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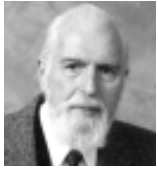
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Except a Man Be Born Again

By R. J. Rushdoony

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:1-3)



These three verses are amazing. A ruler, an intellectual man and a scholar, comes to Jesus at night to make a startling confession. "We know," he says flatly, "that your miraculous power comes from God." By *we*, he meant the Sanhedrin, the ruling body. These were the men who later crucified Christ, and they knew what they were doing. Their problem was not a lack of knowledge but a lack of faith and character. They preferred their way to God's way, and their government to God's government.

Our Lord does not allow Nicodemus to raise the theological and practical questions he no doubt had in mind. He at once answers Nicodemus that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." The issue is brought at once to the fore: rebirth is necessary. Moreover, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). Our Lord forces the basic issue to the forefront: regeneration and baptism, the Holy Spirit at work in us, and the open act of baptism.

Osterhaven wrote of the meaning of baptism:

Baptism has no meaning apart from the fact of human sin. Christianity in all of its branches holds that something tragic has happened to mankind, that the race of men has been morally and spiritually affected with a disease called sin. Because God is holy and just and

cannot, because of His nature, "whitewash" sin we need cleansing if we are to see him.¹

The whole human race, men, women, and children, has a problem: it is born with a tendency to sin; this means self-will and self-centeredness; it means the will to be one's own god and determiner of good and evil (*Gen. 3:5*); it means, my will be done, come what may. The natural man naturally wants his own way: his life's goal is *self-fulfillment*, not the kingdom of God and His justice (*Mt. 6:33*).

As long as men are like this, history offers us no hope. Whatever material progress is made only gives sin more scope to work its will, and sin becomes more dangerous and more powerful.

The solution, our Lord says, is, you must be born again. Natural man must be replaced by supernatural man. We are in Christ all of us a new human race, the Christian race, a supernatural people with unexpected powers and reserves.

And this is what we want for our children, our grandchildren, and our progeny to the end of time. We want them to be Christians, members of Christ's new humanity, a people of grace and power.

The tired old round of natural man is sin and death, pretensions, false fronts, cowardice, and defeat. But we as Christians have a different calling; it is to life and justice (or, righteousness); it is to victory, for "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4).

We give our children to Christ in a great hope, that He will make them His, and that they will be another step forward in the conquest of all things for Christ's kingdom. The hope of Christian parents is beautifully expressed in a fifteenth century hymn by Heinrich von Laufenberg, as translated by Catherine Winkworth perhaps a century and a half ago:

Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord most dear,
As Thou wast once an infant here,
So give this child of Thine, we pray,
Thy grace and blessing day by day.
Oh holy Jesus, Lord Divine,
We pray Thee guard this child of Thine.

As in Thy heavenly Kingdom, Lord,
All things obey Thy sacred word,
Do Thou Thy mighty succor give,
And shield this child by morn and even.
Oh holy Jesus, Lord Divine,
We pray Thee guard this child of Thine.

Their watch let angels around *him* keep
Where're he be, awake asleep;
Thy holy Cross now let *him* bear,
That *he* Thy crown with saints may bear.
Oh holy Jesus, Lord Divine,
We pray Thee guard this child of Thine.

Baptisms are therefore joyful occasions, because they are evidence of the extension of Christ's kingdom into the future, into the lives of our children. We give our children to Christ to make them His new human race, the people of grace and power, the people who are the only good future this world has. ■

¹ Eugene M. Osterhaven. *The Meaning of Baptism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Society for Reformed Publications, 1951), 17.

Faith in the Catacombs

By Mark R. Rushdoony



Crises reveal much about individuals, groups, and peoples. Certainly the true nature of faith comes to the fore. We venerate ancestors, great men of faith, and national heroes who faced great challenges with strong faith and character. Long after they are gone we draw from their strength.

One of the testimonies left by early Christians of Rome is the catacombs, vast networks of underground burial chambers beneath Rome and some other cities. They are a modern reminder of early Christians' faith and willingness to act upon it, even to their financial hurt and under the threat of persecution. In all likelihood, some of the same Christians who were the first to hear Paul's letter to the Romans read in the church there are among the first buried in these tombs.

The catacombs are not just unusual because they are separate and underground. They stand out as burial places for Roman Christians when the Romans almost universally burned the bodies of their dead according to the Greek practice. The Roman Christians immediately rejected this practice and carried over the Jewish respect shown for the remains of the dead.

The ancient Hebrews and Christians based their faith on God's promise of life beyond this life. Their respectful treatment of the dead reflected their respect for that promise. The early Christians did more than believe in the resurrection of the body; they showed a reverence for the body as itself an heir to the victory over the "last enemy," death (1 Cor. 15:26).

Christian Burial

Christian burial was modeled after that of the Savior, which was itself after "the manner of the Jews" (Jn. 19:40). The Hebrews had a traditional ritual treatment of the dead. It involved a washing and a wrapping of the deceased in linen with aloes and myrrh. To economize on these ingredients was considered as dishonoring to the dead. Huge amounts were used for prominent individuals. Eighty pounds of spices were used for Rabbi Gamaliel, yet Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea showed their reverence for Jesus by providing a hundred pounds of such spices (Jn. 19:39-40), and the two Marys and their friends, thinking Jesus was denied this honor, approached the grave on the first day of the week also prepared to anoint the body (Lk. 23:56-24:1). For prominent persons, a large bed of spices was burnt, the body later being laid in the remains (2 Chron. 16:14; Jer. 34:5). Found unworthy, the wicked Jehoram was denied this honor (2 Chron. 21:19).

The body was clothed in either ordinary dress, linen cloth, or a shroud before being placed in a burial chamber. In first century Jerusalem prior to A.D. 70, remains were later transferred to stone boxes, called ossuaries. *Biblical Archaeology Review* (November/December 2002) made international headlines when it reported the discovery of an ossuary with the inscription "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

The death was accompanied by a customary loud wailing. Such "lamentations" were described in Mark 5:38 as "a tumult." The procession to the burial place involved family and friends in numbers corresponding to the individual's prominence or esteem in the community. Thus, a great num-

ber of people accompanied the widow of Nain as her only son was carried to his grave (Lk. 7:12). Likewise, during the next few weeks, family paid frequent visits to the tomb of a loved one. When Jesus went to Bethany after the burial of Lazarus, Mary rose to meet Him, having been told of His approach by her sister. Those around her assumed that she was going to the grave to weep (Jn. 11:31).

The early Christians followed the custom of burying the dead even though this represented a considerable effort and expense and, in the case of the Romans, a rejection of longstanding social practice. Augustine said that "the Holy Spirit has made use, as instruments and vessels, for all good works" of the body of believers. He denied any superstitious belief in the life of the corpse in death, such as those that dominated Egyptian respect for the dead, but attributed Christian burial to the belief that even bodies of believers were under God's providence in anticipation of their resurrection. Cremation was condemned as lacking reverence and a practical denial of the belief in resurrection Christians were to profess. It was not without cruel intent that many martyrs were denied burial by being burnt by their persecutors. It was perhaps thought to deny them, or at least mock, a future hope in which the Christians were known to believe.

