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# Chalcedon report

#438

**A Monthly Report Dealing with the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World**

## Biblical Faith and Economics

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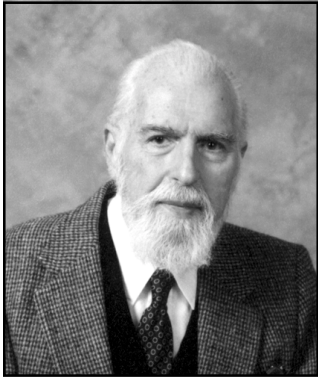
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# Neutrality

*By Rev. R.J. Rushdoony*

**N**One of the persistent errors of the modern era, clearly apparent in Descartes and enthroned by the Enlightenment, is the concept of neutrality. Not without deep roots in Greek and scholastic thought, neutrality came into its own when philosophy began, with Descartes, to know man and the universe in terms of man. It was assumed that man can identify himself in terms of himself and that man and man's autonomous mind is the ultimate standard of life. The point of reference is man, and man's knowledge is independent knowledge. Man's knowledge is tested by man himself, who is thus the final court of appeal.

Although this is a highly theoretical matter, it is one of intensely practical import. What are its implications?

## The Myth of Neutrality

Politicians speak of a Protestant vote, a Jewish vote, and a Catholic vote, as well as of labor, Southern, pensioner, farm, white-collar, and other voting blocs. In many major cities, as well as some states, a ballot ticket, to win, requires candidates drawn from particular groups, *i.e.*, Catholic, Jewish, labor, Polish, Irish, Italian, or the like. The politicians are fully aware of the fact that there is no neutrality in voting and that no vote is a neutral vote.

In spite of this fact, it is regarded as an unforgivable political sin ever to admit this patent and open lack of neutrality. Any man who refers to the obvious fact that each and every one of these groups has deep personal commitments, beliefs, and hostilities, is guilty of a most dastardly sin, except perhaps if he accuses the Protestant majority of prejudice. All are, without exception, "good Americans." All are interested, without exception, in the common welfare.

As a result, we have *the major hypocrisy* of American life, the assumption for all public purposes that all Americans share a common dedication to the general welfare, irrespective of race, color, or creed, together with the *practice* of political plunder by every group capable of committing it. With rank hypocrisy, politicians cater to race, color, creed, class, locality, and to age groups, as well as to professional groups, while refusing to admit that this is a major fact and problem of American life. We have, therefore, an ugly truth tearing at the very entrails of the Union going hand-in-hand with the hypocritical insistence that the situation does not exist!

So deeply is the myth of neutrality imbedded, that to deal realistically and honestly with it is tantamount to political suicide. Politicians must assure every last plundering faction of its sanctimonious neutrality while also insisting on their own.

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Each particular faction, of course, insists on its own impartial, neutral, and objective stance, while deploring the partisan and subjective position of its adversaries. All are equally committed to the great modern myth that such a neutrality is possible. This myth is basic to classical liberalism and to most schools of thought, conservative and radical, which are derived from it.

In part, a liberal myth is involved, namely, that the only true loyalty embraces the world, so that any “limited” loyalty is dishonorable and should not be ascribed to honorable men. A true statesman is a man of “world vision,” who sees things in terms of world politics rather than in terms of “limited” national concerns. Some would regard it as a catastrophe for an American president to be governed by American principles and interests.

Others are insistent on seeing a common faith in different heritages. Thus, it is insisted that Roman Catholics and Protestants are essentially agreed, except for minor differences, although every earnest Catholic and Protestant knows that the differences are not minor, but basic and vital. Judaism is also brought into the same generous tent, and reference is made to “our Judeo-Christian heritage,” again, an offense to earnest believers. The term “Judeo-Christian” is most commonly used by the adherents of the religion of humanity, who are insistent on reading their religion into both Judaism and Christianity. No doubt, if Buddhism were a factor on the American scene, we would hear references to our Buddho-Judeo-Christian heritage.

More basic to this problem than this unlimited world loyalty myth is the myth of man’s neutralism. It is assumed that all men are interested in the general welfare, and, if they are not, they are guilty of some fearful depravity.

This, unhappily, is the perspective of both liberals and conservatives alike. For the liberal, the conservative stands self-condemned because he so clearly reveals a limited loyalty and an obvious lack of neutrality. And the conservatives, who are so often the objects of this holy dismay, themselves reveal it as they deal with others.

*But men are never more foolish nor more dangerous than when they delude themselves into believing that they act for the general welfare.* It is then that they begin to play at being gods, assuming a lofty and god-like title of superiority to and transcendence of the normal human greeds and lusts. Men are never more susceptible to the sins which so easily beset humanity as when they believe themselves to be beyond them or immune to them. It is then that the good of mankind becomes readily equated with the

fulfilment of man’s sin, and, blinded by their delusions, men grope for the wall in the noonday sun.

Conservatives would not be prone to this delusion of neutralism if they were consistently and theologically Christian. One of the privileges of being a Christian is that a Christian can accept the fact that he is a creature, and, moreover, a sinful creature, and that he stands before God, not in his righteousness, but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Neutralism is a myth. Man cannot transcend himself to view the human situation with a godlike objectivity. He will always view things from his perspective, as a Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Buddhist, or the like, as a farmer, laborer, professional man, or an educator. He can approach others with charity and with justice, assuring them of their God-given rights to life, home, property, and immunity from false witness, even as he expects to receive these immunities himself. He must always be aware of his limitations as a creature and find in them his liberty, for to seek a liberty beyond our capacities is to ask for slavery.

### **Factions: An Inescapable Concept**

Thus, the concept of *the bland American*, neutral and objective, is a dangerous myth. Faction must be recognized as a reality, and factions must be identified as factions, the white Protestant majority no less than the Jewish minority. It must be accepted that each will reflect his perspective. What must be required of all is the common structure and restraint of law.

The Biblical law of love for neighbor and enemy is repeatedly cited in Scripture (*Lev. 19; Mt. 19; Rom. 13*) as a summation of the second table of the law. As Frederick Nymeyer has shown, in *Progressive Calvinism* and *First Principles*, the second table of the law is the basic charter of man’s God-given liberties and rights, to life (“thou shalt not kill”), to the sanctity of his home (“thou shalt not commit adultery”), for his property (“thou shalt not steal”), for the integrity of his reputation (“thou shalt not bear false witness”), and for their protection from intent as well as deed (“thou shalt not covet”).

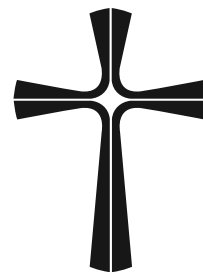
The factional American must therefore live under God and under law because he is not capable of a god-like neutrality. The concept of *the bland American* is thus an anti-Christian ideal and a denial not only of the reality which the Constitution recognized, but also of that order which God created.

*The bland scholar* and the *bland university* are similar myths, as is the apparent United Nations ideal

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# CHALCEDON FOUNDATION

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Dear Reader:

This month marks the first anniversary of the passing of Chalcedon's founder, R J. Rushdoony. In his very first *Chalcedon Report*, a mimeographed sheet dated October 1, 1965, he wrote, "What you are doing, in your support of me, is to sponsor a counter-measure to the prevailing trend...."

Today, that "counter-measure" is needed more than it was in 1965.

Two great enemies confront us. The first is *secularism*. This is the prevalent ethos that substitutes the religion of humanism for the religion of the Triune God. It infests our schools; it plagues our politics; it engulfs our media. It masquerades as a benevolently neutral irreligion. It is nothing of the kind. It is a rapacious enemy of Biblical Faith. It is the Religion of Man that vanquished the Garden of Eden and has gained the upper hand in our world. It is dedicated to abolishing every last vestige of Christian Faith from everywhere except between anybody's two ears — and even there, if it gets half a chance.

It is *the* established religion of the Western world.

The second great enemy is *privatism*. This is the heresy, often parading under a Christian banner, which limits religion only to belief. "You may believe what you will; just don't take your religion too seriously." In the church, this heresy has scuttled the full-orbed Faith of our fathers and reduced it to emotional Sunday entertainment "services" and weekday devotional "quiet times." There is no longer any question of a Christian culture or a Christian civilization, which gave us the blessings of the Western world of the last 2000 years. All that is gone, and the privatists are glad it's gone. A light hidden under a bushel is all we can expect — and all we should want.

This is *the* established heresy of the Christian church.

Chalcedon exists to combat these two falsehoods and to reinstall a Christian Faith for all of life. We do this by communicating a clear message of Christian hope on the basis of an infallible Word, the Bible. Ours is the sphere of ideas.

*Chalcedon will sink or swim on the power of its ideas.* We are not a benevolence society, though we advocate Christian charities that help our fellow men in terms of God's Word. We are not a church, though we endorse orthodox Christian churches in their task to preach the gospel, disciple the saints and spread the kingdom.

We are a *center* of cogent, incisive ideas that can change the world for the sake of Biblical Christianity. These ideas changed it in the past, and they will change it in the future. We are working to restore these ideas and change the world *today*.

We labor to change Christians' thinking and, in so doing, change their actions. We work to extend the kingdom of God in time and history by powerful, incisive writing, teaching, and preaching. We write books, monographs, and pamphlets. We maintain an exciting web site: **chalcedon.edu**. We deliver relevant, hard-hitting sermons and lectures. We are active in the field of Christian education. We hold an annual training session to prepare Christians to take the lead in our world, the Institute for Cultural Leadership. We spend our waking hours in cogent, godly communication. This is what Chalcedon is all about.



In supporting Chalcedon, you are supporting a “counter-measure.” In 1965 many people were convinced that Chalcedon could not succeed, that no one would support an organization based on ideas. If you are happy with the way things are in our secular culture, Chalcedon will not interest you. But if you yearn to see Jesus Christ and His Word exalted not only in the home and church, but also in the arts, business, science, technology, media, politics, and the wider society, Chalcedon is for you. If you believe that Biblical ideas are needed in these areas, Chalcedon is for you.

Over the years, many have shied away from any close association with Chalcedon. We have received a great deal of criticism from both the *secular* sphere and the *privatists* in the church. This is to be expected. Chalcedon is about challenging thinking, both within and without the church, because Christianity itself is about challenging all false beliefs and practices. We cannot stand for truth without challenging falsehood.

Are you afraid of Chalcedon because we sometimes go beyond your comfort level? Is your comfort level where it ought to be?

