctification here and now. Whatever does not stem from such a mindset comes from the evil one. Our own modest contribution to the debate over Christian experience has been devoted to the defense of our biblical and Reformed conviction that unless with biblical presuppositions, or, to use a neologism, *unless done bibliotropically*, we understand this to be so, we will be caught in all sorts of ambiguities, wandering from

one experience to another with empty feelings, and eventually reaching a point of no return. In such a case, we must fear that mere exegesis, devoid of a spiritually and biblically organizing and governing principle, will be of no avail. The most heated debates will never succeed in clarifying the true nature of experience. Calvin has been a master in clarifying that nature successfully for us.

*Theologian par excellence* of the Holy Spirit, Calvin, the reformer, carefully maintained the personal identity of the Spirit in his unity with the second person of the Trinity. The Jesus who ascended into heaven is none else than Jesus of Nazareth glorified, with his corporeality still localized as a human person. When he departed from earth, Jesus went to "somewhere else." Since then he is separated from us by a mode of existence which traces the limits between our own corporeality and his. Jesus is both here and he is not here. In his human nature, he does not enjoy ubiquity. He is not {88} transformed into a kind of spiritual entity of whom we may realize, feel, as an ephemeral presence with us and which might become, so to speak, part of our experience. That which he endured on our behalf will be credited to our benefit, if by faith we accept the benefit and are secured by him. However, that which he grants from above is nothing less than his own person. The benefits of Redemption are absolutely inseparable from himself. He does not give us *some things*; he offers himself to our service and for our adoration. Those benefits do not come as a celestial flush of impersonal spiritual goods. They are granted because Christ first offered his divine person.

The operation of the Holy Spirit renders this association between him and us. The Spirit communicates to us only that which belongs to Christ. Therefore the Spirit can be described in dynamic terms in this activity and looked at in a non-static manner. He is the creator of the new life, not an impersonal conductor, a stagnant channel. He confers to our present existence a genuine spiritual meaning. He opens our sight to the reality of Christ. It can almost (almost, for the sake of illustration only!) be said for him what the Baptist said for himself: he must decrease so that Christ may increase. But what the Spirit brings and offers to us is Christ, the Redeemer. Therefore there is no Holy Spirit and not a single charisma without Christ or independent of him. The Spirit feeds our faith, he leads

us into discipleship, he teaches. He is the divine Doctor. Above all, he unites us dynamically with the living Lord. This dynamic functional way in which Calvin deals with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit stems directly from his doctrine of the Trinity. Such a point will clearly demonstrate that doctrinal discussion of the (ontological) Trinity and the relationships between the divine persons is not of a Byzantine nature but of a highly dramatic importance for our present experience. Indeed, orthodoxy is the a b c of our correct living in faith, hope and love. Although Calvin deals with it independently from the history of redemption, nevertheless he distinguishes it from the experience of salvation. Generally speaking he writes in terms of the Spirit's operations. That he also thought of the Spirit as a distinct hypostasis inside the ontological Trinity there is not the slightest doubt. Calvin is far from being a scholastic theologian (although some among his followers have become that; the reformer is not to be blamed himself for such an unnecessary hardening of biblical truths). He is the pastoral theologian, having understood clearly that the direct benefits which we gather from the history of redemption are offered conjointly by the Spirit, the Son, and the Father. He ascribes to the operation of the Spirit the totality of the power and the efficiency of each and all divine dealings. {89} All the works of Deity are the works of the Spirit, who ensures for them both power and efficiency. He is God in operation sustaining the totality of the work of the Trinity. In the work of Creation he developed it harmoniously. He preserves human history and prevents it from falling into chaos. He is God in the immanent and efficient action of the Triune Deity. It is noteworthy to remark that Calvin was perfectly able to give an account of the relation between the Spirit and the Son without any complicated definitions and with great a clarity, as much he does concerning the relation between the Spirit and the Father. John Calvin had never seen the Spirit as making the ubiquity of Christ possible. It was a notion that the reformer had categorically refused to admit.

Although Christ is physically away from us, yet he fulfills everything necessary by the power of the Spirit. Wherever the hand of God embraces heaven and earth, there Christ is spiritually present and, thanks to the unlimited power of the Spirit in the new dispensation, operates according to God's ways. Calvin makes it

clear that as the body of Christ is elevated above in the heavens, his power and energy are diffused and expanded beyond all the boundaries of heavens and earth. The union with the Spirit is the union with the totality of the person of the Saviour, more specifically so with his human nature. When it comes to dealing with the essential identity of Christ with the Spirit, then Calvin will not advance further than what the Scriptures have revealed.

In his commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians where the apostle writes that “The Lord is Spirit,” Calvin makes it clear that the intention of the apostle is to indicate the *function* of the Spirit, identified here with the mediator in his redemptive ministry, but not in ontological terms. In summarizing his theology it is reasonable to say, some theologians admit, that according to the French reformer the Spirit has become the administrator of Christ! Distinct in his ontological being, he is nevertheless intimately linked and involved in the exercise of the redemptive ministry. The Christ with whom we are united is not some replacement person, or an *avatar* of Christ, but the real one. He is spiritually real and present, through the operation of the Spirit. Calvin will not venture beyond this affirmation, to his credit, for he never forces the biblical text and never elaborates a doctrine which will threaten to break with the letter and also the spirit of the Scriptures. {90}

### Symbolic Writings of the Reformation: Creeds and Confessions

The present paragraph is a summary overview of a few of the Reformed symbolical writings on the Holy Spirit. The main feature expressed in them is, as by John Calvin, an amazement for the operations of the Spirit in his working out a genuine Christian experience. The tone here is again that of the basic Reformed motif: the SOLI DEO GLORIA. All of them stress both the *objective* operation (extra nos) of the Spirit and his *in nobis* action in the course of applying salvation.

#### *The Belgica*

Written shortly after the Gallicana (the French Confession of Faith, 1559), this document brings in its own way a magisterial

contribution for the understanding of the biblical and Reformed faith on the work of the Holy Spirit. The Belgica deals with the Spirit as the principal author of the Scriptures. The dignity and authority of them does not stand on the church which has recognized them as normative criteria of faith, but from the witness which the Spirit renders to our hearts, thus attesting the fact that Scripture has its origin in God. Following the Gallicana, it avoids sacramentalism, even in a most attenuated form. Regeneration is the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. His presence in him leads to sanctification; the will of man is freed from the yoke of sin. According to article 22, in order to acquire true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit animates our hearts with a right faith which embraces Jesus Christ with all his merits, appropriates them, and seeks nothing outside of him. Faith is the fruit of our listening to the word and the operation of the Spirit. The church itself is both the result of the work of Christ and of the Spirit (article 27).

### *The Canons of Dordt*

The Canons of Dordt occupy a place of honor on the list of symbolic Reformed writings, not only because of the merits of the doctrine they defend but also because they are a sort of a Reformed ecumenical creed, the first one in its fullness, coming after the Heidelberg, which had a different purpose. Written around 1618, during the extraordinary Synod of Reformed churches in the city of Dordrecht in The Netherlands, where several “national” Reformed churches gathered from all over Europe, to {91} settle the great controversy which arose from the teaching of J. Arminius and, after his death, of his disciples.<sup>1</sup> With a particular interest the Canons remind and underline the essential role of the Spirit in both the conceiving of salvation and in its application. The latter extends to the church and to the individual believer alike. Therefore the Canons were able to raise a powerful barrier against the synergistic Arminian theology which was pretending to offer a biblical basis to the theory of cooperation of man with God in order to secure the certainty of salvation. The Fathers of Dordt resisted

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1. Due to political circumstances, the French Reformed delegates were prohibited from attending the Synod, though the church has subscribed to its teachings.

all attempts already tried at the end of the sixteenth century to diminish the essential place of salvation and the gospel and reduce them to a phenomenon and reality of almost human dimension. Theological liberalism in its Arminian version at the beginning of the seventeenth century was misleading the Christian believer and moving him towards a religious autonomy, and so granting to him the illegitimate privilege of being the ultimate measure of biblical truth. Not only had autonomous man thus become the exclusive norm of his spiritual experience, but also the glory which is God's was usurped for the benefit of the religiously "autonomous" believer. The Canons insisted on the biblical affirmation according to which God has really, effectively called the elect and pulled them into his fellowship *by his word and his Spirit*. For the Spirit is the one who generates faith and grants gifts in view of our salvation. Outside of the regenerating grace of the Spirit, man is unable to convert himself to God. Not only unable, but even more, unwilling to do so. Neither natural light nor the law can afford the necessary saving grace. By his grace God alone accomplishes our salvation. Therefore it is not enough to preach the gospel from outside. On the sole condition of the work of the Spirit will man be reached and renewed in the deepest parts of his being.

The articles devoted to the perseverance of saints and faith insist again on the powerful intervention and efficient operation of the Spirit. To deny such an essential doctrine of the faith would amount to ignoring grace, which operates with the help of the Spirit and functions in our most inward parts. The Canons refute the objection that such a doctrine will produce laziness and indolence. The doctrine which they defend is the one founded on one side upon the general consideration of the work of the Spirit and on the other upon the nature of biblical faith. {92}

### *The Catechism of Geneva*

Less known among Reformed creeds, although of equal importance, The Catechism of Geneva (John Calvin's) reflects the same convictions and the same concerns related to the operations of the Spirit. Sections 35 to 44, which are materially impossible to reproduce here, are an eloquent witness to this concern. The principal affirmations start by attributing the origin of faith not to our nature but, as the Scriptures attest, to the Holy Spirit. We need

to receive the word of God with a total assurance of its perfect truthfulness, veracity, to which we must submit in all humility, to love with a real affection, and to engrave upon our hearts in order to conform our existence to the model deposited there. In the same manner, the blood of Christ purifies us, so the Holy Spirit washes our consciences in order to make us new creatures purified for eternity. The Spirit regenerates us in such a manner that we receive from him all the treasures and all the gifts offered by Jesus Christ. If Reformed theology succeeded in avoiding the idea of the ubiquity of the physical body of Christ (such as is the case in Lutheran Christology), it also succeeded in preserving the conviction of his real presence in the Sacrament of the Holy Communion (we will remember that this presence is spiritually real, perceived by faith alone, according to Calvin). The following answer of the Catechism explains the reason:

—Is all this in our power?

—No, but it is God who makes it in us, in his own way and by His Spirit (my translation from the French).

It underlines also the role of the Spirit in the sacraments. It is by the operation and ministry of the Spirit that the promises of God are sealed in our hearts. The power of the Sacraments must be understood not as if it were residing in the material elements themselves, *i.e.* the water and the bread and the wine, but as deriving directly from the Spirit himself.

### *The Confession of Faith of Théodore de Bèze (Beza)*

In the chapter dealing with the Holy Spirit and his work, Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, writes:

In the present treatise we will mainly consider the effects which he produces in the life of the children of God, how with faith, he brings to them the graces of God in order to make them feel the efficacy and the power. In brief, how he brings them degree by degree, towards the end to which they are predestined even before the foundation of the {93} world. The Holy Spirit is therefore the one who, through the Father, maintains his elect in the possession of Jesus-Christ, his Son, and therefore all the graces (gifts) which are necessary to salvation. But, in the first place, it is necessary that the Holy Spirit make us apt to receive Jesus Christ. It is this that

he is doing: creating in us by pure bounty and divine compassion, that which we call faith, a unique instrument in order to receive Jesus Christ when he is offered to us. In order to work in us, this instrument of faith maintains and affirms more and more, the Holy Spirit serves of two ordinary means, the preaching of the Word of God and the Sacraments.

*The Confession of Faith of La Rochelle (Gallicana, 1559)*

In article 4, which deals with the Scriptures as rule of faith, the French Confession of the Reformed Churches in France affirms: “We recognize that these books are canonical and the certain rule of our faith, not so much because of the common consent of the Church, but because of the witness and the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit, which distinguishes for our sake from all other ecclesiastical books, upon which, though very useful, one cannot found an article of faith.” The Scriptures are the work of the Holy Spirit. The believer who places his hope in the biblical witness is assured that such a hope does not belong to human thinking but is the result of the internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Reading those lines we understand, if we are not prejudiced against the Reformed expression of faith, that there is nothing intellectual, dry and scholastically boring with such a formulation of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is never operating by himself, without using the work of Christ and applying it to us, in liaison with, or through the instrumentality of, the written word. This is the essential step of his operation for us and for the application of salvation in us.

In article 22, which deals with regeneration, we read: “Being slaves to sin by our very corrupted nature, we believe that it is by this faith that we are regenerated in order to live a new life. Indeed, it is by appropriating the promise made to us by the Gospel, i.e. that God will grant us the Holy Spirit whom we receive by faith, the grace to live saintly and in the fear of the Lord.”

Before this article, when expounding the Reformed doctrine of faith, the Confession declares: “We believe that we receive the light of faith by the secret grace of the Holy Spirit, in such a way that it is a free and personal gift which God dispenses to whom He pleases. The faithful have no reason to boast as if they have been preferred to others, but (this) makes them to be even more grateful.” {94}

Finally, the Spirit operates also through the Sacraments. Baptism and Holy Communion are the visible signs and seals of an internal and invisible reality by means of which God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit (article 34). We need to observe how carefully and faithfully to the Scriptures the confession avoids sacramentalism, be it Roman Catholic or Anglican, or, in the same vein, taking distance from the abstract symbolism of Zwingli. It is the Spirit who makes of the two Sacraments a means of real communion between the believer and the church, and between the believer and the Lord. Jesus Christ requires us to make use of the Sacraments; therefore they are not vain practices, devoid of importance. His work in us is represented by external signs, although the manner in which he acts surpasses our understanding and can not be understood by ourselves, unless it is through the operation of the Spirit.

### *The Heidelberg Catechism*

More than any other symbolic Reformed writing, The Heidelberg Catechism, an exceptional “manual” of biblical piety and pearl of Christian spiritual literature, exhorts the member of the church to understand the essential reality of the work of the Spirit and measure, if possible, its infinite riches. The operation of the Spirit takes place in the life of the church and of the individual believer. At the very beginning (Qe 1), the faithful is assured that God gives everlasting life by the Holy Spirit: “Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit assures me of eternal life ...” We invite therefore the reader to discover personally and directly, if he has not yet done so, the Reformed doctrine concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, as presented on the pages of this theological and devotional masterpiece.

Q. 8 attributes the reality of the regeneration to the Spirit:

Q. 8 But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward evil? A. Yes, unless we are born again, by the Holy Spirit of God

Q. 21 defines true faith:

Q. 21 What is true faith? A. ... it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel ...

Questions 72 and 73 underline the equal importance of the

blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit for our cleansing: {95}

Q. 72 Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

A. No, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.

Q. 73 Why then does the holy spirit call baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins? A. God has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that the blood and Spirit of Christ wash away our sins just as water washes away dirt from our bodies.

The third part of the catechism, which is concerned mainly with our gratitude towards God, starts with sanctification in Q. 86:

Q. 86 We have been delivered from our misery by god's grace alone through christ and not because we have earned it: why then must we still do good? A. To be sure, Christ has redeemed us by his blood ... Christ by his Spirit is also renewing us to be like himself ...

In Q. 115, which asks why God wants the Ten Commandments to be preached upon, even if there is no one able to observe them totally during the course of his life, the answer is:

... while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, we may never stop striving to be renewed more and more after God's image.

And in Q. 116:

Q. 116 Why do Christians need to pray?" A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God gives his grace and the Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them.

Let us also notice how Q. 47 and 49 assure us of the continued presence of Christ after his ascension to heaven thanks to the permanent residing of his Spirit:

Q. 47 But is not Christ with us until the end of the world as he promised us? A. Christ is true man and true God. In his human nature Christ is not now on earth; but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit he is not absent from us for a moment.

Q. 49 How Does Christ's Ascension Into Heaven Benefit Us? {96} A. ... Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth as a further guarantee. By the Spirit's power we make the goal of our lives, not earthly things, but the things above where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.

Like all the other main Reformed symbolic writings, with an essentially pastoral concern, the Heidelberg Catechism avoids vain speculation around the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. In the company of the remaining reformers, the two authors of the catechism insist upon the fact that the word and the Spirit act conjointly. The Spirit seals in our hearts the promises of God which we can find no where else than in his written—inscriptured—word. Therefore they avoid the trap of dangerous illuminism, so much in vogue as a fad during the sixteenth century, as much as in present times.

### Concluding Remarks

This rather quick survey of some aspects of the Reformed theology of the Holy Spirit does not do full justice to the riches of the theological tradition of which we, members of Reformed churches, are the privileged heirs, although so often we have been indifferent to it, neglected it, or even exchanged it in favor of “a dish of ... red stew” (Esau). We hope that at least we have been successful in convincing the reader that there is indeed *A Reformed theology of the Holy Spirit*. This theology puts a heavy emphasis upon the founding, the modeling, and the maturing of all genuine Christian experience.

The reformers manifested the highest practical and pastoral interest towards this dimension of revelation and of redemption accomplished. They spoke of the importance of faith conceived as a life of gratitude and obedience. They have rendered us a tremendous service, enabling us to practice a genuine and solid biblical piety. Standing on this foundation laid down in the past, we may in our own times and our circumstances reformulate with certainty and dedication a sound doctrine of the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. We are aware that in exploring this realm, we did touch but one strand only of the rich gold mine of biblical revelation, which our fathers in the faith, with greater competence, have before us explored and expounded.

The extremely dangerous misinterpretations into which modern “spiritualistic” trends have gone are carrying, like impetuous torrents loaded with unnecessary debris, many parasitical elements in order to enrich “their” Christian experience. At this point we

need to draw {97} attention also to some “main-line Reformed” theologians. These latter, in their legitimate concern to rescue faith from an extreme subjectivism, either in its pietistic expression or liberal versions, stressed with an unfortunate imbalance the “transcendence” of God and neglected his immanence. In so doing they have seriously jeopardized the *in nobis* operation to which we alluded above. We have in mind here especially Karl Barth and his pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit).

Barth achieved a positive work with the “correct” formulation of the doctrine of Trinity, although some have suspected in him traces of the old heresy of “modalism.” He agrees with the *Filioque* (the Spirit proceeds both from the Father and the Son). He is right in warning that we are not allowed to make any declaration about the Spirit without associating him with Christ. Christ is present in the Spirit. At the end of his life, Barth came back to his earlier firmer position on the transcendence of God. Yet he created serious turmoil by making the unnecessary distinction between the baptism of the Spirit and baptism by water. He is strongly opposed to infant baptism. Nonetheless, despite his commendable insistence on the transcendence of God, Barth did not allow much room for the Spirit’s activity during the present dispensation. The Spirit is the responsible agent of God’s immanence to which Scripture renders a strong and clear witness. According to traditional Reformed theology, the Spirit is the *spiritual presence of God* by which he confronts man and operates intimately upon his soul. He is the agent linking man with God, in the same manner as he links the Father to the Son. He is the personal agent originating regeneration and leading the believer on the path of sanctification. The *radical* christocentrism of Barth resulted in a sort of “God-Man” relationship possible exclusively *in Christ*. *The Spirit does not seem to be much involved in this new relationship between God and man*. The legitimate desire to avoid any possible confusion between the two natures of Christ, possible if there is a heavy insistence on the role of the Spirit as the guarantee of divine presence, had become very detrimental to the Holy Spirit and to “experience.” We understand that if there is much importance granted to the Spirit, it may in the last resort lead to an unfortunate Christological confusion. Barth was right not to consider the Spirit as being another or a supplementary gift

in addition to reconciliation achieved in Christ as accomplished with the believer. But he reduced the role of the Spirit to calling man to faith and conversion and stopped at that point. To Barth, the Holy Spirit was no more than the mere power who either relatively or absolutely intervenes between Christ and man. He was the power of Christ's presence. He was the flash of life of which Christ is the {98} fullness. The work of the Spirit was conceived as an introductory stage only which will eventually lead to God. Such a misunderstanding of the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in the present dispensation of salvation has had some disastrous consequences, especially among post-barthian theologians (though Barth himself must not be blamed directly for that). The most extreme form is the blasphemous "Theology of the Death of God." Barth's pneumatology resulted in affirmations which he himself would never have suspected. Nevertheless they were unavoidable, even if he attempted to "safeguard" the absolute transcendence of God. The unexpected result came through the limited role of the Spirit, who was simply *calling* man to faith and to decision. In that case the "decision" made can not originate from the operation of the Spirit. It is not the result of the efficient operation of the Spirit in the soul of a totally corrupted man. It favors, though indirectly, a spiritualism that necessarily interprets regeneration as due to human decision(ism). Man becomes the agent solely responsible for his religious experience. Even more, from another point of view, it favored among the "religious subject" the radical secularization of his spirit (a contradiction indeed, one may even call it a true religious schizophrenia). The theologians of the Death of God denied any role, if not even the reality, of the Spirit, such as the historic Reformed faith and theology have always confessed. Not surprisingly they were all former Barthians! In their eyes it was almost—at least they give the impression—a very fortunate thing to happen to the Spirit, to be exiled or relegated into the realms of transcendence! Thus the Spirit will not intervene and interfere in the here and now of spiritual experience. Man comes of age and is now responsible for that. He has been liberated from the tutelage of a transcendent agent. The man who has come of age needs no more to depend on the Spirit. From now on, the secularized Christian may seek his sanctification only in his involvement in and in being frantically

active in the building of the secular city.

Therefore we see all the bizarre theologies of liberation, the Christian Armed Violence, the Permanent state of Revolution, and even *Marxist and atheist Christianity!* The modern alternative to divine redemption is the human construction of the earthly city. This construction becomes, and has indeed become, the modern “version” of sanctification. In an article introducing Jurgen Moltman, the German theologian, to the French audience, we were making a word-play possible in Greek: “The theology of *Anastasis* (Resurrection in Greek) had been changed into a Theology of *Epanastasis* (Revolution, in modern Greek).” Not each and every one of the so called “Christian experiences” is therefore the fruit of the operation of {99} the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless we still believe in the reality and possibility of a Christian experience through the Holy Spirit and the word. Yet genuine Christian experience also has its limits. For instance, there is no common ground between biblical experience and the equivocal mysticisms of which in modern times we are the helpless and afflicted witnesses. The quivering, dancing, prancing, vibrating, flapping of wings and feet, and the elucubrations with logorrheas may be the experience of pagan worshipers and the practice of the followers of the Greek Pythia, but are unworthy of Reformed Christianity.

The Holy Spirit has revealed the (intelligent) meaning of the redemption accomplished and applied. He is faithfully keeping us in the covenant of grace. He did not appear suddenly on a special occasion, on Pentecost. His operations do not start and end with the record we read in Ac. 2! He was present and active since the beginning, hovering over the chaos of the genesis and in the Old Covenant with the same mighty operations. This is the reason why we may still sing the Psalms that the old Israelites sang. He was present at the Incarnation, as well as “hovering” on the chaos of Calvary where our redemption was wrought. He was preparing the bodily resurrection to prove powerfully that Christ was indeed the Son of God. He is there whenever we open the pages of the Holy Book, even those ones which seem to be less attractive, to convince us that each incident reported there is related to the history of our redemption. He is present and active when we gather in the fellowship of the worshipping community, bowing our heads, praying during congregational liturgies, singing

the praises of our Lord and Redeemer; or when by the grace of God, the minister—if he does not tell his boring tales—faithfully proclaims the *Verba Dei*, the oracles of God. He is there when in personal circumstances, characterized by weaknesses, surrounded by spiritual darkness, in distress and turmoil, we look not “towards the mountains,” but to the one from whom we know we may receive our help. He is even there when our decaying mortal bodies are fading away, renewing us inwardly, preparing a glorified body, ready at last for the final rendezvous with the divine Savior. He is not confined to heaven, but indeed he has become our Paraclete, standing by us, defending us, sustaining us when we are short of breath. He carries our prayers to the throne of grace, otherwise, even the most flaming invocations and desperate shoutings will never rise very high, but will fall on the ground like heavy copper. He translates our sighings and makes them trusting imploration. By his might our silent supplications become heartfelt thanks. Through his operation the heart of our Heavenly Father will not remain {100} cold but will hear us and answer to our prayers, “*Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed ... Peace! Be strong now, Be strong*” (Dan. 10:19).

Is this really foreign to genuine Christian experience? Does the modern Christian need a sort of spiritual Disneyland, good for puerile psychology but unworthy of the pilgrim who is marching in the desert, led during the day by the column of cloud, and the night by the column of fire, lit by the Spirit? The interest we manifest in real experience of faith is therefore not of a theoretical nature. According to Calvin, the foundation of Christian theology is not to be sought in the primacy of reason, but only in the correct understanding of the Scriptures confirmed by the internal witness of the Spirit. Alexander Vinet, a Swiss theologian of the past century, has in this regard expressed very adequately the importance of theology: “*Religious Revival*,” said Vinet, “*bursts necessarily on the rocky soil of orthodoxy.*”

Here there is neither mysticism nor rationalism, but biblical orthodoxy. The ground has been thoroughly investigated and “invested” by Reformed theology. Instead of a theology which would be an abstract synthesis, Calvin helps us, in the light of the Scriptures, to seize the nature of our intimate and direct relationship with God. The well known and moving text in his

commentary on Genesis (ch. 32, Jacob's fight), sheds full light upon the genuinely Christian experience. "God fights against us with his left hand and sustains us with his right hand." In his thinking and living, *Coram Deo*—living in the presence of God—is joined to the *Soli Deo Gloria*—to God be the total glory.

Each Christian experience, every progress in sanctification, even the crowns earned by the faithful believer after his militant life during his earthly battlefield which he may have won at the end of his warfare, will serve to bring the entire glory to God alone. The writings of Reformed theologians of the sixteenth century do not support for one moment the idea that there could be a dead orthodoxy. A dead orthodoxy would be a contradiction in terms, for either theology is orthodox, and therefore it is the liveliest of all faith activities, or it is dead, in which case it was never orthodox. Orthodoxy is not an intellectual occupation or preoccupation. It is not a Byzantine debate about how many angels can dance on the top of a pine. Orthodoxy is first and foremost a doxological activity. Orthodoxy will lead the church and each believer to the genuine practice of a living faith, to a burning hope, to the consuming and self-sacrificing love. In times such as ours, when thinking and speaking have gone wild in the direction of an unprecedented state of confusion and rebellious men outside the {101} church and apostates inside it are building a new Tower of Babel (this time digging downwards, in the expression of Franz Kafka), we will do well to go back to the reformers and receive inspiration and guidance from them. They were real giants, not obese dwarfs.

Christians who talk so much about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, often of a second baptism, have not given to the biblical text the attention and the care which the Reformed symbolic writings have given and in such a loyal way. We confess with sadness that these modern Christians, even some among more evangelical circles, operate in ways reminding us of Roman Catholic modes of making theology. They seem to admit *de facto*, if not *de jure*, of a double source of revelation: the Spirit being one and the Scriptures being the other! The legitimate duality of Spirit-word has degenerated into an illegitimate antithetical dualism of the word and the Spirit. Instead of confessing by the word alone (*Sola Scriptura*) and by the Spirit alone (*Solo Spiritu*),

protestant pentecostals and charismatics create a real opposition between them, though probably unconsciously. Therefore it is not surprising that on this ground where one talks of the, or an, isolated "Spirit," Roman Catholics and Protestants may encounter each other in a happy and often infantile ecumenism.

Faith founded upon the written revelation, nourished by the gospel, must experience maturation, development, purification, and perfection in a constant and regular quest for renewal. Renewal is not a static state; it will be pursued every day until the final and glorious perfection comes. Nevertheless, this development of faith (faith as knowledge) cannot be achieved if it is estranged from the way already traced before us and is alienated from the model which was deposited once for all. With the old prophet (Isa. 8), we may exhort mutually: "*To the Law and the Witness.*" They are the absolute criteria of both faith and piety.

The confessions of faith helped believers of the past who were living in daunting circumstances to be aware of the vital and eminent role that the Spirit was playing in their experiences. Their pastoral mind will greatly help us as an example as much as a guide. The modern church needs a spiritual renewal, this will not be denied. Such a work of renewal must be permanent. There cannot be a static state of renewal. Yet, every genuine renewal can be conceived only on the condition that a rigorous faithfulness to the written revelation is maintained, and in the humble conviction that Christ receives the glory in the church and in our individual lives, thanks to his Spirit. Our regeneration and the perseverance in the faith may be felt as authentic Christian experiences. There is no such a thing as an experience {102} *per se*, only the one which is produced by the Spirit according to the *Ordo Salutis* revealed in the Bible, not outside of it.

At certain moments in the history of the church, God allows some disordered and tumultuous currents to carry away foreign and parasitical elements that encumber both doctrine and piety. But, if one is not watchful, those currents may bring in elements which can be extremely dangerous to the well-being of the people of God. The faithful church will remain vigilant, and seek the permanent cleansing of her thinking and her practice. Reformed Christians, heirs of a rich and solid theological tradition, are well placed to accomplish such a task. Refusing to engage in renewals

which are ephemeral, they will rise and go to the source of biblical spirituality in order that sooner or later genuine fruits of the Spirit, the ones produced by him, may grow and ripen in the church. While some fads disappear without leaving a permanent trace, we will again and again reexamine the Scriptures in order to draw from them the needful teaching enabling us to renew both experience and doctrine. Then, faith will be patient. Patience will engender hope, hope will give birth to serene certainties. We shall be illumined by the word, and always guided by the Spirit we will know the true nature as well as the limits of genuine Christian experience. For, as the Psalmist of old has declared, "*In Thy Light we see our Light.*"

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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BLOOD IN THE BIBLE AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

*Shawn T. Roberson*

The basis of the Christian faith is the word of God as contained in holy Scripture. The Reformation view holds that the entire word of God is normative today. It applies to all of life. The Apostle Paul states that every thought should be taken captive to the word of God. For this reason, all our decisions, choices, and arguments should be based upon God's revealed word. To this end, only one resource will be quoted in this paper.

To better understand the significance of blood in the Bible, one needs to first understand the necessity of sacrifice. This is best achieved by referring to Genesis, the first book of the Bible. There, we are told that God created the universe and all that is in it in six days, and he rested on the seventh day. On the sixth day of this creation, God made a man, Adam, and his wife, Eve. They were originally created in a state of righteousness and perfect relation with God. There was no sin in them.

Adam and Eve were placed, by God, in the Garden of Eden. The garden contained a wide variety of plants from which they could eat. However, God did provide one restriction. He told man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:16).<sup>1</sup> This test was very simple, and the commandment appears to be very easy to obey. All that was required was for the man and woman to refrain from eating from one specific tree among many, in a well-stocked garden.

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1. All scripture quotes are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishing.