By the fourth century it was common for palm or olive branches to be carried in funeral processions as symbols of joy and victory. Leaves of laurel and ivy were placed with the deceased as representations of immortality, and flowers were scattered over the body. The Romans felt seeing a funeral was a bad

omen so their ceremonies were held at night. Christians, on the other hand, developed the funeral procession along the lines of a march of triumph. The Lord's Supper was commonly celebrated at the grave, to represent the communion of those living and the dead in the mystical body of Christ. The error of praying for the dead may have begun with prayers at the grave commending the dead to God. The service ended with the Lord's Prayer and a benediction. For a time Roman Christians even abandoned the dress of mourning used by pagan Romans, instead expressing their hope in the victory of eternal life by wearing clothing appropriate to a feast. Gradually the feelings of loved ones caused a return to clothes of mourning. The death of believers was so integrated into the life of the church that gravediggers were not regarded as common laborers, but as servants of the church. The early church treated death and interment as an opportunity to teach a theology of both life and death and to guide the believer's understanding in a difficult time.

Some have suggested the earliest Roman Christians may have first begun using rock quarries into which the Romans sometimes dumped the bodies of slaves or executed criminals, though this has been rejected by other scholars. It is universally recognized that the vast majority, if not all, of the extensive catacombs were dug by Christians for their own use between the first and fifth centuries, corresponding to the times of earliest persecutions and the onslaught of the barbarians.

The original purpose of the catacombs was as burial chambers, where the believing dead were laid in tombs carved into the walls of the passages. Originally, these were closed by slabs of rock or tiles. Some larger tombs apparently served as family vaults. None of the catacombs could have been excavated or existed in secret. Land was purchased and used for these extensive projects,

and, complying with Roman law, they were placed outside the limits of the city (as it existed at the time). They were named and well-known for centuries.

The Resurrection of the Dead

Later, the catacombs were used as places of refuge in times of persecution. The extent to which they were used as places of refuge was probably much more limited than we tend to imagine. They did have the advantage of being labyrinths peculiarly familiar to Christians, with countless hiding places in hundreds of miles of passageways. Certainly such a complex would have discouraged pursuit by government officials. The real value of the catacombs, however, lies not as a memorial to persecution, but as a testimony to the early church's faith in eternal life and the resurrection of the dead.

Inscriptions and symbols in the catacombs testify to the thinking of the early Christians. Some are historical, and represent scenes from the Old Testament and the gospels. There are symbolic images, including the lamb, the vine, the rock, the light, the fountain, and the lion. Most frequently seen is the fish. The Holy Spirit is represented by a dove, the church by a ship (often sailing near a lighthouse), immortality by a peacock, and the resurrection by a phoenix. Trees were symbolic: cypress and pine representing death, the palm, victory; the olive, good works; and the vine, union with Christ.

These symbols and the few remaining inscriptions were also departures from the fatalism of Roman despair at death. The Christians testified to their hope, peace, and sense of life in God. "Alexander," says one inscription, "is not dead, but lives beyond the stars, and his body rests in this tomb." Another says "Aselus sleeps in Christ."

A third use of the catacombs probably grew from their uses as places of funerals and refuge. They became

themselves places of worship in times of persecution. They had been places of gatherings for burial, the Lord's Supper, and baptisms. With the living and the dead in close proximity for centuries, it is hard to imagine how later generations could not have adopted a superstitious veneration for the remains and relics of martyrs. In order to prevent increasing desecration, Pope Paul I removed many of the bones of martyrs and saints and distributed them to churches and monasteries in the eighth century. Other popes did the same. More were removed by Crusaders. Thus, the mere quantity of such relics in the Middle Ages need not cause us to doubt their authenticity. The catacombs did not become secret and lost until the Middle Ages, being rediscovered by clerics in 1490 and in the following century by scholars.

It is easy to dismiss traditions, ceremonies, and symbolism important to another historical era. It is more difficult, yet more edifying, to understand them as an out-working of the very real faith of Christian brethren we will know only in eternity.

Today, the catacombs are empty. Still, they represent the power of the faith of the early church in the resurrection of the dead to eternal life and its reverence for the promises of God. The testimony of these believers remains today for our edification. May our acts and legacy to future generations be so enduring. ☒

Note: For the history of Christian burial and the catacombs, the author relied on McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 1867-1887, reprinted by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, and Smith and Cheetham, *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, 1880, J.B. Burr Publishing, Hartford. See entries under "burial" and "catacombs" in each.

Teaching Character Through Literature

By Ronald Kirk



We Christians should use every available means to rebuild a Christian culture. Historic Christian literature offers a splendid opportunity for learning to apply Biblical principle to every endeavor. Christian literature illustrates how extraordinary character in ordinary life influences others and contributes to the Great Commission. To take advantage of this opportunity, we must reclaim our heritage of scholarly skills. Such skills open to us the treasury of Christian literature rich with historical Biblical wisdom and the fruit of its resulting personal character.

Christian Worldview Literature

Imaginative literature once reflected tremendous insight into the Christian worldview. In a mature Christian literary era, from Spenser to Dickens, the best writers distilled the trials of personal and historic realities and resolved them with Biblical understanding. Story characters often struggled against their own sinful natures as events tried their souls. As in real life, these trials eventually forged such attributes of character as heroism, statesmanship, gracious family and social manners, aesthetics, and many other aspects of appropriate Christian expression.

Great literary expressions grew quite naturally out of a society with ancient and deep Biblical Christian roots. In this sense, imaginative literature offers a concise history of

ideas with their consequences. Thus, Rosalie Slater calls literature the “handmaid of history” in its instructional value.¹ Reclaiming the Christian literary legacy will enable us to share the old wisdom with a new generation. Ideal Christian attributes can serve to exert a godly influence on our neighbors, as we ourselves learn to live them. In addition, deep literary study should enable Christians to make *new* creative contributions of classic quality, further building the collected body of Christian wisdom and extending its influence. Therefore, the old literature can offer substantial benefits to Christians today.

The Need for Biblical Skills of Observation and Analysis

To achieve a godly use of literature, we must both view the Scriptures as a textbook or manual for life and learn how to apply them particularly. If we view the Bible as merely a means to personal salvation, we fail to understand our extended Christian responsibilities. God commands mankind to take dominion over the earth as a means to facilitate His ways among men, to prepare the soil of men’s hearts for the gospel. We are to make disciples of men for Christ. To make a disciple, we must first *be* disciples. Disciples are scholars or *learners*. Discipleship requires discipline. True learning supplies the student with skills, and with wisdom to apply those skills in a productive and godly way.

To prepare for such Biblical discipleship, we must be ready learners, ready particularly to repent in submission to God’s ways and willing to ask, “How do I specifically fall short of God’s glory?” Educational change requires a humble heart. Biblical accomplishment requires knowing the Bible systematically, that is, bringing the whole of Scripture to bear on a given subject. Systematic scholarship brings any subject into equilibrium, a non-antithetical tension of truth. Jesus teaches that narrow is the path that leads to life and broad is the path that leads to destruction. Balance, through letting the Scriptures speak for themselves, is key.