R. J. Rushdoony was one of the most influential leaders of the twentieth century, yet one of the least quoted. People found his insight invaluable and his view of the Faith life-changing, but they borrowed his ideas selectively and typically avoided any direct association. He was miles ahead of much of the church; he was far removed from their comfort level.

The same has been true of Chalcedon and its ministries. Perhaps that is why many who read the *Report* never give; they like the stimulation, but deem us well out of their comfort level.

We would invite more of our readers to become part of the “counter-measure to the prevailing trend.” **Being more than an observer and becoming part of the action requires leaving your comfort level. What is required, in fact, is that through the power of God’s sanctifying Spirit you learn to redefine it entirely.**

We covet your prayers for Chalcedon and its staff. Quite frankly, however, we also ask for your financial help to our ministry. We are a non-profit that depends on the contributions of the readers of this publication for our funding. Will you be a part of our work? Chalcedon needs you — and, we humbly propose, you need Chalcedon.

Mark R. Rushdoony  
President

P. Andrew Sandlin  
Executive Vice President



# Jerry Falwell's Eschatological Schizophrenia

*Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin*

In a 2001 *World Net Daily* column [[http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=23730](http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=23730)], Jerry Falwell furnished an update on his fledgling Tim LaHaye School of Prophecy at Liberty University: “a comprehensive school that delves into the mysteries of the Bible as they relate to world events leading to Christ’s imminent return.” I find this announcement staggering in light of Falwell’s tireless efforts to turn our depraved, decadent nation back to God and to revive a truly Christian culture.

Let me first gratefully acknowledge that Jerry is one of the most courageous, outspoken Christians of our time. On almost all of the great, controversial issues confronting our modern culture he is clearly on the Biblical side: abortion, homosexuality, Communism, pornography, state education, free market, missile defense, and so on. In the 70s, he helped start Moral Majority, a group dedicated to taking America back from the political liberalism and secularism that had captured it by the late 60s. His perspective on major TV talk shows (both network and cable) is almost unfailingly right down the line with the Bible. He presses diligently for a recovery of Biblical truth and morality in our society; he is the Christian that the liberals most love to hate.

## The Defeatism of Dispensationalism

The thing that has puzzled me about Jerry’s unflagging efforts to restore Biblical decency in our culture is his *eschatology*, highlighted most recently in the imminent (!) Tim LaHaye School of Prophecy. Theologians will tell you that “eschatology” is one’s view of the future — how it all will turn out in the end. Jerry holds to the popular idea of *dispensationalism*. This is, not surprisingly, the eschatology undergirding Tim LaHaye’s popular *Left Behind* fictional series (fictional both in genre and in theology!). It holds that the moral conditions of the world and the church are destined to get increasingly worse. When they get almost unbearably bad, the Lord Jesus will return in the clouds to “rapture” the living saints up to heaven. Then, the world will face a seven-year “tribulation period,” during which a shadowy political figure known as the Antichrist will take over the world; persecute Jews and (new) Christians; and set up a final, cataclysmic encounter with Jesus Christ, Who will return to earth (the *third* time) to liquidate the Antichrist and his cohorts and set up a thousand-year earthly reign in Jerusalem. This is the basic scheme of Jerry’s and Tim’s popular eschatology, which will be taught at the new school of prophecy.

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## The Promise of Postmillennialism

Jerry’s Liberty University and the Chalcedon Foundation are on an eschatological collision course. Let me explain. We both agree that Christ will return one day visibly to earth (“The Second Coming”). We disagree radically on what will *precede* that great event. While Liberty and LaHaye are dispensational, we at Chalcedon are *postmillennial*. We believe that Christ is *already* reigning from the heavens (*Ac. 2:29-36*). He extends His kingdom in the earth by His Spirit, using redeemed humans, Christians (*Ac. 2:14-21*). The Bible teaches that Christ will return *after* all human enemies are placed under His feet (*1 Cor. 15:24-27*). Jesus indicates that it will be a *good, long time* between His First Coming and His Second Coming (*Mk. 13:32-37; Lk. 12:37-48*). Between these two Comings, the kingdom of God will grow slowly, almost imperceptibly (*Mt. 13:31-33*). But it will one day overwhelm the earth. Then will be fulfilled the great Old Testament prophecy that, “[T]he earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (*Hab. 2:14*). There will be an extensive Christian culture on earth — not only after Christ’s Second Coming, but also *before*.

## Jerry’s Contradictions

Now, it is easy to see how this view comports with the idea of a Christian culture that both Jerry and I are working for. *The problem is that Jerry doesn’t hold it.* In other words, his eschatology conflicts with his idea of Christians’ social responsibility. After all, if we are dead certain that the world is *destined* to get more depraved just before Jesus returns, and if we are

equally convinced that He is coming very soon, why get involved trying to oppose the nanny-state, homosexuality, pornography, abortion, and other social sins rotting our culture? In fact, if we oppose them, aren't we just getting in the way of God's work, since we know that work will be ultimately unsuccessful? Maybe Liberty University and the Chalcedon Foundation are delaying the precious Second Advent of Christ by trying to hold back the tide of evil destined to flood the world just before Christ returns!

No, this is silly. It is right to work to turn our nation around for the Lord, and it is wrong to believe that these efforts are all for nothing. The end is not in sight, but a Christian society could be.

I do not ask Jerry to relax his vital work for Christian culture. *I ask him to bring his eschatology into line with his cultural mission.* Not to do this is to maintain a mind-bending schizophrenia that leads to all sorts of ironies and contradictions.

After all, if Jesus is coming *at any moment*, why start a Tim LaHaye School of Prophecy? Why all the planning and effort? If the school's stated objective is, in Jerry's words, to teach "the mysteries of the Bible as they relate to world events leading to Christ's imminent return," how can we honestly believe it is "imminent"? Jerry's school is scheduled to start in a couple of years. But isn't it likely we Christians will all be "raptured" by that time, and won't the Antichrist have closed and boarded up the Tim LaHaye School of Prophecy?

Moreover, why worry about abolishing abortion, exposing statism, and decreasing homosexuality if the rapture is "imminent"? If we work for a godly culture, we need to be assured that our efforts will not be in vain (*1 Cor. 15:58*). We need a divine guarantee that "God hath put [past tense!] all things under Christ's feet" (*Eph. 1:22*). We then go forward with the assurance that before Christ returns, all of His human enemies will be subjugated to Him. This is the confidence that propels us to work to bring America (and the world) back to God.

Unfortunately, Jerry Falwell's sense of Christian cultural obligation conflicts sharply with his eschatology. As long as he teaches his students that "the end is near"; that as we near the end, the world will become progressively more evil; and that all our efforts to clean up our culture will eventually come to nothing, he will never fully convince them that they need to throw themselves into the task to which he has tirelessly committed himself — turning our nation back to God.

Jerry needs to abandon his eschatological schizophrenia and embrace Biblical postmillennialism. It is this eschatology which fuels the vision of a Christian America and a Christian world.

— Continued from Page 3 —

of the bland man. No person or institution possesses the ability to be neutral and objective, to transcend itself and its historical context. This is no less true of science. Some would claim for the instruments of science, if not for scientists, this capacity for neutrality. But do scientific instruments make for objectivity? They are *the refinement of a perspective*, namely, that the *truth* or *utility* of a thing rests in *measurement*, a highly debatable proposition. Scientific instruments are helpful towards *accuracy* for a perspective, but they do not thereby give it *truth*, *objectivity*, or *neutrality*.

It is an inescapable fact that, if final and absolute judgment be denied to God, it will be exercised by men to the death of all liberty and social order. Damnation is not escaped by being "withdrawn" from God; it is simply transferred to man and made the instrument of total tyranny. This is the implication of ascribing neutrality to man. It is an ascription of transcendence and of divinity, and its consequences are tyranny and hell on earth.

A civil order which rests on the assumption that factions are real, and that they are "sown in the nature of man" by "the diversity in the faculties of men" which it "is the first object of government" to protect, is a civil order which assumes as a first premise the sovereign and transcendental nature of God as the only objective source of judgment, the only ultimate ground of fraternity, and the only objective mind which exists. It will therefore be a civil order which will ascribe to itself only limited functions, claiming added powers only when in pride and self-exaltation it seeks to be as god. This it can do only if its citizens are themselves deluded into believing that they and their institutions can transcend faction and become neutral and objective powers.

The alternative to "In God we trust" is "In man we trust," or in reason, science, the experimental method, an elite, or some like entity. In any and every case, it is a religious affirmation. The presuppositions of all of man's thinking are inescapably religious, and they are never neutral.

*(The foregoing article is an abridged version of the chapter by the same name in the author's The Nature of the American System, recently reprinted by Ross House Books. In the full chapter, the author points out how James Madison, in The Federalist number ten, saw factions as a healthy and necessary outgrowth of liberty and the purpose of republican government's checks and balances to be their co-existence, not their elimination. The book may be ordered at [www.rosshousebooks.org](http://www.rosshousebooks.org).)*



# Toward an Extraordinary Christian Life

*By Ron Kirk*

## Education for the Kingdom of God

**E**n behalf of their educational mission, Chalcedon has invited me to join the staff to pursue a user-friendly, yet distinctly Biblical, educational view and method. As many readers surely know, Rousas John Rushdoony long and tirelessly supported Christian education both through theological and historical exposition, and as an expert legal witness on behalf of Christian day and home schools across the nation.

Building upon Dr. Rushdoony's and others' work, my personal vision and application results from over twenty years of attempted craftsmanship in the science and art of teaching and learning derived from the study of the Scriptures and the best historical expressions. These studies were tested through application in Christian day schools, a church pastorate, and my own home. We intend to make this new column, tentatively called *Education for the Kingdom of God*, a regular feature of the *Report*. We intend, for novice and veteran alike, to communicate a wholesome, balanced, strictly Biblical, Christ-centered, and rigorous system of education.

Noted Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer posed the question, "How shall we then live?" Dr. Schaeffer aptly demonstrated the need for an answer to that question, yet he left the positive substance of the question unanswered. Here we intend to apply Chalcedon's wonderful legacy of Biblical wisdom for the edification of home school and professional educators, as well as for every serious-minded disciple of Jesus Christ. Indeed, we hope to persuade even accomplished men and women to re-examine their personal, vocational, and avocational activities in light of pointed Biblical relational and stewardship principles. We hope to persuade parents to examine their form of family government, with the aim to reconstruct or refine the home as appropriate. Ultimately we hope to cover the whole spectrum of educational concerns and in such a way that readers may put the substance of this column directly into practice without sacrificing sound theological underpinnings — to leave no gap between good theory and practice.