The penalty for disobedience was also very simple—death. We may assume, from the statement of the commandment, that the opposite would be the reward for obedience. We have no reason to doubt that, if they obeyed, Adam and Eve, and their offspring, would live forever. We have no way of knowing, at the present time, what all would have been involved in this eternal life, but it cannot be dismissed as irrelevant or impossible.

Unfortunately, this original commandment was not obeyed. Satan, through the use of a serpent, tempted the man and woman, and they ate from the forbidden tree. At that moment, they believed Satan more than God. Their close relation to God was destroyed. In direct disobedience to his command, they ate the fruit. And, as God had warned, immediately {104} upon eating from that tree, Adam and Eve died. They died spiritually—they were separated from God and their spirit died. They also, at that moment, began to die physically. No longer was eternal life possible for them.

Not only were they affected, but their posterity as well. Because he was the first man, Adam was the representative for the entire human race. His obedience or disobedience would, therefore, affect all of mankind. This fact is stated many times in Scripture. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, states that “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Also, in his first letter to the church at Corinth, he says that “in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22). Because Adam’s spirit died (in its relation to God), all men are born with a dead spirit. This dead spirit does not know God; it cannot communicate effectively with God; and it does not understand his ways, his will, or his law.

The presence of a dead spirit means that all men are born sinners. We are born in a state of rebellion against God and his law. This rebellious state is often called “the flesh” or “man’s sinful nature.” As we approach life in a state of rebellion against God, our acts evidence our natural state. These acts of rebellion are known as sin. They are repulsive to God, and he cannot bear to look upon them without feeling revulsion and anger.

The question now arises, How does man regain the status before, and the relationship with, God for which he was originally created? How is the gulf between God and man spanned? We actually get a glimpse at the answer to this question immediately after the fall

(Adam's first sin). In cursing the serpent, God states that he will put enmity between his seed and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). The work of spanning this gulf will be performed by God himself. He will cause a breaking of the alliance between Satan and mankind. He alone will begin the work of restoring man to his original position of communion and righteousness.

It is interesting to notice God's first act after the fall. After they had eaten the fruit, the man and woman felt, for the time, naked. They realized they had disobeyed, and they felt vulnerable before God. All they had done could be seen by him, and they knew it. They attempted to cover themselves by making clothes of leaves. So all men have attempted to cover themselves and hide from God. The thought of someone knowing all about us is very uncomfortable. However, after God's curse upon them for disobeying, he provided clothes for them. His purpose was to show them that he—not they—would provide the means for their covering and {105} redemption. In making clothes for them, we are told, "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). God's first act after the fall, in order to cover the sin of man, so he would not have to look at it, was to shed the blood of innocent animals.

This concept of sacrifice is seen several times in the first part of Scripture. Sacrifices were offered by Abel (the son of Adam and Eve), Job, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many others. Always, the sacrifice is an animal which is killed and offered before God.

After a time, the children of Israel (Jacob) become slaves in Egypt. In bringing them out of bondage, God sent plagues upon the Egyptians. However, in each case the Israelites were untouched by the plagues. Each time a plague occurred, Pharaoh refused to let the people go to the wilderness to worship God. Finally, God sent the ultimate plague. He told Moses he was going to send the Angel of Death upon the land. The firstborn sons of all the Egyptians would be killed. Once again, however, the Israelites were to be left unharmed, if they obeyed God's command to them. They were to take a young lamb and sacrifice it to him. The blood was then to be smeared upon the top and sides of the doorframes of their homes.

This blood of an innocent animal would be a sign that these were God's people. The Angel of Death would pass over any house which displayed the blood on the doorframe. Thus, by

the substitutionary death of an innocent animal, God's people would be saved. This was the first observance of the annual Jewish festival of Passover, so named because the Angel of Death passed over their houses.

After leaving Egypt, the Israelites came to Mount Sinai. Here the law of God, which had been observed by so many in the past, was finally codified. Through Moses, God presented his law to the people, as summarized in the Ten Commandments. However, knowing that the people would not obey his law perfectly, God also provided a means of atoning for their sins.

At Sinai, he instituted an elaborate system of sacrifices to cover the people's sins. Sacrifices were provided for all types of sin—both known and unknown. Daily sacrifices were to be offered for all sins, and the basis of all these sacrifices was blood. In Lev. 17:11, God says, "the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for one's life." These sacrifices were to be offered only at the Tabernacle (later the Temple). One can imagine the priests literally wading in the blood of slaughtered animals, if all the Israelites brought all the appropriate sacrifices. The sheer number of sacrifices and the amount of spilled blood {106} were meant to show that man cannot atone for his sins. It is to be the work of God alone.

We must realize that death is the direct result of sin. Paul, in his letter to the Romans states that, "The wages of sin is death ..." (Rom. 6:23). Because all sin (disobedience to God's law) is repulsive to God, he hates it. His wrath is aroused, and it must be appeased. According to God's word, the rebellion of sin required a penalty to be exacted against the sinner, and the appropriate penalty was death. However, if God instantly killed all sinners, there would be no one left on earth. Therefore, God allowed the substitution of the death of an innocent animal whose blood would then be offered as a covering to shield the sins from God's eyes.

The daily sacrifices in Israel culminated in one specific day of sacrifice. On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the High Priest would offer a sacrifice for the sins of the entire nation. *Two* goats were chosen, and lots were cast to differentiate between a goat for God and one for the people. The goat for God was killed, and its blood was drained. The High Priest (and he alone) took the blood into the innermost part of the Temple (the Holy of Hohes) and

sprinkled it upon the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments. This blood signified the cleansing of the Temple and the people. Because the life of the animal was in the blood, it signified new life before God. A new beginning was being made. It also represented a covering of the past sins of the people. For this reason, it was to be sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat, or Atonement Cover, of the Ark.

The second goat was then brought forward. The High Priest laid his hands upon the head of the goat and pronounced the sins of the people to be upon it. The goat was then taken into the desert to die. This signified the taking of the sins of the people outside the camp and away from them and God. Interestingly, this goat was known as the *azazel*, or scapegoat.

So, we see that the entire religious life of the Israelites was based upon the use of blood in their ceremonies. The blood of innocent substitutes was continually required to atone for their sins. The mere fact that these sacrifices were continual shows their ineffectiveness to completely atone for the sins of the people. The daily sacrifices, as stated earlier, culminated in the Day of Atonement, which was more efficacious. However, this day, in itself, was not perfect either. If it were, there would be no need for further daily sacrifices, or for other Days of Atonement in coming years. However, this ceremony was to be performed each year on a specific day. This continuity, and the sense of these ceremonies pointing to a greater sacrifice, form the link which connects the Old and New Testaments. {107}

To what ultimate sacrifice were these pointing? Would blood also be involved? These were questions which true, believing Israelites must have asked when they considered the ceremonial laws which they had received from God. These are also questions which form the basis for Christian faith today. They are relevant.

We see a strong reference to this ultimate sacrifice in the statement of John the Baptizer when he saw Jesus approaching. He pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Here we see how the new administration of God's covenant was to be observed. Just as in the old administration (Old Testament), the sacrifice of an innocent substitute would be required. And, once again, it was to be a lamb.

Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, the second person of the

Godhead, came to earth as a man. He lived thirty-three years as a man with two natures. He was both God and man. During this time on earth, he kept the law of God to perfection. In fact, he is the only man ever to have kept the law of God perfectly. For this reason, he was innocent. No sin was found in him.

At the age of thirty-three, Jesus was taken by the officials of the Jewish nation and the Romans and crucified. His blood was shed on the cross, both when his hands and feet were nailed to the cross, and when a spear was thrust into his side by a Roman guard. It is important to note that the roles of both goats in the Day of Atonement ceremony were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. He was sacrificed for the sins of the people. He, as an innocent substitute, died to atone for their sins. Also, like the *azazel*, he carried their sins outside the camp. His death occurred outside the city walls of Jerusalem. What had taken two animals to accomplish in the old administration, was now accomplished by one offering in the new. The ultimate sacrifice has finally come! Daily and yearly sacrifices were no longer necessary. God had forgiven the sins of the world!

Just what was accomplished by Jesus on the cross? Some further Scripture references should prove beneficial in answering this question. Paul, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding" (Eph. 1:7-8). The Apostle Peter, in his first letter, states we "know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your {108} forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews states: "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. [This is a reference to the sprinkling of the people, the tabernacle, and its objects by Moses after the exodus from Egypt.] How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (Heb. 9:13-14). And finally, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the

shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22).

So, we see that several things were accomplished by the shedding of Jesus’ blood upon the cross. We were redeemed—purchased by God out of the dead life which we had been living. Our spirits were made alive again. Our consciences were cleansed. No longer should we feel the guilt associated with our sins. The relationship with God has been repaired. The gulf has been spanned, and we may serve the living God and enjoy him forever! All of these things apply to anyone who acknowledges that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he died on the cross for our sins.

We have seen how the first sin of Adam and Eve plunged the entire human race into sin. We also saw how this sinful nature of man causes each of us to be born a sinner. Because we are sinners, we commit acts of rebellion against God; acts which incur his wrath and punishment. However, we also saw that God has provided a way of redemption and atonement for his people through substitutionary sacrifice and blood.

One question still remains: What does all of this have to do with man in the twentieth century? Why would anything as gruesome and cruel as even the mention of blood sacrifice remain in the religious practices of so many people today? The answer to this has been given by Jesus Christ himself.

The observance of the Jewish Passover each year has always incorporated the use of four cups of wine. These cups are drunk at specified points during the service to remind the participants of certain characteristics of God and his people. The cup which is drunk immediately after the Passover meal is known as the cup of redemption. It signifies the importance of God redeeming his people out of the bondage of slavery. Applied to us today, Paul states that we are all slaves to sin until God redeems us.

On the night before his death, Jesus observed the Passover ritual with his apostles. After the meal, he took the third cup, “gave thanks and offered it {109} to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Mt. 26:27–28). The apostles had to have understood his meaning. This cup of wine had always signified the blood on the doorframes of the houses in Egypt on that terrible night of death. It was a reminder of that night and the gracious redemption of God’s people. Jesus had now given new

meaning to this very important rite. He informed the apostles that it was his blood—foreshadowed by the blood on the doorframes and the daily and annual sacrifices—which would accomplish the ultimate redemption of his people.

In instituting what is now called the Lord's Supper on that night, Jesus told his followers to do this (eat the bread and drink the wine) in remembrance of him. Whenever the Lord's Supper is observed today, faithful Christians are to think back to that awful day when the Son of God was nailed to a rough-hewn cross. We are to remember that iron spikes were driven into his hands and feet. We are to remember that his precious blood—his life—was spilled out before God the Father. But, we are also to remember why this took place. Because of the shedding of Jesus' blood, our sins were forgiven, if we will only claim him as our Savior and Lord! We now have eternal life, and our relationship with God has been restored!

Isn't it gruesome to concentrate so much on blood? Do we still need to think about such cruel things as nailing a living man upon a cross? Isn't Christianity supposed to be all love and happiness? Yes, we do need to think on these things. We must never forget just how much God hates sin. He hates it enough that he has always required a punishment to be exacted for it. But, we must also think on these things to fully appreciate the love that God has for us. Yes, he hates sin enough to require death; but, he loves us enough to send his only Son to die for us! That is the significance of blood in the Scriptures and in the Christian faith.

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# WHY IS THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF CREATION SO IMPORTANT?

*Jean-Marc Berthoud*

*Translated from the French by Audrey Jadden*

## Why the Most Important Doctrinal Debates Are Avoided

There are existing doctrinal problems which the churches simply do not wish to face. This is the case with the question we are going to treat now, that of the relation between the doctrines of creation and evolution as an explanation of the origin of the universe, of life and of man. These questions cannot be shoved under the carpet indefinitely under the pretext of a false peace and the pretended impossibility of knowing certain aspects of biblical truth. No, true peace cannot be separated from truth. All divine revelation (not only certain parts which are not controversial) is useful for the progress of Christians and for the edification of God's church.

Sentimental Christianity is preferred to doctrinal Christianity. This preference has contributed to the weakening of God's church in the name of a brotherly love which lacks the force to bring the two positions into open confrontation with each other, to face the problem with love—especially love of the truth—and to provide clear and indisputable answers from God's word. With his help, and aware that this matter entails beginning an immense work of biblical, theological, philosophical and scientific research, which I would gladly leave to persons more competent than I, I should like to broach now four aspects of the question, Why is the biblical doctrine of creation so important?

For about forty years, there has been renewed interest in this

creation-evolution argument, particularly in the United States, but also in numerous other parts of the world, within essential scientific terms. This aspect of the matter is of the greatest importance, because if the Bible is true, it must be so in everything it says, in its geographic, archeological, historical and scientific statements as well as in what it reveals in the spiritual and theological realm. If the miraculous account of creation is not entirely true, if it's only a religious legend or a mythological depiction of a completely different reality, then the entire supernatural authority of God's written revelation may be questioned. Why then believe in the other stories of God's miraculous acts in the Scripture? Then why believe in that miracle of miracles, the expiatory work of our Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection? There are not two kinds of truth, one scientific and the other {112} religious. There is one sole truth, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the word of God who was made flesh at the beginning of our era and who was revealed by his infallible word during more than 1500 years. Our creationist scientists have rendered an invaluable service to the church and to the world itself by reminding us of the unity of truth and the unfailing sovereignty of a unique God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them.

I should like to see what the consequences would be for the foundations of our faith if one or another of the evolutionary positions were adopted. I shall limit myself to four precise points, as follows:

1. Without the doctrine of creation as taught to us throughout the entire Bible, there is no God.
2. Without the doctrine of creation, there can be no truth.
3. Without the doctrine of creation, there cannot be any miraculous interventions in this world.
4. Without the doctrine of creation, redemption itself is absurd.

Now here is the first of the four points.

### Without the Doctrine of Creation There Is No God

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Gen. 1:1)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and

the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (Jn. 1:1-3)

You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heaven, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. (Neh. 9:6)

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. (Rev. 4:11)

These texts could not be more clear. God is the creator of everything that exists outside of himself. Contrary to the created world, he exists throughout all eternity. The creation has a beginning; he does not.

Let us give some thought to the choice before us. There are only two possibilities:

either, in the beginning, God created the heavens and earth out of nothing—*ex nihilo*, as one says and as the texts imply, or,<sup>{113}</sup>

the heavens and earth have always existed, containing in themselves the forces necessary for the manifestation of all the forms we see, in fact, holding the power and wisdom of God. Thus, nature, the universe, is God. This is pantheism: God is in everything that exists.

The doctrine of the creation of the universe by God, starting from nothing, asserts the fundamental difference between the creature and the Creator, the basis of our relationship with God. Theistic evolution, which accepts a form of evolution, directed by God, diminishes the Creator's power and wisdom in order to attribute a portion of his power and wisdom to the laws of evolution supposedly contained in nature. It is a lack of faith that leads one to uphold such a position. Robert Lewis Dabney, an American theologian of the latter half of the nineteenth century, wrote on the subject of Christian thinkers who adhered to a theistic vision of evolution:

Why are theistic philosophers so eager to push God's creative act as far back in time as possible and reduce His action as much as possible, as they are constantly doing in their speculations?... What

is the use, unless one is aspiring towards atheism? (R. L. Dabney: *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, 261)

The word used in the first verse of Genesis, that we translate “create,” is the word *bara*, which has the meaning not of making or fashioning but rather of creating something from completely original matter. It is never used in the Old Testament for any kind of human action whatsoever. In the passage we are considering here, it is only used for the creation of matter and relevant laws (v. 1), for animals (v. 21), and for man (v. 27). This notion of creation is entirely foreign to pagan thought. Neither ancient mythologies, nor Greek thought, nor modern pagan thought conceive of a creation starting from nothing by a sovereign, omniscient, and omnipotent God. For, as the epistle to the Romans says:

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For, although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Rom. 1:20–21)

In ancient times and among people who have not known the gospel, this rejection of God manifested in irreverent, anti-creator mythologies. In our time, this same tendency to reject God, to deny all his attributes, is taking on a pseudo-scientific form, nonetheless mythological, however, for all {114} that. Men like Darwin, Marx, Wellhausen, Bulman, and Keynes, under the guise of science, fabricate a purely fictitious explanation of reality, because above all they want to eliminate the Creator God from their every thought. For it is not possible to acknowledge the biblical doctrine of creation without faith as the epistle to the Hebrews tells us so clearly:

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. (Heb. 11:3)

and without submitting personally to God the creator of all things, and to his commandments. The inextricable linkage between knowing the truth and obeying God was succinctly expressed by

the apostle John as well as by the prophet Samuel:

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God ... (John 7:17)

Speak, LORD, for they servant heareth. (1 Sam. 3:9)

Thus perhaps we understand better men's attachment to evolutionary, auto-creative explanations of the universe, "scientific" explanations, or "religious" mythologies which have that immense advantage for those who accept them of excluding from their thoughts this Creator God to whom their sense constantly bears witness. Well can it be said: Without the doctrine of creation there is no God.

### Without the Doctrine of Creation There Cannot Be Any Truth

Human knowledge of truth can be defined as the correspondence of our thought to what IS: first to God, the personal being par excellence; then to his word which is the truth; and finally to the order which God established in his creation, order which reflects his creative and directive thought. For men, knowing the truth is not an innovative or original work, but simply thinking God's thoughts after him. If in nature everything is constantly evolving, no precise knowledge is possible. Of course, change is a reality: the sun rises and sets; life constantly involves changes; time itself is inexorably associated with change. But everywhere it is a matter of changes situated within a setting which, itself, does not change. Around this creation which is changing, because in it are the life, movement, and being coming to it from God, God has established a framework of substantial forms which do not change. This is the profound meaning of the encouraging word God spoke to Noah after the Flood: [?{115}](#)

As long as the earth endure, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease. (Gen. 8:22)

Jeremiah, the prophet, confirmed these words within the context of the overthrow of nations in the realm of history, and not in creation as with Noah.

If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of

Jacob and David my servant. (Jer. 33:25–26)

But the theory of the evolution of species states that these substantial forms created by God are not stable. If change is the principal law of nature, it is evident that what we call the natural laws, which science has the task of discovering, can also vary. The laws of human thought are also unstable from this perspective. If the law of nature is shifting and there is not a solid base for our thought itself, nothing is sure; everything is moving; no certain knowledge is possible. As nature is a reflection of the Creator, from this same perspective God himself would not have any stability. Some have even gone this far.

This absolute relativism is one of the most serious errors of our time. We see, for example, Marxism teaching that science is variable according to the times and especially according to the class of whoever is teaching it. At this point we fall into total confusion, into the realm of Satan's lies.

Now, one of the definitions the Bible gives us of sin and impurity is that of confusion, of perversion (Lev. 18:23). Thus sexual relations between men and animals are called a confusion by the Bible. This appellation is interesting, because every deviation from the order which God established within the very framework of his creation is the beginning of confusion, of disorder, of anarchy, of chaos. Even more, if we look at the main (though not the only) reason for which the Bible established a distinction between clean and unclean beasts, we see that the latter no longer correspond to the order God originally established for them; birds which cannot fly, like the ostrich, are unclean; mammals which live exclusively in the water, like whales, are declared unclean by the Bible. Then what are we to think of a system like that of evolution that has all the species passing through all the other species in order to reach their present form, a form which still risks being changed into something else? This is the height of confusion, the peak of perplexity, a perniciousness of untold power, the masterpiece of the father of lies and chaos, the devil. Now we see better why we have to consider the theory of evolution very seriously as a demonic doctrine that {116} must be entirely rejected by those who do not want a Christianity blended with the anarchy and confusion of the power of darkness.

God created the universe according to a precise order, that of substantial forms which are those of his own thought. This stable order can be known by men created in the image of God, because the structure of their intelligence, as well as of the language itself which they use to understand the world, is a reflection of divine intelligence and corresponds to the order in creation. Sin is straying from this pre-established order, denying it or establishing another one of human origin, or falling into the confusion of total evolution. In the account of creation, God reminds us of these realities by affirming in several instances, in the most solemn manner, that each species can only reproduce within the framework of its own kind, a declaration completely confirmed by every one of men's scientific observations. We understand now why we must assert with the greatest forcefulness: Without the doctrine of creation, there can be no truth.

### Without the Doctrine of Creation There Cannot Be Any Miraculous Interventions in This World

A fundamental characteristic of the theory of evolution is that the laws of nature, such as our supposed science defines them, have an absolute value throughout all the epochs. This is what is called uniformitarianism. The same causes always produce the same effects and, according to the evolutionists' faith, there have never been any causes other than those which we observe today. This belief eliminates God's miraculous intervention in his creation. The laws of nature of which Jeremiah spoke (Jer. 33:25–26) express the action by which the creator, our Lord Jesus Christ, upholds all things by his powerful word. Not only is God the creator, but it is also he who, each moment, by his constant action, gives existence, movement and being to all things. A miracle is nothing other than God's prompt action within his creation, action by which he temporarily suspends the functioning of the order he himself established for the universe in order to act in another manner. The questions God addressed to Job are always timely:

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?  
Tell me, if you understand.  
Who marked off its dimensions?

Surely you know!  
 Who stretched a measuring line across it?  
 On what were its footings set,  
 or who laid its cornerstone—  
 while the morning stars sang together  
 and all the angels shouted for joy? (Job 38:4–7) {117}

Our science can observe things as they are manifested today. It can tell us nothing of phenomena such as that of the creation of all things, where any observation is impossible. The origin of matter, of life, and of the human soul is totally inaccessible scientifically. Science can describe the existing order as a game of causes and effects, and even here part of the mystery remains immense for the honest and modest scientist; but science cannot speak to us about the cause of matter, substantial forms, the laws of nature, life, and human knowledge. This is why all the theories about origins invented by man are futile, and, I should add, irreverent, because they do not want to recognize the omnipotence and omniscience of God which are at the origin of the universe. This is what certain problematic passages in the biblical account of creation are trying to make us understand.

Professor E. H. Andrews of the University of London ends his work *God, Science and Evolution* with these illuminating words:

The main weakness of geological uniformity is its refusal to admit the biblical witness that miraculous means were in operation at the time of the formation of the universe and the earth. (127)

Luther, in his commentary on Genesis, noted a problem that to his eyes was insoluble. How did days exist even before the creation of the heavenly bodies established by God to measure them? Not understanding with his intelligence, he accepted the assertion from God's word on creation by faith. This problem—and many others in this astonishing account—has been a stumbling block for numerous Bible readers these last three centuries because they did not understand that things happened very differently at the time of creation than today. The apostle Peter speaks to us quite clearly of the uniformist evolutionists of our time:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died,

everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water. By water also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Pet. 3:3–7)

What the apparent scientific implausibilities in the infallible account of creation clearly show—and this, among others, is their purpose—is that the laws of nature which prevail in the universe today are not at all the same ones God used in his work of creation by which he established the laws that {118} we know. God’s creative laws are unknown to us today aside from their actual manifestation in miracles. The end of the world will come by a similar intervention. It is by a similar intervention that the flood came. The denial of creation is above all the denial of the Creator God of whom all God’s work speak. It is above all the refusal by irreverent men to acknowledge the sovereignty, almighty power, and omniscience of a God to whom we shall all be held accountable. It is evident that without such a God and without such a doctrine of creation, there cannot be any miraculous intervention in this world. But, without divine intervention, what could be our hope for redemption?

### Without the Doctrine of Creation Redemption Is Absurd

It is often thought that Charles Darwin primarily had problems with the scientific implications of the Christian vision of the world. In fact, this was not the central point of concern for the biologist with revolutionary views. Let us listen to what he said of himself:

I have trouble understanding why anyone might even wish that Christianity were true, because if it is, the clear language of the Bible text seems to assert that men who do not believe will be punished eternally. And this kind of doctrine is hateful.

Elsewhere he states:

A being so powerful and so full of knowledge as a God capable of creating the universe, is, to our limited minds, all powerful and all knowing. It revolts our intelligence to imagine that his goodness is not equally unlimited. For what advantage can there be in the

suffering of millions of inferior animals in the course of almost endless ages?

The well-known astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle calls attention to the innumerable sufferings of creatures which the theory of evolution implies and asks:

Do you think that God would have adopted such a system? Would God not be capable of inventing a system of laws which would have avoided suffering?

But did God in fact create the universe, and particularly living beings, using the cruel means of suffering and death that the theory of evolution requires? We have to understand at this point that Hoyle and Darwin quite simply attribute to god the brutal mechanisms of the pretended evolution of the species: the merciless struggle between species of the survival of the fittest, the sufferings of living beings during endless ages, and their death {119} during millions of years. All that before sin even entered the world. What is it all about really?

The Bible declares categorically that God is entirely good and that his creative work perfectly reflects his goodness. Six times in the creation account, God states solemnly that his creation is good. In speaking of the new earth and the new heavens where justice will reign, the prophet Isaiah says:

The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but the dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain. (Isa. 95:25; 11:6-9)

In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul speaks to us of the sufferings in creation and of its causes. Their origin does not stem from the creatures themselves:

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Rom. 8:20-21)

For, Paul tells us, death comes neither from God, nor from the laws of nature, nor from the creatures themselves, but it is the consequence of the disobedience of the first man. God had warned Adam:

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat

from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Gen. 2:16–17)

The apostle Paul explains this statement to us when he writes to the Romans:

... sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. (Rom. 5:12)

Because man is the steward of God’s creation, his fall brought about the corruption of all nature. But, for this very reason, the whole creation will be carried along in the wake of the entire restoration of God’s chosen people at the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What we have to notice carefully at this point is that it was the sin of the first man that introduced death, not only into the life of men, the text tells us, but also into the world, that is, literally into the cosmos, into the universe. According to the theory of evolution, the order would be exactly the opposite. Death would have existed before sin. The link of cause to effect between sin and death, to which the Bible witnesses, is thus broken. {120} But if death does not come from sin, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is no longer the expiatory sacrifice for our sins, is no longer the perfect propitiation of the Lamb of God, the appeasement of God’s wrath against our sin. It is easy to see that in making death a “natural” phenomenon, motor of the evolutionary process, one denies its abnormal character, its link with man’s sin, and at the same time negates all the expiatory work of Jesus Christ. For according to the theory of evolution, death does not come from sin and the Bible deludes us from the beginning about salvation.

Now we understand more clearly to what degree this theory, apparently simply a “scientific” explanation of origins, has dire consequences for the most important elements of our faith. We have seen that it is a doctrine of lies having as its source the father of lies. We know, too, that the devil was a murderer from the beginning, and now we see to what degree the evolutionary hypotheses is a doctrine of death, a doctrine which makes death the source of life. We see also the way in which it destroys not only the work of the creation, but also that of the recreation of

all things which is the final goal of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This is why we assert that without the doctrine of creation, the redemption itself is absurd.

But we know that death was really conquered at the Cross. We know that at the resurrection and restoration of all things, this victory will be plainly manifested and that death will be swallowed up by life.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. 15:25–26)

So we shall all be able to exclaim with the apostle Paul:

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Cor. 15:54–58)

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# FIRST CORINTHIANS 15:45

## AN EXEGESIS

*John B. King, Jr.*

Οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται, Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν. Ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν.

*So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor. 15:45)*

### Introduction

As affirmed by Scripture and reflected in the creeds of the church, the doctrine of the resurrection is most central to the Christian faith. Week after week congregations throughout the world confess Christ's death and resurrection in their liturgies, making the doctrine familiar to the church at large. But familiarity often breeds a carelessness which runs counter to vital faith. Among evangelicals critical reflection often wanes, causing the far reaching implications of Christ's resurrection to be missed. Worse yet, many liberals deny the historicity of the resurrection, believing it to have symbolic significance alone. Given the centrality of this doctrine to the Christian faith, this situation is deplorable.

Yet, confusion over the resurrection is not a new phenomenon; the Apostle Paul faced a similar situation in his day. And in his effort to set the facts before the Corinthian church, he expounded the doctrine at great length. In fact, Paul's discussion comprises the totality of 1 Corinthians 15. While various aspects of the resurrection are discussed throughout the chapter, the nature of the resurrection comes to the clearest focus in 1 Corinthians 15:45 and its surrounding context. Before discussing these verses,

however, it is necessary to examine the cultural background. After all, it was this background that shaped the problems at Corinth.

### Cultural Background

Corinth was a city where the main land route between the East and the West intersected with several sea routes. Because of this fact, Corinth was the focal point of much travel, making it both ethnically and religiously diverse. While this situation made the city a strategic point for the gospel, it also contributed to the general immorality for which the city was famous. Additionally, Corinth was the center for the worship of Aphrodite, a goddess whose worship was known to be of a very immoral kind. (Guthrie, 421) {122}

The impact of this environment upon the Corinthian church has been well summarized:

The religious beliefs and activities of the congregation, as those developed between its founding and the writing of 1 Corinthians have often been described as “Gnostic,” since there is evidence that the Corinthian Christians attached great importance to the acquisition and display of special religious knowledge (gnosis, e.g. 1 Cor. 1:5; 8:1,10) and wisdom (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:20–2:13; 3:18–19), that they tended to equate spirituality with possession of the more spectacular kinds of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12–14), and that they dissolved the Christian hope for resurrection from the dead into pretentious claims about the believer’s present life (see esp. 1 Cor. 4:8; 15:12–19). Whether these tendencies can be called Gnostic, proto-Gnostic, or simply Hellenistic, it is clear that they led to serious divisions within the congregation and were a matter of serious concern to Paul. (V. Furnish, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 185)

Within the church at Corinth, then, there were several problems (more than those mentioned here), and Paul wrote his epistle in response to them. As alluded to above, however, there is some ambiguity in determining the precise relationship between these problems and their underlying religious basis. Historians have had difficulty in establishing the Corinthian heresy (Ridderbos, 539), and in actuality there may have been many religious strains present (Guthrie, 422–424). At any rate it is clear that the surrounding culture was having a negative impact upon the Corinthian church

as manifested in a number of concrete problems. Chief among these was the denial of the resurrection.

### Literary Context

Since Paul's epistle was written in response to various problems, its structure is determined by this fact. In effect, the epistle consists of a series of self-contained sections which address separate problems and thus have a high degree of independence and internal coherence. Accordingly, each of these sections can be analyzed as independent units rather than as parts of a larger whole. Thus, the section dealing with the resurrection will be isolated in the following analysis. In this regard it was mentioned previously that Paul's treatment of the resurrection is given in 1 Corinthians 15 with the nature of the resurrection coming into the clearest focus in verse 45. To fully appreciate the significance of this verse, however, it is necessary to trace the flow of Paul's argument to see the verse in its various levels of context. {123}

In making his case, Paul initially reminds his readers that the resurrection is a historical fact attested by over 500 eye witnesses (15:1–11), and that without it the Christian faith is in vain (15:12–19). In fact, since the resurrection is tied to the dominion of Jesus Christ as the last Adam (15:20–28), Paul argues that its denial undercuts redemptive history and with it any basis for Christian ethics (15:29–34). Having thus argued for the historicity and the indispensability of the resurrection, Paul next asks a two-fold rhetorical question (15:35). Namely, "How are the dead raised?"; and "With what kind of body will they come?" These questions Paul proceeds to answer in reverse order in 15:36–49 and 15:50–57, respectively. The chapter then concludes with an exhortation to stand firm in the faith knowing that (on the basis of Christ's resurrection) one's labor in the Lord is not in vain.