Sound applied scholarship requires a philosophical understanding of the subject. Briefly stated, we develop a vocabulary defining the nature of the subject as a foundation for its further study. Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* amply serves here. Upon an articulated vocabulary, we search the Scriptures for God’s observations about the subject. We next read history, especially the history of ideas, to discover God’s hand in the subject. The scriptural standard places historical development in context. When good fruit emerges, we seek the Biblical root cause. Finally, we must learn to discern the underlying principle, theme, or leading idea found in the particulars of the story. Every story possesses a theme, an underlying causal viewpoint leading to the story’s action. Biblical scholarship analyzes the par-

ticulars of a story or history to identify the theme. This is inductive logic. Then we consult the Bible to discern whether the principle affirms or denies the Biblical principle. Having identified the Biblical principle, we make an effort by faith to put that principle into practice. This is deductive logic. The sound doctrines of the historic faith, particularly those found in the heritage of the Reformation also help in the task. Again, we examine the fruit of such application to test our success. Such inductive and deductive investigation comprises the basis of a reciprocal, self-correcting Biblical system of scholarship that leads to real accomplishment.

What Constitutes Christian Literature?

One of the most important elements we seek in literature is the portrayal of godly character, fully developed or in development. I prefer to consider godly literary character in terms of the prototypical American hero or heroine, an icon of the Christian era. Christian meekness — power and authority restrained and directed toward good — comprises the essence of this heroism. The Christian hero corresponds to the Biblical man or woman of faith. Christian literature presents the historical legacy of faith. Christian education may then appropriate the lessons of that legacy to our generation's instruction.

We may identify Biblical character in the heritage of the American Pilgrims. The Pilgrims knew how to keep their eyes on God and their hands on the plow. Their industry and faith in adversity coupled with their strictly Biblical vision forged a character that stood for God in any circumstances. Their many material trials and trials of persecution helped produce their capacity for compassion and mercy for others. These experiences coupled

with their understanding of New Testament liberty forged their ability for local self-government. Their biblicity, love of liberty, and proven character laid the foundation for America's free institutions. When we find such elements of character in literature, we may be assured that we have found some degree of Christian expression.

Most importantly, Christian literature is God-centered. Treating good as evil and evil as good commonly characterizes non-Christian literature. Christian literature favorably regards the Ten Commandments and Christ's Two Commandments as determinative of right and wrong. Moreover, most literature promotes one view of salvation or another. Pagan literature finds leading characters saving themselves or being saved through mere circumstance based on a materialistic determinism. Christian literature acknowledges God, however subtly, as the One who saves.

Examples from Little House

The *Little House* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder represents one of the most complete treatments of familial Christian character in the increasingly secular and decadent world of the 1870s and 1880s. Unlike the unrealistic easy-evangelism that characterizes so much of contemporary Christian literature, the *Little House* books deal with faith in Jesus Christ as a given. Mrs. Wilder is never preachy. Young Laura's mother taught the Scriptures so diligently that when Laura was fifteen and her teacher read a Psalm to start school each day, Laura commented that, though she knew all the Psalms by heart, she loved to hear them over and over again. Similarly, when Laura heard the Declaration of Independence publicly read as part of a town Fourth of July celebration, though she knew the document by heart, she loved to hear it again. Laura realized that America had no human

king. This fifteen-year-old realized in a very adult moment that God is America's King. Americans needed no dictator. This meant that she was free and independent, but it also meant she had responsibility to live well apart from external constraint. She must answer to God.

In her masterpiece, *Little House in the Big Woods*, Mrs. Wilder immediately introduces her theme. The Little House lies in the Big Woods. The wolves and wildcats and bears that inhabit the woods are dangerous and scary to a five-year-old girl. "Laura knew that wolves would eat little girls." Pa's answer? "Go to sleep, Laura. Jack [the brindle bulldog] won't let the wolves in." Moreover, in their material life, though rude by contemporary standards, the family appreciated refinement, beauty, and grace. While Ma added salt to the kerosene lantern to keep it from exploding, she also added red colored cloth to make the oil pretty. The little house was a safe and beautiful sanctuary in a wild and dangerous land.

How can a family be secure in such a place? The rest of Chapter One relates the annual preparation for winter and is a veritable economic textbook. Chapter 3 finds Pa cleaning his flintlock long-rifle for the next day's hunting. Mrs. Wilder's description would supply even a novice with the instruction needed to care for a black powder weapon. Pa meticulously makes the bullets, cleans the barrel, and reloads. He tells Laura and her sister Mary to watch for mistakes, but he never makes any. Moreover, "Laura and Mary were never afraid when Pa went alone into the Big Woods. They knew he could always kill bears and panthers with the first shot." Contrast this illustration of Pa's excellence of character and skill with Laura naughtily touching the hot bullets out of the mold.

In this same chapter, Pa tells Laura the story of when he was “a naughty little boy.” This story seems out of character in a chapter on competence, excellence, and all the character and skills needed to survive and thrive in the big woods. Why is it there? The story tells of nine-year-old Pa losing himself in play while tending cows. The sun goes down and the cows are gone! He hears a great screeching sound. The negligent and now frightened boy runs through the darkened woods, badly stubbing his toe. Once home, he finds the cows waiting outside the corral. Laura’s grandpa cuts a switch and gives the boy a thrashing, so that he “would remember to mind him after that.” How does one grow from a naughty child to a self-possessed, accomplished man capable of living in such a wild place? His father trains him and corrects him when needed. Sloppiness and casual rearing can ruin a man. Careful, diligent, and loving training will produce an able and independent manly man. Pa’s Pa concludes with the counsel, “If you’d obeyed me, as you should, you wouldn’t have been out in the Big Woods after dark, and you wouldn’t have been scared by a screech-owl.” A family in a little house may live secure and thrive. The now careless child eventually acquires the character and skills to match the wild and dangerous landscape. How times have changed! Or have they? While we may not experience such imminent physical danger, sound economy and careful moral training are more important than ever!

The rest of the book observes the seasons passing to complete a year in the life of the Ingalls family. *Season* has a dual meaning here. Seasons mark the passing of time and the changes that accompany them. However, seasoning is the process of hardening and strengthening wood, so that it makes suitable and long-lasting building material. Just so, character seasons and hardens through

living and training, overcoming trials by faith, and, in a word, through growing up. Mrs. Wilder ingeniously both expands her theme and ties her simple story containing no plot into a masterpiece of literary Christian Americana. Every new chapter and every one of Pa’s stories make history come alive in a homely and personal, but engaging manner. More importantly, they impart valuable character lessons of tremendous utility — if we are careful to observe them.

The Ingalls’ story is but one example. Laura wrote similarly, in the book *Farmer Boy*, of her husband Almanzo Wilder’s family in Upstate New York. What would young Almanzo do with the fifty cents his father gave him? How much work did that fifty cents represent? Almanzo rehearsed for his father the work it took to raise potatoes. Fifty cents represents all the work it took to produce half a bushel of potatoes. Would he drink it up in lemonade at the fair to impress his friends? Or would he invest it in a sucking pig with the potential of earning ten to twenty dollars?

In another story, Almanzo attempts to haul logs with his father. Almanzo takes his homemade sled and his newly broken ox calf. He attempts to carry too much wood, hurts his foot, and flounders in the snow with the too-heavy load. His father does not help Almanzo. Is his father cruel? Does Father ask too much of the young boy? Was Father disappointed that Almanzo actually carried so little wood? Clearly, Father’s purpose is educational. He wishes Almanzo to learn certain economic lessons. He also wishes him to forge character and wisdom through the difficulties of his experience.