Let me hear from you (ronaldwkirk@compuserve.com). Your opinion of how effective I am in this undertaking and your thoughts for improvement will help guide the future of these articles. I particularly wish to hear from practicing educators.

## Toward Biblical Christian Education

Early in my walk as an evangelical Christian, my church wished to start a Christian school, and I took a personal interest in it. Therefore, when a Christian television program featured a Christian activist and Hollywood movie actor, who spoke on America's heritage of Christianity and education, I listened with rapt interest. He spoke of many early Americans as dedicated Christians who sought to incorporate their faith into every sphere and activity of life. From the beginning, Americans self-consciously designed their civil governments according to a Biblical standard and "for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith" (*The Mayflower Compact*, 1620). Daniel Webster declared the American Pilgrims sought to incorporate their Christian faith "through all their institutions, civil, political or literary."<sup>1</sup> He spoke of Noah Webster and his efforts to preserve and enhance the American English language, a necessity for the support of America's unique, free, Christian institutions. He said Webster devoted his life to educating Americans in such a way as to perpetuate these free institutions. This television presentation began to change my perspective, my career, and my life.

Previously, I harbored the unspoken thought that I could only find appropriate expressions for my faith through service in some church ministry. In my new found life, I desired Christ to be the center of everything concerning me, but appropriate expressions for my devotion seemed very limited. Not even family life, apart from church activity, seemed fundamentally important. My pastor told me I must be content with four nights home a month if I was to serve in the ministry. I must gather with the saints in worship and fellowship, or else I must occupy myself in personal devotion. All other time spent



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must be futile idleness, mere packing material for the true and spiritual life I desired.

Well, what is wrong with the life of a monk, personally devoted to Christ and laying his life down for Him? What is wrong with the hedonist, who simply seeks to make himself as comfortable as possible while he waits for his reward in eternity? Why should I not conform to the world so that I may get along more easily with it? The one answer is simple: these ways neglect both the soil and the appropriate fruit of the gospel's great commission. John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ; that is, he prepared men's hearts. Without Christians exerting the influence of their carefully crafted Christian character and personality on the world around them, the soil of men's hearts grows fallow, shallow, hardened, or choked with weeds. Indeed, when Christians neglect the stewardship of life in all its facets, social, scientific, civil, economic, recreational, and artistic, because we have lived our lives selfishly, then the militant humanists, the God-haters, most willingly fill the vacuum we leave. Many humanists are militant for *their* faith. Most humanists are at least consistent with their faith. And why should the world desire the Christian life if it holds no meaning other than to sit and wait for eternity or as mere fire insurance? Have we not then made ourselves irrelevant? Jesus said, "You know a tree by its fruit." And the seed planted in good soil will produce "some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold."

## A Fulfilling Christian Life

Why should a fulfilling Christian life wait until eternity to begin? Instead, what if the average Christian rose to his personal calling and stirred up his gifts? Why not live as if Christ had sent His Holy Spirit to inspire and comfort us so that no challenge is too great, no potential accomplishment too small? God made us complete human beings in Christ. Imagine how it will glorify God when the greatest novelists, the greatest painters, the greatest composers, the greatest jurists, the greatest scientists, the greatest families, the greatest businesses are the result of the self-conscious taking of every thought captive to the obedience of life! Imagine the heroic character which the Holy Spirit will build in the heart of the believer whose whole being seeks to be so worked into the depth of the soul and so filled with Him!

If this premise is sound, and people of the Reformation and the Protestant faith certainly thought so, then how indeed should we then live? The answer to that question has remained my passion and the quest of my life since I was introduced the idea so long ago.

The theoretical answer is simple, while the finished deed requires a lifetime: Christians must again be

disciples of Christ in every sense of that term. The acceptance of Christ's salvation and personal religious devotion mark the necessary, but mere beginning. From there, we must once more learn to read the Scriptures for the commands and principles which will make our lives conformable to Christ. We must master a *method* of Christian scholarship. Fortunately for us, we need not invent such method of scholarship, but rather re-discover that same historic skill which led to the great exploratory, scientific, literary, and civil accomplishments and triumphs of the Reformation through the nineteenth century. Thanks to the work of Rev. Rushdoony and many others, this work of re-discovery is quite accessible to everyone, and a primary aim of this column will be to articulate this method in considerable and practical detail for every present level of education and scholarly development and accomplishment, from beginner to veteran. In this regard, it is very important to remember that a scholar or disciple is but a willing learner, not necessarily an accomplished one. A truly accomplished scholar is one who has humbly persevered — a mere follower in advance of others.

When we have finally adopted a Biblical method of scholarship and taken seriously Jesus' admonishment to "learn from me," we will have begun to learn the science of life. When we begin self-consciously to apply our learning to ordinary life, we will be on our way toward the mastery of the art of life. When Jesus commands us not to worry, do we trust Him? When Paul says to stir up personal gifts, do we earnestly prepare to use them? When Paul says to learn the Scriptures, but not for interminable bickering, do we learn, yet restrain ourselves for the sake of both personal growth and brotherhood (but without compromising our consciences!)? Do we train our children and take pains to have such personal relationships with them that they become our (and others') best friends when mature? Do we study a subject of our passion, master it, and then contribute to it and take leadership in it? Then we have truly begun to *practice* the art of Christian life.

Upon the observations of fulfilled Christian lives in history, we find a legacy of consistent themes or principles. Please stay tuned to this column as we expand and apply these principles, with the result that we further extend the tent pegs of the influence of the gospel, through the heroic efforts of ordinary people moving toward extraordinary lives.

(Recommended reading: *The Messianic Character of American Education* by R.J. Rushdoony, and *The Foundations of Christian Scholarship* by Gary North [Ed.] )

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<sup>1</sup> Verna Hall, *Christian History of the Constitution: Christian Self-Government* (San Francisco, Foundation for American Christian Education: 1975), p. 248.



# Biblical Faith: Hebraic or Hellenic?

*By Rev. Steve Schlissel*

*"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven,"  
says the Preacher (Ecc. 3:1).*

**N**ow is the time for Christians to be more Jewish. The church's Hellenic orientation is reaching the end of its spotty course; now is the time to recover the mindset of the Scripture.

This is not meant to imply that Greek thinking did us no good. It did. Nor is it meant to imply that Greek thinking was altogether avoidable. It was entirely *unavoidable*. The gospel, which was first for the Jew, then for the Greek, had to be "converted" to Greek thought forms if it was to conquer (which it did) a Hellenically-informed world. As Dix noted, Athanasius "[F]inally formulated the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity in the only Greek terms which could fully express Jewish-Christian Messianism and Monotheism while satisfying Greek intellectualism and rationality" (*Jew and Greek*, p.55). From the moment of the Ascension, the Ecumenical Creeds became inevitable, because the Gentiles, who had theretofore been excluded from citizenship in Israel and who had been foreigners to the covenant, were being brought near through the blood of Christ. As Gentiles were becoming "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (*Eph. 2*), they had to hear the Truth in their language.

But the Truth included the following command from St. Paul: "I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking" (*Eph. 4:1*). The New Israel was to act *and think* the part. The widespread departure from the Biblical, covenantal, antithetical way of thinking was, in some ways, halted at the Reformation. But the return was far from complete. I submit to you, in condensed form, four arenas of thought which continue to be in need of Reformation (this list is not meant to be exhaustive):

## Dynamic vs. Static

Boman sees the difference between Hebrew and Greek thinking "outlined in bold relief by two characteristic figures; the thinking Socrates and the praying Orthodox Jew. When Socrates was seized by a prob-

lem, he remained immobile...in deep thought; when Holy Scripture is read aloud in the synagogue, the Orthodox Jew moves his whole body ceaselessly in deep devotion and adoration" (*Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, p.205). The Greek experiences the world in reflection, the Hebrew in movement.

Boman's contrasting figures are here offered for illustrative purposes only; no one is advocating *davening* as if it was demanded by the Informed Principle of Worship! (Cf. [www.messiahnyc.org/content.php?menu=9&page\\_id=1](http://www.messiahnyc.org/content.php?menu=9&page_id=1).) It is not. The value of the illustration is this: it captures contrasting ways of finding/viewing/living the self in relation to the world. The Greek begins with a presupposition of intellectual independence and ends with the world being subjected to autonomous interpretation. The Jew is looking for his place in a world he did not make and which operates by rules not of his fashioning. You might say the Greek stands still and seeks to take in the world, while the Jew rocks as God's world and Word take possession of him. Better still, the Word takes possession of the Jew as part of a people, *never* merely as an individual. Which leads, naturally enough, to our second arena.

## People vs. Person

While Socrates would like to talk about his conclusions with other human beings, he *came to them* in isolation. For the Jew this is impossible. It's as wrong to think of self apart from the group as it is to think of a raindrop apart from rain. One is defined, essentially and necessarily, in terms of the other. The ideal in the Greek mind is the lone hero; in the Hebrew mind it is the group: *Am Yisroel Chai*, the People of Israel Live. Hercules serves himself; David serves God's people. The Bible does not say, "I will be your God, and you will be my person," but "you will be my people." In Acts 2, "about three thousand were *added to* their number that day," then "the Lord *added to* their number daily those who were being saved," and later, "more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were *added to* their number." The word is *prostithemi* and it means "to

How is it possible for *anyone* to believe that the number one problem facing the church today is that Christians are trying too hard to obey God?

add, that is, to join to, to gather with any company.” Biblical salvation is inseparable from being joined to the body of Israel. The inability of modern Christians to think an inch beyond their “personal salvation” is a legacy of Greek individualism.

### Whole vs. Part

The uncritical and universal embrace of the technology of chapters and verses superimposed upon Scripture has had a devastating effect on the church. Yes, it has facilitated study, learning, and worship, but at a price. We have virtually lost the ability to think of a letter from Paul (for example) as a letter at all. Rather, we regard it merely as a collection of verses, divinely authored, yes, but really and essentially a deposit that was made apart from history, personality or conflict; discrete snatches of words, detached from one another and disconnected from the world.

Yet that is obviously not the way the Bible was given to us. It was more rough and tumble than pretty. And no epistolary “verse” was ever given isolated from a history, a personality, a conflict, or a purpose. This means that “verses” cannot be properly understood apart from contexts, near and far. You can see how closely this problem lines up with the previous problem: Greek individuation has not only rent our conception of self and church; it has torn apart the very idea of the Word (that’s singular) of God and rendered it a series (at best) or a collection (at worst) of sayings, words, formulas, aphorisms, ideas. As one man noted, “The result is that the Word of God appears as a sort of nondescript hodgepodge from which the professional theologian extracts, like a mineral out of its matrix, small but precious bits of knowledge which it is his job to clarify and systematize.” But the Word of God, in the Jewish conception, is not that which man defines, but that which defines man. And it does so in its entirety. We can only read a part at a time, but we *must* read, hear, and be taken by the whole.