With the structure of the argument clear, the significance of verse 45 may be ascertained by noting its relation to its immediate context. It falls within the section (15:36–49) discussing the nature of the resurrected body. In this section Paul draws an analogy between the death of the body and the planting of a seed and uses this analogy to contrast natural and resurrected humanity. Of particular relevance here is the argument as it progresses beyond

verse 42:

Οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται, Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν. Ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν.

42. So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

43. it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

44. it is sown a natural body (σῶμα ψυχικόν), it is raised a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν). If there is a natural body (σῶμα ψυχικόν), there is also a spiritual body ([σῶμα] πνευματικόν).

45. So it is written: “The first (πρῶτος) man Adam became (εγένετο) a living being (ψυχικόν ζῶσαν);” the last (ἔσχατος) Adam, a life-giving spirit (πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν)

46. The spiritual (πνευματικόν) did not come first (πρῶτον), but the natural (ψυχικόν) and after that the spiritual (πνευματικόν).

47. The first (πρῶτον) man was of the dust of the earth, the second (δευτερός) man from heaven.

48. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so are those who are of heaven.

49. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

### Analysis

Within its context verse 45 does double duty. It not only serves to illustrate the contrast between the natural and spiritual bodies, but also serves as an additional argument for the existence of the spiritual body, {124} basing it on the natural. In making this argument Paul paraphrases part of Gen. 2:7 using it as the basis both for contrast and extrapolation. The actual wording of Gen. 2:7 (as indicated by the bold letters) is “the man became a living being.” To this verse Paul has added “Adam” in apposition to “man” to establish the parallelism between Adam and Christ and has added the adjective “first” to distinguish the two Adams (Barrett,

373).

The contrast between the two Adams is established by two significant word pairs, first/last (πρωτος/εσχατος) and being/spirit (ψυχη/πνευμα), respectively. With respect to the first pair, Adam is referred to as the first (πρωτος) Adam, while Christ is referred to as the final (εσχατος) Adam. Additionally, since Christ is also called the second (δευτερος) Adam (v. 47), the comparison is most significant. First, it implies that there can be two and only two Adams since Christ is both the second and final Adam. Moreover, since Christ's divinity predates Adam's humanity, it is evident that the comparison has Christ's humanity in mind; otherwise he would be the first Adam. Thus, on the basis of the first word pair it follows that the text has two humanities in view which correlate as type and antitype, respectively.

The bigger contrast, however, to which the first word pair is subordinate is expressed through the second pair, being/spirit (ψυχη/πνευμα). It is this contrast, after all, that the whole argument is calculated to establish. Whereas it is said that the first Adam became (εγενετο) a living being (ψυχη ζωσαν), Christ is said to have become a life-giving spirit (πνευμα ζωοποιουν). To clarify this contrast, therefore, it is not only necessary to compare these terms but also to trace this "becoming." The first question then is at what point in history each Adam acquired the properties attributed to him. That the reference is to simple events in the speaker's past follows from the fact that the Greek verb, εγενετο (translated "became"), is an historical aorist (simple past tense).

With regard to Adam it is clear that he became a living being during creation as Paul indicates by referencing Genesis 2:7. Moreover, since this verse refers to conditions prior to the fall, it is evident that Paul has Adam's original, unfallen nature in view. The significance of this point will emerge shortly. With regard to Christ, however, it may be said that he became a life-giving spirit at the point of his resurrection. This assertion can be established theologically and fits the context. First, since the text has Christ's humanity in view, Christ's becoming a life-giving spirit must be subsequent to the incarnation. Second, because Christ was born of a woman into a humanity subject to death (Rom. 8:3; Ridderbos, 65), his {125} becoming a life-giving spirit can only refer to his resurrection, at which point he assumed his glorified humanity.

(It is with this body, after all, that he ascended to the Father's right hand to send the Spirit of life.) Additionally, since this result dovetails with Paul's argument that the body is sown in weakness and raised in power (v. 43), it fits the context. Thus, as noted previously, verse 45 represents a contrast between two humanities. But as is now evident, the contrast is more specifically between Adam's original humanity and Christ's glorified humanity.

To express the nature of this contrast more clearly, it is necessary to consider the meanings of the words involved. The task is complicated because in Greek, as in English, words often have a variety of uses, particularly common words such as πνευμα (spirit) and ψυχη (being or soul). Accordingly, one may not simply insert a standard definition irrespective of the context. Fortunately, in this case the solution is facilitated by the fact that variants (both the nouns and related adjective forms) of πνευμα and ψυχη are scattered throughout the passage which is unified by a central contrast. And this contrast is between the natural body (σομα ψυχικον) which is sown in weakness and the spiritual body (σομα πνευματικον) which is raised in power (v. 43–44). Thus, when Adam is said to have become a living being (ψυχη ζωσαν), the reference is to his natural humanity comprehending both its physical and spiritual dimensions. Accordingly, various authors refer to this existence as psychical to distinguish it from the purely physical. Similarly, when Christ is said to have become a life-giving spirit (πνευμα ζωοποιουν), the reference is to his resurrected humanity in both its bodily and spiritual dimensions. (After all, to imply that Christ had become “pure spirit” would be to fall into the very heresy that Paul was criticizing.) Since the resurrected body comprehends both the bodily and the spiritual dimensions of humanity, it is referred to as the pneumatic (spiritual) body to denote the fact that in it both aspects of humanity exist on a higher plane. (Note that in this discussion the words “body” and “spiritual” have been used in two different senses.) That the meanings determined for the words here are valid may be confirmed from standard reference tools of the Greek language (*BAGD*, 677, 893; *TDNT*, v. IX, 633).

So far it has been determined that verse 45 establishes a contrast between Adam's original humanity and Christ's resurrected humanity in both their bodily and spiritual dimensions. As mentioned previously, however, the verse serves an additional

function in establishing the pneumatic body on the basis of the psychical. The reason for this relationship is that the {126} comparison is based upon Adam's original, unfallen nature. According to Geerhardus Vos,

... the Apostle was intent upon showing that in the plan of God from the outset provision was made for a higher kind of body (as pertaining to a higher existence generally). From the abnormal body of sin no reference could be drawn as to that effect. The abnormal and the eschatological are not so logically correlated that one can be postulated from the other. But the world of creation and the world to come are thus correlated, the one pointing forward to the other, on the principle of typology the first Adam prefigures the last Adam, the psychical body the pneumatic body. (cp. Rom. 5:14) (Vos, 169)

In other words, because God created with a purpose in mind, creation is not aimless but rather moves toward consummation. From the outset Adam had the goal of dominion (Gen. 1:28), and when he fell, he was barred from the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22). The reemergence of this tree in eschatological symbolism (Rev. 22:2) confirms the eschatological thrust of the initial creation and by implication the initial connection between the tree and the pneumatic body.

R. Lenski, however, disagrees with this position, arguing that since Christ's work is conditioned upon Adam's sin, not his original humanity, the pneumatic body is not implied by creation (Lenski, 719). The answer to Lenski's objection is to realize that while redemption is God's gracious response to man's sin, his goal for creation is not. Since these goals were articulated prior to the fall, the eschatological is necessarily prior to the redemptive. What the fall produced then was not a change in the historical purpose but rather a change in the historical mode. So, while Christ's work is conditioned upon man's sin, the goal for creation is not. The psychical and pneumatic bodies are therefore implied in one another as correlative concepts within an eschatological framework of creation and consummation. Since the fall, however, eschatology and soteriology have become necessarily linked so that the purely historical has become the redemptive-historical. And in this regard the resurrection is most significant to our world.

## Conclusion

Within its context then verse 45 has been shown to fulfill a twofold purpose. By contrasting Christ's glorified humanity with Adam's initial nature, it shows the pneumatic state to be higher than the psychical, even in its original goodness. Additionally, it implies the former by means of the {127} latter. Underlying these distinctions, however, is the parallelism established by the two-Adam typology. When this relationship is examined, both the contrast and the implication of verse 45 are seen to be more global.

In this regard the parallelism between Christ and Adam is most striking. While both Adam and Christ (in his humanity) were created by supernatural acts of the Holy Spirit (Gen. 2:7, Lk. 1:35), Christ was also resurrected by the Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:16). Since this is the point at which Christ became a life-giving spirit (*πνευμα ζωοποιον*), it follows that Christ in his resurrected humanity is (like Adam in his original humanity) a new creation of God. Moreover, since he is the first born from the dead (Col. 1:18), he is both the father of a new race and the inaugurator of a new age in history. And unlike the first Adam, he will not fail in his dominion task, "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26).

From this development then it can be seen that a redemptive-historical contrast is implicit in the anthropological contrast of verse 45. Since the framework of redemptive history provides the unifying matrix for Paul's theology (Ridderbos, 11), these redemptive-historical implications are of prime importance. While Christ's resurrection is past, the general resurrection is still future. Moreover, since death is the last enemy to be destroyed, the resurrection of the body is but the completing act in the more global restoration of the cosmos of which the body is an integral part. The contrast between Adam and Christ is therefore seen to involve a contrast between two ages with the second age implied by the first yet transcending it in glory. The resurrection thus provides the foundation for both personal and global hope. To the extent that this doctrine is obscured or rejected, any basis for hope is denied. {128}

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# JUSTIFIED UNBELIEF

## *A Survey of the Antitheistic Epistemological Problem in the History of Philosophy*

*Joseph P. Braswell*

### I. The Theological Horizon

In the account of the fall of man into sin in the third chapter of Genesis, the serpent tempted Eve in Eden with the ideal of autonomous knowledge. The word of God could not be absolute, the ultimate standard. *Knowledge*, if it is to be rationally justified and scientific in character, must be *critical*; it could not rest upon the mere acceptance of something on authority. Adam and Eve must *question*; they must approach things with a healthy skepticism that does not naively accept things on close-minded and dogmatically certain faith. Their reason must be the ultimate judge of truth, impartially weighing any and all truth-claims with the neutral detachment of a Mr. Spock, willing to follow the facts (and the logical cogency of the serpent's well-reasoned arguments) wherever they may lead. They must look objectively—without biases or prejudices, without preconceptions—at the facts, propose several hypothetical conjectures, and test them, subjecting God's model to possible refutation as well. They must begin with the open-minded assumption that the world is open to several possible interpretations besides the one given them in the special revelation of God, that the world does not absolutely preclude alternative interpretations, that the serpent's interpretation is a legitimate hypothesis worthy of consideration as possibly true. They must be willing to experiment and verify things for themselves. They must, in other words, be as God, knowing things independently of

God and his dogmatic opinions, discovering truth for themselves by trial and error, using their own standards of discernment to accredit the truth.

At the serpent's prodding, therefore, Adam and Eve assumed that possibility is more basic than God, that it is over and above God as the ultimate source of a wholly contingent, *open* reality that has sprung forth from the womb of impersonal chance. God's judgments may only *possibly* be true, but they may as well possibly be false. At any rate, the truth of the matter is independent of God; matters of fact are contingent matters to be settled *a posteriori* by investigation; the facts are not originally, *creatively* preinterpreted by the fiat-word of God that determines the definite nature of the facts (which are his creation). Man's logic is legislative in determining {130} what is and is not possible, and man, applying his rational faculties *autonomously*, is fully competent to arrive at the actual truth and determine for himself what the facts mean and what interpretation best fits them. *His* interpretation is in principle as original and ultimate, as possibly true to the nature of things, as any other, and *his* logic must be the final court of appeal in deciding the issue on purely rational grounds.

## II. A Preliminary Reconnaissance

### 1. The Socratic Tradition

#### (1) *Socrates and Plato*

One of the greatest sons of Adam was the Athenian philosopher Socrates, who exemplified this critical attitude of rational inquiry, of "open-mindedness" in the relentless pursuit of truth, in paradigmatic fashion. According to Socrates in Plato's *Euthyphro* dialogue (12e–15a), *piety* must be known apart from the *doxa* of gods and men. Its essence precedes any and all interpretation. To *know* it we cannot know it relative to God; its meaning cannot depend upon the word of God: God approves an act of piety because it is indeed intrinsically pious rather than an act being pious because it is an act approved by God. God is not the norm; God is not the creator. To refer piety to the will of God (what

God says) leads to *irrationalism*, to the conventional nature of the definition, to its being the mere product of arbitrary whim—merely chosen voluntaristically (and having no intrinsic necessity according to the inherent nature of things). Rather than the caprice of will (and the spectre of mutability, of nonnecessity, due to its freedom), it is *nous* that is given primacy by Socrates (cf. *Phaedo*, 97b–98b).

Because this rationalist-impersonalist metaphysic is assumed (wherein every element of subjectivity—of interpretive judgment and point of view—must be removed from objective truth), the “account of the reason why” that grounds knowledge as the “fastening down” of right opinion (*Meno* 97d–98a) cannot be an appeal to God (merely another point of view). It must find that *common*, ultimate context that encompasses both God and man, the normative principle to which both God and man are subject. It is the quest of *autonomous* theoretical thought that must proceed according to a principle of continuity such as the great chain of being that can achieve understanding. {131}

In the Socratic view of the matter, in order to discover what piety is in and of itself, according to its own essential nature (cf. *Phaedo*, 100b), we cannot accept anything on authority. Rather, by reason we abstract out from the adduced instantiations the particularity and all its relativities of extension and reference to arrive at the pure idea of piety-as-such (its intension or sense). It is the universal, the absolute definition comprehending the distilled *essential* nature of piety, that is the reason why piety can be predicated of any and every particular example of a pious act *qua* an act that to varying degrees partakes of and manifests this property. In logical order, one must know the universal concept, understand the definition, before one can make reference to specific acts, judging them to be pious acts. Here is the classic “Meno-problem” (*Meno*, 80e).

According to Socrates, we in fact already possess these ideas innately, but they must be brought to the light of day through questioning (cf. *Meno*, 8285) that awakens *anamnesis*. Socrates believes that “all nature is akin” (*Meno*, 81d). This posits a principle of continuity, a *participation* of our *logos* in the *logos* of things (or, to stick with the language of Plato’s Socrates rather than later Platonists, the correspondence of our *nous* with the *noumenal* character of reality). The *noumenal* object is the *thing-*

*in-itself* because the *noumenon* is our rational participation in the ultimate ideal reality of final causes (the transcendent realm of the Forms). The way of ascending to *episteme* involves a purging purification of our souls from all the contaminants of matter and flux; it is a realization of the *divinity* of the *nous*. Thus, the road to understanding is according to the Socratic dictum: “Know thyself.” Only as we separate ourselves from the illusory world of sense-appearances, of particularity and change, can we awaken to the immutable reality in which our understanding *by nature* participates, where our rational soul beholds the Forms and truth manifests itself ideally. This is how the subject must be adjusted to the object.

## (2) Aristotle

Aristotle did not regard the Socratic-Platonic enterprise as altogether successful. Plato was never able to bring the Ideas into satisfactory relation to the world of experience. He could not explain, given the bifurcation of the two realms, how the Forms were instantiated. Transcendence and immanence remained in unresolved tension; particulars did not participate in the universals. While Aristotle agreed that there could be no science of accidents, that knowledge was of the universal, he was concerned to find the universal present within the individual instantiation. Aristotle’s {132} categories—ways of predication about a subject, relating the subject to teleological class concepts according to various modes of “is-ness”—depended upon this metaphysical move, and it is the categories—the several ways of predication—that save us from Parmenidean monism (the *blank* of the undifferentiated identity of being with itself as all there is) and its destruction of meaningful predication.

Also, Aristotle believed that the Platonic way led to the *tertium quid* of the sense-world as a less-than-real world hovering between the poles of Being and Nothingness (Form and Matter). In this, Plato did not fully escape Parmenides, who by logic destroyed logic, rendering the principle of noncontradiction metaphysically foundationless. Plato’s equivocating, “both /and” predication regarding the ambiguous ontological status of the semi-real space-time world likewise made logic (the law of excluded middle) impossible (cf. Book *Gamma* of the *Metaphysics*).

Aristotle thus proceeded along the way of *induction* (cf. *Posterior Analytics*, 2:19) by supposing that the world given to our senses was Form and Matter together, that the Form manifested itself to the understanding as it contemplated a sufficient sampling of particulars.

This peculiar view of induction (which is more than a generalization inferred from a mere enumeration of particulars) was dependent upon Aristotle's Form/Matter scheme. It is only because of the relation of Form (qua the Being of Being-as-such) and theoretical thought that this view of inductive discovery could work in the demonstrative way that Aristotle intended it according to Book I of the *Posterior Analytics*. In the Aristotelian metaphysic, thought and being are coterminous; pure Form—the Unmoved Mover—is “thought thinking itself,” engaged in *theoria*; pure Being is pure Thought and is inherently rational. The laws of thought are first and foremost laws of being; only because they are first descriptive of the ultimate reality are they normative of theoretical thought in the quest for *episteme* and *sophia*.

There is thus a principle of continuity that relates the soul or *nous* of man (the form of man) to the form of things theoretically contemplated whereby man's mind participates in the form of things and those forms manifest themselves to the mind of man. The mind of man is suited to this intuition of the form as it “makes a stand” amidst the particulars; it has a formal capacity (due to its own potentiality) to apprehend the forms of things, to intuit the essences and formulate corresponding definitions and classifications true to the quiddity of things (essentialism). {133} This sort of induction cannot survive the abandonment of the Form/ Matter metaphysical paradigm that justified it, and foundationalist science cannot proceed from logically primitive *axioms* without the basic apprehension of the Forms that constitute our metaphysical first principles. The eventual triumph of nominalism over conceptualism, the terminist rejection of essentialism whereby the former asserts the conventional nature of universals (general terms) and the reality of particulars only, would create a crisis in inductive logic as a truly scientific method according to the Aristotelian-rationalistic ideal of demonstration, and the relation of act and theory therein becomes problematic.

## 2. Modern Philosophy

Yet that Form/Matter scheme *was* abandoned in Early-Modern philosophy (Descartes' new metaphysic). Descartes gives philosophical standing to the metaphysics of Early-Modern science (Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo): a metaphysic emerging in the Renaissance revival of a Pythagorean Neo-Platonism (e.g., Ficino) in reaction to the crumbling metaphysical paradigm of Late-Medieval Scholasticism.

While Augustine had offered a new paradigm for, and new impetus to, philosophy—a *Christian* philosophy—in the wake of the insoluble dilemmas of Classicism,<sup>1</sup> this agenda was never properly developed by his successors. Instead the remaining Neo-Platonism in his thought tended to dominate philosophy in the Early-Medieval period of Erigena and the Carolingian Renaissance (influenced especially by the work of Pseudo-Dionysius). Augustine was read Neo-Platonically, in terms of the Plotinian great chain of being and the Nature/Grace scheme. The rediscovery of Aristotle and the masterful synthesis forged by Aquinas shifted the emphasis within the Nature/Grace dialectic, raising new philosophical problems that disintegrated Scholastic metaphysics into competing schools and an impasse born of the irresolvable tensions of Nature/Grace dialectics. Nominalism, on the ascendancy in the latter stages of these paradigmatic death-throes, did much to foster both Renaissance and Reformation.

The “rediscovery” of Nature (and of man’s place therein) in the Renaissance’s emerging Nature/Freedom paradigm worked to “reverse” the direction of the great chain of being.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Renaissance {134} Neo-Platonism was not *otherworldly* in orientation; it focused mystically upon the mathematical perfection of nature as a *cosmos* full of beauty, harmony, and order. This climate was the matrix of the theories of Copernicus and Kepler, who saw truth manifested in mathematical aesthetic.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New York, 1957).

2. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA, 1936), chaps. 2–4.

3. E. A. Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (London, 1932, 2nd rev. ed.), chaps. 1–2.

Yet the Renaissance, fueled by both the recovery of the texts of the Ancient Academicians and the Pyrrhonian Skeptics (e.g., Montaigne and Erasmus)<sup>4</sup> and by the intractable intramural debates waged among the Scholastics (the impasse), was also heading in a skeptical direction (and, with Hobbes, in a materialist direction). It is to this that Descartes responded, epistemically answering skepticism, metaphysically justifying the new science and its mathematico-mechanical worldview, and doing this in a way that saves us from materialist monism (preserving, so he believed, the Catholic faith in God and the soul). Whereas the Scholastics failed to give us certain knowledge and stood against the new science, Descartes believed his new paradigm of Nature and Freedom solved the problems of the modern age and made it truly an age of reason.

In the view of Nature that dominated the Enlightenment the teleological scheme was discarded for a mechanistic view of causality (teleology is, after all, too personalistic). The question for the Empiricists<sup>5</sup> was how to maintain the strong sense of *episteme* as demonstration and to the Empiricist principle (no innate ideas; all content derives from sense-perception) without being able to construct demonstrative syllogisms from logically primitive premises informed by inductive results.

It is precisely here, in this problem-context, that Hume's empirical skepticism spelled the end of science as strict demonstration by showing that Locke's inferences were unjustifiable. Kant, awakened from his "dogmatic slumbers" by Hume's disturbance, represented the valiant attempt to save Newtonian science (*episteme*)—the crowning achievement of the Enlightenment enterprise—from Hume's attack on induction. Kant's "Copernican Revolution"

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4. Richard Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley, 1979), chaps. 1–8, but esp. 2–3.

5. We need not concern ourselves here with the Continental tradition of Rationalism. Besides its intramural problem with Cartesian mind/body dualism (with attempted but unsuccessful solutions in Malebranche's Occasionalism, Spinoza's monistic Categorical Parallelism, and the Idealism of Leibniz' monadal "pre-established harmony"), its innatist starting point reduced facts to relations, proving unhelpful to the growth of science. Newton's success (ostensively using Baconian induction) ultimately spelled its demise (as it did for Kant, converting him from Wolffian Rationalism), and the Empiricist tradition from Locke springs forth out of the achievement of Newton's empirical science.

restored the rationality of our {135} expectation of regularity in nature, our assumption that future experience will resemble past experience. It restored the idea of necessity in causality. In short, it rationally justified our beliefs and habits of expectation, transferring them once more from Hume's imagination to the Understanding and transforming Hume's psychological explanation of the cause of such beliefs into the very *a priori* form of intelligible experience that itself justifies our belief in regularity. It restored the anticipation of lawful regularity from *custom* to a valid *a priori*. Newton's induction worked precisely because Kant introduced a new Form/Matter scheme in which the Newtonian world-view was a *necessary* discovery of the way the world *must* appear; its predictions are justified by the formal conditions that make experience-as-such possible.

The Humean problem, as Kant perceived it, can only be understood within the rationalistic tradition and its requirement of strict demonstration for *episteme*. Socrates proposed in Plato's *Meno* dialogue (98) that right opinion (true belief) becomes knowledge when one can give "an account of the reason why" the belief is true—*i.e.* give a causal explanation of what makes the belief true (thus granting the cause which produces the truth of P, one understands why P must be true: P is true *because...*). Aristotle accepted this conception of understanding as explanation (cf. *Metaphysics*, 981a25–981b7) and developed at great length in his *Posterior Analytics*, Book I the nature of this "account of the reason why." This explanation of why P is true was only deemed sufficient (adequate) if it demonstrated why P *must* be true (its *necessity*). The casual explanation sought is that which strictly entails P as its necessary consequence, showing that not-P could not be the case (the situation could not be other than it is—cf. chs. 2 and 6 especially, and his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. VI, chs. 3 and 6). Thus, if I say that B occurs because A, I am saying that A is a sufficient condition for B (it fully explains B's occurrence) and that, given A, B will necessarily follow as a certain consequence (if A, then B). B is as certain (but only as certain) as is A; B derives its certainty from A.

Now it follows from this that A may require explanation as well. Its certainty may need demonstration as dependent upon some prior cause which causes it to be the case. Its certainty may

itself derive from (and thus require) another agent. Since B is no more certain than A (we know that B only if we know that A and understand that if A, then B), B is not certain until we justify A by demonstrating that the cause of it is the case, thus providing the transference of logical certainty along the linear chain of inference. We can never account for B until we reason back to some nondependent, nonderivative, *basic* (or ultimate) cause that is necessarily {136} true in and of itself and as such is self-evident (self-justifying, axiomatic). An infinite regress would make everything inexplicable, making demonstration impossible and therefore knowledge as well. An axiomatic truth must be a necessary truth (self-justifying because we understand that its denial is impossible) and all truths demonstrated from this axiom are thus also necessary truths.—Thus, in a strict scientific sense of understanding, the objects of knowledge are necessary truths.

The Rationalist assumes that a logically valid syllogism constructed of true premises ought to be sufficient to persuade the competent mind. That the mental state of the knowing subject is one of indubitable certainty in assent to these truths follows from understanding that a logical syllogism produces conclusions which necessarily follow as a strict consequence entailed by the premises. If the premises of a valid syllogism are true, so must be the conclusion as well, and scientific demonstration is this deduction of necessarily true conclusions from necessarily true premises. The premises are the causal conditions which sufficiently explain the conclusion and show it to be necessary. If one is certain of the truth of the premises (which are either logically primitive axioms—basic necessary truths—or else themselves logically derivative: the prior conclusions of prior syllogisms using prior premises, regressing finally back to axiomatic truths), and one understands the syllogism, then one will be certain of the conclusion because one knows why it has to be true (he sees its necessity and hence its certainty). A syllogism (the method of demonstration) causes the conclusion. By demonstrating the necessity of P one has gained the right to be sure that P is true.

Thus far, this Platonic-Aristotelian conception of *episteme* (strict scientific understanding) as justified true belief (in which P must be necessarily true, S must be certain of P, and S must have an explanation sufficient to warrant absolute certainty by providing

the reason why P must be true), which dominated philosophy until the late eighteenth century, provides four of Bruce Silver's six characteristic marks of rationalism.<sup>6</sup> These four marks are:

1. The objects of scientific knowledge are necessary truths.
2. The knowing subject attains a state of complete certainty.
3. Justification = explanation. {137}
4. One explains by logical demonstration of logically derivative necessary truths from prior, logically primitive necessary truths; the method of science is demonstration.

The sixth mark is designated by Dr. Silver as *philosophical optimism* (Karl R. Popper's *epistemological optimism*).<sup>7</sup> This is based upon the belief expressed by Socrates that "all nature is akin" (Meno 81b-d), that it is a *cosmos*, an ordered and coherent system in which every part is related to every other part and every part participates in every other part, that it truly forms an organic and integral *whole*.

The assumption that the universe is a rational system—a lawful order—provides the confidence that reality is inherently knowable and explicable. It is open to rational investigation and explanation. We can thus interpret it by rational categories (the light of reason) and understand why things are as they are, and comprehend this knowledge into a coherent and consistent, logically ordered system. There are no inherently irrational, inexplicable facts (brute facts, unknowables, *surds*). Truth manifests itself—reality discloses its true essence as an intelligible object of the understanding—when it is apprehended by reason, for our reason corresponds to the *logos* of the cosmos in its ultimate substance and structure, its *form* or *idea*. *Episteme* understands the *aitea* of things.

It is this optimistic faith which is the root assumption underlying Aristotle's denial of an infinite regress in the chain of causes. If every truth requires demonstration, if there are no basic and indemonstrable truths (axioms), then no proposition can

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6. Dr. Silver is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of South Florida in Tampa. He has employed this listing of the six marks of rationalism in various courses and seminars he has taught there on the history of philosophy.

7. See Popper, "On the Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance," in his *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York, 1965), 5–6.

ever be justified, no truth can be demonstrated with certainty as necessarily true. Thus, if there are no logically primitive axioms (i.e., if there is an infinite regress), demonstration is impossible, nothing is ever explained, and knowledge is impossible. Since Aristotle held that knowledge is actual, that things are indeed explicable, it followed that an infinite regress in demonstration could not be the case.

(Silver's fifth mark—*innatism*—need not concern us now. It is that *sine qua non* of pure Rationalism in distinction from a rationalistic Empiricism. It is what separates Aristotle from Plato or Locke from Descartes—all of whom shared the other marks in common. A pure Rationalist—a Descartes, Spinoza, or Leibniz—would, in terms of the fifth mark, insist that it is not the case that the contents of synthetic knowledge arise exclusively from that which is given to the understanding by the senses, denying that foundational tenet of the Empiricist tradition that insists {138} upon the perceptual origin of all our ideas. Until Hume, this mark was virtually *all* that separated the two traditions of epistemology.)

In this tradition of epistemological optimism, of the belief that truth is manifest, it is *conventionalism*, the veil of tradition (of *doxa*), that obscures our perception of the objectively perspicuous truth. We must thus oppose the authority of tradition with an autonomous critical spirit. We must learn to deconstruct the imposed structures of convention to lay bare the *thing-in-itself* allowing it to present itself without the filters of prejudice and bias, without the grid of our conditioned habits of expectation. We must ruthlessly criticize the naively received traditions—the *doxa* of culture—by a methodical skepticism that frees us from the closure of the opinionated mind unto the open reception of truth and *episteme*. We must, in other words, facilitate the manifestation of truth by properly adjusting ourselves to reality in such a way that the *appearance* of the world, unimpeded and untarnished by bad habits of our minds, will be an appearing unto us that agrees with the thing-in-itself, a purely *noumenal* apprehension or intellectual intuition of the truth.

### 3. Kant in Historical Context

#### 1. The Problem of Noumena

Kant, of course, changed the landscape of this tradition of epistemology by asserting that the thing-in-itself cannot be grasped as a noumenal object. This breaks with a tradition extending back to the beginning of Ancient Greek philosophy, to the tradition that began with Thales.

As Kant may have interpreted the history of philosophy, when the Ionian *Physikoi* had searched for the divine *arche*, they were attempting to get beyond (or behind) mere appearances to the enduring substance at the foundation of reality. According to them, our sense-experience presents to us a world of manifold forms of appearance, a diverse plurality of qualities. In their view, this sensory phenomena must be overcome, for it provides us with a confused and deceptive picture of reality. Our naive sensory experience therefore only leads to *doxa*, not to *episteme*.

However, these early philosophers believed that the correct use of reason could and must be employed in order to allow truth to manifest itself to the understanding (as a *noumenal* object). By *theoria* we can locate the one ultimate substance—the thing-in-itself—that is capable of a plurality of modes of appearance. It is this one substance that is truly real and eternal—*divine*. Thus, it is theoretical thought, employing reason, that provides {139} *episteme*, transcending the realm of sensory phenomena to behold noumenally the thing-in-itself.