Additional Examples from Literature

The early Christian classic *Beowulf* portrays Christianity emerging from

a pagan and superstitious culture. *Beowulf* teaches us that God is patient with our present state as He brings us from glory to glory into His image. Part of *Beowulf*’s virtue is the example of the selfless heroism of the warrior Beowulf. Beowulf also confronts us with the place of war in the Christian heritage. The story emphasizes faith with respect to restraint in war, giving place to God to decide the contest, not by might, but by His Spirit. Beowulf demonstrates that courage is appropriate for the Christian, as Providence prevails in all things.

We may also see the Christian heritage compromised in Louisa May Alcott’s stories, such as *Rose in Bloom*. Miss Alcott wrote with a high regard for Christian virtues, but these were mixed with humanistic principles. For example, Uncle Alex believes that one must experience the consequences of one’s bad actions truly to learn a moral lesson. Such a premise denies that one may act upon the Word of God by faith. As is typical in humanistic literature, the hope of reform rests with oneself, not upon Christ’s gift of salvation.

Carry on Mr. Bowditch by Jean Lee Latham is the delightful narration of the life of Nathaniel Bowditch, mathematical genius and naval navigation pioneer. His work, the *American Navigator*, remains the essential manual for ocean-going travel. Bowditch reduced complex arithmetic to simple addition and subtraction using logarithms so that the common and poorly educated seaman could perform advanced shipboard navigational functions. When he was young and his hopes were disappointed, Nathaniel learned to sail by “ash breeze.” That is, when his life was “becalmed” for lack of helpful, fresh winds to fill his sails, he *rowed* with ashen oars. He overcame his difficul-

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The Resurrection

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld



As every Christian knows, or should know, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His ascension to heaven is a crucial and indispensable part of Christian theology. It is the miracle that proves Christ's being as the Son of God, the mediator between mankind and God the Father.

Christ and the Covenant

The purpose of Christ's being sent to this earth was not only to save mankind from its sins and offer salvation and eternal life after death, but also to extend the covenant made between God and Abraham and his descendants to the rest of mankind. Jesus told the Apostles as He was about to ascend to Heaven: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:19-20).

And that is why Christianity spread as it did, because it offered mankind the benefits of the covenant, a life lived in accordance with God's law, a life that could conquer sin.

In Mark 16:15, we read: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Those who rejected the gift of salvation were indeed damned.

In Luke 24:44, 46, Christ tells the Apostles, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with

you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Thus Christ affirmed the continuity between the Old Testament and the future New Testament. All things must be fulfilled in accordance with the prophecies of the Old Testament. And the gospel, in Christ's name, is to be preached among all nations, beginning with His own people, the Jews.

Jesus is identified in Hebrews 13:24 as "the mediator of the new covenant," the holy means that established the covenant between God the Father and the rest of sinful mankind.

We read in 1 John 5:14, "And we have seen and so testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Christ's mission was to save mankind from its own sinful nature. And in John 11:25 we read, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Worth Living and Dying For

Why were the Apostles willing to accept so much suffering in order to spread the gospel? Because they believed in the truth of the resurrection. They believed in the truth of Christ's miracles. Rev. Samuel Stanhope Smith, president of the College of New Jersey, wrote in 1809 in his book, *Lec-*

tures on the Evidences of the Christian Religion:

Men as they were, of sound understandings and of rational piety, a conviction in our minds of the sincerity of their declarations is all that is necessary to gain for them full credence to the miraculous facts which they relate. There is a wide difference between dying in attestation of a fact, and to prove our adherence to an opinion. In our opinions we may err, and an enthusiastic mind may maintain its errors at the stake with no less ardour than it would adhere to truth. But in facts, such as those related by the apostles and disciples of our Lord, subjected as they were to the examinations of all the senses, and for so long a time, it was impossible for men so judicious, so honest, and so faithful, to be deceived. ... And their constant readiness to seal their testimony with their blood affords the strongest proof that not the smallest doubt mingled itself with their perfect knowledge and belief of the resurrection, and of all the miraculous works of their Saviour, on which their faith of his divine mission, and of the doctrine of salvation which they proclaimed to the world, was founded.

It was indeed the miracle of the resurrection that convinced many pagans to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ. And it was the honesty and sincerity of the apostles that were responsible for the fast spread of Christianity throughout the ancient world. Christianity offered a moral code for human life based on God's love of His creatures. It offered the believer forgiveness of sin,

salvation, and eternal life after death. It offered liberty in Christ. Men were at last liberated from the fickle, arbitrary actions of the pagan gods, the appeasement of whom was the central substance of their worship.

The practice of Christian worship was simple and honest. The reading and explanation of Scripture became a key means of extending Christianity to the next generation. It followed the Jewish practice in which the Torah is read throughout the year as a constant reminder of God's commandments. Yet, in those early days, with little written Scripture, the Christian faith grew on the basis of the Word. And thousands believed because it offered a welcome alternative to pagan depravity.

Today, Christ offers the same salvation from depravity in a world that has fallen prey to a new twenty-first century paganism. It is difficult to

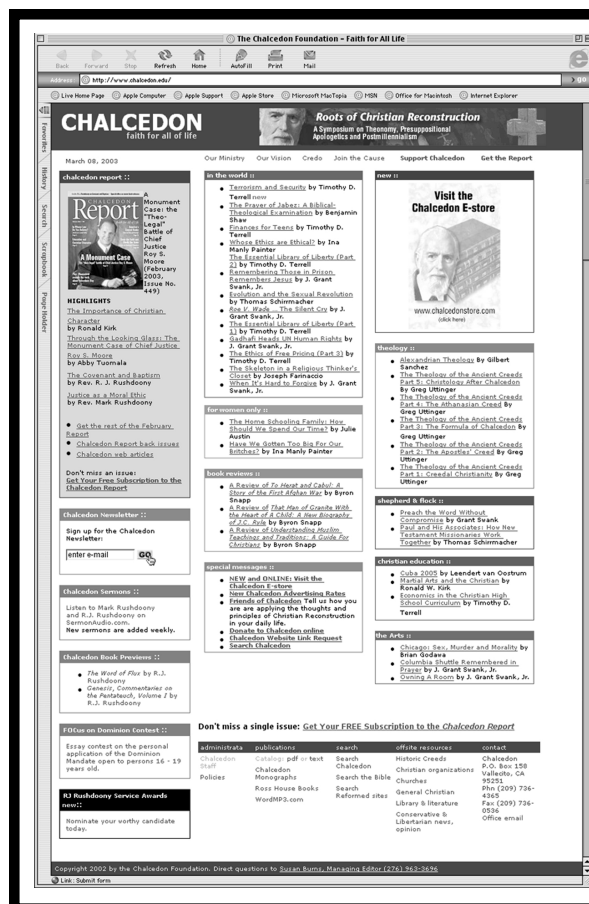
understand how a civilization that worshipped the idol of "scientific progress" could so easily succumb to pagan primitivism and barbarism. In the name of freedom of speech we've allowed pornography to flourish and corrupt millions of people every day. And in the name of women's rights we've allowed abortion-on-demand to destroy millions of the unborn.