### Organic vs. Abstract

For the Greek, the idea of *strawberriness* was more to be preferred than strawberries. Red, bumpy, juicy, luscious strawberries were merely instances of strawberriness, and it was in the idea, the *-ness* of a

thing, that the immovable, fixed object of faith was to be found. In the end, such thinking makes the Incarnation more than an ideological or metaphysical problem — it becomes a real moral dilemma. It is, to Hellenic thought, a permanent and dangerous justification of “the flesh,” *i.e.*, the creation — this world — against the immutable “idea.” And on this scheme, the resurrection of the flesh is a positive scandal! But guess what? God was manifest *in the flesh*.

Man cannot live on strawberriness alone — or at all. He wasn’t made to. Nor did God make us to live on propositions which exist without feet. Yet this is precisely the mindset of too many “friends” of the Reformation. They believe the entirety of what God has entrusted to us is discovered in an assent to a set of *solas* which live, move, and have their being in abstract orbit somewhere above the earth. The notion that God will not, does not, cannot allow that a justifying faith can exist apart from obedient feet, is, to these “friends,” altogether anathema — despite what God may say to the contrary. After all, they have their “verses.” And, like good Procrustians, those verses which don’t fit their contrived system, are lopped off, to be picked up only in epistemological and ethical emergencies.

It’s the Hellenic mindset which explains the comfort these friends have with the radical disconnect between faith and life. So long as your propositions resemble well-behaved ducks in a row, all is well. But the only ducks which stay lined up are dead or wooden. Living ducks move. This is not an argument against order, neatness, system, or truth-in-propositions, *per se*. It is a rejection of the idea that ideas can exist, in a world created by God, without consequences. No such animal.

Some think the Reformation can only continue among us as we excommunicate anyone failing to submit to our whip, our “cat-o’-five-solas,” as it were. But I propose that it can only continue as we seek to complete the partial recovery of Hebrew-mindedness begun at the Reformation. How is it possible for *anyone* to believe that the number one problem facing the church today is that Christians are trying too hard to obey God? As our young people say, “Hello?!”

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# Christianity Versus Islam

*By Samuel L. Blumenfeld*

**B**ecause we live in such a highly secularized society, we cannot believe that America could ever become involved in a religious war in this day and age. Yet ferocious religious wars have been going on all over the place: in Northern Ireland, in Israel, in the Balkans, in Sudan, in India, in Kashmir, and in Russia. But history is a very harsh taskmaster and refuses to let us Americans escape into our secular fantasies and liberal hot houses for long. Thus, it is vitally important for us to reconnect with the human race's never-ending history of religious struggle. That a group of Islamic terrorists, trained in a remote, war-torn, famine-ridden, hell-hole in Asia, could organize the kind of mind-boggling attack against America that took place on September 11, 2001, means that America is not only not exempt from history, but has been dragged kicking and screaming back into the middle of it.

## History Speaks

Back in 1588, Christopher Marlowe, master of historical drama, wrote his famous *Tamburlaine 2*. In it there is a fascinating scene in which the Christian King Sigismund of Hungary and Orcanes, the Muslim King of Natolia, both former enemies, decide to establish peace between them in order to join forces to defeat Tamberlaine the Great, the cruel, pagan conqueror of Asia.

Both men confirm their commitment with an oath. King Sigismund vows:

*By Him that made the world and sav'd my soul,  
The Son of God and issue of a maid,  
Sweet Jesus Christ, I solemnly protest  
And vow to keep this peace inviolable!*

King Orcanes vows:

*By sacred Mohamet, the friend of God,  
Whose holy Alcoran remains with us,  
Whose Glorious body, when he left the world,  
Clos'd in a coffin mounted up the air,  
And hung on stately Mecca's temple-roof,  
I swear to keep this truce inviolable!*

But as the story goes, it was King Sigismund who later broke the truce and was defeated and killed by the Muslims.

While the history of the struggle between Christians and Muslims for control of Europe was for a time settled after the Muslims were expelled from Spain in 1492, and driven back from the gates of Vienna to Asia and Africa, the Islamic enclaves that remained in the Balkans led to the recent wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Serbs had considered themselves as the Christian bulwark against further Islamic incursions in Europe, and therefore could not understand why they were being bombed by fellow Europeans and Americans.

## Bosnia and Kosovo

You had to know history to understand what Bosnia and Kosovo were all about and what bin Laden's men were doing in the Balkans. That conflict proved that the war between Christianity and Islam has never ended. Over the ages, it simply took on different forms. The rise of European power put a lid on Islamic ambitions and the Muslim world became the backwater of history until the discovery of oil in the twentieth century. But in the nineteenth century, the Islamic Barbary states of North Africa could still make trouble for the Infidel. They took possession of American and European commercial vessels, held their crews for ransom, and enslaved other Christians. Our first war after independence was fought during the Jefferson administration against the Muslim pirates and kidnappers of Tripolitania. It is known in the history books as the Barbary War, in which U.S. Marines staged their first invasion of foreign soil. Hence, the Marine anthem: "From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli."

In order to finally put an end to the piracy and barbarism coming out of North Africa, France decided to take over Algeria. During the 1830s and 1840s, the French imposed their rule over the territory, encouraging Europeans to settle there. The result was a flourishing French colony and an end to

Barbary piracy. France maintained order in North Africa until the end of World War II, when the anti-colonialist movement got underway. Both liberals and communists joined in forcing the European powers to give up their colonies.

In Algeria, however, over a million Europeans had settled in the territory and the coastal *départements* were considered an integral part of France. However, when Charles de Gaulle gained power at the height of the Algerian uprising, he decided that France should quit Algeria because the Moslems could never become true Frenchmen. And so France abandoned Algeria, and a million Europeans took to the boats. Today, the invasion has been reversed. Five million Muslims, mostly Algerians, live in France. They make up ten percent of the population and are part of the resurgent Islamic power in Europe. Christianity is now so weak in France that one wonders if it is capable of resisting the assumption of Islamic power.

We have been told by our leaders and the media that we are not at war against the Islamic religion. We are at war against terrorism. But what they all prefer not to recognize is that the spiritual power behind that terrorism, the power that drives otherwise intelligent human beings to undertake suicidal missions against the infidel, is the religion of Islam. Of course, there are millions of Muslims who just want to lead normal lives. Unfortunately, after September 11, 2001, nothing is “normal” anymore.

## Islam Today

In an alarming article in the November, 2001 issue of *Commentary* magazine, Daniel Pipes contends that Islamist militants are serious about their plan to conquer America. He writes:

*The first missionaries for militant Islam, or Islamism, who arrived here from abroad in the 1920's, unblushingly declared, "Our plan is, we are going to conquer America." The audacity of such statements hardly went unnoticed at the time, including by Christians who cherished their own missionizing hopes. As a 1922 newspaper commentary put it:*

*To the millions of American Christians who have so long looked eagerly forward to the time the cross shall be supreme in every land and the people of the whole world shall have become the followers of Christ, the plan to win the continent to the path of the "infidel Turk" will seem a thing unbelievable. But there is no doubt about its being pressed with all the fanatical zeal for which the Mohammedans are noted.*

Pipes writes further:

*As a teacher at an Islamic school in Jersey City, near New York, explains, the "short-term goal is to introduce Islam. In the long term, we must save American society." Step by step, writes a Pakistan-born professor of economics, by offering "an alternative model" to Americans, Muslims can transform what Ismail Al-Faruqi referred to as "the unfortunate realities of North America" into something acceptable in God's eyes.*

The irony in all of this is stunning. For years the Christian Right has been trying to get Americans to live godly lives, but with very limited success. The fact that 85% of American parents put their children in pagan public schools is an indication of how strong our liberal secular culture is. It controls the curriculum in our schools and universities. It controls most of the print media, the electronic media, and most of what comes out of Hollywood. And American schools are now teaching American children all about Islam. While the Bible has been eliminated from the classroom, apparently the Koran hasn't. How else can you teach about Islam?

## Franklin Graham's Take

Recently, the Reverend Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse, a Christian relief agency, called Islam “wicked and violent.” He said, “I don't believe this is a wonderful, peaceful religion. When you read the Koran and you read the verses from the Koran, it instructs the killing of the infidel, for those that are non-Muslim.”

As the son of Billy Graham, Franklin is the designated successor to his father's longtime evangelical ministry. He delivered the benediction at Bush's inauguration. But now he's in trouble with the White House, which sponsored a Ramadan dinner for 50 ambassadors from Islamic countries with a traditional meal and prayer. Also, the Muslim chaplain of Georgetown University recently officiated at the opening prayers of the House of Representatives on Capitol Hill.

The moral seems to be that if Islamist terrorists bomb the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and kill 5,000 Americans, other Islamists get invited to the White House for a special dinner prepared to their specifications: no pork. Now that Americans are being invited to be kind to Muslims, where will all of this lead?

Graham said, “It wasn't Methodists flying into those buildings, it wasn't Lutherans. It was an attack

on this country by people of the Islamic faith.” And that’s why the latter are now favored guests at the White House! Of course, the President is doing this to keep the Islamic states in line while we war against the terrorists which these states harbor.

But if we are being encouraged by our born-again President to be kind to our Muslim neighbors, shouldn’t Christians see this as a missionary opportunity? Why not introduce Muslims to the loving grace of Jesus Christ? One of the reasons why Americans find it difficult to become friendly with Muslims is because sooner or later their rabid hatred of Israel will surface. Americans in general don’t like to hate anybody, and they are uncomfortable with people who are haters.

Christianity preaches love. Islam preaches hate. That is why hatred of Israel fills the psyche of so many Muslims. Abnormal, pathological hatred is not healthy. It requires constant energy to be sustained at the level it exists among Muslims. And that is why life is so miserable in many Islamic countries. And that is why Palestinian refugees have preferred to remain in refugee camps for 50 years rather than do something constructive with their lives. They prefer to live with festering, enduring hatred, and teach it to their children, rather than accept forgiveness and peace. No true Christian could ever waste his life that way.