Whether one asserts that all is water (Thales), or *apeiron* (Anaximander), or air (Anaximenes), or—to move to other Pre-Socratics—number (Pythagoras), or simply being (Parmenides), the quest remains in the hands of an active *nous* that is capable of finding the transcendent truth about ultimate reality by abstract *theoria* or pure reason in disparagement of mere appearances given to the senses. Plato's idealism is therefore but a more consistent development along these lines, within an essentialist tradition that considered sense phenomena to be illusory, not entirely real, that sought the manifestation of truth in the purified *noumena*.

## 2. The Cartesian Turn

It is with Descartes, however, that the quest for the noumenal manifestation of the thing-in-itself reaches its final stage, and if we are to understand Kant, we must first understand Descartes. The second of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* expounds the "wax experiment" in which Descartes discovers the essence of the idea of body (material substance). Without yet being sure (as per the doubts raised in the "First Meditation") that an external, corporal world actually exists beyond, and independently of, the *res cogitans* of the Cartesian *cogito*, Descartes must concern himself with the essence of the idea of this wax in which the wax functions as but a particular instance of the idea he possesses of a world of body. This idea of an external, physical world is a powerful and compelling idea that forces its way into his consciousness beyond his free, volitional control (e.g., the imaginative ability to manipulate and reconfigure); it is extremely difficult to shake, to bracket out, to doubt. There is a subjective necessity, an inner constraint and first-order indubitability, about this idea of an external, physical world, and he wishes to explore and clarify what this idea really is as a preliminary clue to from whence it may originate (by his senses? from his own imagination?). What precisely is it about this idea that gives it this necessity, that which is essential to the idea of body-as-such when clearly and distinctly perceived, that stands immediately indubitable and compels first-order belief according to the psychological necessity of the consistency of reason. He is not at this stage (prior to the "Third Meditation") convinced on the second-order meta-level that there is in fact a corporeal object *in re* to which his idea has reference, to which it corresponds, but he is in a position to examine the idea and understand it *formally* as it evinces the *a priori*, universal and necessary conditions—the *essence*—of any corporeal object-as-such, so {140} that *if* indeed there *are* such material objects outside of his consciousness, they *must* be of this character that comes clearly and distinctly to his understanding by this rational inquiry.

What Descartes discovers in this examination of the wax (the actual existence of which is still a matter in which he may be deceived) is that it is precisely those properties of the wax presented to him by his senses which are *accidental*. Specific

qualities of particular shape, size, color, texture, odor, etc. are mutable; these appearances do not define the essence of body. Its true and immutable nature which remains constant throughout all the changes of state that affect its sensible qualities is an understanding of it that comes through reason. This is an apprehension of the attribute of *extension* (not any particular shape or size but universal idea of extension-in-space-assuch). The senses (already subject to doubt according to the *dubito* in the “First Meditation”) cannot convey to us the *essence* of the physical world, should such a world actually exist, but by the clarity and distinctness of the *noumenal object*, we know what form such a world must have, for such a world must conform to this idea (and such a world of extension is therefore subject to Descartes’ analytical geometry!).

Descartes has not only retreated into the inner space of his own consciousness to find certainty (the *cogito*), he must now remain in the ideal realm, certain only of his own clear and distinct ideas (essences) in so far as these are “true and immutable natures” perceived “clearly and distinctly” by intellectual intuition. Only with the idea of *God*—an idea that can only be accounted for should God actually exist (“Third Meditation”)—can Descartes bridge the gap between noumenal object (in intellectu) and external referent (in re), positing existent bodies as the cause of his idea of bodies. Only with an idea of God which must include existence in its very essence (“Fifth Meditation”) can Descartes find a correspondence theory of truth (based upon the *veracitas Dei*) whereby his ideas accurately represent states of affairs in an external reality beyond the contents of his consciousness. Only by this road does the consistency of reason have metaphysical reference.

Of course, should Descartes’ ontological argument fail to bridge the gap between the inner or psychological necessity of the knowing subject (indubitable, “clear and distinct ideas”) and an external world of corporeal existence, should he accordingly fail to achieve a link of correspondence via the *veracitas Dei* between idea and states of affairs occurring outside the contents of his consciousness, skepticism reemerges at the second-order {141} level where the question arises as to whether clear and distinct ideas are true (as opposed to whether they may be deceptions caused by the hypothetically postulated, omnipotent demon). The idealistic

retreat of the “First Meditation” threatens the link between the external things-in-themselves and the noumenal objects that stand over against the *cogito*-subject in that theoretical reflection which is necessarily confined to the contents of consciousness.

Most philosophers and students of philosophy would agree with Kant’s judgment that Descartes’ theistic proofs fall short of demonstrating the existence of God, even if they might not accept the validity of all of Kant’s objections to these proofs or might criticize them differently than Kant did. If Descartes’ theistic arguments do indeed fail to establish rationalistically the existence of the Cartesian deity, this failure entails that Descartes is left with no source for the contents of his ideas, save from that which is presented by his senses or from his own imagination—both of which Descartes has dismissed as unreliable for providing an accurate representation of the world. The Rationalist enterprise thus loses the factuality of the real world and reduces to sets of relations (especially exemplified in Leibniz) as the Rationalists attempt to construct, solely according to the consistency of reason, a rational order and imaginatively define a world into existence by legislatively conceiving what such a world *must* be like. Moreover, granting for the sake of argument the existence of the Cartesian deity, the dualism created by Descartes can only be bridged by faith and experience, not by reason. As conceded in his reply to Princess Elizabeth’s letter of 20 June 1643, it is *in fact* the case, as we so clearly observe, that mind and body actually *do* interact, so it must be possible for them to do so, but we do not know how or why; we have no rational explanation for this *matter of fact* of the union of body and soul (we may here observe that Descartes’ appeal to the pineal gland as seat of the soul does *nothing* to solve the problem of dualism and the interaction of the two disparate substances: Is the pineal *res cognitans*, *res extensa*, or *tertium quid?*). The world of body is not demonstrably indubitable (it cannot be logically entailed from the existence of God—especially the *free* God of Descartes), but simply imposes itself upon us with a force and vivacity that no sound mind can doubt it in the *Peircean* sense of doubt (cf. this admission in the Synopsis of the “Sixth Meditation”), and this turn moves Descartes out of strict Rationalism into a cautious and modified Empiricism guaranteed by God (and from here into the hands of Berkeley).

Perhaps, in light of this Cartesian *surd* of inexplicable interaction, we can better understand the subsequent Rationalist tradition as the attempt to {142} *explain away* (rather than rationally explain) experience. Malebranche's Occasionalism and Leibniz' monads set in pre-established harmony are cases in which the mind/body interactions are explained away as deceptive appearances to the senses, with reason alone capable of providing a true account of the real state of affairs. Spinoza's one substance (Deus, sive Natura) must be viewed under one or the other of the two categories open to us—either the attribute of thought or the attribute of extension respectively. However, the problem of is only “dissolved” because we can only employ these perspectives one at a time, in terms of a *parallelism* that operates something like Niels Bohr's *principle of complementarity* in quantum physics so that the perspectives cannot be simultaneously employed or combined. Moreover, these categories—which constitute a *phenomenal* dualism—are but two of an *infinite* set of attributes of the one substance, the rest being inherently beyond our comprehension so that the rationalism involved ends as an irrationalism of the unknowable thing-in-itself.

Kant, formerly a disciple of Wolff (a Leibnizian), had abandoned the Rationalist tradition as a dead-end. His hope briefly shifted from Dogmatic Rationalism to Dogmatic Empiricism until he was at last awakened from his “dogmatic slumbers.” He thus came to see that pure Empiricism had equally come to an impasse. It ends in Hume with nothing but brute facts without any lawful order, without coherence. It ends with skepticism regarding any objectively necessary relations, any explanation of *why* Newton's theory applies to the world. Since Rationalism can only succeed on a *deus ex machina* (finding God by means of an *a priori* argument), its picture of the world remains suspect as nothing more than the product of what an overactive imagination can conceive. The way of making fruitful contact with the external world remains in the hands of the senses which present to us impressions caused by something external. Though this picture consists of nothing more than *appearances* (and possibly deceptive ones at that), these impressions must be appearances of something, albeit that something may well be a “Something, I know not what.” While it is true that the Sensibility is passive and merely receptive, that the

Understanding must act upon these appearances in order to think through what is given and make rational inferences, this way of beginning with the Manifold of Sensibility remains our only hope for a linkage between the inner and outer realms, the only hope of connecting the contents of our own consciousness with something out there beyond us. Yet, by the time this empirical turn of epistemological idealism reaches Hume we have only impressions arising from unknown causes, leaving complete skepticism {143} about the nature of that which lies beyond appearances. If *episteme* can only be noumenally justified in the thing-in-itself, we have utterly failed, for Hume has shown us that we are never going to derive this by inferences from the phenomena within which we are hopelessly situated.

Kant saw this quest for a noumenal comprehension of the *ding-an-sich* as misguided. The assumption that the knowing subject must conform his categories of understanding to the object in order to have knowledge was at an impasse; Dogmatic Empiricism and Dogmatic Rationalism were in shambles. Traditional metaphysics was making no progress. The time had come for a transcendental critique that would expose the erroneous common assumption tacitly shared by and underlying both these seemingly disparate positions, that would lay bare this uncritically accepted presupposition that led to the impasse, in order to assume its opposite and proceed from there. Thus, the subject-object relation was reversed in Kant's "Copernican Revolution" in epistemology.

Kant's epistemological turn began with the recognition of the *a priori* limit placed upon the knowable once it is admitted that all knowledge arises from perception. That which appears (the phenomena) tells us nothing about the way things are in themselves. That which is given to our senses appears unto us within the transcendently ideal forms of intuition, the *a priori* framework of space and time as the universal and necessary mode of empirical apprehension. The empirically real is already conditioned by this spatio-temporal perception; the object given to us is a spatio-temporal object conformed to the way in which we perceive the world, the manner in which every appearance unto us must be structured *a priori*. The Sensibility thus presents the object to the Understanding where it is comprehended according to our rational categories, according to *a priori* relations that organize our world

into intelligible and coherent experience. *Episteme is synthetic a priori experience*, and our imposition of a schematization is the transcendental condition for the manifestation of truth. There is no justification whatsoever for believing that things-in-themselves are anything like the phenomenal world so constructed by the epistemically creative activity of the knowing subject.

Kant believed he had uncovered the absolute construct. He believed that he had set forth the universal and necessary conditions for any possible experience, the way the world is and must be experienced by any one and everyone. This of course was not to be the case. Newtonian physics has been superseded by Relativity Theory (not to mention Quantum Mechanics!), and other logics and geometries have been invented as well. {144} Conceptual schemes change; ways of perceiving and conceiving, of organizing experience and rendering it intelligible, are not absolute. The enduring contribution of Kant is found in his recognition that order and structure—rationality—is imposed, that the world is constructed by human activity. However, it is now seen that this theoretical conceptualization, this application of a schema, is not something innate to an unchanging human nature (a universal and necessary *a priori*). World-making—the *invention* of intelligible, meaningful reality—is *conventional*; it is learned as received tradition (the implication into the social construction of reality). It is *doxa* rather than an apprehension of manifest truth's disclosure of itself (whether in and by means of the inherent and essential nature of the object-as-such or of the subject). Truth cannot be discovered; it can only be provisionally asserted as a coherent theory (a model), as tentative and always defeasible interpretation—a conjecture that cannot be verified.

To speak of a *correspondence* of this explanatory and prediction-generating schema to “the facts” (objective states of affairs) “actually out there,” as though the theory describes the way things are in themselves, is to assert something which cannot be tested. We cannot get “out there,” beyond our interpretive judgments and theory-laden language, to the pure and uninterpreted reality in order to compare our beliefs to this raw reality of the way things are in themselves, independent of our categories. No verification of correspondence is possible. Thus, the idea of representation, that our models “mirror” the transcendent reality, is mistaken.

*Manifestation* occurs only within the construct as a product thereof, and that which is made manifest is theory-relative, theory-variable. Facts are not *constants* but come to light only within theories, changing with the change of theories that set forth our expectations.

### 3. Kantianism and the Contemporary Situation in the Philosophy of Science

Philosopher of science Karl R. Popper, famous for his principle of falsification, wishes to maintain what he calls a *critical realism*. Our conjectures and refutations somehow move us closer to truth, to the way reality actually is. He will have none of the instrumentalist view of science.<sup>8</sup> This rationalism of his is in fact an *irrationalism*; it is unjustifiable optimism. Since we cannot compare a theory with the purely pretheoretical nature of virgin things-in-themselves, we cannot know that {145} we are approaching a better approximation of uninterpreted reality. Since we invent rather than discover, and our justification for our conjecture is a purely negative one of elimination, there is no logic to justify the belief that our noetic structure is in fact approaching a realist version of truth, a correspondence theory of truth by which the *in intellectu* refers to the *in re* and, to varying degrees, represents it. Elimination is from an infinite set of possible worlds, and every new theory has zero probability. Here Kuhn is correct; progress is not movement *toward* ultimate truth, but movement away from the unworkable and discarded.<sup>9</sup> Refutation can provide nothing else; it is not a method of discovery (of which there is no such thing) but a method of discarding a failed conjecture (and much more difficult to employ successfully—decisively—than Popper makes it sound). Popper's *belief* in truth-correspondence makes no prediction that can be tested, that is open to potential refutation; he—quite inconsistently—seems to think it is *verified* (confirmed) by the way each new conjecture that is proposed must take up within it that which was “right” in previous theories (as Einstein's Theory of Relativity validates a limited application of

8. Popper, “Three Views concerning Human Knowledge,” in *Ibid.*, 107–119.

9. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1970, 2nd ed.), 169–70.

Newtonian physics, saving the latter's equations within certain low-velocity parameters). Against this unwarranted realism, we must conclude with Kuhn that, given this state of affairs, the truth of the moment is what, for now, works (has not been overturned), what is useful for a comprehensive and coherent explanation, for productive puzzle-solving, and for successful prediction; to think it manifests something about reality requires a wholly unwarrantable leap of faith; truth is a useful fiction that allows us to function and to control.

Are we forced into this ultimate agnosticism? I do not believe so. We can escape this impasse if we will but grant that reality is *revelatory*, that it in fact discloses itself according to the truth of God. The history of philosophy has been the quest of autonomous man to prod the world into revealing itself without revealing God, to reveal itself apart from God and so to reveal itself without revealing its *createdness*, to reveal itself as the product of impersonal chance (ultimate contingency). When it was found that the witness to God could not be muted in this manifestation, the quest became one of silencing reality by rendering it opaque and unknowable, by being consistent to the presupposition that it is a brute fact upon which we—as original, ultimate, and creative interpreters—impose our {146} autonomous meanings according to our purposes. Epistemological agnosticism serves the antitheistic quest to be theologically agnostic.

Christian epistemology stresses the revelational character of all created reality and thus the revelational character of truth. Rationalism (in the broad sense that embraces both a Descartes and a Locke) historically has also emphasized what Karl Popper calls *the manifest nature of truth*, the basic tenet of what he calls *epistemological optimism*. Popper clearly equates the idea of manifest truth in rationalistic epistemological optimism with the Christian belief in the revelational character of reality. Is this equation of two such different traditions justified?

Again, we must take issue with Popper. History refutes Popper's perspective on the subject. Popper's interpretation cannot explain why it is that those who did not fully subscribe to *total depravity* in citing the noetic effects of sin, those who compromised this radical view of lapsarian anthropology by asserting the primacy of the intellect in man the "rational animal" and the neutrality of

natural reason, are in fact those who, according to Popper, belong to the tradition of epistemological pessimism, establishing strong, centralized, authoritarian structures and a rigid traditionalism (Roman Catholicism and its Medieval Scholasticism). Meanwhile, science *flourished* and made such remarkable progress in *Calvinist* culture (with its decentralized, liberalized structures of authority) among Puritan-influenced scientists who evince epistemological optimism.<sup>10</sup> This is no accident, no mere coincidence; Calvinism—the tradition that most consistently confessed total depravity—is the cradle of that progress that Popper attributes to liberalism and optimism precisely because of its worldview (specifically, its philosophy of revelation). Popper rightly notes that epistemological optimism—the autonomous variety that follows the tradition from Socrates—leads to epistemological pessimism, turning into its opposite. This is simply the rationalist-irrationalist dialectic at work in apostate thought, a manifestation of its inherent instability, its inherent tension. He should have noted therefore that the “epistemological pessimism” of a confession of *total depravity* leads to an epistemological optimism, given the philosophy of Christian-theism recovered in Calvinism. {147}

Now, my proposal that we interpret the history of philosophy as the attempt of would-be autonomous man to dispense with the knowledge of God, to suppress the truth in unrighteousness, is, of course, something of a bold and brash assertion, one many will find dogmatic, biased, and simply *incredible*. Yet we have previously seen this quest exemplified in the epistemic strictures of Socrates in Plato’s *Euthyphro* dialogue. We see it exhibited as well when early-modern science and philosophy abandon teleology or the great machine-universe that runs as a closed system under purely natural law. We see it manifested in the egocentrism of the Cartesian epistemological turn and in Hume’s attack on metaphysics.

Kant stands squarely in this tradition. Once God has been banished from the realm of scientific knowledge we must now

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10. See, e.g., R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1972), 98–149; Charles Dykes, “Medieval Speculation, Puritanism, and Modern Science,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* (Summer, 1979, 6/1), 27–45; E. L. Hebben Taylor, “The Role of Puritan-Calvinism in the Rise of Modern Science,” *Ibid.*, 46–86.

work to reconstruct epistemology so that we can enjoy knowledge without God. While it is progress to at last be rid of God and justify an ultimate agnosticism that excuses us for our metaphysical ignorance, it will not do if we should lose the Enlightenment rationalism in the bargain. The task is now to have knowledge without the presupposition of God, a science to which the God-hypothesis is rendered irrelevant. We must succeed in secularizing science by placing it upon a new foundation of autonomous *theoria*. We can admire Hume's discovery of our limitation (banishing metaphysics to the flames), but we must find a way to justify the synthetic *a priori*, saving Newtonian science, without in the process justifying metaphysics—keeping theological knowledge beyond our limits and irrelevant to our enterprise.

#### 4. A Preliminary Analysis and Critique of Kant

Such a radical reconstruction was Kant's self-assigned task. The question for us now to investigate is whether he was able to pull it off. Could he develop a consistent and coherent theory that truly established the boundary (the limit) that would exile God into the unknowable while saving Enlightenment science? Could he establish an epistemic justification for induction, for rationally predictable regularity in our experience, that would not be applicable to theistic proofs, that would not bear witness to God? Could the world be made at last to manifest truth to autonomous reason while being silent concerning God?

For Kant, the mess of traditional metaphysics occurred because the right epistemological questions had not been asked. Hume has provided us with the *reductio ad absurdum* that exposes the utter untenability of Lockean Empiricism by the way he consistently pressed the full implications of this tradition to its logical conclusion. Yet experience *is* possible; we *do* in fact {148} have knowledge of nature and its laws (Newton). No one (certainly not Hume) doubted this. Humean skepticism merely indicates that science cannot be accounted for in terms of Locke's epistemology, not that science (with its manifest successes and triumphs) is rendered dubious. The proper procedure therefore is to begin with the *given* that science *is* indeed possible (because actual) and to investigate anew how this actuality—this indubitable matter of

fact—is possible: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge? We must explore the foundations and see how the process works; we need a full-blown theory of knowledge to explain empirical knowledge. In pursuit of this inquiry, given that reason is competent within the bounds of empirical knowledge, and stipulated that metaphysics deals with alleged realities beyond the empirical realm, we must query whether pure reason is competent to the task of metaphysics, or whether it is in some way integrally bound to the empirical realm in which its competence is securely established by the triumphs of Newtonian physics. Thus emerges Kant's monumental *Critique of Pure Reason* as it seeks to make the Newtonian world safe from theological metaphysics.

Logically, however, the next prolegomenal question to be asked—ignored by Kant—concerns whether reason is competent to the task of a transcendental critique of reason.<sup>11</sup> Can reason so investigate itself as to the limits of its proper and valid application in knowledge? Is it capable of specifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge as such? If these questions are legitimate, we face the threat of infinite regress as we are led into a critique of the critique. Yet we need not so proceed down this Kantian slippery slope. The problem with transcendental arguments may be approached from other directions.

Korner, for example, argues that transcendental deductions are impossible.<sup>12</sup> According to him, such arguments must invariably proceed from a particular schematism, and, as such, they are always contextually relative, lacking in that universal (unique) necessity and normativity so crucial to Kant's enterprise. He maintains that Kant can give *sufficient*, but not *necessary*, conditions, or rather that the necessity involved in those conditions is strictly a contextually immanent necessity that arises wholly from within, and remains wholly bound to, the particular schema. It is a necessity wholly relative to the particular schema employed, having no application, no normativity, beyond that schema. Thus, the "necessity" {149} involved is a *nonunique a priori* among several possible schemata,

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11. This was the objection raised by Schulze, a minor post-Kantian (cited in Gordon H. Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* [Boston, 1957], 434).

12. S. Korner, "The Impossibility of Transcendental Deductions," *The Monist* 51/3, 320f.

none of which compel adoption in any absolutely necessary sense. For example, *within* the Euclidean framework it is true that two parallel lines are always and necessarily nonintersecting (it cannot be otherwise), but this *a priori* does not preclude non-Euclidean geometries, and in such alternative systems the Euclidean necessities do not necessarily hold true. In like manner, Kant's transcendental deduction is not truly transcendental in the sense of providing a transcendental necessity (unique, allowing no alternative) but remains contextually relative to the axioms and postulates of the particular schema he has adopted without transcendental justification of its *absolute* necessity and universality.

This is so, Korner proceeds to argue, because Kant cannot demonstrate that any and every method of prior differentiation of a region of experience necessarily belongs to this schema (the uniqueness of the schema). For the method of demonstration would have to involve one of three methods. First, one could attempt to establish the uniqueness of the schema by comparing it with undifferentiated experience (i.e., experience prior to any method of differentiation). Second, one could instead compare the schema with all possible competitors (every alternative schema). Third, one can engage in an immanent examination of the schema and its applicability. However, the first option is ruled out because, even if we had access to undifferentiated experience (certainly at odds with the assumption of Kant's "Copernican Revolution"), we could at most merely demonstrate that our schema reflects it, and this falls short of proving that no other schema could also reflect it. The second option is untenable given the impossible demand to exhibit all possible schemata and the unlikelihood that we can demonstrate uniqueness while conceding the existence of alternative schemata. Lastly, the third option fails to demonstrate more than the successful function of our schema in differentiating a region of experience (a demonstration of sufficiency), a proof that falls far short of establishing that it is *necessary*, that it is the only schema to which any and every possible differentiation must belong.<sup>13</sup>

Kant therefore reasons in a circle, discovering the inner necessity

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13. *Ibid.*

of the schema from an immanent stance of having presupposed it from the outset, without demonstrating a more basic and primitive necessity for adopting it in the first place. He is squarely situated in the historical context in which a specific metaphysical paradigm is widely assumed at a tacit level. He merely accepts without a second thought that the very framework of {150} rationality *is* the world, space, and logic, of Newton, Euclid, and Aristotle respectively. On the other hand, we can no longer grant the manifest self-evidence and axiomatic *givenness* of such an assumption.

It follows therefore that the presupposition of theoretical autonomy that was supposed to generate a guarantee of the neutrality postulate becomes preclusive of that postulate (a self-referential inconsistency). This is the case in as much as the granting of this transcendental-deductive impossibility is simply a recognition of the inherent limitation of any and every standpoint that remains immanent within the sphere of theoretical thought. Since this impossibility of transcending specific schemata is inherent to that contextually-relativized immanence-stance within the presumed self-sufficiency of *theoria*, it would appear that the transcendental-deductive impossibility can only be overcome by rejecting the dogma of theoretical autonomy that underlies the notion of pure reason-as-such. At the very least raises a question as to whether Kant's so-called *critical* philosophy is in reality nothing more than simply another form of dogmatic philosophy in its seemingly naive assumption that it has an adequate *pou stu* wholly within the bounds of theoretical thought itself from which its allegedly critical investigation could proceed transcendently.

## 5. Conclusion

It is not my concern in this essay to answer Korner's challenge regarding the possibility or impossibility of transcendental arguments, to justify such a method in light of the strictures he has set forth. Given the presumed autonomy of theoretical thought as sufficient unto itself, I do not believe he *can* be answered, that transcendental arguments can be justified within the narrow limits that Kant's enterprise requires. This is because I do not believe that the choice of a schema is purely a theoretical matter, taking place on a purely theoretical level (resolved by reason alone). I

believe that this choice of schema cannot be justified purely by an appeal to something dictated within theoretical thought itself. The choice must originate in, and arise from, some other “nonrational” (pretheoretical, supratheroretical, or nontheoretical) factor of decision—of existential orientation and commitment—that one brings with oneself in personal involvement to one’s philosophizing from a deeper level of concerns and values (worldview). This constitutes a more basic and more ultimate metaphysical paradigm for all one’s activities, and *thought is* in no wise exempt from its conditioning. Thus, we could perhaps speak with William James of a “*sentiment of rationality*” or some other such *predisposition* that governs {151} one’s philosophizing, determining one’s initial stance and outlook. One operates concretely in a *tradition* that is more than simply the critical tradition of the science of the day (or rather the science of an age arises in a matrix of tradition that is not reducible without remainder to pure *theories* from pure reason in the abstract, untouched by other cultural factors).

In our own time historico-sociological factors are emphasized in this respect as ways in which this choice is “nonrationally” preconditioned, but certainly other options are available. For example, Saint Augustine appealed to the basic religious motives of the two supreme loves—that of the City of God and the City of Man respectively—that ethically inform and energize the heart of *homo religiosus* at the level of basic commitment, existential orientation, and ultimate concern. (For Augustine and the Christian tradition, the heart is the deep wellspring of human existence and personhood, out of which issue forth all of life and thought such that, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he and so he manifests himself in all his works.)

*Scientia* therefore proceeds along the way of the Augustinian *Crede ut intelligas* in which theoretical thought is Archimedeanly ground in supra theoretical presuppositions—faith-commitments—incapable of a purely theoretical and neutral (an autonomous) justification. If this much is conceded, we can, for now, forego arguing at length for an Augustinian view against the full-blown contextual relativists (such as Thomas Kuhn). An Augustinian will not accept their various ways of world-making in which they arbitrarily “shop around” for ontologies within a wholly malleable, plastic reality upon which they, as absolute

relativists, impose meaning and order as original interpreters within the bounds of their resignation to historicism and its denial of ultimate truth. An Augustinian would no doubt argue that the only alternative to his metaphysic is a naturalized epistemology, itself beset with problems and the ensuing difficulties of avoiding the pull to a meta-level of normativity that cannot, on such an assumption, exist. Surely an Augustinian—a Christian-theist—would have to argue that the relativism of the Kuhnian seems, contrary to what one might expect of *relativism*, to absolutize a special science as the autonomous origin of meaning (be it history, sociology, psychology, or some interdisciplinary combination of social-scientific perspectives).

It would of course be profitable in another, more suitable context for us to pursue a critique of the Kuhnian relativists along such lines. For, in reductionist fashion, it seems that some specific field of investigation is absolutized and made autonomous to function normatively as the criterion {152} of truth. To use Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as an example, the history and sociology of science somehow have a truth-character about them as to inform us as to the way things actually are independently of our frameworks (which give only an instrumentalist "truth"). Somehow these disciplines can provide "true truth" that is denied to the theories of natural science by Kuhn. He does not inquire as to whether historicism and cultural relativism may themselves be nondescriptive constructs of only pragmatic and operationalist value, functioning as merely heuristic principles for problem-solving and tentative explaining/predicting within the social sciences according to the currently accepted paradigm that is subject to change. Might such a perspective—itsself relative rather than absolute—be eventually discarded and superseded? By Kuhn's own standards we have no basis for exempting the perspective of the social sciences behind his sociology of knowledge and psychology of research from being itself paradigmatically determined and paradigmatically relative, the product of the current *zeitgeist* infecting the social sciences, as able to be transcended as was Newtonian physics once a new paradigm emerges and triumphs. Yet would that admission of the time-bound and age-conditioned, historical relativity of relativism expose a self-referential inconsistency, an inner contradiction—

the dialectical tension between the assertion of the absolute truth of relativism and the relativity of that absolute presupposition of relativism? Absolute relativism is always self-defeating, arising out of an absolutization which is both necessary to it while, simultaneously, antithetical to it.

Kuhn is in many ways an irrationalist. What must be recognized is that he is also something of a rationalist. Kuhn is, of course, generally associated with a postmodernist repudiation of the modernist/rationalist, Enlightenment view of science, a critique of the *privileged status* traditionally given therein to the statements of *science*. Contrary to the optimism of the positivists (and to the utter consternation of a rationalistic philosopher of science such as Karl R. Popper), he has stressed the *nonrational factors*—extrascientific considerations of background, values, and other *personal* or *cultural* influences—that shape expectations and alter the specific meaning of criteriological values such as parsimony, economy, simplicity, and aesthetics (themselves rather odd evaluational criteria of *truth*) as these are applied in choosing theories. Yet, by his appeal to what his study of what the history of science manifests, he is still relying upon theoretical thought to give an account of itself in terms of its own product. Thus, he must be reductionistic in terms of his absolutized origin of meaning, itself dependent upon a conceptual scheme produced by {153} theoretical abstraction. Thus, Kuhn (following R. G. Collingwood) would say that metaphysical questions are *really* historical questions, that epistemology is *really* sociology of knowledge or psychology (naturalized epistemology). A Christian-theist would therefore argue that the only alternative to this self-defeating circularity is to situate contextual relativity within a sociology of knowledge that presupposes the social context of the City of God—the city with *foundations* in the absolutely personalistic metaphysical context of the ultimate social reality of the infinite-personal Triune God whose being is communion. The Christian-theist would wish to press the point that apart from the presupposition of the Christian-creationist worldview there can be no justification of knowledge whatsoever, for knowledge is the correspondence of our interpretive judgments to the prior interpretation by God of the cosmos that his creative word has brought into existence.

However, such a TINA argument (There Is No Alternative)—a

truly transcendental argument—is beyond our immediate concern in the present essay.

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# FRANCIS LIEBER'S THEORY OF INSTITUTIONAL LIBERTY

*Steven Alan Samson*

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Francis Lieber, a German-American educator and publicist, helped lay the foundations of academic political science in the United States during a career that spanned the middle third of the nineteenth century (1827–1872). Unaccountably neglected today, Lieber is nevertheless generally acknowledged to have been the most prominent political scientist of his generation. His most important single contribution to the literature of political science is considered to be his theory of institutional liberty, which links civil liberty with self-government. A sketch of Lieber's life and work will be followed by a discussion of his ideas about the relationship between nationalism, liberty, and self-government.