Modern Idol Worship

What all of this means is that modern man is as susceptible to corruption as was primitive man in the days of idol worship. In fact, we have today idol worship on a scale unimaginable in ancient times. Our technology has not raised our morals nor brought us closer to God. But it has, in fact, made our belief in God more essential than ever. For, if there was ever a two-edged sword, it is technology that mocks God by claiming its power to be as God.

But there are many souls in America who are not deceived by the new gods of technology and humanism. The new remnant is growing as more and more human beings become aware of the lethal seductions all around us. Despite the complexities of our high-tech culture, it is obvious that the way to salvation is as startlingly simple as it was in Roman times. The light of Christ leads the way. It leads us out of the cultural maze. It leads us to the Promised Land of freedom in Christ.✠

Samuel L. Blumenfeld is the author of eight books on education, including *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*, *How to Tutor*, *Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers*, and *Homeschooling: A Parents Guide to Teaching Children*. All of these books are available on Amazon.com or by calling 208-322-4440.



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Christ's Resurrection and Ours

By Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.



As we reflect on the resurrection of Christ in this season we must recognize its enormous significance in the Christian worldview. In this article I will deal with just one of the redemptive-historical effects of Christ's resurrection: the eschatological resurrection of believers. Christ's resurrection not only secures our present redemption *for* glory (*Rom.* 4:25; 10:9-10) but also our future resurrection *to* glory (*Rom.* 8:23).

Unfortunately, a new gnosticism is infecting the church: hyper-preterism. One major feature of hyper-preterism is its denial of a future physical resurrection of the believer at the end of history. As we shall see, this contradicts a major result of the resurrection of Christ. Before I demonstrate this, I must briefly summarize the argument for Christ's physical resurrection, which is the effective cause of our own future resurrection.

The Scriptures teach that Christ was resurrected in the same body in which He died: The very body in which He died was raised from the dead, just as He prophesied (*Jn.* 2:18-19, 21). As such, it miraculously attested to the truth of His divine mission on earth (*Mt.* 12:39-40). This is why the tomb and His burial clothing were found empty: His physical body had departed from them (*Mt.* 28:6; *Jn.* 20:4-11, 15). The gospels present the resurrected Christ in a material body that could be touched and handled (*Lk.* 24:39), which still had the wounds of the cross (*Jn.* 20:27; cf. *Rev.* 5:6), which could be clung to (*Jn.* 20:17; *Mt.* 28:9), and could eat food (*Lk.* 24:42-43; *Jn.* 21:11-14). Christianity has always affirmed the corporeal resurrection of

Christ as a prominent feature of its high supernaturalism.

But how does that speak to the issue of *our* resurrection? Because my space is limited I will simply provide an abbreviated commentary on 1 Corinthians 15, which speaks directly to the point and is a favorite passage for hyper-preterists. They gleefully point out that Paul speaks of a "spiritual body" (v. 44) and argue that "you do not sow the body which is to be" (v. 37).

The Corinthian Context and Problem

Before surveying this chapter we must be aware of a major underlying problem in the Corinthian church: a mixture of a quasi-gnostic philosophy (highlighting higher knowledge and denigrating the physical realm) and an exorbitant pride rooted in pneumatic-eschatological claims.

Indeed, Paul opens his letter by referring to their pneumatic gifts (1:7; cp. chs. 12-14) and the matter of a Greek concern for "knowledge" (1:18-25; cp. chs. 2-4, 8-10). These issues almost invariably lie behind the particular problems he addresses. For example, their sexual immorality was rooted in their unconcern with issues of physical morality (1 Cor. 6:13, 15; "the body doesn't matter! what's the problem?") and their denial of legitimate sexual relations in marriage (1 Cor. 7:1-4; "we are above physical relations"). And their charismatic abuses are quite well-known (1 Cor. 12-14). They even revolted against local social conventions and boundary markers in disregarding public decorum in dress (hair style) by their "eschatological women" (1 Cor. 11; see Gordon Fee's commentary). These

women asserted that since the *eschaton* has come, then the resurrection is past — consequently, they are like the angels in heaven who have no need of marriage nor differentiation from males (based on *Mt.* 22:30).

Fortunately, hyper-preterists do not promote immorality, yet their doctrinal outlook has remarkable parallels to the Corinthian paradigm. But I must move quickly to the problem at hand, showing that hyper-preterism strikes at the vitals of our holy faith through flawed exegesis.

Introducing the Problem and the Solution

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul focuses on a denial of the resurrection of the body. In the first part of his argument for the resurrection (vv. 1-34), he repeatedly expresses his concern for its *necessity*: "if the dead are not raised" (15:12, 13, 15, 16, 29, 32). To dispel all doubt about our resurrection, he links Christ's resurrection to ours (as elsewhere: *Rom.* 8:1; 1 Cor. 6:14; *Phil.* 3:21). As we will see, this linkage powerfully affirms the physical resurrection.

In the second part of his response (vv. 35-57), Paul adapts his argument for the resurrection to the pneumatic-eschatological theology of his audience. He rebuts them by responding to their spiritual pride regarding "knowledge" and "gifts." He argues that *they themselves* have not yet received the full spiritual blessings of redemption (and neither will they in a few weeks, as per the ludicrous hyper-preterist A.D. 70 scheme). They will not attain the fullest expression of the Holy Spirit until "the end" (v. 24a), at the consummation (v. 24b-28), following upon the resurrection of the dead (vv. 21-23). Effectively

Paul not only corrects their present dismissal of the importance of the material order, but affirms their future eternal materiality in a physical body!

Paul's First Argument

After insisting that Christ was resurrected from the dead and that this is the foundation of our redemptive hope (vv. 1-19), Paul then powerfully links our resurrection to Christ's. In other words, his whole point regarding Christ's resurrection is to lay a foundation for ours. In verse 20 we read: "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the *first-fruits* (Gk., *aparche*) of those who are asleep." This first-fruits imagery carries a load of theological implications regarding our physical resurrection.

First, the temporal significance of "first" requires that Christ's resurrection is peculiarly the first of its kind. No other consummate-order resurrection occurred previously. Second, in that He is the "first-fruit" He *represents* the rest, just as the Old Testament offering of the first part of the harvest represented the whole harvest (cp. *Rom. 11:16*). Christ's resurrection represents our own. Third, the "first-fruit" also promises more to come. Christ's was unique for the time, but it spoke of others to follow at "the end" (v. 24). Thus, the resurrection of Christ as the first-fruits is: (1) the first of this order to occur, (2) represents His people's resurrection, and (3) expects more eschatological resurrections to follow at the end.

Consequently, the *fact* of Christ's resurrection is essential to the believer's resurrection — *and anticipates it*. From Adam death and all of its processes arose; so from Christ life and its fullest blessings arise (vv. 21-28). The resurrection of Christ is necessary for the triumph of life over death (vv. 25-26), which will finally and fully be enjoyed only when we ourselves are raised from the dead and the "last enemy" is defeated (v. 26). It is fundamentally important to Paul.

In verses 29-34 Paul presents a relentless and vigorous *ad hominem* against his Corinthian opponents: He notes he is risking his life for what the Corinthians deny (v. 30-32). He lashes out against their spiritual pride in thinking they have arrived at the fullness of Holy Spirit blessings (v. 33). He warns that their "bad company" on this matter has "corrupted good morals" (v. 33; cp. *1 Cor. 6-7* particularly). They must become "sober" and "stop sinning" in this (v. 34). And all of this is in the context of his argument for the resurrection of believers!