Yet, the United Nations’ aid agency accepts these refugee camps as perfectly normal for the Arab Muslims. After World War II, millions of displaced persons found new constructive lives in countries all over the world. But in the Middle East, Palestinian hatred is used to torment the world about Israel.

It is to be hoped that one of the first things the new government of Afghanistan might do is recognize Israel and establish diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. It would signal a dramatic change in the attitude of Muslims toward Israel.

Indeed, let us be loving and concerned with the well being of our Muslim citizens, and let us convey to them that Jesus will save them from their sickening hatred and grant them life renewed.

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*Samuel L. Blumenfeld has written eight books on education, including Homeschooling: A Parents’ Guide to Teaching Children, How to Tutor, and Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers. Dr. Blumenfeld’s books are available on Amazon.com. Also, back issues of his incisive newsletter, The Blumenfeld Education Letter, are now available on line. He can be contacted at slblu@netway.com.*

# **Wanted!**

**Chalcedon-friendly Churches, Home Churches, Bible Studies. Chalcedon wants to develop a list of churches, home churches, and Bible studies sympathetic to our position and objectives so that we can share this information with those of you who call asking for groups in your area. If you would like for your group to be included on our list send the name of the contact person, their email, phone number, the town and state of the group to Susan Burns at [chalcedon@netscope.net](mailto:chalcedon@netscope.net).**

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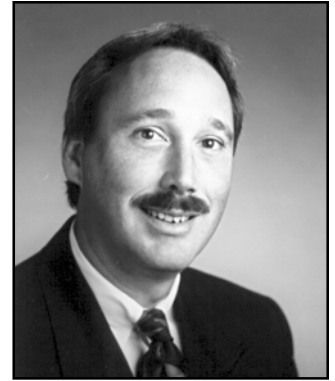
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# The Biblical Case For Private Property

By Rev. Craig R. Dumont



**P**riate property is receiving a lot of attention these days. I guess you could say there is a renaissance of thinking and appreciation for, as Tom Bethel puts it, “the blessings of private property.” In fact, Bethel is one of many brilliant and competent men who have recently tackled this topic. His book, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity Through the Ages* is well written and informative. It also is encouraging that one of the last chapters deals with the rediscovery of private property and looks ahead to the trend of acknowledging and strengthening property rights in our country and around the world. Another author, Harvard professor Richard Pipes, has written a marvelous book called simply *Property and Freedom*.

Let me be the first to declare that I am very thankful that there are rising up all around us men who are taking up the intellectual defense of private property after years of conceding the battle to socialists, Marxists, Darwinists, and statist. However, there is one great need within these useful works that must be addressed, and that great need is to present the theological foundation, for without a theological basis on which to ground freedom and rights, there is nothing other than toleration. There is a huge difference between freedom and toleration.

## Freedom vs. Tolerance

Freedom is security based upon the unchanging laws of God which all men must obey. It eliminates the uncertainty of arbitrary changes in opinion, pragmatic opportunism, or state control. Tolerance only grudgingly allows for the continuation of a “privilege” that the state may grant today, yet withdraw tomorrow, based upon new thinking, different circumstances, or power politics.

Unfortunately, almost all the books I’ve read mistake tolerance for freedom. For instance, Bethel states:

*[T]here are four great blessings that cannot easily be realized in a society that lacks the secure, decentralized, private ownership of goods. These are: liberty, justice, peace and prosperity. The*

*argument of this book is that private property is a necessary (but not a sufficient) condition for these highly desirable social outcomes.<sup>1</sup>*

In other words, society in general, intellectuals in particular, and the state specifically should tolerate private property, not as an inherent right in regard to itself, but only to the extent that it contributes to liberty, justice, peace, and prosperity.

Now, everyone would agree that liberty, justice, peace, and prosperity are good things and highly desired. It could also be argued that as long as these terms found their meaning and expression in God’s Word, the Bible, there would be no problem; for all these words or terms are clearly defined and elaborated upon in the Bible. In fact, one theologian points out that when God’s property laws are followed, there will indeed be blessings. “There is also continuity; the promise of posterity, of continuity of possession and security therein, and, with these things, peace and prosperity, is a consequence of freedom and continuity under the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> But there lies the crux of the problem I’ll set forth: Today, we are a lawless people, or perhaps a better way to express it is that we are not a people under one law any longer, but rather we have come to a point in time where everyone creates his own law, or his own standards of right and wrong. Judges on a regular basis make up “law” on the spot, making every court appearance a crapshoot. We live in what is called “postmodern times” where each person determines what is good and what is evil. All definitions are blurred; there is no objective reality. Ask ten different people how they define those terms, and you’ll get ten different answers.

In France, Robespierre and the French Revolutionaries rallied the masses under those very words — a revolution that later came to be known more honestly as “The Reign of Terror.” Karl Marx had his own definitions for these as did Stalin and Mao. I guarantee you that President Clinton, while using the same words, meant something totally different than you and I do when we talk about these things.

So the problem is this: If private property rights are tolerated only as they contribute to liberty, justice, peace, and prosperity, tell me, who is going to be the official arbitrator of definitions and levels? Consider, for instance, peace. There's no peace between Microsoft and Sun. There are times private property creates not peace, but conflict as people attempt to maximize their assets in a free market. If private property is simply tolerated because it contributes to the "peace process," it is open to attack when peace is defined on these terms, especially because there are times when "peace" and "freedom" conflict.

## Private Property and Justice

Justice is also a hazy place to hang your private property hat in today's world. Again, because today there is no objective law standard to measure ourselves against, justice to the large land-owning farmer or rancher is different from the justice demanded by the so-called "environmentalist." Prosperity suffers the same fate, for what is prosperity and who has it? Does redistribution of wealth fall under "prosperity" and "justice" as in calls for "economic justice"? Ron Sider, who masquerades as a Christian teacher, is a regular contributor to *Moody Monthly*, and calls for a radical redistribution of wealth in the name of fairness and justice. I dare say that none here would want to have his definitions imposed upon them.

Professor Pipes, despite an otherwise excellent book, also comes up short in this area. His four arguments set forth are truly historical arguments, but he totally misses the most important one that changed the history of the world. He gives these four arguments for private property:

- The political argument in favor of property holds that (unless distributed in a grossly unfair manner) it promotes stability and constrains the power of government. Against property it is claimed that the inequality which necessarily accompanies it generates social unrest.
- From the moral point of view, it is said that property is legitimate because everyone is entitled to the fruits of his labor. To which critics respond that many owners exert no effort to acquire what they own and that the same logic requires everyone to have an equal opportunity to acquire property.
- The economic line of reasoning for property holds that it is the most efficient means of producing wealth, whereas opponents hold that economic activity driven by the pursuit of private gain leads to wasteful competition.

- The psychological defense of property maintains that it enhances the individual's sense of identity and self-esteem. Others assert that it corrupts the personality by infecting it with greed.<sup>3</sup>

He then goes on to state:

*These four approaches fairly exhaust the range of arguments for and against property articulated during the past three thousand years.*<sup>4</sup>

Now that is an amazing statement, because it omits the most important, persuasive, and influential argument for private property that the West has set forth: *God's private property laws*. It was the proper understanding and implementation of God's property laws that allowed the Christian West to flourish and prosper.

## God's Private Property Laws

This universal truth that flows from God's property laws is rooted and grounded in the objective fact that, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: the world and they that dwell therein" (*Ps. 24:1*). The Biblical idea of property comes up right at the beginning of Genesis where man was created in the image of God and commanded to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it. "Not only is it man's calling to exercise dominion, but it is also his nature to do so.... Man was created to exercise dominion under God and as God's appointed vicegerent over the earth."<sup>5</sup> Rushdoony points out, "An aspect of this dominion is property."<sup>6</sup> The Biblical teaching is that "the earth is indeed the Lord's, as is all dominion, but God has chosen to give dominion over the earth to man, subject to His law-word, and property is a central aspect of that dominion. The absolute and transcendental title to property is the Lord's; the present and historical title to property is man's."<sup>7</sup>

God's declaration that man is entitled by His law, a law which transcends all man-made laws, arguments, and philosophies, to own private property is highlighted by at least two of the Ten Commandments: the Eighth which says, "You shall not steal," and the Tenth which strikes at the heart of the entire matter, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

A case could be made for private property rights being outlined and protected by God in every commandment, as reflected by James' insistence that



if a man is guilty of breaking one commandment he is guilty of breaking all commandments. But we can clearly see the principle of private property set forth and confirmed in the Fourth Commandment, where a person and his personal property were required to rest; in the Sixth Commandment which restrained a person from stealing the ultimate personal property, another's life; in the Seventh Commandment which, by outlawing adultery, set personal boundaries which had to be respected; and the Ninth Commandment which prohibited one from robbing a person of his reputation, which is a very important and valuable form of personal property.

The fact is, God created the world and then delegated it, in the form of personal property, to man. The right to own and control private property, therefore, transcends any political, moral, economical, or psychological basis and rests in God's revealed and declared law.

Let me point out that God takes the issue of private property very, very seriously. For instance, God's law of securing and maintaining landmarks that define a person's property is stated and reinforced on at least five occasions. That law, stated in Deuteronomy 19:14, reads like this:

*You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.*

It is cited also in Deuteronomy 27:17; Proverbs 22:28; 23:10; and Job 24:2.

When you look at the Tenth Commandment, you'll see that this is one powerful assertion of private property rights. This commandment deals with both the intents and actions of men to manipulate or control property that does not legitimately belong to them. Martin Noth, in his commentary on Exodus, writes:

*[Coveting] describes not merely the emotion of coveting but also includes the attempt to attach something to oneself illegally. The commandment therefore deals with all possible undertakings which involve gaining power over the goods and possessions of a "neighbor," whether through theft or through all kinds of dishonest machinations.<sup>8</sup>*

Another scholar writes:

*[T]he corresponding Hebrew word [for covetousness] has two meanings, both to covet and to take. It includes outward malpractices, meaning seizing for oneself.<sup>9</sup>*

What we're seeing is the positive assertion of private property rights with boundaries established by God Himself, with a negative condemnation of every attempt to gain by fraud, coercion, or deceit that which belongs to our neighbor.

Let me point out the obvious right here. If God Himself establishes private property rights and "if all desiring and taking by force or by law what is your neighbor's is strictly against God's law, [doesn't it also follow] that the organization of such covetousness into a system is the creation of an anti-God society?"

Let me put it even plainer. Outside of God's laws governing property use, all attempts to control, manipulate, and dictate what a person can do with his property is antichrist to the core. Therefore, all public planning commissions and zoning boards that meet to consider anything other than what God does or does not allow on property is a lawless example of stealing and covetousness in action. To reiterate, it is antichrist to the core.