## A Biographical Sketch

Franz (Francis) Lieber was born on March 18, 1798, in Berlin into a once prosperous business family that had suffered reverses during the political upheavals in Germany spawned by the French Revolution.<sup>1</sup> Forever etched into the young boy's memory was the shame he felt at his country's defeat in the Battle of Jena (1806), followed by the parade of Napoleon's troops outside his window

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1. This account is drawn primarily from Frank Freidel, *Francis Lieber: Nineteenth-Century Liberal* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1947). See also Lewis R. Harley, *Francis Lieber: His Life and Political Philosophy* (New York, [1899] 1970); and Henry A. Pochmann, *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences, 1600–1900* (Madison, WI, 1961), 125–27.

on Breite Strasse in Berlin, where later, on his 50th birthday, the opening battle in the Revolution of 1848 would be fought.

At the age of seventeen Franz was severely wounded and left for dead at the Battle of Waterloo. It took him a full year to recover and return home. Afterwards he studied gymnastics under Friederich Ludwig Jahn and joined the *Turnerschaft* movement, where he came under the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Before he resumed his formal studies, Lieber helped compile the official *Turner* songbook.

Lieber was imprisoned for four months in 1819 following the assassination of the playwright and political satirist, August von Kotzebue. Like Jahn, Lieber knew the assassin but was not personally implicated in the crime. The police confiscated his diaries and published some of his most {156} strident poems, which served only to provide an ampler forum for the dissemination of his political views.

Following his release, Lieber resumed his studies and sought admission to the University of Berlin in the safe subject of mathematics, but he was rejected by the rector on orders from the police. He lodged a protest with Freiherr von Stein zum Stein, the liberal Minister of Education, who responded by forbidding his admission to any Prussian university.<sup>2</sup> Lieber then surreptitiously won admission to the University of Jena, which had been declared off limits to Prussian students because it was a center of radical activity.

Lieber matriculated in theology early in April 1820, switched to the liberal arts where he specialized in mathematics, and was granted his Ph.D. diploma after four months. The police cited his acquisition of the Ph.D. as another political offense and kept him under surveillance. But no one questioned the degree's validity. In years to come it would open many doors for him.

The following year Lieber escaped Germany to fight in an early phase of the Greek war for independence (as did Lord Byron and Samuel Gridley Howe), but the experience left him disillusioned and destitute. Lieber left for Italy in the Spring of 1822 and called

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2. Lieber's personal experience evidently colored his later view of Stein, as may be seen in the entry on Stein that Lieber wrote for his *Encyclopedia Americana*.

upon the great liberal historian, Barthold Niebuhr, who was then Prussia's ambassador to Italy. Niebuhr took pity upon the young man, hired him to tutor his son, helped moderate his revolutionary fire, and initiated him into international cultural circles.

The year-long association with Niebuhr had a profound influence on Lieber's intellectual development. One biographer suggests that the Francophobia of Lieber's youth was, if anything, intensified through his association with Niebuhr. But Niebuhr's Anglophilia is even more evident in Lieber's subsequent development and undoubtedly inspired the contrast he later made between Anglican and Gallican liberty.<sup>3</sup>

Lieber published an account of his experiences in Greece and met both Alexander von Humboldt and the Prussian king during his stay in Rome. Meanwhile, Niebuhr interceded with the king on Lieber's behalf and won a pardon for him. The two men then returned to Germany late the following summer. Even so, Lieber continued to face difficulty and eventually spent more time in prison after refusing to identify his earlier compatriots. {157}

Faced with an uncertain future at home, Lieber emigrated first to England in the Spring of 1826, where he met his future wife Matilda, as well as George Grote, Henry Brougham, and John Stuart Mill. While Lieber was still in England that autumn, his friend Karl (Charles) Follen, a Harvard lecturer, recommended him to a group of Bostonians who wanted to establish a gymnasium. Lieber accepted their offer, sailed to America the following summer, and started his own swimming school. After five years of residence and the beginnings of a family, Lieber was awarded American citizenship in 1832.

In addition to operating a swimming and gymnastics program (1827–29), Lieber edited the *Encyclopedia Americana* (1828–33), then taught at South Carolina College (1835–56), Columbia College (1857–65), and Columbia Law School (1865–72). During the Civil War, he drafted the first code of military conduct for use in land warfare, which was later incorporated into the Hague and Geneva Conventions.<sup>4</sup> Lieber also carried on an extensive

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3. Friedel, *op. cit.*, 37–38.

4. See Richard Shelly Hartigan, *Lieber's Code and the Law of War* (Chicago, 1983).

correspondence with a great number of scholars, politicians, and literary figures in Europe and America.<sup>5</sup>

Lieber's work covers a wide range of fields.<sup>6</sup> His contributions to penology, international law, and higher education have been acknowledged in the standard histories of those fields.<sup>7</sup> Apart from the *Encyclopedia Americana*, Lieber's larger works include a popular travelogue, *Letters to a Gentleman in Germany* (1834), reprinted in England as *Stranger in America*, which included an account of his experiences at the Battle of Waterloo; a set of principles for interpretation and construction in law and politics, *Legal and Political Hermeneutics*<sup>8</sup> (1839); a textbook on political economy, *Essays on Property and Labour* (1841); two political science treatises, the *Manual of Political Ethics* (two volumes: 1838, 1839) and *On Civil Liberty and Self Government* (1853); a posthumous collection of his shorter writings, *Miscellaneous Writings* (two volumes: 1881); and selections from his letters

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5. The full list of Lieber's correspondents is a veritable "Who's Who" of the literary, political, and academic leaders of his day. Among his major correspondents were J. K. Bluntschli, Henry Clay, Dorothea Dix, Edward Everett, Hamilton Fish, Simon Greenleaf, Gen. Henry Halleck, Samuel Gridley Howe and his wife, James Kent and his son William, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his wife, K. A. J. Mittermaier, William H. Prescott, Joseph Story, Charles Sumner, George Ticknor and his wife, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Andrew Dickson White. For a more comprehensive list, see Charles B. Robson, "Papers of Francis Lieber," *Huntington Library Bulletin*, 3 (February 1933), 135-55.

6. Apart from occasional verse, special lectures, topical pamphlets (including pro-Union propaganda), and several treatises, Lieber also published -- in succession -- a study of the Lancastrian system of education; a booklet of German drinking songs; thirteen volumes of his encyclopedia, which was modeled upon Brockhaus's *Konversations-Lexikon*; an introduction to Beaumont and Tocqueville's work on the American penitentiary system; an education plan for Girard College; reminiscences of Barthold Niebuhr; proposals to Congress concerning statistics and an international copyright; remarks on the relation between education and crime; remarks on comparative philology; a study of penal law; a study of the vocal sounds of Laura Bridgman, the blind deafmute; and several essays on nationalism and international law.

7. In addition, Lieber's influence on sociology is noted in Albion W. Small, "Fifty Years of Sociology in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology*, 21 (1915/1916), 728-29, note 1; and his place in physical education (along with that of Friedrich Jahn) is considered at length in Fred Eugene Leonard, *A Guide to the History of Physical Education*, 3rd ed., revised by George B. Affleck (Westport, CT), 242-47.

8. This work is the subject of James Farr, "Francis Lieber and the Interpretation of American Political Science," *Journal of Politics*, 52 (November 1990), 1027-49.

edited by Thomas Sergeant Perry, *The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber* (1882).

### The Character of Lieber's Political Philosophy

Alan Grimes has summarized Lieber's place in American political thought as follows:

The decline of the constitutional and legal approach to an understanding of the nature of the American Union, and the rise of the organic concept of the nation is well illustrated in the writings of Francis Lieber. An immigrant from Germany, Lieber skilfully synthesized the English emphasis on civil liberty and the importance of local political institutions, with the German emphasis on nationalism. Thus Lieber's nationalism was built upon decentralized institutions which in turn helped protect the civil rights of the citizens. It was, Lieber believed, the happy combination of local institutions and national purpose which protected and fostered civil liberty in a modern nation state.<sup>9</sup>

Given Lieber's personal background, it is probably natural that the chief concern of his political philosophy should be how to obtain and perpetuate "real and essential self-government, in the service of liberty."<sup>10</sup> Lieber's later theory of institutional liberty appears to have firm autobiographical roots. The Germany of Lieber's youth was fragmented among several petty kingdoms that subsisted precariously in the shadow of France and Austria. The defeat of Napoleon had simply meant exchanging a French overlord for Austrian hegemony. The kind of liberty and self-government known in {159} England and the United States must have seemed a distant prospect for a young German liberal.

Given these concerns, it is also probably natural that the first of Lieber's two treatises on politics would concentrate on political ethics. As Bernard Brown has noted, Lieber believed that

the problems of politics are primarily ethical and moral. Lieber's concept of morality, like Kant's, is a social one; it derives from the

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9. Alan Pendleton Grimes, *American Political Thought*, revised ed. (New York, 1960), 283. Grimes draws primarily from Lieber's essay "Nationalism and Internationalism" in volume 2 of Lieber's *Miscellaneous Writings*.

10. Francis Lieber, *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government*, 3rd ed., revised, ed. Theodore D. Woolsey (Philadelphia, 1877), 300.

fact that man is a social being. Each individual, because he exists, has valid claims; but the fact that there are other individuals alike in nature and with similar claims creates a social situation and the need for general controls. Because of the existence not only of the individual, but of other individuals, and of a society as well, both right and duties are essential to men in society.<sup>11</sup>

Another major dimension of Lieber's thought is theological. Repeated references to God, creation, and Christianity sprinkle the *Manual of Political Ethics* and, more casually, *On Civil Liberty and Self Government*.<sup>12</sup> Lieber certainly belongs among the academic moral philosophers of his period who, according to D. H. Meyer, "played a significant role in the formation of America's public conscience."<sup>13</sup> He believed that humanity is providentially designed for a higher destiny. It was his firm conclusion that human nature reaches its fullest amplitude of expression in a state of civilized interdependence—in cultural maturity—rather than primitive isolation. Lieber attributed cultural and developmental differences primarily to tractable historical influences. He was wary of invidious racial and biological comparisons.<sup>14</sup> {160}

Lieber consciously sought to distinguish his work from the dominant German schools of law and politics, as may be seen in his inaugural address at Columbia in 1858:

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11. Bernard Edward Brown, *American Conservatives: The Political Thought of Francis Lieber and John W. Burgess* (New York, 1951), 28. The reference is to one of Lieber's favorite mottos: "No Right without its Duties, no Duty without its Rights."

12. Lieber's attention to theology not unusual at this time. Theodore Woolsey's *Political Science* (1877) and Elisha Mulford's *The Nation* (1870), show a clear theological orientation. Woolsey, the president of Yale, was much indebted to Lieber's *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government*, which Yale adopted as a textbook in the 1850s. Another political scientist at Yale in the early 1870s, who subsequently adopted scientific naturalism, was the Rev. William Graham Sumner. See George M. Marsden, "God and Man at Yale (1880)," *First Things*, 42 (April 1994), 40. Likewise, John W. Burgess studied theology before he succeeded to the political science chair at Columbia once held by Lieber.

13. D. H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The American National Ethic* (Philadelphia, 1972), vii. Unfortunately, Meyer chose Lieber because his "concerns and approach clearly [differed] from those of the ordinary textbook writers" (147). Lieber used William Paley's work in his own ethics classes.

14. See C. B. Robson, "Francis Lieber's Nationalism," *Journal of Politics*, 8 (1946), 57–73.

There was a time when the greatest sagacity of the historian was believed to consist in deriving events of historic magnitude from insignificant causes or accidents, and when the lovers of progress believed that mankind must forget the past and begin entirely anew. These errors produced in turn their opposites. The so-called historical school sprang up, which seems to believe that nothing can be right but what has been, and that all that has been is therefore right, sacrificing right and justice, freedom, truth, and wisdom at the shrine of Precedent and at the altar of Fact. They forget that in truth theirs is the most revolutionary theory while they consider themselves the conservatives; for what is new to-day will be fact to-morrow, and, according to them, will thus have established its historical right.

Another school has come into existence, spread at this time more widely than the other, and considering itself the philosophical school by way of excellence. I mean those historians who seek the highest work of history in finding out a predetermined type of social development in each state and nation, and in every race, reducing men to instinctive and involuntary beings, and society to nothing better than a bee-hive.<sup>15</sup>

In a similar way, Lieber likened both society and the state to living organisms, especially to the animal body, which he called "a republic of action."<sup>16</sup> But in describing his ideal of "hamarchy" (cooperative rule), he avoided the totalitarian implications of the organic model by basing it not, "as it is in so many biological analogies, on the centrally directed nervous and muscular system of the animal, but upon the vital generative power of the disparate 'systems [which] act and produce independently.'"<sup>17</sup>

Lieber associated the rise of the nation-state with the development of autonomous institutions. He identified three major characteristics of the development of the modern epoch.<sup>18</sup> First is

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15. Francis Lieber, *Miscellaneous Writings*, vol. 1: *Reminiscences, Addresses, and Essays* (Philadelphia, 1881), 339–40.

16. Francis Lieber, *Manual of Political Ethics, Designed Chiefly for the Use of Colleges and Students at Law*, Part I (Boston, 1838), 412.

17. C. B. Robson, "Francis Lieber's Theories of Society, Government, and Liberty," *Journal of Politics*, 4 (1942), 241.

18. Francis Lieber, *Miscellaneous Writings*, vol. 2: *Contributions to Political Science, Including Lectures on the Constitution of the United States and Other Papers* (Philadelphia, 1881), 225–43.

the national polity or nation state. Second is “the general endeavor to define more clearly, and to extend more widely, human rights and civil liberty.”<sup>19</sup> Third, amidst the {161} breakdown of universal empires has come the simultaneous flowering of many leading nations under the aegis of international law and “in the bonds of one common moving civilization.”<sup>20</sup> Still, he believed that “there will be no obliteration of nationalities” in this commonwealth of nations. Internationalization is merely the latest manifestation of an “all-pervading law of interdependence.”<sup>21</sup>

Each of these themes converges in Lieber’s theory of institutional liberty. The theory itself developed through several stages of its own: the idea of hamarchy in *Manual of Political Ethics* (1838), the contrast between “Anglican Liberty and Gallican Liberty” (1849) in an essay by that title, and, most importantly, the long section on institutional liberty in *On Civil Liberty and Self Government* (1853).

### Nationalism

The character of institutional liberty is easiest to grasp by starting with Lieber’s essay on “Nationalism and Internationalism” (1868), where the by now familiar concept was unobtrusively integrated into his theory of nationalism.

A nation is the product of a slow, organic growth that merges the people of a given area into a greater whole:

This institutional and evolutionary emphasis in Lieber led him to discard the contract theory of the state, holding that the state arose from the social necessities of man’s being. The nation, in Lieber’s conception, was a homogeneous population, in a coherent territory, with a common language, common literature and institutions, possessed of a consciousness of a common destiny. It was this aspect of commonality of culture, of history, of political institutions and of destiny which made a given people in a given place a nation. This organic concept of the nation was certainly far

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19. *Ibid.*, 222, 239.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 241–42.

closer to Burke than it was to the contract theorists in America.<sup>22</sup>

The role of nationalism in Lieber's thinking appears to have gone through some stages in its own development. In his *Manual of Political Ethics*, Lieber attributed the change between ancient and modern times to six factors: {162}

1. Christianity
2. the barbarian conquest of the Roman empire
3. the increased size and population of states
4. printing
5. the increased importance of taxpayer, science, and industry
6. the discovery of America.<sup>23</sup>

The third and fifth points are especially indicative of the rise of the nation state. Later, he simply acknowledged the importance of the nation in his treatise, *On Civil Liberty and Self Government*:

How necessary for modern liberty a national representative government is—a representative system comprehending the whole state, and throwing liberty over it broadcast—will appear at once, if we remember that local self-government exists in many Asiatic countries, where, however, there is no union of these many insulated self-governments, and no state self-government, and therefore no liberty. We shall also presently see that where there is only a national representative government without local self-government, there is no liberty as we understand it.<sup>24</sup>

Lieber's mature views on the subject, then, were only developed in a fragmentary way in his last essays. In an early version of his essay on nationalism, Lieber claimed that "the national polity is the normal type of modern government."

As the city-state [a word coined by Lieber] was the normal type of free communities in antiquity, and as the feudal system was one

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22. Grimes, *op. cit.*, 283–84. In fact, Lieber was critical of Locke's contract theory. He probably owed much more to Montesquieu's idea of the separation of powers and to the influence of Burke on German liberals like Niebuhr and Wilhelm von Humboldt.

23. *Political Ethics*, I, 431–32.

24. *Civil Liberty*, 168.

of the normal types of government in the Middle Ages, so is the national polity the normal type of our own epoch—not indeed centralism.

Large nations have been formed out of the fragmentary peoples on the continent of Europe, England alone dating the blessing of a national polity over a thousand years back; others are in the act of forming; others, already existing, are carrying out more distinctly or establishing more firmly the national elements of their polities.<sup>25</sup>

The modern nation state represents a marked advance over the “market-republics” of earlier times and the “absorbing centralism and dissolving communism” of Asian and European despotism. But this advance beyond the feudal system of local and class privileges has taken two opposing forms, as summarized by Charles Robson: {163}

In so far as nationalism served to break down isolated groupings and the stratification of the middle ages, to do away with petty territorial obstructions to cultural and economic exchange,... it contributed to the realization of freedom. When it took the form of absolutism and centralization, however, the concept of liberty was distorted and the actuality destroyed.<sup>26</sup>

Lieber held that “extensive and organized power over large populations does not suffice to make a nation.”<sup>27</sup> More essential than these is a full, comprehensive development in terms of a unifying ideal.

Despite what Lieber called the “national humiliation and suicide” of the ancient Hebrews “before their national government had fully and comprehensively developed itself,” he considered it very significant that “the only monotheistic people, and the people for whom Moses legislated, formed, in the earliest times of history, a nation in the modern sense. The same cannot be said of ancient Egypt.”<sup>28</sup>

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25. *Miscellaneous Writings*, II, 225.

26. C. B. Robson, “Francis Lieber’s Nationalism,” *Journal of Politics*, 8 (1946), 63.

27. *Miscellaneous Writings*, II, 229.

28. *Ibid.*, 230. Enoch Cobb Wines, whose interests included prison reform, had a similar regard for what he called the Hebrew Republic. See E. C. Wines, *-Commentaries on the Laws of the Ancient Hebrews, with an Introductory Essay*

Lieber regarded England as the first modern nation and the native land of modern liberty. He dated its origin back to the time of Alfred the Great, its early lawgiver, and maintained that “in her alone liberty and nationality grew apace.”<sup>29</sup> By contrast, the still incomplete process of creating the Italian and German nations began much later when Dante and Luther each raised his native dialect to the dignity of a national tongue.

Turning to the question whether the early American states were a nation, Lieber argued that neither the accidents of geography nor the (often reprehensible) motives of the crown were determinative. Instead, he emphasized that the American colonists hailed from a country where national institutions were part of their birthright and already displayed considerable expertise in self-government.

Long before the American independence was actually declared, the consciousness of our forming a national entirety was ripening. The Continental congress used the words country and America in its {164} official acts—in resolutions and appointments—before that day of mark, the Fourth of July. The very name Continental congress, Continental army and money, shows that the idea of a national unity was present to the minds of all—at home as well as abroad.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that a general rather than a specific name was adopted for the country—the “United States of America” or simply “America”—seemed significant to Lieber as well as Orestes Brownson.<sup>31</sup> But whether the name was distinct or not, “all felt

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*on Civil Society and Government* (Philadelphia, [1853] 1859). The idea that the Israelites had a republican form of government was not a new one. See, for example, the election sermon of Samuel Langdon preached before the General Court of New Hampshire on June 5, 1788, which is reproduced in Ellis Sandoz, ed. *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805* (Indianapolis, 1991), 941–67.

29. *Ibid.*, 226.

30. *Ibid.*, 233.

31. In the name United States “there are no sovereign people without states, and no states without union, or that are not united states.” At no time were the states independent of each other, in Brownson’s judgment. He held that sovereignty was vested “in the states united, not in the states severally, precisely as we have found the sovereignty of the people is in the people collectively or as a society, not in the people individually ...” Alvan S. Ryan, ed. *The Brownson Reader* (New York, 1955), 77.

that we were a nation.”<sup>32</sup> He concluded, again like Brownson, that the American union predated the Declaration of Independence. Specifically, he held to the view of John Adams that the speech of James Otis against the writs of assistance in 1761 “breathed into this nation the breath of life.”

Thus the American nation was born in a struggle for civil liberty: “all exertions were instinctively national, or in the spirit of a nation to be born.”<sup>33</sup> This American nation was afterward transformed into a national representative republic by the adoption of the Constitution.

The instrument is called a Constitution, not Articles; the word sovereign does not appear once; a national legislature, the members of which vote individually and personally, not by states, and an eminently national and individual executive, in the person of one man, are established, and a portion of the people or of the states (though it must be a large majority) can oblige the smaller portion to adopt amendments to the Constitution. No minority of *sovereigns*, however small, can be made subject to a majority of sovereigns, however large. This single fact would annihilate *sovereignty*. We are a nation. The general government was always called in the early years of our present government, a national government, and rightly so.<sup>34</sup>

It is this condition of self-government with union, then, that provides a context for evaluating Lieber’s theory of institutional liberty. {165}

## Liberty

Lieber opened his 1853 treatise *On Civil Liberty and Self Government* with words that, following the collapse of the Soviet empire, resonate very strongly once again:

Our age, marked by restless activity in almost all departments of knowledge, and by struggles and aspirations before the unknown, is stamped by no characteristic more deeply than by a desire to establish or extend freedom in the political societies of mankind.<sup>35</sup>

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32. *Miscellaneous Writings*, II, 234.

33. *Ibid.*, 235.

34. *Ibid.*, 237.

35. *Civil Liberty*, 17.

This is the second characteristic of the modern epoch: a concern to define and extend human rights and civil liberty. With an earnest intensity that seems to burst out of the intersection of history and autobiography, Lieber surveyed the prospect in 1853 and described it as a period of “marked struggle in the progress of civilization” resembling the Reformation in its scope and violence. He invited his readers to accept the task of diffusing civil liberty as the mission assigned their generation.

The love of civil liberty is so leading a motive in our times, that no man who does not understand what civil liberty is, has acquired that self-knowledge without which we do not know where we stand, and are supernumeraries or instinctive followers, rather than conscious, working members of our race, in our day and generation.<sup>36</sup>

Hundreds of political constitutions had been drafted during the first half of the nineteenth century. However short-lived, they would leave roots “which some day will sprout and prosper.” Alluding to the revolutions that had recently convulsed Europe, Lieber remarked that blood “has always flowed before great ideas could settle into actual institutions, or before the yearnings of humanity could become realities.”<sup>37</sup>

The most concentrated expression of Lieber's thought on the subject of civil liberty is found in his essay “Anglican and Gallican Liberty,” which was first published in 1849.

Lieber argued that external liberty is an outgrowth of internal freedom. Real freedom is “personal, individual, and relates to the whole being.” Liberty is “granted, guaranteed, and, therefore, generally of a public character.” It is the political expression of this preexisting moral condition of the people. It is a practical result of flourishing institutions of self-government. {166}

In its ultimate sense, freedom is perfect self-determination:

Absolute freedom ... can be imagined only in conjunction with perfect power. The Almighty alone is perfectly free. To all other beings we can attribute freedom, but only in an approximate or relative sense.<sup>38</sup>

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36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, 18.

38. *Miscellaneous Writings*, II, 371.

Given its relative character, civil liberty is the highest degree of independent action that is compatible with obtaining those essentials that are the proper objects of public power. Since these objects vary, the character of civil liberty

varies with the different views which men may take, at the various stages of civilization, of that which is essential to man—in other words, of the essentials of humanity and the object and purpose of this terrestrial life.<sup>39</sup>

The classical idea of human nature, represented by Aristotle, treated citizenship as man's highest estate. But Lieber believed Aristotle's politics was confounded by his pre-Christian metaphysics. On the positive side, Aristotle regarded the existence of certain institutions as tests as to whether liberty existed in a particular state or not. Even so, neither the Greeks nor the Romans ever succeeded in extending self-government beyond the city-state.

The modern view of man, on the other hand, emphasizes individuality.

Christianity and modern civilization place the individual, with his individual responsibility, his personal claims, and his individual immortal soul as the highest object, and the state, law, and government, however vitally important to each person and to civilization, are for the moderns still but a means to obtain the yet higher objects of humanity.<sup>40</sup>

In modern times, "entire nations are agreed among themselves, with a remarkable degree of unanimity, upon the political principles and measures necessary for the establishment or perpetuation of liberty," although there might be disagreement over some of the particulars. Lieber believed these guarantees

will be found to consist in the highest protection of the individual and of society, chiefly against public power, because it is necessarily from this power that the greatest danger threatens the citizen, or that the most serious infringement of untrammelled action is to be feared.<sup>41</sup> {167}

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39. *Ibid.*, 372.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, 373.

But two distinct ideas of modern liberty have evolved, which for the sake of brevity may be described as either centralized or decentralized. Gallican liberty is what Lieber called the kind that is granted by absolute governments, whether the monarchic absolutism of the Bourbon kings and Bonaparte emperors or the democratic absolutism of the French revolutionaries. In either case, the individual is left naked and powerless before the state or the general will.

By contrast, as Charles Robson has noted in his summary of Lieber's views:

England had developed political institutions consisting of a national representative system, a common law presided over by an independent judiciary, and local self-government, which permitted non-political institutions "of all sorts, commercial, religious, cultural, scientific, charitable and industrial" to flourish under the protection but not the control of the national state.<sup>42</sup>

This Anglican liberty, as Lieber called it, is rooted in the habits and loyalties of long-standing communities. As he defined it in a later work:

What we call Anglican liberty, the guarantees which our race has elaborated, as guarantees of those rights which experience has shown to be the most exposed to the danger of attack by the strongest power in the state, namely, the executive, or as most important to a frame of government which will be least liable to generate these dangers, and also most important to the essential yet weaker branches of government.<sup>43</sup>

Lieber designated this type of liberty "Anglican" because he viewed it as a development "common to the whole Anglican race..."<sup>44</sup> Its guarantees help prevent abuse of the powers exercised by the national government. All this accords with Robson's appraisal of Lieber's nationalist theory of liberty: "This type of nationalism was the model for modern states, for in it the liberty of the individual could be realized and the loyalty of free men could be enlisted."<sup>45</sup>

Lieber's reflections on the differences between the decentralized,

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42. Robson, "Nationalism," 63–64.

43. *Civil Liberty*, 53–54.

44. *Ibid.*, 55.

45. Robson, "Nationalism," 64.

highly institutionalized Anglican liberty and the centralized, largely unmediated Gallican liberty of Napoleonic France were deepened by first-hand observation of the aftermath of the revolutions which broke out early in 1848. When the news arrived one spring day, an agitated Professor Lieber dismissed his classes early. {168} He waited impatiently for the end of the school year, then left for Germany late in June. But all his hopes for a liberal regime had already been dashed by the time he arrived in July.

Much as Lieber wished to see the establishment of Anglo-American institutions in his homeland, he realized that “they presuppose a people well skilled, trained and formed in the politics of liberty.”<sup>46</sup> Upon leaving Germany for the last time, he sadly wrote his friend Mittermaier in Heidelberg: “I take with me the clear conviction, that Germany cannot be great, strong or happy with her many princes. She could be a great country if united under one government...”<sup>47</sup>

### Self-Government

At the time Lieber wrote *On Civil Liberty and Self Government* (1853) the word “self-government” had not yet come into general use. Although the word is a literal translation of the Greek *autonomeia* [autonomy], Lieber gave it a much wider application than did the Greeks, for whom “it meant in reality independence upon other states, a non-colonial, non-provincial state of things.”<sup>48</sup> By contrast to the Greeks, who were faced outwardly by foreign

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46. The context of Lieber’s letter to Matilda (August 8, 1848) indicates that he was still hopeful: “No revolution in history was ever so difficult as the German. It is a great misfortune, but natural according to the antecedent circumstances, that an overwhelming majority of the continental people look infinitely more toward France than England. England is shunned as aristocratic, and the whole drift of things here is pre-eminently democratic. This has produced one evil: in the Parliamentary proceedings they have adopted and are daily adopting the French Règlements, instead of the English or American wise rules. However, I doubt very much whether, under all the existing circumstances, the English rules could have been adopted, or if they would have worked well. *They presuppose a people well skilled, trained, and formed in the politics of liberty.* Yet I must add that the United States is universally mentioned with respect and admiration. This does my heart good” (emphasis added). Thomas Sergeant Perry, ed. *The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber* (Boston, 1882), 218–19.

47. Freidel, *op. cit.*, 248.

48. *Civil Liberty*, 39 note.

states, the English term was first adopted by theologians and used in an inward, moral sense. "Self-government, the same word [as *autonomeia*], has acquired with ourselves, chiefly or exclusively, a domestic meaning, facing the relations in which the individual and home institutions stand to the state which comprehends them."<sup>49</sup> It suggests an internal or moral autonomy or independence from others, including other institutions. {169}

The concept of internal self-government is clearly anticipated in Lieber's *Manual of Political Ethics*. Lacking an English word for it, Lieber simply coined one, hamarchy, which he derived "from ama, at the same time, jointly, cooperatingly, and *archein*, to rule."<sup>50</sup> He began by defining hamarchy in contrast with "autarchy."

I call autarchy that state in which public power, whole and entire, unmitigated and unmodified, rests somewhere, be this in the hands of a monarch, or the people, or an aristocracy, it matters not for our division. Provided there be absolute power, or absolutism, a power which dictates and executes, which is direct and positive, we call the polity an autarchy. As the word autocracy has already its distinct meaning, namely, that of absolute monarchy, I was obliged to resort to another, which would comprehend the absolute monarchy as well as absolute democracy or aristocracy. The democratic autarchy stands, therefore, in the same relation to a democracy in general, as the absolute monarchy or autocracy stands to monarchy in general.<sup>51</sup>

Lieber deliberately drew his analogies and language—"power," "direct," "positive"—from physics to underscore the contrast between autarchy and hamarchy. Cold, industrial, mechanical, even geometric images are deployed as if arrayed for battle against the warm and supple image of a living system.<sup>52</sup>

Lieber's definition of hamarchy, on the other hand, points ahead to the idea of institutional liberty:

Hamarchy... is that polity, which has an organism, an organic life, if I may say so, in which a thousand distinct parts have their

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49. *Ibid.*, 39 note.