Thus, once we determine the nature of Christ's resurrection, we understand the nature of our own. If Christ was physically raised from the dead, then so shall we, for He is the "first-fruits" of our resurrection. The only way around our physical resurrection is to deny Christ's physical resurrection.

Paul's Second Argument

Paul finally arrives at the specific objection toward which he has been driving: "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?'" (v. 35). Here he is clearly speaking of a physical resurrection in that: (1) His opening question concerns how the "dead" are "raised," that is, "with what kind of *body*?" (2) The verb "raised" is attached to "the dead" in verses 1-34, and to their actual "bodies" in verses 35-58. And since he is dealing with objections regarding a physical resurrection, he now emphasizes the "body" (*soma*) in this portion of his argument (vv. 35, 37, 38, 40, 42, 44). (3) Christ's resurrection from "the dead" is the key to the whole passage and argument (vv. 12, 13, 15-16), and His was a physical resurrection. In fact, Christ's resurrection is mentioned in the context of His being "dead," "buried," and "raised." Christ's *body* was buried; so His *body* is what raised.

Contrary to the Corinthians quasi-gnostic, hyper-spiritual, eschatologically-

conditioned claims, Paul establishes the death of the body as the pre-condition for the fullness of the life they presently claim. He illustrates this by the seed that is sown, which must "die" (vv. 36-37) so that it can be raised to eschatological glory. Despite their pride of "having arrived," the pneumatic Christians¹ cannot "be there" yet. Their bodies haven't been "sown."

In verses 38-41 Paul emphasizes two crucial truths in response to their question (v. 35): First, "God gives it a body just as *he* wished" (v. 38a). As with Augustine later, all objectors must recognize: "Is he who was able to make you when you did not exist not able to make over what you once were?" (*Sermons on Ascension*, 264:6). Any objection regarding the difficulty of resurrecting a dead body is more than accounted for by the fact that it is God who effects it.

Second, God gives bodies appropriate to their environment (v. 38b). He gives fish bodies appropriate to water, birds appropriate to flight, and so on (vv. 39-41). And all bodies have a level of "glory" appropriate to their estate (v. 40-41), whether they be "earthly" or "heavenly" (v. 40). The glorious condition of the resurrected body is adapted for victory over the decay element. Though our pre-eschatological condition suffers dishonor and weakness, our future estate will enjoy glory and power (vv. 43-44; cp. *Rom. 8:11*; *2 Cor. 4:7-12*; *Phil. 3:21*). In fact, it is "the body" itself that will be transformed from being perishable to imperishable (vv. 42, 52-54).

Paul employs shock therapy against these pneumatics: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (*1 Cor. 15:44*). His point appears to be that not only should they not denigrate the present material order (which they have done, chs. 6-7), but he informs them that they will be resurrected in a "spiritual *body*" in the eschatological order! And here is where the hyper-preterist's

theological naiveté causes him to stumble so badly. Hyper-preterists believe Paul's reference to the "spiritual body" speaks of the *substance* of the body, its compositional makeup. Consequently, they are emboldened to employ this verse for discounting a physical resurrection. Of course, this is as wrong-headed as to say a Coca-Cola bottle is made of Coca-Cola. Note the following evidences supporting the orthodox approach to Paul's argument (to name but a few):

- This "spiritual (*pneumatikos*) body" is no more immaterial than the "natural (*psuchikos*) body," even though both "spirit" (*pneuma*) and "soul" (*psuche*) often refer to the immaterial element within the creature. Here Paul uses these (usually spiritual) terms to describe the *body*, and we know that our present natural (*psuchikos*) body is material. In 1 Corinthians 2:14 these adjectives distinguish the believer and the unbeliever. Rather than distinguishing their body materials, the terms focus on their driving forces: spiritual (Holy Spirit driven) concerns over against animal appetites.
- To Paul, the semantic domain for *pneuma* overwhelmingly means "pertaining to the Holy Spirit" (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:13; 3:1; 12:1; Rom. 1:11; Eph. 1:3; 5:19). That is, it means *governed by* the Spirit of God. The adjectives *psuchikos* and *pneumatikos* describe, therefore, the essential governing characteristic of each body: the present, unresurrected, fallen *body* over against the future, resurrected, redeemed *body*. That is, they speak of the earth-related, animal-appetite-controlled condition of the present order (the totality of man in his earthly estate) over against the eternity-related, Holy Spirit-controlled condition of the resurrected estate (the totality of

man in his eternal estate). The glory of the eschatological state entered into by the eschatological resurrection involves the full dominance of the Holy Spirit and all that that entails (including the body's imperishable condition and its moral control). And contextually, Paul designs his response to confront the prideful Corinthian pneumatics who think they have arrived at full spiritual glory. (Later Paul notes that the natural is first, not the spiritual, showing that the Corinthians must first live out their present lives before attaining the fullness of the Spirit, v. 46).

- Paul's parallels and contrasts show that his concern is not physical over immaterial, but perishable over imperishable (v. 42), dishonor over honor (v. 43a), and weakness over power (v. 43b). Our resurrected condition is so governed by the Holy Spirit that the weaknesses of our present condition will be totally overcome by the transformational power of the Spirit. Indeed, he emphasizes the difference of *glory* as the key (vv. 40-41).
- According to scholars such as A. T. Robertson, adjectives ending in *-inos* generally denote compositional material, whereas those ending with *-ikos* signify characteristics. This fits the flow of Paul's argument regarding the "natural" (*psuchikos*) and the "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) body as I have presented it — and it supports the historic faith of the church regarding the resurrection.
- Once again, Paul brings in the parallel between Adam and Christ as illustrating the differing circumstances of our estates (vv. 45-48). In verse 45 he applies Genesis 2:7 in light of his resurrection argument, contrasting the Adamic condition (the first Adam) with the resurrected Christ (the second Adam). (He cites the LXX: "the

man became a living [*psuchen*] soul.") Adam's body was a *psuchen* body subject to animal weaknesses (hunger, death, and so forth, Gen. 1:29; 2:17). Once again we have the distinction between the *psuche* (soul) and *pneuma* (spirit): But we know that Adam was not immaterial, nor was Christ in His resurrection. The idea here is that just as Adam is the source of our perishable bodies as the "first Adam," so Christ is the source of our Spirit-powered bodies as the "last Adam" (the man of the last estate or condition of the redeemed). Thus, Paul is drawing the parallel between the two material bodies and their consequent conditions (cp. v. 22), then noting the superiority of the consummate state represented in Christ's resurrection condition.

- In verse 47 ("the first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven") Paul is not speaking of the origin of Adam and of Christ, but the *quality* of their conditions (focusing on the *resurrected* Christ). He is reiterating the difference between their weakness/power, inglorious/glorious conditions. Resurrected believers share the heavenly life of Christ but are not *from* heaven themselves. Paul contrasts the resurrection body with the Genesis 2:7 Adam (vv. 45-46). Thus, "just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (v. 49). We shall wear the image of the heavenly Second Adam, whatever His resurrection was like.
- In verse 50 he contrasts man's fallen condition with his eternal condition in Christ: "Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the per-

ishable inherit the imperishable.” The phrase “flesh and blood” shows the need for transformation. It highlights the weakened, sinful estate, not the material condition. In the LXX “flesh and blood” stands for human weakness as subject to and indicative of death (cf. *Dt. 32:42; Isa. 49:26; Jer. 51:35; Ezk. 39:17-18; Zeph. 1:17*). Therefore, “flesh and blood” parallels with the decayed realm, for “this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality” (v. 53) Paul uses *touto* (“this”) four times: twice in verse 53 and twice in verse 54. His use of “this” demands continuity of the body (this body) even during transformation to the resurrected estate.