This does not mean that we are free to ignore planning commissions and zoning boards because God's laws are meant to be an expression of faith as well as a rule for life, and today's Christians are not people willing to put their faith in God. They ignore God's laws and put their faith in government to solve their problems and meet their needs. The civil government that we have is a direct expression of our society's faith. It's not a full-scale rebellion against these commissions that we need, but rather a revival of the true Christian Faith in the hearts and minds of those who call themselves Christians.

Far too many Christians reject God's laws and declare themselves as god and, therefore, declare themselves able to ignore the Eighth and Tenth Commandment. They actively engage in stealing and coveting and love every minute of it. They seek to manipulate and control their neighbor's property, specifically through non-Biblical zoning laws. In effect, these Christians show that they hate God's plan for the future and they seek to impose their own version of predestination on property owners, arbitrarily telling them what can and cannot be done with their property. You get Christians thinking righteously about these things and you would be amazed at how soon we would see the dismantling of Satanic institutions, all without any civil disobedience or rebellion.

By the way, I don't mean that these zoning decisions have to be just quietly accepted. We have civil recourse through our court system that is designed to be appealed to. It's true that it's no longer the law-based system that seeks and upholds

the justice that our Founders had envisioned, but by God's grace it is a restraining force against many true evils. Until the time comes that people no longer feel able to covet openly through zoning boards, we have a responsibility to pray for God's grace, mercy, and righteousness to prevail in our courts.

There are, in fact, limits to what a person can do with his private property, for ultimately it is owned by God and it is He who sets the parameters for use. But let me stress that property use is governed and regulated by God, and not by those who are neither owners nor the stewards of the property.

<sup>1</sup> Tom Bethel, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity Through the Ages*.

<sup>2</sup> R.J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology*, "Theology of the Land."

<sup>3</sup> Richard Pipes, *Property and Freedom*.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> R.J. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, Vol. 1, "The Eighth Commandment."

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Martin Noth; Exodus, as cited in the *Institutes of Biblical Law*, Vol. 1, "The Tenth Commandment."

<sup>9</sup> Gerhard Von Rad; *Deuteronomy, A Commentary*.

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## Chalcedon itinerary

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| Feb. 17  | P. Andrew Sandlin at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (10:00 a.m.). For more information, contact Bill Garaway at (831) 476-4877. Also at Reformed Heritage Church, San Jose, CA (2:00 p.m.). For more information, contact Gary Wagner at (408) 866-5607. |
| March 9  | P. Andrew Sandlin at Cal State University, Fullerton. Other speakers include Rev. Roger Wagner, Jeffrey Ventrella, and Commander Thomas McManus. For more information, call (714) 572-8358 or go to <a href="http://www.scccs.org">www.scccs.org</a> .       |
| March 17 | P. Andrew Sandlin at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (10:00 a.m.). For more information, contact Bill Garaway at (831) 476-4877. Also at Reformed Heritage Church, San Jose, CA (2:00 p.m.). For more information, contact Gary Wagner at (408) 866-5607. |
| April 21 | P. Andrew Sandlin at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (10:00 a.m.). For more information, contact Bill Garaway at (831) 476-4877. Also at Reformed Heritage Church, San Jose, CA (2:00 p.m.). For more information, contact Gary Wagner at (408) 866-5607. |
| May 19   | P. Andrew Sandlin at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (10:00 a.m.). For more information, contact Bill Garaway at (831) 476-4877. Also at Reformed Heritage Church, San Jose, CA (2:00 p.m.). For more information, contact Gary Wagner at (408) 866-5607. |
| June 16  | P. Andrew Sandlin at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (10:00 a.m.). For more information, contact Bill Garaway at (831) 476-4877. Also at Reformed Heritage Church, San Jose, CA (2:00 p.m.). For more information, contact Gary Wagner at (408) 866-5607. |

# The Earth is the Lord's

*By Rev. William O. Einwechter*



**A**s the stubborn Pharaoh of Egypt suffered with his people through the terrible plague of thunder and hail, he called for Moses and Aaron and begged them to entreat the Lord (Yahweh) that the plague would cease. Moses responded by saying that he would go out of the city and pray to the Lord “and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD’S” (*Ex. 9:29*). The proud Pharaoh of Egypt had refused to believe that all things in heaven and earth were the property of Yahweh and subject to His rule; but Pharaoh was receiving a first-hand display that Yahweh was indeed Lord of *all*. Later, as Israel stood poised to enter the Promised Land, Moses taught the people the fact of their election by God. This election is all the more awesome to contemplate when Israel remembers that Yahweh is no mere tribal deity, nor one god among many, but the Creator of heaven and earth. Moses states, “Behold, the heaven and the heaven of the heavens is the LORD’S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is” (*Dt. 10:14*). David stated the truth that God is Master and Owner of all things when he wrote, “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (*Ps. 24:1*). According to these words, the whole earth belongs to God, including all its elements and all the people who dwell therein.

An important scriptural term to designate God’s comprehensive ownership and rule of the world is the term “dominion” (cf. *Job 25:2; Ps. 103:22; 145:13; Dan. 4:3, 34*). As Creator, God has dominion over all — the entire world belongs to Him and is under His jurisdiction and command. Significantly, the word “dominion” is used by God to describe man’s place and calling in the world (*Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8:6*). It is imperative that the modern church understands the dominion calling of covenant men and women, and the purpose of this article is to give a brief introduction to this calling.

## **Man, the Image of God, and Dominion**

Genesis 1:26 is one of the most important verses in all of Scripture concerning the being and calling of man. In this verse, the divine counsel concerning the creation of man is stated: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” There has been much discussion concerning the precise definition of the image of God in man, but the general agreement is that it refers to the fact that man will be comparable to his Maker in certain aspects of his being and his work — the Creator Himself will serve as the pattern from which man will be contrived. In regard to his being, man will have a moral and spiritual likeness to God (*i.e.*, he will be a rational being, a self-conscious person, able to exercise a will in moral choices; and a pure being, untainted by sin). In regard to his work, man will, like God, possess authority and power to rule the earth and its creatures (*i.e.*, have dominion). These two aspects — man’s being and work — encapsulate the image of God in man. The two are intimately related: man is able to exercise dominion in the earth because he is a rational, self-conscious, and righteous man; and, the dominion responsibility provides the province for the exercise of man’s moral and spiritual powers.

It is God’s purpose that man serves as His representative in the earth. To adequately fulfill this calling, man is made in God’s image. God has endowed man with the faculties needed, the authority required, and the materials and creatures requisite to show forth the glory of God and to provide for his life on earth.

## **The Charge to Take Dominion**

From the beginning it was God’s will that man would have dominion in the earth. This dominion is part of the image of God in man. The charge to take dominion in Genesis 1:28 is preceded by the grant

of dominion in Genesis 1:26, “and let them have dominion....” The Hebrew word that is here translated “dominion” means to subdue, rule over, or have the mastery of. It can also carry the meaning of “to possess oneself of,” or “take possession of.” According to the context of Genesis 1, it appears that both connotations of the word “dominion” are represented here. In this grant of dominion, God gives the earth and all that is in it to man as his possession and also gives him the authority to rule it. Because God’s dominion must remain absolute, man’s dominion is one of stewardship. The authority man exercises over the earth has been delegated to him by God, and the assets that man holds are ultimately the property of God. Man, as God’s steward and representative, is to use his authority and possessions for the glory of his Lord and Master.

The charge to take dominion in the earth is stated in Genesis 1:28. Here God commands the man and woman “to have dominion over” the earth and all living creatures. The command reflects the grant of dominion, but reveals the fact that man must actively *take dominion*; that is, his work is to take possession of all the earth and exercise a hands-on rule of the earth and its creatures. The necessary steps to fulfill the dominion mandate are stated as: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it....” The work of dominion requires man to be fruitful (*i.e.*, have many children)<sup>1</sup> and fill the earth with people, and for man to “subdue” the earth. The word “subdue” indicates that man must bring all space and resources of the earth under his control.

The dominion commandment instructs man to develop all the riches of the earth so that the full potential of the creation can be realized to the glory of God and the good of mankind. The dominion mandate is comprehensive, calling man to rule the entire world, its creatures, and all aspects of life in accord with the will and purpose of God. David states it this way: “Thou madest him [man] to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet....” (*Ps. 8:6*).

## The Corruption of Dominion

Man’s fall into sin radically changed him. He remained a rational being, but because he had established his own mind as the standard of truth, he would no longer think God’s thoughts after Him, so his ability to reason was corrupted. He remained a self-conscious person, but because he did not derive the concept of his personality from the fact of his creation in the image of God, his self-consciousness was perverted into selfishness and self-aggrandize-

ment. He retained the power to will, but lost the ability to choose righteousness, and thus became a slave to sin. But not only was his being corrupted, so was his capacity for dominion. Man’s original endowments enabled him to serve as God’s representative and exercise dominion in the earth, but when these endowments were depraved through sin, man could no longer carry out his calling. But his *ability* for dominion was not the only thing he lost; he also forfeited his *authority*. By rejecting God’s rule, man came under the rule of sin and Satan — he became a slave, and slaves do not exercise dominion. Only a righteous man operating in the liberty of obedience to God can carry out the charge of taking dominion.

There is a widespread misconception that unregenerate man can still fulfill the dominion mandate. This perspective is based on the view that the dominion calling of man is essentially agricultural and technical. But it is not. The dominion calling is inherently *ethical, i.e.*, it calls man to rule the earth and develop its resources as *God’s representative* for the honor and glory of his Creator. Man is charged with the task of governing the earth according to the ethical standards of God’s law as summarized in the two great commandments of the law: love of God and love of one’s neighbor. Unregenerate man does not carry out any of his activities out of a love for God and almost never out of a true love for other men. To some degree, unsaved man still retains the image of God in his person and also an impulse to take dominion, but his focus is limited to the technological, and his motive is his own power and glory. How can it be a fulfillment of the dominion mandate when a man uses his gifts and resources in the context of rebellion against God? The dominion charge is to build the kingdom of God on earth! It is true, that in a limited, physical sense, the unregenerate may contribute procreationally to the filling of the earth and technologically, agriculturally, or scientifically to the subduing of the earth — God uses even the wrath of man to praise Him and serve His purposes. These contributions of the wicked are part of the wealth that is laid up for the righteous (*cf., Pr. 13:22; Eccl. 2:26*). Only righteous men can fulfill the dominion calling, and that is why in the Bible the charge to take dominion is not addressed to unregenerate men.