50. *Political Ethics*, I, 411.

51. *Ibid.*, 411.

52. See also "Anglican and Gallican Liberty" in *Miscellaneous Writings*, II, 380.

independent action, yet are by the general organism united into one whole, into one living system ... In the autarchy the law is the positive will of power; in the hamarchy it is much more the expression of the whole after a thousand modifications. Hamacratic polities rest materially on mutuality; autarchy on direct power. The principle of autarchy is sacrifice; the principle of hamarchy is compromise. Blackstone had in mind what I call hamarchy, when he said, "every branch of our civil polity supports and is supported, regulates and is regulated by the rest." It is not the "balance of power" which makes the hamarchy, but the generation of power. A hamarchy cannot be compared to a pyramid, or to concentric circles, or to a clock-work, but only to the living animal body, in which numerous systems act and produce independently in their way, and yet all functions unite in {170} effecting that which is called life. If ever there was a republic of action it is the animal body ...<sup>53</sup>

Although biological analogies had been used to support arguments for the divine right of kings, Lieber here anticipated the general systems theory that developed a century later.

### Institutional Liberty

Lieber apparently dropped both hamarchy and autarchy from his political lexicon by the time he wrote *On Civil Liberty and Self Governmente* "Self-government" and "absolutism" were substituted. He wrote that "there is no formula by which liberty can be solved, nor are there laws by which liberty can be decreed, without other aids."<sup>54</sup> The needed character can only be acquired in a practical way.

How then is real and essential self-government, in the service of liberty, to be obtained and to be perpetuated? There is no other means than by a vast system of institutions, whose number supports the whole, as the many pillars support the rotunda of our capitol.<sup>55</sup>

Lieber defined institution as "a system or body of usages, laws, or regulations of extensive and recurring operation, containing within itself an organism by which it effects its own independent action, continuance, and generally its own farther development.

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53. *Political Ethics*, 411-12.

54. *Civil Liberty*, 298.

55. *Ibid.*, 300.

Its object is to generate, effect, regulate, or sanction a succession of acts, transactions, or productions of a peculiar kind or class."<sup>56</sup> Self-government is one of its chief properties. It "insures perpetuity, and renders development possible." Otherwise, history "sinks to mere anecdotal chronology."

Impulsiveness without institutions, enthusiasm without an organism, may produce a brilliant period indeed, but it is generally like the light of a meteor. That period of Portuguese history which is inscribed with the names of Prince Henry the Navigator, Camoens, and Albuquerque is radiant with brilliant deeds, but how short a day between long and dreary nights!<sup>57</sup>

Lieber extended this idea to include entire systems of institutions. Much of his magnum opus is devoted to a comprehensive list of what he {171} considered to be the constituents of civil liberty (56–255). This lengthy section is introduced by a chapter entitled "Anglican Liberty" (51–55).

Lieber's characterization of these civil liberties reinforces his view that they depend upon well-articulated and firmly established political and social institutions. Although they may be classified any number of ways, this partial list drawn from "Anglican and Gallican Liberty" and *On Civil Liberty and Self Government* is organized for the sake of convenience.<sup>58</sup>

Briefly, the following are protected: persons generally; public and private communication; free production and exchange; religion or worship; lawful opposition to the administration; the minority against the majority; aliens and foreigners; freedom of the people to adopt the government they think best; free choice of residence; freedom of emigration and immigration; and the rights of petition, assembly, bearing arms, and resisting unlawful authority or unlawful demands.

The following are prohibited: extra-governmental power, domination by the central government, unconsented legislation, quartering soldiers in private homes without consent of Parliament, and dictation by one or many.

Finally, the institutional safeguards of liberty include popular

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56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*, 306.

58. *Miscellaneous Works*, II, 373–75; *Civil Liberty*, 83–85.

control over public funds, self-taxation, judicial review, trial by jury, trial by common courts, due process, publicity concerning political and judicial activities, submission of the army to the legislature, the parliamentary veto, responsibility of ministers and other officers, dependence of the executive on legislative appropriations, restraints on the war-making and peacemaking power, independence of the judiciary, the common law principle of precedent, and supremacy of the law.

In summing up these principles and institutions, it appears that they are guarantees of the security of individual property, of personal liberty, and individual humanity, of the security of society against the assaults or interference of public power, of the certainty with which public opinion shall become public will in an organic way, and protection of the minority. Many of these have originated, nearly all of them have first been developed, in England ...<sup>59</sup>

Thus modern liberty—that is, institutional liberty—consists in “these practical provisions and political contrivances.” Herein lies the difference between medieval and modern liberty. Medieval rulers isolated political {172} independence by chartering freedom. In modern times, the people charter governments.<sup>60</sup>

The chapter on “American Liberty” (256–69) adds the following to the list of Anglican liberties: republicanism, federalism, separation of church and state, political equality, popular elections, separation of powers, judicial review, impeachment, a written constitution, freedom of navigable rivers, and several others.

Lieber maintained that these liberties were still in a “nascent stage” on the European continent, which had gone through “periods of absorbing and life-destroying centralization.”<sup>61</sup> Instead, a prudential balance of local and central initiative is required. Thus Lieber addressed the age-old dilemma of unity and diversity—the One and the Many—through a fluid mixture of what he called individualism<sup>62</sup> and socialism, reason and tradition. Human nature and society should be regarded as both singular and plural:

Two elements constitute all human progress, historical development

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59. *Civil Liberty*, 375.

60. *Miscellaneous Works*, II, 376.

61. *Ibid.*, 388.

62. Both Lieber and Tocqueville claimed credit for coining the term.

and abstract reasoning. It results from the very nature of man, whom God has made an individual and a social being. His historical development results from the continuity of society. Without it, without traditional knowledge and institutions, without education, man would no longer be man; without individual reasoning, without bold abstraction, there would be no advancement. Now, single men, entire societies, whole periods, will incline more to the one or to the other element, and both present themselves occasionally in individuals and entire epochs as caricatures. One-sidedness is to be shunned in this as in all other cases...<sup>63</sup>

Institutional self-government is distinguished by its tenacity, assimilative power, and transmissible character. It can be successfully exported. But it increases only slowly and it depends on the willingness of citizens to conscientiously obey lawful exercises of authority. It is threatened by sejunction [schism] if local interests begin to dominate, as it had in the Netherlands after it had won independence, and it may perish if the institutions themselves become corrupted or degenerate. Lieber also recognized that evil institutions may thrive for a time, and lamented the malignant growth of slavery as a threat to American liberty.

At the opposite pole from institutional liberty is the fusion of legislative and executive functions that Lieber called, variously, "the power,"

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"Caesarism," and "Rousseauism." He examined the perplexing notion of an "elected despot" in two chapters on "Imperial Sovereignty" (374–88) and found the ultimate form of this "democratic absolutism" in the Bonapartist claim that the emperor is the embodiment of the general will. In this ultimate expression of Gallican liberty, Lieber had in mind the French Revolution and its aftermath, echoing Burke.<sup>64</sup>

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63. *Civil Liberty*, 260–61.

64. Years later Hannah Arendt acknowledged a similar debt to Burke in her own conception of totalitarianism. "A conception of law which identifies what is right with the notion of what is good for—for the individual, or the family, or the people, or the largest number—becomes inevitable once the absolute and transcendent measurements of religion or the law of nature have lost their authority. And this predicament is by no means solved if the unit to which the 'good for' applies is as large as mankind itself ... Here, in the problems of

## Afterword

It is easy to read Francis Lieber's theory of institutional liberty as an idealization of the American constitutional tradition. But in the context of the times, it was also a defense of union against the fragmentation that sectional rivalries seemed to threaten.

The sensitivity of Lieber's position at South Carolina College compelled him to maintain a discreet public silence on the subject of slavery. One consequence was a personal rupture with Charles Sumner that lasted for several years. As the country drifted toward the sejunction he dreaded, Lieber chose to move where his greatest sympathies lay, a year before securing another academic appointment. But the move north did nothing to insulate him from the tragedies of the conflict he foresaw.

An émigré scholar, Lieber was a multiple exile. This adds to his interest. His attachments were cosmopolitan rather than local. In the end it was the strength of an idea—a commitment to the Union as an ideal—that prevailed over all considerations of place. If indeed it was disunion that had kept Germany so long in thrall, it was natural that Lieber should keenly feel the threat of disunion as an American. His theory of institutional liberty may be regarded, at least in part, as a response to John C. Calhoun's theory of the concurrent majority.

The Lieber family, like so many American families, was torn by the war. The talented eldest son, Oscar, died in the service of the Confederacy.<sup>65</sup> {174} Two other sons fought—and one was severely wounded—for the Union. In the hour of crisis, Lieber supported policies that could be challenged from the pages of his own books. But his theory was pliant enough to make a place for prudence and the use of temporary expedients.

Lieber was a nationalist of an unusual sort. He consistently encouraged economic free enterprise in his teaching and

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factual reality, we are confronted with one of the oldest perplexities of political philosophy, which could remain undetected only so long as a stable Christian theology provided the framework for all political and philosophical problems, but which long ago caused Plato to say: 'Not man, but a god, must be the measure of things.'" Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new edition (New York, 1973), 299.

65. James O. Breeden, "Oscar Lieber: Southern Scientist, Southern Patriot," *Civil War History*, 36 (1990), 226–49.

writings.<sup>66</sup> He regarded the rise and fall of nations as simply part of a larger picture. National institutions permit the encouragement of commerce and interdependence among nations. This, in turn, puts absolutism on the defensive, as the chapter on “Gallican Liberty” (279–96) makes clear.

This growing interdependence, then, permits the principle of institutional liberty to operate on a global scale as well as locally. It is this third characteristic of the modern epoch—the flourishing of many nations “in the bonds of one common moving civilization”<sup>67</sup>—that seems to have been the greatest encouragement to Lieber’s hopes for the continued growth of liberty.

To learn liberty, I believe that nations must go to America and England, as we go to Italy to study music and to have the vast world of the fine arts opened up to us, or as we go to France to study science, or to Germany that we may learn how to instruct and spread education. It was a peculiar feature of antiquity that law, religion, dress, the arts and customs, that everything in fact, was localized. Modern civilization extends over regions, tends to make uniform, and eradicates even the physical differences of tribes and races. Thus made uniform, nations receive and give more freely. If it has pleased God to appoint the Anglican race as the first workmen to rear the temple of liberty, shall others find fault with Providence? The all-pervading law of civilization is physical and mental mutual dependence, and not isolation.

Many governments deny liberty to the people on the ground that it is not national; yet they copy foreign absolutism. There is doubtless something essential in the idea of national development, but let us never forget two facts: Men, however different, are far more uniform than different; and most of the noblest nations have arisen from the mixture of others.<sup>68</sup>

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66. See “A Letter of Dr. Francis Lieber to D. J. McCord,” in Frederic Bastiat, *Sophisms of the Protective Policy*, trans. D. J. McCord (New York, 1848), 5–14; “Notes on Fallacies of American Protectionists,” in *Miscellaneous Writings*, II, 389–459.

67. *Miscellaneous Writings*, 11, 239.

68. *Civil Liberty*, 295–96.

# EVANGELICALISM'S NEW MODEL ARMY

*A Review by John A. Fielding III*

Michael S. Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars*

Chicago: Moody Press, 1994; 287 pp.; \$17.99

## Introduction

We have no intention of doing to this Congress what the unions, the feminists, and the gay lobby did to Bill Clinton when he took office two-and-one-half years ago: They made unreasonable demands, presented an extremist agenda, and ... forced this administration way out of the mainstream.—*Christian Coalition's Ralph Reed on the "Contract with the American Family"* (quoted in *World*, June 17–24, 1995, p.10).

That's *Mr. Weenie* to you!—*Clifford Clavin, indignantly speaking into the telephone on Cheers.*

The American fanaticism for turning everything harmless and bland, our orthodoxy of co-option, lets nothing stand in its way ... Our democracy, our culture, our whole way of life is a spectacular triumph of the blah.—P. J. O'Rourke, in *Parliament of Whores*, p. 25.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.—Rom. 12:2

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and

blind and naked ...—Rev. 3:15–17

After the defeat of the Parliamentary forces at the Battle of Edgehill in October of 1642, Oliver Cromwell saw the need of a new type of soldier and a new army.<sup>1</sup> With this, the idea of the New Model Army was conceived. In addition to developing innovative battle strategies, Cromwell paid particular attention to the character of the men recruited.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the New Model Army, made up of men of good character, was able to be molded into an effective fighting force by using discipline that might not have worked under other circumstances.<sup>3</sup> Singing their Psalms amidst the {176} cornfields, Cromwell's New Model Army was so highly disciplined that his enemies, at the Battle of Marston Moor, dubbed his army "Old Ironsides" "because his ranks were so impenetrable—the name originated with the man and passed on to his regiment."<sup>4</sup> Relying upon the providence of God and convinced of the rightness of their cause in accordance with God's law, Cromwell and the New Model Army led the Parliamentary forces to victory in the English Civil War.

In recent days we have seen attempts to call the Christian army out to the field again to fight for God's cause. Unlike Cromwell's New Model Army, which was equipped with the Psalms, excellent weapons, superior tactics as well as Christian armor, the New Model Army of modern evangelicalism seems destined to throw off every piece of the armor of God in a vain attempt to lighten the journey to the battlefield. By the time the army will have reached its objective, however, it will be too lightly armed to draw any blood.

The prospect of evangelicalism confronting the army of

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1. Antonia Fraser, *Cromwell: The Lord Protector* (New York, 1974), 97–98.

2. *Ibid.*, (quoting Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs from the beginning of the Reign of King Charles the First to the Happy Restoration of King Charles the Second* (1853), 1:93; John Bruce, Preface, *The Quarrel Between the Earl of Manchester and Oliver Cromwell* (Notes and completion by David Masson, Camden Society; 1875), 72; *Relinquiae Baxterianae, or Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of his Live and Times [1696]*, 98).

3. *Ibid.*, 101 (quoting *Special Passages* [the Parliamentarian newspaper]).

4. *Ibid.*, 132. See also J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, *The Protector: A Vindication* (Harrisonburg, VA, [1847] 1983), 52.

darkness stark naked seems to have alarmed Michael Horton as well. In his book *Beyond Culture Wars*,<sup>5</sup> Horton warns evangelicalism that its stripped down gospel of expediency cannot hope to confront men with the creator and savior of the world and his law-word. Unfortunately, Horton proposes a replacement that is no improvement over that which he criticizes because his replacement suffers from the same, albeit rearranged, deficits.

In this paper, I will summarize what I believe to be major themes of the work and then proceed to critique what I believe to be a presentation that has only muddied further the waters of the debate over evangelical political action.

### *A Summary of Beyond Culture Wars'* Major Themes

In a paper of this size, a summary of major themes is all that one could have hoped for under normal conditions. Horton's book suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity that makes normal analysis difficult. Horton's rationale for writing the book seems to be his dissatisfaction with the current definition of the conflict as being between "cultures." Horton states that "Christianity is not a culture."<sup>6</sup> The major themes of the book represent an effort to reinforce that point by defining what Christianity is and how it should remain in order to confront the American culture biblically and effectively. It may simply be that I am looking at the book through my own particular pair of spectacles, but I had real difficulty following Horton's argument. He seems to be riding off in too many directions at once. Nevertheless, I perceive the major themes of the book to be as follows.

#### 1. We have met the enemy and he is us.

The American church, not wishing to {177} engage in the genuinely hard work of intellectual development and engagement based on the Scriptures, substitutes a drive for power over culture. Having neglected the culture for the better part of the century,

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5. Michael Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars* (Chicago, 1994).

6. *Ibid.*, 32.

“[s]uddenly—indeed, almost overnight—the tone changed from apathy toward politics and society to near-obsession, as Christian leaders reveled in rhetorical flourishes about the power of the evangelicals.”<sup>7</sup> Horton complains that when “[Francis] Schaeffer was calling Christians to *think*, much of his work went unnoticed, but when he began calling them to *act*, the sleeping giant of American activism awakened, rose to its feet, and mobilized.”<sup>8</sup> Part of the problem with the church getting involved in changing culture is that it is dangerous: The church is now still hostile to culture; rather than the culture being persuaded by superior reasons, it is being forced to conform to rules it is not persuaded are for its benefit. The result will be a further alienated culture. The other part of the problem is that this activity tends to identify the gospel with a particular culture or political system, “[v]iewing moral issues as ultimate, instead of as effects of one’s deeper theological and philosophical beliefs ...”<sup>9</sup> Horton summarizes:

Having trusted too much in the idols of nation, pragmatism, ideology, and secular power, whether the carved image is in the shape of a donkey or an elephant, the stage is perhaps set for a return to the main message and mission of the church.<sup>10</sup>

The problem is that the American church has bought into the same presuppositions as the culture at large. We are all democrats with a small “d.” We do not like humanism because that smacks of intellectualism.<sup>11</sup> We do not like “cultural elites” because the church is too much the product of mass culture.<sup>12</sup> We appeal to the founding fathers as support for a monolithic Judeo-Christian culture when the faith of the early republic was largely a “mixed bag,” especially among the leadership, with an essentially Pelagian worldview continuing to this day.<sup>13</sup> We appeal to the “Judeo-

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7. *Ibid.*, 25.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 38

10. *Ibid.*, 39.

11. *Ibid.*, 42–44.

12. *Ibid.*, 44–46.

13. *Ibid.*, 46–51. Horton writes, “At the 1983 convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, President Ronald Reagan delivered his ‘evil empire’ speech and met his most ardent supporters, concluding with the line from

Christian” culture itself as if it were a substitute for Scripture, and not a “tradition that combines faithfulness and {178} unfaithfulness.”<sup>14</sup> The real problem is idolatry:

Unlike the early Christians, who grounded their mission on specific truth claims, we argue for dominance on the basis of (a) seniority (i.e., the precedent of the founding fathers) and (b) pragmatism (i.e., the moral and civic usefulness of the Christian morality). In so doing, we risk not only alienating the unbelievers before they hear the gospel; we actually end up laying the basis for a rejection of Christianity on the basis that it simply is not the option one chooses to adopt in the marketplace of competing interests.<sup>15</sup>

Enlightenment myth that “political solutions are ultimate,”<sup>16</sup> that the “miraculous” may be reduced to “a philosophical result of the right use of means,”<sup>17</sup> and that “Capitalism replaces God and his prominence with the ‘Invisible Hand of the Market.’”<sup>18</sup> Horton concludes:

Whether the main issue is seen as breakdown in traditional values on one hand or failure to unleash the power of universal compassion on the other, the problem is seen as primarily a matter of social, moral, and political reform, and the government is seen as the answer. Everyone is out to *legislate* his or her way to happiness ... I know other brothers and sisters who are certain that the party *does* represent a biblical agenda.

There is nothing wrong with compromising politically when one cannot be wholly satisfied, but we should at least know the difference ... Although I ... would certainly regard democracy (and,

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Thomas Paine, ‘We have it within our power to begin the world again.. This secular, Enlightenment notion of progress through the human spirit pervades American nationalism and is embraced by most evangelicals. Though utterly at odds with the Christian revelation and an unbroken consensus in church history, this fundamental myth of modernity underlies much of the preaching, teaching, and activity of American evangelicals. Although it is being abandoned by cynical pagans, in the wake of its experiment—not because it contradicted reason, but because it contradicted experience—this view of human nature has yet to be overthrown in the church, whether conservative or liberal.’

14. *Ibid.*, 51–53.

15. *Ibid.*, 53.

16. *Ibid.*, 54.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, 56.

for that matter, capitalism) as ethically and practically superior to any other system, it is vital for us to recognize that the issue we face is not merely “this system” versus “that system,” or “this party” versus “that party”; we need a fundamental reassessment of the legitimate role of politics in a fallen world.<sup>19</sup>

As a result the gospel has been reduced to a worship of us and our own needs as those are defined by self's interpretation of reality.<sup>20</sup> “We are ourselves the very ‘secular humanists’ we discover in a more developed form through the barrel of our guns in the ongoing culture wars.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, Horton sadly concludes, “We have met the enemy” and, to finish the famous line from the comic strip *Pogo*, the enemy is us.<sup>22</sup>

## 2. The confusion of law and gospel

Horton believes that one of the reasons for the confusion of the church in political matters is the confusion over the relationship of the kingdom of God to the kingdoms of this world, the activity of the *Christian* and the activity of the *church*, and whether there is the possibility of a Christian nation.<sup>23</sup> He attributes this confusion to a confusion between law and {179} gospel.<sup>24</sup> He interprets the kingdom of Christ as one that

conquers not by swallowing up the kingdoms of this world, but rather by outlasting them and outshining them in their glory, even as the eternal outlasts the temporal and the sun outshines its rays  
...<sup>25</sup>

Thus,

Plato had made the idea of the “Republic” almost mythical—indeed, almost religious, and Rome saw itself as the incarnation of that Greek idea. As the Roman Empire took on a more Christian character, the temptation was to see Rome and Christ as each other's

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19. *Ibid.*, 58, 59.

20. *Ibid.*, 67.

21. *Ibid.*, 79.

22. *Ibid.*, 61–82.

23. *Ibid.*, 83.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 88.

protector, and for a vast number of the populace, if Christianity had replaced the old gods, the new religion merely served the old uses: providing social glue and lending divine approval to the Roman state and its cultural values.<sup>26</sup>

Augustine of Hippo pointed out that the City of God was heavenly and that Rome, being of the City of Man, could be kind for a time to the City of God, but that the two could never be allies, “for they represent two different sources, goals, allegiances, and kings.”<sup>27</sup> Horton points to the statement by Augustine that the City of Man lives by man’s standards and the City of God according to God’s will.<sup>28</sup> Of course the City of Man is capable of civic righteousness, and we can find much to praise in it which is why Christians should be active in building it because “civilization is not a curse of the Fall, but a gift of Creation ... Many saw the ‘barbarian invaders’ as the enemies of Rome and, therefore of Christ. But Augustine viewed them as ‘citizens to be’ in the City of God.”<sup>29</sup> Horton concludes:

As the early Christians eschewed either Gnostic, “other-worldly” monasticism on the one hand or a Christian takeover of the state on the other, Augustine sought to lead the Western church toward a sanely biblical view of the two kingdoms in an effort to preserve the integrity of the gospel and take advantage of the moment by attempting to view it through God’s lens rather than from a merely human, temporally conditioned perspective.<sup>30</sup>

In an interval during the Middle Ages when the ecclesiastical body of the Church identified herself as the “mother of Christendom,” a culture or civilization (the City of Man) “rather than seeing the kingdom of Christ triumph *in spite of* the condition of the kingdoms of this world,”<sup>31</sup> the Reformation restored the Augustinian notion of the “two kingdoms” through both Luther

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26. *Ibid.*, 89.

27. *Ibid.*, 90.

28. *Ibid.* (citing Augustine, *The City of God*, David Knowles, ed. [New York, 1972], Bk. xv, Chap. 1).

29. *Ibid.*, 91.

30. *Ibid.*, 92.

31. *Ibid.*

and Calvin.<sup>32</sup> Despite lack of clarity in Calvin's thinking leading the Puritans to mix the civil and spiritual spheres by "requiring voting members of the body politic to also be members of the church," Roger Williams restored the proper balance {180} by separating church and state by separating the established church from dictating statecraft, not the separation of God and state.<sup>33</sup> Today, evangelicals have again mixed the two by accepting "the comfort of a civil religion that serves the moral and political ends of the nation."<sup>34</sup> Thus:

As citizens of the kingdom of God, we announce the claims of our King through the spiritual sword, not through the physical sword (political action or coercion of any kind, including economic). This does not mean that, for instance, a Christian police officer cannot employ force in the arrest of a thief, for that is appropriate to that "kingdom." And yet, we so often confuse these swords and assume that the claims of Christ's kingdom must be legislated and enforced in order to refashion a "Christian nation."<sup>35</sup>

"The purpose of a Christian in politics is not to create a Christian society, but merely to help restrain evil ... no social, moral, or political activity can reshape a society spiritually."<sup>36</sup> Horton uses the example of education to point out that it is not the purpose of education to shape moral character. He states that it cannot make people good any more that the government can. The Nazis "were very well-educated, cultured preservers of 'Western culture.'"<sup>37</sup> Horton then uses Randall Terry of Operation Rescue as an example of someone that has confused law and gospel. For Horton, the law "commands, judges, condemns, threatens, and guides" while the gospel "gives, saves, redeems, and justifies."<sup>38</sup> He quotes Theodore Beza that the law "is a doctrine whose seed is written by nature in our hearts" while the gospel "is not at all in us by nature, but which is revealed from Heaven ... and totally surpasses natural

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32. *Ibid.*, 93–97.

33. *Ibid.*, 97.

34. *Ibid.*, 99.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*, 101.

37. *Ibid.*, 102.

38. *Ibid.*, 111.

knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, Terry, who states: “We must expend energy in both ‘preaching the gospel’ in the narrow sense, as well as ‘living the gospel’—the good news that the Lord is come—and extending the rule of his authority into all arenas” is guilty of confusing the law and gospel because the commands of the Bible, while they are to be obeyed, “are not the gospel or even part of the gospel. Rather, they are part of the law.”<sup>2</sup> Even Gary North comes in for criticism for comparing dominion theology to liberation theology: “the way of approaching Scripture—often ignoring doctrine in favor of *praxis* and maintaining an eschatology of redemption throughout the dominion of the ‘righteous,’ has many parallels with liberation theology.”<sup>3</sup> Horton concludes:

We have confused civil righteousness (righteousness before our neighbor) with spiritual righteousness (righteousness before God) by confusing moral and political crusades with the advance of Christ’s gospel and kingdom: We will do it. We will {181} bring God back or bring America back to God. Its moral righteousness is the reason God favored it, and its lack of moral righteousness is the reason for God’s abandonment. We must get Him back. We will save America, And here is how we’ll do it: Vote this way, organize this group, follow this strategy, embrace this agenda. It is like following a recipe or an instruction manual: By following these laws (“principles”), God will be obligated to make America number one again.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Horton’s Solution

Using the Lord’s Prayer as a model, Horton proposes his solution.

#### a. “Our Father Which Art in Heaven.”

“Christianity is a religion, a theological confession first and a moral system only secondarily.”<sup>5</sup> We have failed to keep the

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1. *Ibid.*, 109.

2. *Ibid.*, 110–111, quoting Randall Terry, *Why Does a Nice Guy Like Me Keep Getting Thrown in Jail?* [Lafayette, LA, 1993], 61.

3. *Ibid.*, 119, n.17.

4. *Ibid.*, 123.

5. *Ibid.*, 140.

transcendence and immanence of God in balance. Thus, “[a]ny true reformation or revival in the church or in society today must begin not with a campaign for traditional values, but with a campaign for the knowledge, worship, praise, fear, and service of God.”<sup>6</sup>

b. “*Hallowed Be Thy Name.*”

“So we are back to the original thesis: *Theology*, not *morality*, is the first business on the church’s agenda of reform, and the *church*, not *society*, is the first target of divine criticism.”<sup>7</sup> We do not properly hallow God’s name in the political realm by associating it with issues and causes, speaking on our own authority in the name of God. Horton offers four rules to assist us “in determining whether we are properly using God’s name in the political sphere.”<sup>8</sup>

(1) Make sure it is theological, not political.

Horton separates what the individual may be called to do in the public policy arena from the “*church’s* calling as an institution.” With respect to the issue of abortion, for example, Christians and churches must speak out and individuals convinced in their own mind concerning what to do about the issue, “but it does not mean that the Christian faith demands one particular public policy position or another, except in very unusual circumstances.”<sup>9</sup> Horton concludes, “we cannot identify that name with particular agendas or policies to which He has not committed Himself in print.”<sup>10</sup>

(2) Make sure it really is a universal absolute and not a relative application.

Horton believes that we cannot speak where God has not spoken. What this means is that in “all but the most exceptional policy issues,” “we have no authority to command the conscience where God has not bound it.” Thus, “we are left to the ‘big picture’ God gives us in Scripture, and we must carefully distinguish between that which He commands and that which we infer or

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6. *Ibid.*, 144–145.

7. *Ibid.*, 150.

8. *Ibid.*, 154.

9. *Ibid.*, 154–55.

10. *Ibid.*, 157.

pursue on our own in the light of those commands.”<sup>11</sup>

(3) Make sure you distinguish between the church’s calling to proclaim {182} *the law and the gospel* (revealed in Scripture) and the state’s calling to enforce civil justice, based on natural revelation.

Horton writes:

Even in the realm of morality, *sola Scriptura* (only Scripture) stands. Just as we cannot dictate the personal behavior of individual Christians beyond Scripture (although *we* do it anyway), we cannot dictate public morality *in the name of God* beyond that which is written into the human conscience by creation. We cannot even attempt to force the Ten Commandments on a godless society. This does not mean that we do not *preach* them and call all men and women to repentance by the preaching of the law, but it does mean we cannot really enforce the Ten Commandments.<sup>12</sup>

Horton points out that the first table of the law cannot be enforced by the civil authorities because “the police cannot enforce ... the true worship of God” because that “depends on a right relationship with God.”<sup>13</sup> As for the second table, “[t]he state can keep me from murdering my neighbor with my hands, but it cannot keep me from murdering my neighbor in my heart.” In fact, “[i]t seems clear from the Scriptures themselves that God gave His written law to Israel as part of the covenant, and not to any other nation.”<sup>14</sup> No other nation enjoyed the linking of the two kingdoms that Israel did and “no nation can be ‘in covenant’ with God as was Israel.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, although nations founded on the Judeo-Christian ethic may rule more wisely and justly, there is no guarantee, because pagan societies also have a sense of right and wrong due to the law of God written on the conscience.<sup>16</sup> Horton even cites Calvin who criticized some Anabaptist revolutionaries “who deny that a commonwealth is duly framed which neglects the political system of Moses, and is ruled by the common law of

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11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, 159.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, 160.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

nations.”<sup>17</sup>

(4) *Make sure that natural law is your common ground.*

Horton’s solution to the fact that we cannot enforce the Ten Commandments on society is the natural law that we all have in common (Rom. 1:18–20; 2:14). While acknowledging that Thomas Aquinas was one of the most brilliant exponents of natural law, Horton relies on Calvin as one of the “chief architects” of our understanding of this theory, which has been rejected in favor of relativism and pragmatism. Horton states:

This “natural law” is not a rival to God’s law, but rather it is that same universal divine mandate imprinted on humanity’s conscience as part of God’s image. But since modern nations are not in a covenantal relationship with God, as Israel was, the rule ought to be “general equity,” as it was established by constitutions and interpreted by courts.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, according to Calvin: {183}

It is a fact that the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men ... Hence, this equity alone must be the goal and rule and limit of all laws. Whatever laws shall be framed to that rule, directed to that goal, bound by that limit, there is no reason why we should disapprove of them, howsoever they may differ from the Jewish law; or among themselves.<sup>19</sup>

Horton states that “our defense of the unborn ought to be made on the same basis as our defense of civil liberties for everyone in this country: equity, which can be argued on the basis of natural law, without requiring people to first accept the Bible’s authority.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, “[i]t is the role of the church to make known God’s revealed will in Scripture, including the Ten Commandments; it is the state’s role to enforce God’s will revealed in nature by pursuing justice (‘equity’) through wise counsel, legitimate government,

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17. *Ibid.*, 161 (quoting John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.20.8, 14).