Conclusion

When all is said and done, the historic position of orthodox Christianity

is sustained. Christ was physically resurrected (though with transformed powers), and so shall we be. God created man as distinct from angels. We are designed to be physical creatures for: (1) God sovereignly and purposely created the objective, material world in which we live (*Gen. 1; Psa. 33:6-11*). (2) He lovingly and carefully formed our physical bodies for dwelling in this material world (*Gen. 2:7-24*) which He has entrusted to man (*Ps. 8:1-9; 115:16*). (3) He brought his objective, propositional revelation to us through the historical process of inspiration and inscripturation by means of men moved by the Spirit of God (*2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21*). (4) In the Second Person of the Trinity, God took upon Himself a true human body and soul (which He still possesses, *Col. 2:9*) and entered history for the purpose of redeeming men back to a right relationship with Him (*Rom. 1:3; 9:5; Heb. 2:14*). (5) His elect people will inherit

the eternal estate in resurrected, physical bodies (*Jn. 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:20-28*) so that we might dwell in a material New Creation order (*2 Pet. 3:8-13*).¹

Dr. Gentry is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America. He is the author of thirteen books and a contributor to eight others, from publishers such as Zondervan, Baker, Kregel, P & R, and American Vision. He is the editor of a forthcoming title from Ross House Books: *Thine Is the Kingdom: A Summary of the Postmillennial Hope*. He has spoken at conferences and on radio across the nation.

¹ The pneumatic-eschatological tendencies of the Corinthians are the combined charismatic outbursts that they are associating with the coming in of the eschaton. That is, they deem their charismatic gifts as evidences of the end having come.

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After the Resurrection

By John E. Stoos

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:10-11;13-14)



There is a lot of confusion today regarding how Christians should function in the realm of politics. The political left and some concerned Christians accuse those Christians who are active in this realm of some sort of messianic goal of “saving” society through politics. If we sought to replace the power of the Christian gospel to regenerate a lost soul with anything human, their concerns would be well founded. However, those encouraging words from the Apostle Paul to the Philippians tell us that a lot should happen in the life of a Christian *after* he or she experiences the new birth. I believe that Christians should and must be involved in politics, but we must remember that no good will come of our political activism if we do not understand and operate in the “power of His resurrection.”

What Is Government?

First and foremost, Christians are the only people who can restore the proper Biblical understanding of government to our modern system. Whenever I discuss this with young people, I use a word association game that psychiatrists, our modern day witch doctors, use in some of their therapy sessions. I explain that I am going to say a single word and ask them to remember the *first* word, thought, or phrase that comes to their mind. I draw their attention to the front of the room and then simply say “government.”

Next come a series of questions: “How many of you thought about something relating to yourself?” I am yet to have a hand go up on that one. Next I ask, “Who thought of something relating to their families?” I usually get a few hands here and often it has to do with what civil government is doing to harm the family. Next I ask, “Who thought about the church?” and again few hands are raised. Finally I ask about civil government, our federal, state, or local governments; this is where most of the hands in the room are raised.

I do this exercise to illustrate how out of touch most Christians are with what the Bible teaches about government. Living in the modern world, we are taught that the word *government* is synonymous with civil government and everything else has only to do with our private lives. Buying into this lie, most Christians practice a false piety focusing on personal holiness, family, and church while largely ignoring the political realm. From the Bible, however, we learn that there are several major types of government, starting first and foremost with self-government. Biblical Christians do not advocate the sort of top-down controls that liberals suggest to handle the problems of society. Instead we preach the Good News of the gospel that changes hearts one at a time. Today we have sadly forgotten that those of us who are saved are to live in “the power of His resurrection.” Obviously this resurrection power should have a great impact on how I govern my own

actions as I learn to worship God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself (*Mt. 22:37-39*). Of all the areas of government, we find the Bible has the most to say about self-government.

However, the Bible also has much to say about the smallest and most fundamental unit of human organization, the family. Not only does the Bible establish the family as the normative structure for rearing children and taking dominion over creation, but it also has much to say about how it is to be governed.

Bible-believing families are instructed not to forsake the fellowship of the saints, and thus we have churches. And, yes, the Bible has a lot to say about how they are to be governed as well. When we study the Scriptures, we should notice that almost everything that deals with rearing children, education, caring for the sick, providing for the poor, and the general building of character is centered on one of these three Biblical governments. The civil government should have a very limited role to play in these matters and yet in the past two hundreds years of our nation’s history the civil magistrates have taken, or been given, more and more control over these important duties. Biblical Christians should be on the forefront of restoring the proper Biblical balance.

So, what would be left for the civil magistrate to do? Plenty! The civil government is responsible for the defense

of our nation; it is meant to protect us and our families from enemies foreign and domestic. The civil magistrate is responsible for maintaining social order and enforcing Biblical commands such as "Thou shall not steal" and, of course, the civil magistrate is the only government that God entrusts with the power of the sword to punish crimes like murder and kidnapping. The civil magistrate is responsible, as our Declaration of Independence so eloquently states, for protecting our God-given rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (or property)." It is not the magistrate's job to tell us what is or is not good for us to purchase or at what price; it is their job to maintain justice: A Biblical civil magistrate would establish a free market where the laws protect private property and require men to be honest in their dealings and faithful to their contracts.

Civics 101 and the Resurrection

So just what does this Civics 101 lesson have to do with the resurrection? It goes back to what Paul was trying to teach us about living "in the power of His resurrection." To illustrate, reflect on the story of an earlier resurrection that was discussed in chapter 11 of the Gospel of John. Jesus' friend Lazarus had died, and before going to his tomb, Jesus waited a full four days to make sure that everyone knew that Lazarus was indeed dead. This helps us really understand just how "dead in trespasses and sins" we were before God gave us faith and called us forth in the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the story does not end with Jesus' command for Lazarus to come forth, but continues with further instructions to others who witnessed Lazarus' resurrection. There is a lesson here that I hope and pray many pastors and teachers will reflect on carefully and prayerfully. It would have been pretty incredible to see Lazarus obey Christ's command to

come forth, to see him stand up off the stone and come out of the tomb, grave clothes and all. But then Jesus turned to those who were with Him and said, "Loose him, and let him go."

The Christian life is not just about getting saved and looking forward to the rapture or heaven! What Paul wants us to do is take new Christians, loose them, and let them go so they can live in the power of Christ's resurrection. After Lazarus was loosed, he continued to minister to Christ, but found himself, as most of the early Christians did, a target of persecution with the Jewish leaders wanting him back in the tomb!