## The Restoration of Dominion

After the Fall, wherein man lost his ability and authority for dominion, God in mercy intervened with His Promise (*Gen. 3:15*). The promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent provided hope for man that what he had lost

would one day be restored through one of his descendants. This promise also provided the objective basis for man's faith in God and His saving grace. From the beginning, the Scripture differentiates between the chosen line of the seed of the woman and the reprobate line of the seed of the serpent. The line of the seed of the woman originates in Adam's son, Seth, continues in Noah and Shem, and leads to Abraham, the father of all who believe. The promise of Genesis 3:15 is greatly expanded in God's promises to Abraham and his seed (*Gen. 12:2-3; 17:4-8*), and it is revealed that through Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed (*Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4*), and that his seed shall take dominion in the earth (*Gen. 22:17*). These promises are secured by the covenant that God makes with Abraham (*Gen. 15*). Therefore, the Old Testament shows that God's covenant with Abraham will be the means of restoring righteousness and dominion to fallen man.

The New Testament explicitly teaches that the promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (*Gal. 3:6-9, 16-18, 26-29*). He is the second Adam Who restores what the first Adam lost (*Rom. 5:17-19; 1 Cor. 15:22*); He is the seed of the woman Who crushes the head of the serpent (*Rev. 12:1-9*); He is the man Who reestablishes dominion for mankind (*Heb. 2:6-8*); He is the Lord Who is given authority to rule all the nations of the earth (*Ac. 2:33-36; Rev. 19:16*). In Christ, men have their ability to exercise dominion restored (*Eph. 4:24*), and their authority to rule reinstated (*Rev. 2:26-27*). Christ is the head of a new humanity (*2 Cor. 5:17*) that will bring the blessings of the kingdom of God to earth as He leads them in the fulfillment of the original dominion mandate. Through Christ and His seed the task of dominion will be realized when, in time and history, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (*Isa. 11:9*).

## The Means of Dominion

But how is the dominion charge carried out in the post-Fall world, where it is not simply a matter of subduing the earth, but also of subduing sin and rebellion against God? The answer is found in the Great Commission.<sup>2</sup> The Great Commission should be understood as a restatement of the original dominion charge for the post-Fall, post-resurrection-of-Christ world. The Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 states that the followers of Jesus have the ability ("I am with you," *i.e.*, through the Holy Spirit that I will send to you [*cf.*, *Ac. 1:4-8*]), and the authority ("All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore....") to go forth as God's representatives to conquer sin and subdue the

earth for the glory of God. The Great Commission as stated in the gospels is reminiscent of the commands of the original dominion charge in Genesis 1:28. Jesus' followers are to preach the gospel and gain converts (*i.e.*, be fruitful and multiply); they are to go into all nations (*i.e.*, fill the earth); and they are to disciple all nations in obedience to the commands of Christ (*i.e.*, subdue the earth).

The Great Commission teaches that God's purpose for man as revealed in the dominion mandate will come to pass as the church of Jesus Christ disciples the nations by preaching the gospel, baptizing the converts, and teaching them to observe the whole counsel of God as it is revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Thus, the Great Commission is not simply a matter of evangelism and church planting, but aims at the transformation of every institution and every sphere of life by the Word of God, and at the development of godly, Christ-honoring culture in every land. The call to Christians is to cast down the foolish imaginations of men, and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring every thought in every area of life captive to the obedience of Christ (*2 Cor. 10:5*).

The tools of dominion are given explicit identification in the Scriptures. The Old Testament reveals that faith in the Word of God (*Gen. 15:6*) and obedience to the law of God are the means of victory for His covenant people (*Dt. 4:1-8; 11:13-25; Josh. 1:5-9*). The New Testament teaches that the weapons of warfare given to the covenant army of the faithful are not fleshly but spiritual (*2 Cor. 10:3-4*). Paul uses the figure of the Roman soldier and the weapons given to him by Rome to conquer the world to identify the spiritual weapons that God has given to Christians to subdue the earth and its rebellion to His kingdom (*Eph. 6:11-18*). John tells us that the followers of Christ overcome the Serpent and his seed by the power of the redeeming blood of Christ, the Word of God that forms the basis for their testimony, and through an all-out commitment to die, if necessary, for the cause of Christ (*Rev. 12:11*).

For redeemed man, the Scriptures are the essential tool of dominion. The Bible is the perfect revelation of God to him (*Ps. 19:7-13*), and it equips him for every aspect of his dominion work (*2 Tim. 3:15-16*).

## Conclusion

Scripture says that, "The earth is the LORD's, and fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (*Ps. 24:1*). His ownership and authority is total. Nothing — not even the smallest grain of sand; no creature, man or beast; no institution or realm of man's life — is outside the dominion of God. Man, as the image of God, shares in this

dominion on a creaturely level. That is, God has given man stewardship over the earth to possess it and rule it as His representative and for His glory. Through sin man lost his capacity for godly dominion, but Christ, the God-Man has restored it. Now, in Christ, redeemed man goes forth to take dominion over every part of the earth, every resource of the earth, every creature, every area of life, and every God-ordained institution. The dominion task is necessarily comprehensive, for the earth is the Lord's.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this aspect of the dominion charge as it applies today, see William O. Einwechter, "Children and the Dominion Mandate, Parts 1 and 2" *Chalcedon Report*, 400 and 401 (November and December, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent study of the Great Commission, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *The Greatness of the Great Commission* (Tyler, TX, 1990).

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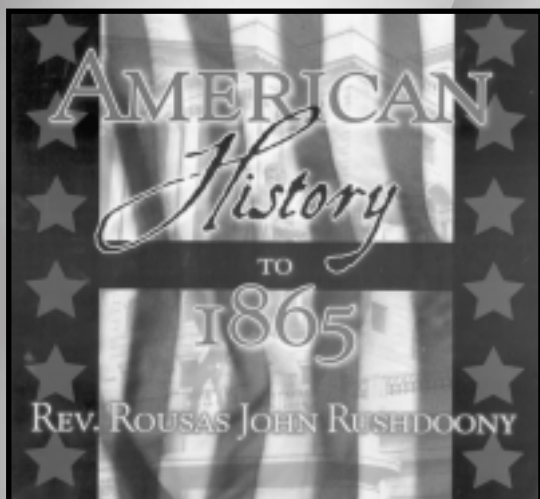
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# Biblical Faith and Economics

*By Ian Hodge*



**I**n an earlier article in the *Chalcedon Report*,<sup>1</sup> I argued that the modern nation-state with its emphasis on involuntary but permanent taxation, debt slavery, control of the courts, and encouragement of human sacrifice (abortion) was the establishment of a new god. This contravenes the Biblical injunction: “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,” the First Commandment. God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth and all things in it, is to take the precedence in all matters. This is how the people He created are to acknowledge their Creator.

The essence of sin as outlined in Genesis 3:5 is for man “to know” good and evil. The Hebrew word translated in this text has the sense of “to make” or “to determine.” To know good and evil, said the tempter, was to define for yourself the categories of good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error.

Given this background, the rest of the Bible is understandable. God immediately sets out to provide His rules for right living. The Ten Commandments, with their attendant case law explanations, form the basis of the first five books of the Bible. The remainder of the Old Testament is comment upon the Israelites’ failure to obey God, setting up their own rules for life rather than following the ones God had provided on Mt. Sinai. In the language of Scripture, everyone was “doing what is right in his own eyes.”

The New Testament, reinforcing the Old Testament as it does in Matthew 5 (at the commencement of New Testament canon), can only be read and understood properly in the light of the Old Testament. The New Testament tells of the completion of God’s plan of redemption. It makes no attempt to replace the Old Testament Torah with New Testament Torah, but does continually reiterate its dependence for its authority on the Old Testament history and laws of Israel. “We do not worship man-made gods,” said the early apostles. “Our God is the One Who created all things; the One Who saved Noah from the very great flood He caused; the One Who called Abraham and his descendents to 400 years of slavery until He was ready to remove the Amorites out of the Promised Land. This same God

was the One Who raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus is the One Who performed miracles; Who was, in fact, born supernaturally; and Who was indeed the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament.”

The salvation message, argued the New Testament apostles, includes the notion of repentance. And you cannot repent, that is, stop doing the wrong thing and start doing the right thing, without first of all having the list of right things, *i.e.*, the Ten Commandments. Without the Ten Commandments, repentance, is arbitrary or non-existent. And without repentance, there can be no salvation. For while salvation does not *depend* on what we do, it does, in the end *include* a changed life. It includes a life that no longer follows the tempter’s challenge, to know or to define the categories of right and wrong. Jesus affirmed that we know good trees by their fruit, not by their external appearance. We are told to beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing, because in the end a wolf will *act* like a wolf, even though he appears to be a sheep. And most of all, if we are truly to build our lives on solid ground, that solid ground must be obedience to the categories of right and wrong that God has provided. This is the Torah, the five books of Moses, the first five books of our Old Testament. The rest of Scripture remains a commentary based on these books, of Israel’s falling away, of Egypt’s falling way, of the falling away of all nations. Falling away being lack of obedience to the Law of God, starting with the very first premise, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”

Instead, the nations of this world, past and present, have resorted to idolatry. Refusing to obey the God of the Bible in even the smallest thing, they do everything in their power to hinder the spread of God’s Word, preferring to install their own laws which determine how people should live. In Western nations such as the United States or Australia, the hostility to the Ten Commandment is concealed, though very real. And nowhere is this hostility better identified than in the economic realm. For this forms the larger part of our lives. It governs our working hours and, to an extent, our leisure hours.

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## The Family

The Western notion of family carries with it some of the Biblical definitions of family. The influence of Christianity on the development of the West has real implications in this matter. For example, for a very long time, it was held that a function of the family was to raise children in godly principles. Yet in the nineteenth century, an assault came on the Christian family in the form of compulsory school attendance and the establishment of the public school system.

Children, it was argued, were not the property of the parents. It was claimed they were the property of the state. The argument that children are property is an interesting prospect. If children are property, then we are in the realm of economics, arguing about who owns children. It might be that some parents think of themselves as stewards, and that God has merely “loaned” them children for a short while to be raised the way He wants them raised. Children are, in this view, the property of God, not the parents. But this is not the view of the political order today. The political realm sees itself “owning” all the children within its jurisdiction. One of the demands made, therefore, is to turn children over to state educators, or at least state-trained and -approved educators, so that children might be taught what the political order determines. There is sufficient historical evidence to show that in England, the United States, and Australia the establishment of compulsory education and public schools was a deliberate mechanism to eliminate, or at least water down, the teaching of Christianity to children.<sup>2</sup> Parents and church schools, successfully educating children prior to this point, were unfortunately raising their children with sectarian biases, Protestant versus Catholic, High Church versus Low Church. The authorities set out to abolish this.