18. *Ibid.*, 162.

19. *Ibid.*, 162–163 (apparently quoting from Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.20.16).

20. *Ibid.*, 164.

and the rule of constitutional law.”<sup>21</sup>

c. “*Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*”

According to Horton, God considers cultural activity important, but it is no longer “kingdom activity;” it is common, not holy, activity. Horton uses Cain’s family (Gen. 4:16, 21–22) as an example of this type of activity. Seth’s family, on the other hand, “began to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen. 4:25–26). “In other words, here we have the two cities going in two distinct directions. One is horizontally-oriented; the other is vertically-oriented.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, “[a]lthough the children of Seth participate in culture, they are the heirs of the heavenly promise, and they must not intermarry with the Cainites, for that would pervert their faith. Thus, it is clear that salvation will not come through the building of the city, but through ‘calling on the name of the Lord.’”<sup>23</sup> Horton claims that we do not remember this, that “we often confuse these kingdoms and believe, if only subconsciously, that salvation does come through our efforts in the building of the city.”<sup>24</sup> While God is the author of both our *natural* and *supernatural* possessions, the latter were lost in the fall and need to be restored by God’s supernatural intervention. Meanwhile, we are still capable of civic virtue. Natural men are still capable of earthly understanding, not heavenly (1 Cor. 2:14). The two reasons for this are that (1) through the image of God, rays of light shine through and (2) God’s common grace restrains men’s wickedness. Horton quotes Calvin that we should not reject the truth “wherever it shall appear.”<sup>25</sup> Horton rejects what he terms as Gnosticism’s twin evils i.e., entering a monastery, or insisting on turning the world into one<sup>26</sup> through what he terms “the doctrine of the Kingdom,” believing that the kingdom is already {184} here spiritually, but not yet here in its fullness. The angel is still barring the way to Utopia

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21. *Ibid.*, 164–165.

22. *Ibid.*, 175.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 177 (quoting Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.15).

26. *Ibid.*, 182.

with a sword.<sup>27</sup>

*d. "Give us this day our daily bread."*

Horton believes we learn two things from this petition: "First, that God is the source of our whole existence, not just of redemption; and second, that his providence extends over every person, not just believers; and preserves culture, not just the kingdom of God."<sup>28</sup> Horton complains that modern evangelicals want the whole bakery and not necessarily for the good of their neighbors: that they feel only Christians are qualified to rule, that the state exists to make people less evil or more just, that adoption of Judeo-Christian values guarantees a good society, and that legislation (of proximate importance) may take the place of the gospel or theology (of ultimate importance).<sup>29</sup> Horton suggests that, not only should we distinguish between earth and heaven, but our public witness in terms of its likely impact on the progress of the gospel. Horton uses as an example a crusade against gay rights:

For instance, I do not oppose crusading against gay rights because I think homosexuality is acceptable; God calls it an abomination, and so must we. Furthermore, I would not have any moral problems with keeping the laws on the books making such an unnatural act criminal. But we have to come to terms with the facts: The crisis in America is not political or even moral at its root. The problem is that people have so suppressed their natural knowledge of God that such things have become "natural" (see Rom. 1 and 2). Therefore, we must go deeper to the problem, deeper than politics or morality, deeper than protests and crusades. It must be a spiritual battle for hearts and minds—nothing less than a revival and a Reformation in our time.<sup>30</sup>

*e. "Forgive us our debts, even as we forgive our debtors."*

Horton believes that we have forgotten that we need to be forgiven and saved from the wrath of God, substituting rather the message that America needs to be saved from a loss of pride

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27. *Ibid.*, 184–185.

28. *Ibid.*, 190.

29. *Ibid.*, 190–205.

30. *Ibid.*, 206.

and self-esteem.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, we have forgotten how to be tolerant towards those that believe differently than us for the sake of the gospel. We must never believe in religious *syncretism*. At the same time, “the state cannot make any law ruling that one religion is true over another.” The role of the state is to keep religious groups from “trying to impose their creeds by force.”<sup>32</sup> The imprecatory psalms are only “uttered justly by the prophets as they speak for God and foreshadow the final Prophet, Jesus Christ, who, at the end of the age, will judge his enemies and accusers.”<sup>33</sup>

f. *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”*

We must avoid the temptation to define the key problems as the secular culture does. We must avoid the temptation to {185} engage in political power to achieve our objectives rather than persuading others using arguments guided by thinking that has been brought into captivity to Christ.<sup>34</sup> We must repudiate secularism and the methods used by it. “We cannot preach that Americans are good people who need a moral environment, that self-esteem and self-fulfillment are legitimate Christian obsessions, and a host of other modern heresies and then condemn ‘secularism.’”<sup>35</sup> We must avoid the temptation to put the transformation ahead of the imputation, and common sense ahead of Scriptural authority.<sup>36</sup>

g. *“Whose Kingdom, Power, and Glory?”*

Evangelicals have shifted their focus from God to the secular process. Horton writes:

Thus, *secularization* is the process of either downplaying the significance or even existence of God and his reign in this world right now through Jesus Christ, or of affirming that reign as embodied in a particular set of secular goals, values, and ideals. In other words, not only does the so-called “secular humanist” secularize society when trying to remove any mention of God or religion from public institutions; the evangelical Christian also

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31. *Ibid.*, 211.

32. *Ibid.*, 223–225.

33. *Ibid.*, 226.

34. *Ibid.*, 231.

35. *Ibid.*, 237–238.

36. *Ibid.*, 239–242.

secularizes society when God becomes Uncle Sam to the tenth power and Christianity merely serves to lend credibility to an already approved set of political, economic, and social policies that have absolutely no clear sanction in Scripture itself.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, according to Horton, “[t]o work today, in light of the age to come, provides sanity in a world of disappointments. To work today, as if we could bring about the age to come, is sure to end up only secularizing the Christian hope.”<sup>38</sup> The kingdom of God is a kingdom that has its source in and derives its authority from God. It is not a particular place on earth, as was the kingdom of Israel, which was a theocracy, a union of church and state.<sup>39</sup> Remembering the true nature of the kingdom of God is essential because “most Christians today tie the kingdom to a socio-political and geographical place on earth—either Jerusalem, or Washington, or both.”<sup>40</sup> Horton specifically singles out Pat Robertson and the Christian Coalition for being “a bit more concerned with our Own kingdom power and glory in America than with the Kingdom of God ...” for advocating the “products of modernity as if they were sacred expressions of the Christian faith...,”<sup>41</sup> for suggesting that the criterion for a true religion was the Enlightenment value of *usefulness*, rather than *truthfulness*,<sup>42</sup> and for leading a movement “that confuses the national blessing of Israel’s obedience with America ...”<sup>43</sup> Horton maintains that we have to recover a vision of God as sovereign in creation, providence, salvation, and consummation, although God has never promised “the {186} restoration of all things within history, as modernity has.”<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, “God sent Christ to redeem the whole creation (Rom. 8:22–25).”<sup>45</sup> The Reformation “was not a program of ‘culture wars’ and taking over ‘power bases,’ but of

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37. *Ibid.*, 244–245.

38. *Ibid.*, 246.

39. *Ibid.*, 248.

40. *Ibid.*, 249.

41. *Ibid.*, 251.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*, 252.

44. *Ibid.*, 257.

45. *Ibid.*, 258.

becoming the brightest and best to the glory of God, finding ways of positively contributing to a culture that would never, this side of the second advent, be perfected, but could be seasoned and enlightened.”<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion: “America: Mission Field or Battlefield?”

Using Paul’s apologetic Mars Hill speech to the Athenians (Ac. 17) as a model, Horton proposes five theses for “moving beyond culture wars.”

##### *a. We must recover the proclamation of God’s character.*

Stating that polls showing that 98 percent of Americans believe in some ill-defined god is no reason for rejoicing, we need to reestablish the character of God as creator, Lord, Father and savior.<sup>47</sup>

##### *b. We must recover the proclamation of Christ’s person and work.*

Evangelicals are in danger of being too optimistic about the power of general revelation. We cannot proclaim the true message of salvation while implying that atheists or Buddhists can become Christians while remaining atheists or Buddhists. General revelation can only “convict us of our crimes; it does not have the power to lead us to salvation.”<sup>48</sup>

##### *c. We must recover the art of persuasion.*

Horton complains that modern evangelicalism is a rebellion against the “mind of Machen” and has concluded that what it cannot win by persuasion, it will take by force and power. Rather, “[w]e must recover that robust Reformation orthodoxy that makes sense of things, and then listen to the best contemporary arguments and criticisms, and only then put together our best case possible.”<sup>49</sup>

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46. *Ibid.*, 259.

47. *Ibid.*, 266–272.

48. *Ibid.*, 269–270.

49. *Ibid.*, 277.

*d. We must recover an interest in our culture and our creed.*

Horton cites Irving Kristol, a Jewish conservative, in support of the proposition that while we should not neglect the political aspect of the anti-abortion movement, we should take a lesson from the Orthodox Jews who attack abortion in Israel by making Jews more orthodox, not simply anti-abortion. While we pay exclusive attention to politics, we have missed the “deeper cultural crisis which renders abortion and similar acts of moral anarchy socially acceptable even among Catholics and evangelicals ...”<sup>50</sup> Thus, “[i]t is a recovery of the Christian faith within the church itself, not the imposition of Christian values over a hostile society, that holds the only possibility for meaningful change.”<sup>51</sup> It is only within the context of such a recovery that we may pass any more to future generations than just a religious experience.

*e. We must be the ones to accommodate our language—not our message, but our language.*

Christians have a tendency to use a language called {187} “Christian-eze.” We need to learn to present the gospel in today’s language in order to communicate effectively.<sup>52</sup>

### An Analysis of Beyond Culture Wars

Before launching into a general critique, I would like to point out the area of agreement between Michael Horton and myself. Horton criticizes the evangelical political movements for sacrificing the message of the gospel on the altar of expediency. Insofar as I can agree with Horton on the definition of the gospel, I can agree with him. The Christian Coalition is not specifically “Christian” within the normally received meaning of the word. There is no requirement of orthodoxy in order to become a member. In fact, in the spirit of Ralph Reed’s doctrine of “casting a wider net,” anyone who approves of the broad policy objectives of the Coalition can become a member. Thus, Rabbi Daniel Lapin, leader of the

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50. *Ibid.*, 279.

51. *Ibid.*, 281.

52. *Ibid.*, 284.

Jewish group Toward Tradition, holds an honored place within the Coalition.<sup>53</sup> Thus, if we believe that Christ's ascendancy to the throne and his promulgation of God's law word are the true source of power for political reform today, we must only conclude that settling for a five hundred dollar per child dependent deduction, while welcome, is pretty weak tea. In terms of confronting the culture with its *true* condition, it's not even close.

The Christian Coalition is not into attacking the presuppositions of a culture. It is too busy making peace with those presuppositions for the sake of achieving half a loaf. Thus, by the time the Coalition finishes laying aside the weight of all of that pesky Christian armor which apparently doth hinder its march to this week's location of the American mainstream, there is no power left to confront the culture. Evangelicalism's new model army, unlike Cromwell's, is not equipped to confront the enemy. It does not realize that, having accepted the presuppositions of the culture, it is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ..." (Rev. 3:17). Since most of the Coalition is made up of dispensationalists, this is not surprising. Dispensationalists have a history of conforming to the culture in order to be considered intellectually respectable.<sup>54</sup> Thus, instead of standing up to American culture, evangelicalism has been coopted by it. Therefore, when Horton criticizes evangelicalism for its failings in this area, I agree.

### *1. Horton paints with too broad of a brush.*

Horton seems to classify the mistakes that the Christian Coalition is making with those of, say, Randall Terry. Because Horton believes that cultural activity is no longer "kingdom activity,"<sup>55</sup> there can be no distinctive Christian involvement in culture. If Horton believes that the gospel and Christianity are limited to believing certain doctrines and historical events, {188} and telling others about them, then the Christian's involvement, *as a distinctively Christian involvement*, is limited to that as well. This is borne out by his criticism of Randall Terry when Terry states

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53. Michael Medved, the conservative movie critic and author of *Hollywood vs. America*, is the most famous member of this group.

54. See generally, George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York, 1980).

55. Horton, *op. cit.*, 175.

that one must “live the gospel” not simply “preach the gospel.”<sup>56</sup> Surprisingly, if one examines what Terry means by the gospel, his view is as narrow as Horton:

After many years in the faith and innumerable conversations with Christians on this topic, this is what I understand us to be saying when we say we “preach the gospel” in its narrowest sense. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ the Son died for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God. He was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven from whence He will return in power and glory to judge the living and the dead. He that believes in Him shall be saved; he that does not believe shall be damned. Many debate whether mere “faith” is enough, or whether repentance is also required. (Count me in the repentance group.) I realize this is a very cursory overview, not discussing redemption by blood, justification by faith, what compromises true faith, imputed righteousness, regeneration by the Holy Spirit and more, but for our purposes, I believe it will suffice and 99.9 percent would agree with this overview of the gospel (or at least know what I’m talking about).<sup>57</sup>

Ironically, I do not believe that Horton’s version of the gospel conflicts with Terry’s “gospel in the narrow sense.” Horton is simply missing or ignoring an equivocation in the use of the word “gospel.” Terry apparently has a “gospel in the broader sense” that includes sanctification and “lordship” implications, and that Horton does not. Horton’s concern seems to be that if issues of sanctification and obedience are imported into the “gospel,” the gospel, understood as “free grace,” will be watered down. Horton states that “God demands absolute perfection; I don’t have it.” The gospel, for Horton, is Christ dying, rising and imputing his righteousness to us through our exclusive trust in him.<sup>58</sup> Horton seems to fear that bringing in issues of sanctification steers us in the direction of Roman Catholicism. This is not necessarily true. Reformed theologians have always taught that justification and sanctification are inextricably linked.<sup>59</sup> While no one is saved by

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56. *Ibid.*, 110–111.

57. Terry, *Nice Guy*, 62.

58. Horton, *op. cit.*, 113.

59. James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: [1867] 1977), 362–63; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* trans., James T.

works, political or otherwise, that is far from saying that good works are not involved at some stage of the Christian's life. I do not think that Terry would disagree.

What is the source of the disagreement? One problem is that Terry has an optimism about the understanding that Christians have of Christian doctrine that Horton does not share. Thus, when Terry speaks of the "inadequacy" of preaching the {189} gospel as a solution, he is speaking of people that use the excuse of preaching the gospel as an exclusive substitute for any other kind of action. A second problem is that Terry believes that God's law guides us toward a progressive sanctification of society as well as the individual. No one is "saved" by sanctification. Terry is not claiming that society can be "saved" in some eternal sense by obedience to God's law. But if Horton is prepared to say there is no particular temporal significance to obedience to God's law as opposed to some other law system, Terry has a point that Horton is obscuring by claiming something for Terry that Terry has not claimed for himself.

Similarly, Horton attacks Gary North for proposing a "Liberation Theology of the Right."<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, what Horton is really attacking is not a direct quote from North but a characterization of North by Richard John Neuhaus.<sup>61</sup> I find it difficult to believe that someone as obviously well educated as Horton in modern evangelical movements could be ignorant of the fact that Gary North is one of the most prolific writers in any movement, to say nothing of the reconstructionist movement. Yet Horton, seemingly, could find nothing of North's to criticize directly and had to rely upon Neuhaus. For the record, I could find nowhere that North characterized his beliefs as the "Liberation Theology of the Right." He has stated that creedal Christianity in all of its activities constitutes the "true liberation theology."<sup>62</sup> But is not Horton seeking to return us to creedal Christianity as a proper

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Dennison, Jr. (3 vols., George Musgrave Giger, [1847] Phillipsburg, NJ, 1994), 2:689-93; Calvin, *Institutes*, 3:16:1.

60. Horton, *op. cit.*, 119.

61. *Ibid.*, 127 n.17.

62. Gary North, *Liberating Planet Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Blueprints* (Fort Worth, TX, 1987), 34, 14-15, 26-27, 35-38, 44-49.

basis for Christian activity in the world? Sorry, my mistake.

The fact is that both North and Terry want to return Christians to using God's law as the basis for their involvement in the world. The Christian Coalition really does not because, unlike North and Terry, the Coalition believes that "common sense" natural law theology can form an adequate basis for political activity and confronting the secularists. The Christian Coalition is guilty of bringing a knife to a gunfight. As Cliff Clavin said, "That's *Mr. Weenie* to you!"

## 2. Horton and the nature/grace distinction

So which group's "New Model Army" do Horton's solutions more closely resemble? Ironically, Horton's "New Model Army" marches out to meet the enemy on the political battlefield as naked as the Christian Coalition's.

What is the source of the problems? Horton holds to the nature/grace distinction that has afflicted Christianity since Thomas Aquinas recast the Christian faith in Aristotelian terms to combat the Aristotelian philosophical influx from the Arabs in the late Middle Ages. Horton believes that the church must begin with a campaign for proper understanding of God and theology, not morality. One difficulty is that {190} Horton does not maintain a clear distinction between what the Church is to do *institutionally* and what Christians are to do as citizens of a republic. Therefore, the Church is limited to making "known God's revealed will in Scripture, including the Ten Commandments."<sup>63</sup> The state is to "enforce God's will revealed in nature by pursuing justice (equity)" through wise counsel, legitimate government, and the rule of constitutional law."<sup>64</sup> Horton never defines "justice" or "equity" but simply leaves them there as if we all know what he is talking about. When it comes to individual Christians' views and activities on political issues, Horton makes clear that he believes that they must rely on natural law. As is usually the case with natural law types, Horton appeals to biblical revelation to "backstop" him when citizens do not find the "wise counsel" with which to instruct the state that Horton is certain is there: "In ethics, we have no

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63. Horton, *op. cit.*, 164.

64. *Ibid.*, 165.

authority to command the conscience where God has not bound it, by requiring or prohibiting that which God has not clearly addressed in Scripture.”<sup>65</sup> Even though many of us had been under the impression that quite a few subjects had been addressed clearly in Scripture, Horton apparently does not think so: He is not even clear *whether* the law can be applied in society. Thus, the second table of the law can be enforced (“[t]he state can keep me from murdering my neighbor with my hands”<sup>66</sup>) but, on the other hand, these laws cannot be enforceable in society because the written law was part of Israel’s covenant and not given to any other nation,<sup>67</sup> but, on the other hand, Horton does not “have any moral problem with keeping the laws on the books making such an unnatural act [homosexuality] criminal,” even though Horton admits that suppression of natural law by sin in the hearts of men have made such acts “natural” today.<sup>68</sup> Michael Horton, *sic et non*.

Due to his rather unclear position on the Christian citizen and that citizen’s standard for good government, Horton does not extend his understanding of Christian theology to require particular views on public policy issues “except in very unusual circumstances” and, instead, proposes natural law as the only satisfactory basis for public policy initiatives. Horton’s position is a consequence of the fact that extending God’s rule to the entire earth seems to be an illegitimate activity for Christians in this age; according to Horton, cultural activity is no longer kingdom activity. In fact, this kind of activity is lumped with Cain’s family, rather than Seth’s. Seth’s family, the godly line, seems to be limited to “calling on the name of the Lord.”<sup>69</sup> Regrettably, Horton leaves us without any further citation to or exegesis of this “Calling Mandate.” Thus, post-fall, Christians are limited to peering into the unclear, creation version of God’s revelation for public policy {191} information. The Christian Coalition has the same view of natural law, believing that its agenda can be clearly discerned from natural law. The difference between the Coalition and Horton is that while

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65. *Ibid.*, 157.

66. *Ibid.*, 160.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*, 206.

69. *Ibid.*, 175.

the Coalition gives us an unclear standard that provides, to them, a clear mandate ("common sense" solutions), Horton gives us an unclear standard that provides an unclear mandate. I am not sure that is an improvement. Horton wants to say that theology and statecraft do not mix: The church (theology) must remain separate from the state (natural law), grace must be separate from nature, the kingdom of God must be separate from the kingdoms of the world. Horton and the Christian Coalition do not seem to see that theology and statecraft can *never* be separate: some version of god, theology, and law will prevail in the state. If Horton believes the Christian God and his theology and law are true, they should prevail through the efforts of Christian citizens. The gospel should be preached, but covenantal sanctification not neglected, whether individual, familial, ecclesiastical, or societal.

### 3. Horton's unwilling accomplices

One consistent difficulty in Horton's work is that he confuses an insistence that God's law-word direct the path of all societal structures with an insistence that the institutional church interfere with the institutional state in ways other than prophetic ministry toward the state directly and also indirectly through its members. Thus, in a sense, the institutional church, as a legitimate interpreter of God's law-word, always dictates statecraft, as well as "family-craft" and "person-craft." But no one, including the Christian Coalition, Randall Terry, the Reconstructionists or the National Reform Association has suggested that institutional church and state be one in some structural sense. Having essentially said that theology and statecraft do not mix, Horton sets off in search of historical figures to make good his claim. One must admit that there is, throughout history, a process of differentiation whereby truly consistent Christian premises become discerned and, therefore, one cannot expect from Augustine what one expects from Calvin, from Calvin what one expects from Kuyper. This should provide all the more incentive for us to not blunder about in history, as a pig roots about in a sack of feed, searching for bits and pieces of anything that will support a position. Unfortunately, Horton assembles "the usual suspects" to try to support his absolute distinction between law and gospel, nature and grace, the

kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world.

*a. Augustine*

Horton puts words in Augustine's mouth by implying that, when Augustine separates between the City of God and the city of Rome by pointing out that the two "represent two different sources, goals, allegiances, and kings,"<sup>70</sup> Augustine is endorsing Horton's view that Christians should not attempt to use God's law as a standard for the civil state in a republic. Horton cites Augustine's statement that the City of {192} Man lives by man's standards and the City of God according to God's will.<sup>71</sup>

First, Augustine is speaking of the division of mankind into two groups after the fall. One is called the City of God, the other the City of Man. In the City of God, everyone obeys God, and in the City of Man, nobody does. Both are spiritual entities, representing alternative spiritual allegiances.<sup>72</sup> One cannot simply make an equivalence between two spiritual entities with completely incommensurate sources and allegiances, on the one hand, and two earthly spheres, the institutional church and the institutional state, made up of members belonging to both spiritual entities and governed by those allegiances, on the other. F. C. Copleston writes that "None the less, the ideas of the heavenly and earthly cities are moral and spiritual ideas, the contents of which are not exactly coterminous with any actual organization."<sup>73</sup> To say that there is an absolute difference between Christians and non-Christians is not to say that God's rule should not extend over both institutional spheres, and that even non-Christians do not and should not owe allegiance to God and obey his law. Augustine believed that the "ruling authority should be rejected if it does not follow divine justice."<sup>74</sup> Thus:

Constantine believed the state should rule the church. Medieval

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70. *Ibid.*, 90.

71. *Ibid.* (citing Augustine, *The City of God*, David Knowles, ed. [New York, 1972] Bk. xv, chap.1).

72. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, 1945), Bk. xiv, Chap. 28—Bk. xv, Chap. 8.

73. F. C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (New York [1985], 1962), 1:2:87.

74. W. Andrew Hoffercker and Gary Scott Smith, eds., *Building a Christian World View* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1988), 2:206–207.

Roman Catholics argued that the church should rule the state. Augustine advocated a *functional* balance and equality between church and state although he acknowledged the spiritual superiority of the church over the state.<sup>75</sup>

In contrast to the Greeks and Romans who thought that the state was divine, Augustine believed that the church and the state were equal under God. As the eminent classicist, Charles Norris Cochrane puts it, "Caesar must therefore abandon his pretension to independence and submit to Christian principles..."<sup>76</sup> Copleston writes: "The State, in other words, is informed by love of this world, when it is left to itself; but it can be informed by higher principles, principles which it must derive from Christianity."<sup>77</sup> Therefore, while Augustine placed the church in a superior spiritual position to the state, thus paving the way for the abuse of that position in the Middle Ages, its superiority issued forth from the fact that it was responsible to instruct the state in God's law-word which is a far cry from Horton's view of the Christian citizenry attempting to "persuade" the state to adopt some {193} vague ethical mutterings gleaned from natural law.

### b. Luther

Horton claims that "Martin Luther was the first to recover the Augustinian notion of 'two kingdoms,' so explicit in the New Testament."<sup>78</sup> If this is so, Paul was a disciple of William of Ockham. In Ockham, the nature-grace tension brought over from the Greek tension between form and matter reached full fruition. Herman Dooyeweerd writes: "Founded in an incalculable, arbitrary God who is bound to nothing, the law only held for the sinful realm of nature ... Near the end of the Middle Ages this tension ultimately led to Ockham's complete separation of natural life from the christian life of grace."<sup>79</sup> One cannot simply equate Augustine's

75. Hoeffcker, ed., *World View*, 2:207 n.5.

76. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (New York, 1957), 510.

77. Copleston, *op. cit.*, 1:2:89.

78. Horton, *op. cit.*, 93.

79. Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*, Mark Vander Vennem, Bernard Zylstra, eds.. John Kraay, trans. (Toronto, 1979), 138139.

notion of the opposing kingdoms of God and Satan, and parallel such an idea with Luther's two kingdom doctrine. Luther had three dualisms permeating his works, not one. Augustine's dualism cut across Luther's Ockhamist dualism between the kingdom of Christ, to which God is always present in his word, and the kingdom of this world which has the power of the sword and to which God's presence is hidden, and the spiritual/temporal dualism of individual salvation and the relational natural order.<sup>80</sup>

"[Luther] seems to have a double attitude toward reason and philosophy, toward business and trade...[and] toward state and politics." These paradoxes suggest "that Luther divided life into compartments or taught that the Christian right hand should not know what a man's worldly left hand was doing."<sup>81</sup>

Gary Scott Smith points out that the paradoxes manifest themselves in a number of ways. First, Luther believed that only urgent changes should be made in the political system because the signs of the times seemed to point to an imminent return of Christ. Second, he believed that the state functioned on the basis of reason and natural revelation. Third, he held that the church ministered to the inner man while the state ministered to the outer, natural, man. Thus, Christians should submit to the state because neither the church nor the state were complete without the other.<sup>82</sup>

Smith further comments that Luther's two kingdom doctrine was blamed for "the failure of German Lutheranism to resist Hitler's policies..."<sup>83</sup> Thus, Luther "tended to separate the kingdoms so sharply that their fundamental unity... was obscured."<sup>84</sup> Gene Edward Veith, writing concerning fascism, sees the sharp distinction as a misinterpretation of Luther:

Actually, the doctrine of the two kingdoms insists that God is

80. Hoeffcker, *op. cit.*, 2:224–225.

81. *Ibid.*, 2:225–226 (quoting H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951), 171).

82. *Ibid.*, 2:226.

83. *Ibid.*, 2:229.

84. *Ibid.*, 2:230 (quoting Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* [Philadelphia, 1976], 183).

the {194} king of both realms. An earthly ruler who breaks God's transcendent moral law is usurping the divine authority. In the words of the Augsburg Confession, the central Lutheran doctrinal statement, "Christians are obliged to be subject to civil authority and obey its commands and laws in all that can be done without sin. But when commands of the civil authority cannot be obeyed without sin, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)."<sup>85</sup>

The only point that we can glean from this is that Luther was not clear concerning the source of the state's guidance for policy. Horton, however, treats Luther (1) as if he were clear, and (2) chooses and endorses the interpretation that the state is to be guided by natural revelation and is to have exclusive use of physical force. Hence, Horton insists that political action by Christians is to be guided by that which may be gleaned from natural revelation, despite the fact that by his own admission, a Christian understanding of morality has been bled out of the society to the extent that homosexuality is now received as "natural." While Horton's unfavorable reaction to this turn of events is appreciated, it does not get him out of ethical and epistemological difficulty: One cannot seem to pull a Christian "rabbit" out of the hat of natural revelation without having first put it in. If anything, Horton's view of natural law, along with the Christian Coalition's, is in danger of being taken in the same direction Luther's was taken by the Nazis, albeit in an "American" direction. Robert P. Erickson writes of the chief Nazi theologian, Emmanuel Hirsch:

Hirsch also asserts that universal values and knowledge exist and can be discovered ... Hirsch wants to avoid relativism and scepticism. His entire goal in this book has been to build a foundation for a positive view of state and nation through a theistic and ethical philosophy of history ... Hirsch insisted that God works in history, intersects human life, and can be recognized by man through a proper appreciation of history and a properly sensitive conscience."<sup>86</sup>

This is no different from Michael Horton endorsing natural law, which is unfortunately "a theory which has been rejected today in

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85. Gene Edward Veith, *Modern Fascism* (St. Louis, MO, 1993), 63.

86. Robert P. Erickson, *Theologians Under Hitler: Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emanuel Hirsch* (New Haven, CT, 1985), 129, 140-141, 145.

favor of relativism and pragmatism.”<sup>87</sup> Horton may draft Luther into his army, but it is uncertain that Luther belongs there, and, even if he does, he is no help to Horton.

### c. Calvin

Calvin suffers from the same problem as Luther: a divided judicial legacy.<sup>88</sup> Horton shows his own indebtedness to Thomas Aquinas’ “nature/grace” distinction even as he tips his hat to Calvin:

The medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas, was one of the most brilliant exponents of this notion of “natural law” since Augustine, but modern historians are agreed that John {195} Calvin was one of the chief architects of our modern understanding of this theory, a theory which has been rejected today in favor of relativism and pragmatism. This “natural law” is not a rival to God’s law, but rather is that same universal divine mandate imprinted on humanity’s conscience as part of God’s image. But since modern nations are not in a covenantal relationship with God, as Israel was, the rule ought to be “general equity,” as it was established by constitutions and interpreted by courts.<sup>89</sup>

According to Horton, one does not go to God’s law to determine the universal moral law always and everywhere applicable but to natural law and its interpretation in constitutions and courts. While Calvin was clearly divided regarding use of natural law as opposed to the written law-word by the state, even he said, “Accordingly (because it is necessary both for our dullness and for our arrogance), the Lord has provided us with a written law to give us a clearer witness of what was too obscure in the natural law, shake off our listlessness, and strike more vigorously our mind and memory.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, even though Horton quotes all of the passages in the *Institutes* that support his point, he manages to leave out the passages in Calvin that support the applicability of the penalties of God’s written law in society:

On Apostasy:

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87. Horton, *op. cit.*, 162.