The do-gooders who claimed religious neutrality suppressed their real religious hostility, not to religion in general, but to Christianity in particular. From a Biblical perspective, the claim that the state owns the child is a false claim. It is a claim to ownership and control that is not granted by God. But it is an effective claim that helps destroy the application of the Christian Faith to the family.

Hence, it can be seen that the claim to property of any kind is an economic claim that must be tested in the light of Scripture. The political order may claim ownership of all children under its jurisdiction; but if God grants ownership, the state is a thief. Those who argue that the state is the true owner of children are thieves along with the politicians who are ready to accept the claim.

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## The Nanny State

It is easy to recognize, therefore, that economics is at the heart of the modern political order. It takes children within its borders under its wing and pretends to be their real parent. Similarly, it takes all consumers under its wing and claims to be their protector from all kinds of real and imagined evils. Adults in the modern nation state are deemed to be incapable of managing their own lives. They need “protection.” They don’t educate properly, even with the help of the church, so the political order will step in to solve the problem. Consumers don’t know the best age for children to be in school, but the political order has solved this with the establishment of compulsory education laws.

Similarly, consumers who do not know what is best for their children are also incapable of knowing what is best for themselves. The protective political order, however, will solve the problem. Legislative act after legislative act treat consumers as little children, incapable of knowing how to act properly. Politicians — ordinary consumers until the day they are elected — somehow instantly gain a new wisdom that allows them to know what is best for everyone. They will pass new laws to make the world a better place. Better to reduce competition by preventing cheap foreign goods from entering our shores, than allowing consumers access to cheaper goods. Better to tax everyone and provide government handouts to those whose vote can be bought with taxpayers’ money.

In the midst of all this, the First Commandment stands clear: “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.” In other words, *stop* making up your own rules and live by My rules, says God. This is how we acknowledge God as Lord. Once people are willing to ignore this command, it is easy for them to ignore other commandments too. To take children from parents when God does not sanction such action is theft. “Thou shalt not steal,” declares God. But politicians steal children; they take what they are not entitled to in people, money, and goods; they destroy the value of everyone’s wealth through inflationary policies (such as fractional reserve banking); and they insist that all business owners pay various kinds of levies and taxes for the privilege of being in business.

How did we get into this mess? Life was not always like this. The *Magna Carta* (1215) was an affirmation of property rights that the highest political authority could not override. At one time, English courts upheld the rights of parents to educate how they liked, and also allowed educators to start private schools.<sup>3</sup> The result was a remarkable affirmation of Biblical principles that gave England, and her offshoots such as the United States and later



Australia, the same blessed privileges. A man *was* king in his own castle and ruled accordingly. Now, the political rules in his stead, and we have moved from a familial society to a state-centered one.

The Faith that the Bible demands begins with adherence to at least the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." This is the fulfilment of the first of the Great Commandments, to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Salvation requires repentance, and repentance means to turn from other gods, other sources of authority, and acknowledge God as the True Law-Giver. Until our gospel message embraces this point and converts to the Faith begin to implement God's jurisdictions rather jurisdictions decreed by the political order, we cannot expect to see righteousness flow throughout the land. And this, at the end of the day, is God's ultimate goal, the establishment of His kingly (*i.e.*, law-giving) rule throughout the whole earth.

The curious question is why so many Christians today do not want to work to this end.

<sup>1</sup> December, 2001. See it online at [www.chalcedon.edu](http://www.chalcedon.edu).

<sup>2</sup> E. G. West, *Education and the State*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1970); R.J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education* (Nutley, 1976); A.G. Austin, *Australian Education 1788-1900* (Melbourne, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> J.E.G. de Montmorency, *State Intervention in English Education* (Cambridge, 1902), 55ff.

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# Redemptive-Deconstruction: Anti-System & A-Historical Currents in Redemptive-Historical Preaching *By Rev. Tristan Emmanuel<sup>©</sup>*

**I** don't think it's an overstatement to say that "Redemptive-Historical" preaching has had a profound impact on Reformed preaching. In fact, unlike any other school of preaching in postmodern times, Redemptive-Historical appears to have gained unilateral acceptance — in certain circles it has assumed a position of orthodoxy, ensconced as the purest, most sublime manner of unfolding the mystery of Christianity from the pulpit.<sup>1</sup>

One avid proponent of this method is Sidney Greidanus, professor of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Greidanus has authored several articles and books on the subject. His latest contribution is his book: *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*.<sup>2</sup>

Greidanus articulates in the clearest terms that the genius of Redemptive-Historical is that it enables a preacher to preach Christ from the whole Bible. All of Scripture points us to Christ, not just the New Testament. Therefore a preacher can, with confidence, reorient the thinking of his congregation. Says Greidanus, to reorient the thinking of the congregation, a "Christian preacher cannot preach an Old Testament text in isolation, but must always understand the text in the context of the whole Bible and redemptive history...."<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest challenges facing a Reformed pulpit ministry is reorienting the way Christians view the Bible, especially the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments. And, given today's dispensational milieu, it is certainly refreshing to hear a staunch defense of the historic Protestant view of the Old Testament.

However, for all of its value, there are a number of problems with the method, problems that at the root compromise sound hermeneutical and exegetical practices. In Dr. Greidanus' book, these problems take the form of false dichotomies. Given the limited space we shall only examine two.

## The Chronology or System Fallacy

The first dichotomy is the "Chronology or System," fallacy. Greidanus asserts, "Although the Old Testament contains a rich treasure of biblical truths (doctrines), *we should first* consider redemptive history. For redemptive history precedes biblical doctrines."<sup>4</sup> There are three basic flaws with this position.

First, it pits chronology (progressive revelation) against theology (systematic dogma). It implies that one is superior to the other. Now, it may be indicative of an internal dispute between Biblical and systematic theology. However, this does not establish *a priori* homiletic commitment. Moreover, it leaves the impression that Redemptive-Historical is more concerned with progress than with logical development.

Second, and closely related, is that there is no Biblical imperative that necessitates considering "progress," before we consider the logical ordering of a "doctrine," especially when it comes to arranging a sermon. Even if one were to grant that progress chronologically precedes Biblical doctrine, this would still not justify considering the flow of redemptive history first.<sup>5</sup>

Within the first three chapters of Genesis, there are at least five different foundational doctrines that can stand alone without appeal to their progressive context: Doctrine of Creation, Doctrine of the Image of God, Doctrine of Anthropology, Doctrine of the Fall, Doctrine of the Covenantal Divide, etc. Where is the Biblical imperative that a preacher *must* begin with progress?

Third, his assertion belies the fact that it is itself a "doctrinal" position based upon systematic development. Certainly one cannot deny the progressive unfolding of Scripture, but that the complex of redemption (the proto-evangelium to its fulfilment in Christ) is understood, as progressive revelation, is itself a doctrinal position developed systematically. Redemptive-Historical is in danger of subterfuge. Its abhorrence with scholastic preaching has caused it to sacrifice system in the name of progress.

## The Redemptive Historical Fallacy

The second dichotomy is the “Exemplaristic” or “Redemptive-Historical” fallacy. Greidanus states, “[I]f we make a sermon on the narrative of David and Goliath, we may not isolate this narrative from the flow of redemptive history and hold David up to the congregation as a hero....”<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, speaking of John Calvin, Greidanus decries the use of “detail,” saying, “Although this patristic method of explaining and applying sentence by sentence and clause by clause keeps him close to the text, in narrative texts it leads to moralistic applications of dos and don’ts being attached to mere elements of the preaching-text. Frequently Calvin attaches these applications to the actions of words of the biblical characters.”<sup>7</sup>

Here, men like Joseph, Moses, and David (examples) are pitted against the main point of the author (redemptive-history). In essence this erodes, if not destroys, the very foundation of “history” that Redemptive-Historical so desperately tries to champion. Ironically the dichotomy is indicative of an a-historical current in Redemptive-Historical. There are two reasons for this.

First, the method dehumanizes the saints of old, because the only homiletical value we place in them is in how they relate us to the over-arching theme of redemption. In its zeal to uncover Christ in the Old Testament, it covers up the men, and the “details” of their life. It does this not by refusing the historical account, but by placing little to no value in them as historical personages.

Certainly, Christ is the apex of all Scripture, *but God ordained and created real redeemed men to whom we can relate, not shadows, or play actors.* God created fallible, sinful men, who, just like us, have been redeemed from particular sins (details). Therefore, historical details, situations, and the very people to whom we are introduced are very important. It is imperative that we don’t diminish the significance of humans in history — in doing so we may even end up losing the historic Jesus in the process.<sup>8</sup>

Second, it also denies the Biblical warrant for role models. Without question, Christ is chief among role models. However, Paul categorically stated, “Imitate *me*, as I imitate Christ.”<sup>9</sup> We look to Old Testament personalities (examples) to see how as human beings, with all their idiosyncrasies and their particular struggles with sin (details), they as redeemed men imitated Christ. Thus, we learn from them very practical points for living in our day. This does not need to be an either/or situation — something Dr. Greidanus does not account for.

Sidney Greidanus has made a number of valuable contributions in the field of preaching and Biblical

theology. This book has particularly helped to explicate the foundational indicative of the Old Testament — Christ; and, as previously stated, it helps preachers reorient the mindset of their congregation. However, Greidanus has been influenced by a number of undercurrents, undercurrents that not only compromise sound hermeneutics, but are in danger of undercutting the very foundation of truth.

<sup>1</sup> I find this trend most disconcerting.

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 230.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* 26.

<sup>5</sup> When pressed for an imperative that mandates Redemptive-Historical as the normative Biblical method, proponents generally appeal to the many apostolic examples of preaching. Ironically, Redemptive-Historical advocates generally view “examples” as having little to no normative influence on the behavior in the modern church. One must wonder why “preaching” is the only exception.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 238.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 150.

<sup>8</sup> I suggest that there is an undercurrent of Neo-Orthodox influence in Redemptive-Historical preaching.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor. 11:1 emphasis mine. (In 1 Cor. 4:16 Paul makes a bolder statement: “Therefore I urge you, imitate me.”)

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