88. Gary North, *Westminster’s Fascism* (St. Louis, MO, 1993), 63. *Confession* (Tyler, TX, 1991), 48–72.

89. Horton, *loc. cit.*, 162.

90. Calvin, *Institutes*, II:8:1.

Then let us not think that his law is a special law for the Jews: but let us understand that God intended to deliver us a general rule, to which we must tie ourselves ... it is to be concluded, not only that it is lawful for all Kings and Magistrates, to punish heretics and such as have perverted the pure truth: but also that they be bound to do it, and that they misbehave themselves towards God, if they suffer errors to roost without redress, and employ not their whole power to show a greater zeal in that behalf than in all other things. For is it reason that he which sitteth in the seat of justice, should punish a thief for doing wrong but to the value of five shillings; and in the mean while let a traitor to God go unpunished?<sup>91</sup>

#### On Choosing Magistrates:

We wonder to see our Lord overthrow Commonweals, and to behold how the Nations that were free, are greatly distressed and overwhelmed with tyranny; but we look not from whence all those things proceed. The ground thereof was the abuses which were committed, because there was no regard had of the maintaining of the state which God had established, nor care to follow faithfully the order that God had enjoined.<sup>92</sup>

#### The Necessity of God's Law:

Wherefore let us mark well, that to discern that there is nothing but vanity in all worldly devices, we must know the laws and ordinances of God. But if we rest upon men's laws, surely it is not possible for us to judge rightly. Then we must needs go first to {196} God's school, and that will show us that when we have once profited under him, it will be enough.<sup>93</sup>

Now Moses showeth to what end he exhorted the people to deem well of God's works: namely to the end they might keep all his commandments, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. Keep the commandments of the Lord thy God (saith he) that thou mayest walk in his ways and fear him. First we have to mark here, that Moses sendeth the people to the law, as to the perfect and chief doctrine of our whole life. And it is a point well worthy to be marked ... Behold, the Infidels can well enough search the secrets of nature, they can well not only allege reasons, but also say, this is

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91. *Idem.*, *Sermons on Deuteronomy*, Arthur Golding, trans. (Carlisle, PA, 1987), Sermon 87, 537.

92. *Ibid.*, Sermon 101, 622.

93. *Ibid.*, Sermon 21, 123.

done after this fashion. Yea and they have deemed God to be good, righteous, and wise, & we see that the heathen Philosophers knew God's works so far, as they could talk of his majesty. But what? It was all confusedly: and in the end they vanished away in their own imaginations, so as they never attained to the point whereto they should have come. Then let us understand that all is to no purpose, until we have God's doctrine for all perfection.<sup>94</sup>

According whereunto Saint Paul saith, that we cannot be wise before God, until we become fools in our selves: that is to wit, until we know that there is nothing but vanity & leaning in our own understanding, and therefore that we must give over all that we think good, and not know aught but that which God commandeth. And therewithall, as Moses meant here to bereave me of all selfweening, to the intent they should stoop and submit themselves unto God's word: so on the contrary part he meant to show that when men have God's law for their rule: they shall want nothing, but all shall be well and perfect.<sup>95</sup>

That Calvin was inconsistent is acknowledged. But that he was working his way out of the medieval dichotomy between nature and grace is also acknowledged. Thus, Gordon Spykman comments as follows concerning Calvin's reformulation of the "two kingdoms" doctrine:

Similarly here, in dealing with the inner structural relationships of society, Calvin perpetuates distinctions which on the surface are reminiscent of the older Scholastic dichotomies. Fundamentally, however, he has broken with the past, and broken through to a new position, even though he failed to follow through on it consistently. Religiously he sees both church and state under the sovereign judgment and redemption of God. Structurally, however, the wedges which he drives between church and state are ambiguous and inept, leaving them as rather loosely defined areas of life rather than clearly defined societal institutions. But he no longer identifies the state with nature and the church with grace ... Calvin's distinction between these two forms of "government" should therefore not be construed as an updated version of the Scholastic dichotomy between the church as the realm of grace and the state as the realm {197} of nature, nor as a variation on the Lutheran

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94. *Ibid.*, Sermon 59, 357.

95. *Ibid.*, Sermon 20, 120.

dichotomy between a Christianly committed ecclesiastical arena viewed as the “kingdom of God” and a religiously neutral governmental sector viewed rather negatively as a stopgap measure made necessary by the reality of sin within the “kingdom of the world.” In His sovereign grace God claims our wholehearted allegiance in both church and state. In both, the norms of God’s word are to be implemented ... Calvin began in his own somewhat halting way, to see each of these two spheres as exercising in its own unique way a divinely delegated subservient sovereignty under the supremely sovereign rule of God.<sup>96</sup>

Henry Van Til comments similarly:

Calvin saw the church and state as two interdependent entities each having received its own authority from the sovereign God. In this conception the state is never secular, nor are state and church separated in the modern sense of the word. Atheistic democracy and popular sovereignty cannot claim Calvin as their father. According to Calvin, church and state must live in peace and must cooperate together in subjection to the word of God. Each is to have its own jurisdiction. The state has authority in purely civil and temporal matters; the church, in spiritual matters.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, speaking of Calvin’s Geneva, John T. McNeill writes:

Certainly the system was a theocracy in the sense that it assumed responsibility to God on the part of secular and ecclesiastical authority alike, and proposed as its end the effectual operation of the will of God in the life of the people. In principle, at least, it was not hierocratic. Calvin wished the magistrates, as agents of God, to have their own due sphere of action.<sup>98</sup>

Therefore, we see that, while inconsistent, Calvin cannot be simply lumped in with a simpleminded adherence to a ‘law/gospel’ or “Kingdom of God/kingdom of the world” model that Horton wants to have the reformers endorse for him. As we explore other Reformed political figures, the distortion becomes more obvious.

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96. Gordon J. Spykman, “Sphere-Sovereignty in Calvin and the Calvinist Tradition,” David E. Holwerda, ed. *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1976), 191–192.

97. Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: [1959] 1972), 95.

98. John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York, 1954), 185.

#### *d. Transitional political figures*

One point that Horton conveniently neglects in his fish-eyed march to an absolute distinction between theology and politics is the development of the doctrine of the covenant which provides the unifying context of both law and grace or gospel as they are applied to the various structural societal law-spheres. In fact, as R. J. Rushdoony has pointed out, there is no real distinction between law and grace because our relationship to God is *always* a legal one, albeit maintained by grace in the case of Christians. Nonetheless, the fact that God has {198} loved the world enough to give it his law is a gracious act.<sup>99</sup> Horton leaves out the entire historical development of the covenant by skipping from Calvin to the Puritans, and giving even the Puritans short shrift in his breathless stampede to get to Roger Williams. I feel somewhat obligated to supply the deficit.

##### *(1) Heinrich Bullinger*

First systematically developed by Heinrich Bullinger in his *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*,<sup>100</sup> the doctrine of the covenant united both law and grace and preserved that unity in the earthly relationships based upon its prescriptions. Under the heading, “The Duties of Humans and What They Owe to God,” Bullinger writes:

But what is central among these many things? It is our duty to adhere firmly by faith to the one God, inasmuch as he is the one and only author of all good things, and to walk in innocence of life for his pleasure. For anyone who has neglected these things and has sought false gods, who has lived shamefully or impiously, and who has worshiped God more with ceremonies or external things than with true holiness of life, will be excluded, disinherited, and rejected from the covenant.<sup>101</sup>

Thus, for Bullinger, there are two classes of individuals: covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers. Instead of endorsing

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99. Rousas John Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology* (Vallecito, CA, 1994), 1:373–374.

100. Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville, KY, 1991), 99–138.

101. *Ibid.*, 111.

Horton's whining about the premature judgment of the tares among us through the participation of the church<sup>102</sup> in the societal rejection of sin-based crime,<sup>103</sup> Bullinger believes that the judicial laws of Israel are to be applicable in society for the restraint, and, yes, condemnation of covenant-breakers:

For these [the judicial and civil laws of Israel] are also the obligations of piety, or necessities for the holiest churches, so necessary that without them they could not properly exist, and they have never existed apart from them without danger. In connection with that, according to the word of the Lord (Matthew 13), there will always be tares in the field of the Lord, nor will it ever be without them. For the Lord did not wish the tares to be uprooted because their uprooting would ruin the wheat, that is, the righteous and the holy church. So Jesus said, "Allow both to grow, lest while you gather together the tares you at the same time also uproot the wheat with them." But who doubts that those same (19b) tares ought to be cut off with the scythe of justice, when their excessive and untimely strength and quantity tends toward the subversion of the church? Furthermore, the saints consist not only of spirit but also of flesh. As long as they live on this earth they do not {199} entirely lay aside the human shape and totally turn into spirit. But also their laws are made to order external dealings among people in their social life. For these reasons, they need magistrates and the works of the civil law covering many subjects. What is more strange than the insanity that drives those who exclude the magistrate from the church of God, as if there were no need of his functions, or who consider his functions to be of the sort that cannot or ought not to be numbered among the holy and spiritual works of the people of God? (20a)<sup>104</sup>

## (2) *Philippe Duplessis-Mornay*

Mornay's *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* (A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants), written under his pen-name, Junius Brutus, proposed the superiority of God's law in the covenant as a basis for rebellion against tyrants that had violated the terms and law of God's covenant stipulations:

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102. Horton once again confuses the duty of the institutional church with the duty of Christian citizens.

103. Horton, *op. cit.*, 172–173.

104. McCoy and Baker, *op. cit.*, 113–114.

Now, although the form, both of the church and the Jewish kingdom be changed, for that which was before enclosed within the narrow bounds of Judaea is now dilated throughout the whole world; notwithstanding the same things may be said of Christian kings, the gospel having succeeded the law, and Christian princes being in the place of those of Jewry. There is the same covenant, the same conditions, the same punishments, and if they fail in the accomplishing, the same God Almighty, revenger of all perfidious disloyalty; and as the former were bound to keep the law, so the other are obliged to adhere to the doctrine of the gospel, for the advancement whereof these kings at their anointed and receiving, do promise to employ the utmost of their means.<sup>105</sup>

As may be seen, Mornay lays the basis for replacing tyrants that exceed the prescriptions of God's law in the statement that the covenant provides continuity in the demands of that law. Entirely missed by Horton as well is the significance of the work for the development of federalism in America.<sup>106</sup>

### (3) *Johannes Althusius*

Johannes Althusius (1557?–1638) was a Reformed elder and political philosopher in Germany and Switzerland, and the first systematic expositor of federal political philosophy.<sup>107</sup> Althusius' concern was to “interpret all political life in terms of pactum,

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105. Junius Brutus, *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants* (Edmonton, AB, Canada, [1689] 1989), 11.

106. Rousas John Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic.- Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History* (Fairfax, VA, 1978), 24–25: “Important in this context of legality of revolution was the influence of *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* (1579), held by John Adams to be one of the most influential books in America on the eve of the Revolution. *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* held among other things, to these doctrines: First, Any ruler who commands anything contrary to the law of God thereby forfeits his realm. Second, Rebellion is refusal to obey God, for we ought to obey God rather than man. To obey the ruler when he commands what is against God's law is thus truly rebellion. Third, since God's law is the fundamental law and the only true source of law, and neither king nor subject is exempt from it, war is sometimes required in order to defend God's law against the ruler. A fourth tenet also characterized this position: legal rebellion required the leadership of lesser magistrates to oppose, in the name of the law, the royal dissolution or contempt of law. All these doctrines were basic to the colonial cause.” See also McCoy and Baker, *Federalism*, 47–49.

107. McCoy and Baker, *op. cit.*, 50.

the bond of contractual union, or covenant.”<sup>108</sup> Althusius referred to the study of politics as “symbiotics” or “the art of associating men for the purpose of establishing, cultivating, and conserving social life among them.”<sup>109</sup> The means for conserving social life was through a covenantal relationship based upon biblical foundations. Thus, commenting upon the limits of the power of a nation’s leaders, Althusius comments:

These administrators exceed the limits and boundaries of the power conceded to them, first, when they command something to be done that is prohibited by God in the first table of the {200} Decalogue, or to be omitted that is therein commanded by God ... Finally, the wickedness of administrators cannot abolish or diminish the imperium and might of God, nor release the administrators from the same. For the power and jurisdiction of God are infinite. He created heaven and earth, and is rightly lord and proprietor of them. All who inhabit the earth are truly tenants, vassals, lessees, clients, and beneficiaries of his. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” and is so by the right of creation and conservation. God is therefore called “King of kings and Lord of lords ..”<sup>110</sup>

The “common law” or the law written on the hearts of men and made explicit in the Decalogue, forms the general basis for the covenant of the society, while “proper law” is the case law that applies its general principles:

Thus common or moral law concludes from its principles that evildoers ought to be punished, but proposes nothing concerning the punishment. Proper law determines specifically that adulterers, murderers, and the like are to be punished by death, unless the punishment should be mitigated because of further circumstances. Various punishments, for example, exist in the Mosaic law for these crimes. Common law requires that God be worshipped. Proper law determines that this is to be done each seventh day. Therefore, common law commands in general. Proper law makes these commands specific, and accommodates them to the experience

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108. *Ibid.*, 55, quoting Carl J. Friedrich, “Preface,” in Johannes Althusius, *The Politics of Johannes Althusius*, Frederick S. Carney, trans. and intro., Carl J. Friedrich, preface; (Boston, 1964), ix.

109. Johannes Althusius, *Politica*, Frederick S. Carney, trans. and ed., Daniel J. Elazar, foreword; (Indianapolis, 1995), 17.

110. *Ibid.*, 98–99.

and utility of the commonwealth and the circumstances of each activity. For this reason, the moral precepts of the Decalogue, having no certain, special, and fixed punishment attached to them, are general. The forensic and political law then makes specific determinations, which it relates to the circumstances of any act ... At this point we encounter the controversy over what we maintain to be the political doctrine of the {201} Decalogue. In the judgment of others the Decalogue should instead be considered theological ... Whence there is a deep silence among them about the role of the Decalogue in politics. But this is wrong in my judgment. For the Decalogue teaches the pious and just life; piety toward God and justice toward symbiotes. If symbiosis is deprived of these qualities, it should not be called so much a political and human society as a beastly congregation of vice-ridden men ... If you would deprive political and symbiotic life of this rule and this light to our feet, as it is called, you would destroy its vital spirit. Furthermore, you would take away the bond of human society and, as it were, the rudder and helm of this ship. It would then altogether perish, or be transformed into a stupid, beastly, and inhuman life. Therefore, the subject matter of the Decalogue is indeed natural, essential, and proper to politics ... From these things it follows that the magistrate is obligated in the administration of the commonwealth to the proper law of Moses so far as moral equity or common law are expressed therein.<sup>111</sup>

Thus, the foundation of proper societal relations is biblical law as seen within a covenantal context. Without such a foundation, society dissolves:

For no one can doubt that such a compact or covenant constitutes a right and obligation both to God and between the promising debtors, namely, between the people and the king. What is at stake in this obligation is not only the public practice of orthodox religion and the honest worship of God, but also the second table of the Decalogue, of the correct and honest administrations of justice. This is to say, both tables are involved.<sup>112</sup>

Althusius would have been horrified at Horton's notion that we cannot "assume that the claims of Christ's kingdom must be legislated and enforced in order to refashion a 'Christian

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111. *Ibid.*, 145–148.

112. *Ibid.*, 165.

nation.’ ”<sup>113</sup> Under Althusius’ proposal, a Christian nation was the only kind of nation to have. Furthermore, he would not have understood Horton’s belief that while King Jesus has a “universal monopoly on truth,”<sup>114</sup> it is somehow inappropriate that the Ten Commandments be forced on a godless society.<sup>115</sup> To the contrary, as Daniel J. Elazar states:

The Althusian version of the Calvinist model of the religiously homogeneous polity is not likely to be revived in the postmodern epoch. On the other hand, we are beginning to revive an old understanding that no civil society can exist without some basis in transcendent norms that obligate and bind the citizens and establish the necessary basis for trust and communication. The connection between the Decalogue and jus as both law and right, while hardly original to Althusius, may offer possibilities for renewed development in our times. Althusius adopts a conventional understanding of the two tables {202} of the Decalogue of his time, namely that the first table addresses itself to piety and the second to justice, both of which are necessary foundations for civil society.<sup>116</sup>

#### (4) Samuel Rutherford

Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker comment:

More than any other person, Rutherford provided an exposition of the theological and political principles undercharging and guiding the Reformed components of [the Scottish Reformed] movement. Rutherford did this in *Lex, Rex: the Law and the Prince*, published in 1644, and in *The Covenant of Life Opened; or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, published in 1655. These works provided the most comprehensive account of federalism in Britain up to that time. In them the close relation of religious faith and political action was made clear. Yet Rutherford also distinguished carefully and consistently between the appropriate functions of the church and those of the government. He showed throughout the influence upon him of the federal tradition from Bullinger onward.<sup>117</sup>

In speaking of the limitation of the power of the king, Rutherford

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113. Horton, *op. cit.*, 99.

114. *Ibid.*

115. *Ibid.*, 159.

116. Daniel J. Elazar, “Foreword,” in Althusius, *Politica*, xlii.

117. McCoy and Baker, *op. cit.*, 43.

writes that “the power [of the king] is ... a power to rule according to God’s law.”<sup>118</sup> Thus:

Both king and people shall find the revenging hand of God against them, if they fail in the breach of their oath; every one, king and people, by the oath stand obliged to God, the king for himself, and the people for themselves, but with this difference, the king oweth to God proper and due obedience as any of the subjects, and also to govern the people according to God’s true religion; (Deut. xvii.; 2 Chron. xxix.;) ...<sup>119</sup>

He who is made a minister of God, not simply, but for the good of the subject, and so he take heed to God’s law as a king, and govern according to God’s will, he is in so far only made king by God as he fulfilleth the condition ... There is no condition required in him before they make him king, but only that he covenant with them to rule according to God’s law.<sup>120</sup>

#### (5) *The Covenanters*

The Scottish Covenanters believed that the covenant should so dominate the government of a nation that a nation that was not governed according to God’s covenant was governed by an “unlawful” government that “must not be owned as a true and ordained government.”<sup>121</sup> Even the Seceders, who did not take quite as severe a view of government, believed that “[a] due measure of Scriptural qualification in magistrates is essential to the WELLBEING of a nation ...”<sup>122</sup> Therefore, a Covenanter writer, William Symington, commenting on the relationship between the law of God given to Moses and the law of {203} government over modern nations, writes:

The transaction at Sinai partook distinctly of a federal character. The children of Israel were then put in possession of a complete body of laws, for the regulation of their national concerns. Stipulations and restipulations were mutually passed ... Possessing

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118. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex Rex, or The Law and The Prince* (Harrisonburg, VA, [1644] 1982), 72.

119. *Ibid.*, 55.

120. *Ibid.*, 57.

121. Samuel E. Boyle, *The Christian Nation* (Pittsburgh, 1971), 135.

122. *Ibid.*

the nature, this transaction received the name, of a *covenant*. From the gracious covenant relation in which the people of Israel stood to God, it is plain that, in this whole transaction, they had to do with the Son of God as Mediator ... What was adapted to promote national prosperity in their case, is calculated to do the same in all cases. It is more reasonable to regard their political organization as a *model* to future nations, than as an *exception* from all others.<sup>123</sup>

*e. The Puritans vs. Roger Williams*

As may be seen from the preceding, Horton has left out a bit of incongruent history on his way to claiming the reformers as support for his position of a bifurcation between law and grace to the extent of saying that biblical law is only appropriate for the church while the state must settle for the dry husks of natural law. Thus, the reformers after Calvin developed the idea of the overworking covenant that expressed God's will and law for all of creation, and especially the spheres of society. For the reformers, there were no "two kingdoms" in the sense that there was any facet of society exempt from the claim of God's will and his law-word.<sup>124</sup> Rather than the Puritans being an aberration, as Horton's exposition suggests, their attitude "requiring voting members of the body politic to also be members of the church"<sup>125</sup> was certainly natural if one assumes the history of the covenant as I have expounded it. On the other hand, Roger Williams believed that a Christian civil magistrate "owed the same protection to false religion as he did to his own. Williams asserted, in other words, the right of a man to be wrong about religion and to be protected in his error by the civil government."<sup>126</sup> In contrast, the Puritans only "allowed ... a liberty to do right, and they demanded that government coerce men whose consciences led them astray,

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123. William Symington, *Messiah the Prince or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ* (Edmonton, AB, Canada, [1884] 1990), 257–258.

124. Although there were of course two kingdoms in the sense that God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom constituted genuine (covenant-keeping) and counterfeit (covenant-breaking) versions of reality.

125. Horton, *op. cit.*, 97.

126. Edmund Morgan, *Roger Williams: The Church and the State* (New York, 1967), 140–141.

whether in morals or religion.”<sup>127</sup> Thus, “Williams’ friend John Winthrop, for example, insisted that the liberty enjoyed by men in civil society was a liberty ‘to that only which is good, just, and honest.’<sup>128</sup> Roger Williams was the aberrant figure in the development of Reformed political thought, not the Puritans.<sup>129</sup>

*f. Abraham Kuyper*

Abraham Kuyper is a strange ally for Horton to enlist. Kuyper believed that common {204} grace was responsible for the development of any culture whatsoever.<sup>130</sup> Thus, “the independent goal of common grace [is] to develop culture by cultivating and preserving the creation of God.”<sup>131</sup> Special grace, however, influences common grace first, indirectly, by making the culture truly human and transforming the culture into a “Christian” culture by transforming the structures of society into Christian families, a Christian state and a Christian society. Second, special grace transforms the common grace of culture directly through regenerated individuals:

Thus, the kingdom of heaven appears not only eschatologically at the denouement of history, but also here and now. [cite omitted] It is the task of the church as an organism, either personally or in organized unity, in the realm of common grace, to fulfill the common cultural mandate for the sake of the king. [cite omitted] This constitutes the warfare of the Christian in this world in distinction from the activity of the church in the preaching of the word and evangelization. [cites omitted]<sup>132</sup>

In this warfare, covenant-breakers (Kuyper’s “Normalists”) and covenant-keepers (Kuyper’s “Abnormalists”) fight to transform the culture in accordance with their respective visions. The basis of this fight is a radical disjunction between believers and unbelievers penetrating to the root of society. Thus, the “new humanity is, for

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127. *Ibid.*, 141.

128. *Ibid.*, n.58.

129. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, TX, 1989), 223–261.

130. Van Til, *op. cit.*, 117–122.

131. *Ibid.*, 123.

132. *Ibid.*, 124.

Kuyper, the church as an organism, impelled by the Spirit and obedient to Christ, functioning in the area of common grace to fulfill the creative will of God.<sup>133</sup> Kuyper, however, finds the definitive statement of this creative will of God in the Scriptures.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, when Kuyper speaks of the transformation of culture, he is speaking of particular grace applying the word of God to all of life.

Horton states that Kuyper “argued for what he called ‘sphere sovereignty’ [a theory] ... that each realm of life—the arts, education, science, the church, and the family—retains its own unique character and mission.”<sup>135</sup> Well, yes. But Horton then presses sphere sovereignty into service defending his separation between church and state (somewhat legitimate) and the “kingdom of heaven” versus “the kingdom of the world” (illegitimate). Under Kuyper, the different spheres refract God’s will, applying that aspect of God’s will appropriate to its Scripturally-defined function.<sup>136</sup> Thus, there is a separation between the spheres of church and state as *institutions*. The separation, however, always takes place against the backdrop of God’s sovereignty and God’s will. Despite the fact that Kuyper never manages to define a specifically Christian social theory,<sup>137</sup> he would not say that the church takes its orders from God’s law in contrast to the state, which takes them from the “natural order.” As to Kuyper endorsing Horton’s notion that “the purpose of a Christian in politics is not to create a Christian society, but merely to help restrain evil”<sup>138</sup> which is somehow not a kingdom activity,<sup>139</sup> the above quotation concerning the kingdom of heaven should disabuse Horton of that view.

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133. *Ibid.*

134. Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: [1689] 1980), 361–389.

135. Horton, *op. cit.*, 100.

136. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: [1898] 1931), 96–98.

137. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, TX, 1990), 80–81.

138. Horton, *op. cit.*, 101.

139. *Ibid.*

#### 4. Horton's concern with evangelical power

Horton does manage a good critique of evangelicalism when he criticizes it for not confronting the culture based upon the Scriptures and then getting into politics with a rather truncated political agenda when evangelicalism sensed the “traditional values” slipping away.<sup>140</sup> Evangelicalism bases its politics on a vague moralism rather than “deeper theological and philosophical beliefs.”<sup>141</sup> After a good beginning, however, one senses that, once again, Horton begins sloganizing. He speaks of returning to “the main message and mission of the church” which is welcome, but speaks of it in a section in which he is condemning the truncated message in the political action by Christians as citizens. If what he is saying is that we need to present a distinctly biblical message and political solutions, fine. But that is not what he is saying, because, as seen above, he wants political involvement to be based upon natural law. In essence, he wants Christians to limit the theology to the church's message, which is just what Enlightenment humanism would say should be done. Horton is concerned that Christianity will be rejected as just one option among many if evangelicalism relies merely on the Judeo-Christian tradition. What Horton does not seem to realize is that if we seek to persuade men based upon natural theology and law, we will be doing the same thing because options are all one can get from natural law.

Finally, Horton condemns evangelicalism for treating political solutions as ultimate. First, if any evangelical were pressed, I think Horton would have trouble finding *anyone* that believed that statement. The only reason that Horton believes this is the case is because evangelicals have their issues, right or wrong, and they understand that the American political system is based upon counting the votes. After 200 years, Horton is a little late in his complaint. The reason evangelicalism seems to believe that political solutions are ultimate is because evangelicalism's theology does not make it out of their churches. What Horton really wants is a movement to confront the culture with political solutions based on the Scriptures. Oh, I forgot. Horton does not think these

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140. *Ibid.*, 25, 38–39, 42–51.

141. *Ibid.*, 38.

to be either attainable or identifiable. He wants us to do it based upon whatever natural law is saying this week. Rats.

### Summary and Conclusion

Michael Horton's book, *Beyond Culture Wars* presents several problems. One minor problem that I had in examining the book for this {206} review was its lack of an index of any kind. Not only is it difficult to find material quickly, it adds to the impression that the book was rushed into the marketplace without adequate preparation. Another problem of form is that, in my judgment, Horton has tried to do too many things and, therefore, has not really done justice to any. If he wanted to use church history to support his case, he should do a scholarly examination of historical political theories. If he wants to support his case exegetically, he should actually do exegesis. If he wants to support his case with a biblical-theological examination of the role of Christians with respect to the state, he should do the work. As it is, this book is a pastiche of all of the above, but none done deeply or particularly well. Horton is reduced to sloganizing. The book is, unfortunately, an example of the kind of shallow examination for which Horton condemns others.

More importantly, Horton's plan for Christian political action leaves Christians as naked as those he is condemning. Horton states that "the Christian faith [does not demand] one particular public policy position or another..."<sup>142</sup> Thus, Horton's problem with the Christian Coalition is that the Coalition is claiming biblical authority for public policy positions like the marriage penalty. Where? It is certainly not in the Coalition's *Contract With the American Family*.<sup>143</sup> Horton, by way of contrast, seems to think that it is an improvement to not claim biblical authority for the pragmatic witch's brew one proposes for public policy.<sup>144</sup> The state "is simply concerned with civil order, safety, and justice,"<sup>145</sup> and,

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142. *Ibid.*, 154–55.

143. *Christian Coalition, Contract with the American Family: A Bold Plan to Strengthen the Family and Restore Common-Sense Values* (Chesapeake, VA, 1995), 17–19.

144. Horton, *op. cit.*, 157–68.

145. *Ibid.*, 161.

because of the “universal divine mandate imprinted on humanity’s conscience as part of God’s image,”<sup>146</sup> Horton is optimistic that, in spite of sin, men can be persuaded on the basis of natural law.<sup>147</sup> Horton likes his natural law straight, with no chaser.

Horton does not realize it but his real problem with the Christian Coalition is not that it wants to see God’s law as the standard for the nation, but that it has a different standard of natural law for political action than Horton has. This is the problem with natural law: it is a mirror, reflecting back at the gazer whatever he wishes to see in it. Thus, Horton’s New Model Army is as naked as the Christian Coalition’s for similar reasons. Only the clarity of God’s covenantal law-word can provide durable armament for the battles ahead.

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146. *Ibid.*, 162.

147. This despite his own experience with homosexuals and his admission that the bit of natural revelation that reveals to individuals that their homosexuality is an abomination to God has been apparently “suppressed.” *Ibid.*, 206. Surprise.

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## THE MINISTRY OF CHALCEDON

[Proverbs 29:18]

CHALCEDON (kal-SEE-don) is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and to 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 layman 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 (A D. 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 challenges directly 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 announced that "all power is given unto men in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for its 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).

Christians have generally given up two crucial features of theology that in the past led to the creation of what we know as Western civilization. They no longer have any red optimism concerning the possibility of an earthly victory of Christian principles and Christian institutions, and they have also abandoned the means of such a victory in external human affairs: a distinctly biblical concept of law. The testimony of the Bible and Western history should be clear: when God's people have been confident about the ultimate earthly success of their religion and committed socially to God's revealed system of external law, they have been victorious. When either aspect of their faith has declined, they have lost ground. Without optimism, they lose their zeal to exercise dominion over God's creation (Genesis 1:28); without revealed law, they are left without guidance and

drift along with the standards of their day.

Once Christians invented the university; now they retreat into little Bible colleges or sports factories. Once they built hospitals throughout Europe and America; now the civil governments have taken them over. Once Christians were inspired by “Onward, Christian Soldiers”; now they see themselves as “poor wayfaring strangers” with “joy, joy, joy down in their hearts” only on Sundays and perhaps Wednesday evenings. They are, in a word, pathetic. Unquestionably, they have become culturally impotent.

Chalcedon is committed to the idea of Christian reconstruction. It is premised on the belief that ideas have consequences. It takes seriously the words of Professor F. A. Hayek: “It may well be true that we as scholars tend to overestimate the influence which we can exercise on contemporary affairs. But I doubt whether it is possible to overestimate the influence which ideas have in the long run.” If Christians are to reconquer lost ground in preparation for ultimate victory (Isaiah 2, 65, 66), they must rediscover their intellectual heritage. They must come to grips with the Bible’s warning and its promise: “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29:18). Chalcedon’s resources are being used to remind Christians of this basic truth: what men believe makes a difference. Therefore, men should not believe lies, for it is the truth that sets them free (John 8:32).

*Finis*