Pastors and leaders need to take off the old grave cloths of the world from about those in their flocks and teach them to be disciples who are willing and able to live in the power of Christ's resurrection, conforming to Biblical teachings and confronting the world

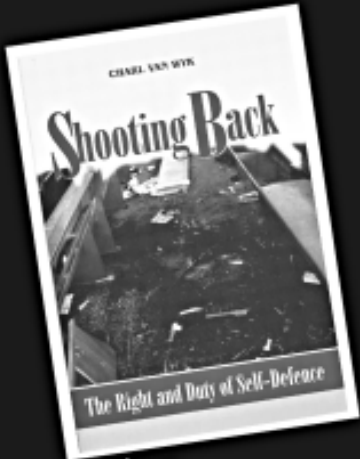
in all the areas of government discussed above. Will this be messy and controversial? You bet it will: "Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox" (*Pr. 14:4*). I would suggest that in many Christian circles today, we are spending far too much time making sure the barn is clean and criticizing anyone who messes it up. Instead we should be rejoicing in all the work that is being done by those Christians who have been properly instructed and let loose to "live by the power of His resurrection," even if we have to clean up a few of their messes. ☐

John E. Stoops is a political consultant living in Sacramento California with his wife Linda. They have six children and fifteen grandchildren. John is also host of the radio talk show, Dialog on KFIA, AM710 in Sacramento, which airs weekdays from 5-7 pm.

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by CHARL VAN WYK



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A million lights seemed to be flashing all over the place. Police and rescue vehicles were everywhere as I arrived at the church that fateful Sunday evening, July 25, 1993. I walked into the church in a complete daze. There were bodies lying in the pews - bodies sprawled in the aisle - blood everywhere. ... a young worshipper, Charl, realised what was happening and returned fire, says Bishop Frank Retief of the St. James Church in Cape Town, South Africa. - *Joy Magazine*

Read Charl's wonderful testimony in this book.

Charl, a full-time missionary of Frontline Fellowship, will be available in the US to share his testimony and the vision of the mission between 24 May and 8 June 2003. He may be contacted through In Touch Mission International.
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Resurrection Apologetics

By Ian Hodge



Many religions compete for the allegiance of people, some more successfully than others. Only one religion, however, is rooted in historical facts: Christianity. When we view the apologetics of Stephen or Paul in Acts we find they tell the history of Christianity — the creation, the events of the Old Testament in God's dealing with Israel — as the rationale for belief.

Stephen, the first martyr, defended the faith against his persecutors with a history lesson. Beginning with the visit God made to Abraham, Stephen told his Jewish inquisitors some homegrown facts. Not that they were unaware of these facts; they simply had chosen to ignore them. So Stephen rightly took the opportunity to remind these learned Jews that the facts of history were on his side.

Paul used the same tactic on non-Jewish pagans in Athens. Once the persistent persecutor of Christians, he became the articulate defender of the faith. Paul identified the unknown God whom the Athenians chose to worship. This God, said Paul, was the One who had created all things. This was not just an impersonal god who might have been the first cause, but also the very personal God who had created all things and made them for a purpose.

Our creeds reflect this historical aspect of Christianity. The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds early identified God as the One who made heaven and earth, which was an historical event. If creation did not occur at some time in the past, then the God we identify could not exist.

The ancient world was a lot like our own. It was governed by religious pluralism and pragmatism. The political order was seen as the source of all law and authority, and there was widespread apathy to the Christian message. Therefore, the tactics used by these early church fathers and the contemporary followers of Christ is instructive for our own time today.

We live in a world governed by pragmatism, materialism, and the idea that truth, (if it exists) is unknowable. And nothing gets people more upset than when someone insists that one religion is true and all others are false. This upset is exacerbated when the religion claiming to be true insists that it alone possesses the historical facts to *verify* its claim.

Here are the facts: In writing to the Corinthian church, St. Paul argues that without a resurrection, we are still dead in our sins. The Easter event is thus crucial to the claims of Christianity. The importance of history and historical events to Christianity cannot be overstated. Neither can the implications of these historical events. St. Paul's emphasis on the resurrection is appropriate, given that it signifies, better than anything else, the idea of *new life*. This is a theme the apostle repeatedly returns to in his letters. New life means a new man (*Eph 4:24; Col. 3:10*) and without the resurrection none of this would be possible.

The resurrection is thus the fact that sets Christianity apart from all other religions. The prophet of Islam is dead. All that remains of Buddha are statues. Meanwhile, the Christ of Christianity lives on, risen from the dead. Without the resurrection, Chris-

tianity is dead in the water. This is how important the resurrection is.

Aspirin Christianity

Considering the importance of historical events, and especially of the resurrection to the early evangelists, it might be time for the church 2,000 years later to acquire a taste for historical argument. The propensity to consider Christianity in terms of psychology rather than history is not helping the culture of our day find its meaning and identification with the God who made all things. Rather than argue for an historical creation, for historical intervention by God in the affairs of men culminating in the resurrection by one Man from the dead as the first-fruits of what is to come, our age would rather offer Jesus as the heavenly Pain Reliever. Or, if people are not getting enough enjoyment in life, then Christ is the Great Aphrodisiac offering pleasure to all if taken in sufficient quantities.

Perhaps this is why the world today is so troubled. Rather than offer the world the historical Triune God of the Bible, and the Old and New Testaments and the historical events that go with Him, people are offered a psychological solution that makes them feel good for a while but produces no lasting change. Like placebos designed to make us feel good without curing underlying problems, Jesus is offered as no more than the junkie's weekly fix. "Come back here next week, folks, and you'll get another shot in the arm to make you feel well again." Feelings are paramount.

Our culture is sick and dying. There is no evidence that Christianity is

turning the tide against big government, wrong legislation, and outright attempts to suppress Christianity from the religious marketplace. Well, some of this should be expected since to sign up in the kingdom of God is to abandon our country of birth and its political order, and to take on the kingdom of our new birth, offering our allegiance to the King of kings. Christ is now our Ruler, not our president or prime minister, and this makes us treasonous to the modern nation-state. This is why modern pagans wish to stamp out Christianity from the marketplace.

If history, as it is given to us in the New Testament canon, is any guide then it seems we cannot win the battle for the hearts and minds of men and women in our age by using a different set of tactics than the apostles. They were, after all, closer to our King than any of us, and had first hand knowledge, experience and training to achieve the remarkable: the conversion of pagan tribes and nations to the gospel.

We must insist, in the face of strong opposition, that the truth is not relative, that history is not just one man's interpretation of the past. Rather we must insist in words that the historical story of Christianity, centered in the Easter event with the resurrection as its culmination, alone provides credible evidence and that all men should choose wisely in what they believe.

Finally, our words must be followed by actions that reflect the moral character of the God who manifested Himself on earth and rose again from the dead to save us from our attempts to be our own god. What we do speaks louder than what we say, so words and actions go together.

If we are in doubt as to the right path, we must ponder again the resurrection and its historical importance to Christianity. If we're convinced that history is

vital to the Christian message, we must move forward in faith and confidence knowing that saints of old have trodden the path we've selected. And the signposts are there to guide us to do our part to bring all the nations to Zion, so that we will see the glory of Christ reflected throughout the whole earth. With this message the early Christians converted great parts of Europe and created Christendom. With all its faults, it was recognizable as Christendom, the outcome of the Easter message.

Maybe it's time to take our history seriously and insist in our evangelism there is one God, Maker of heaven and earth, who alone can save us from our rebellion and wickedness and give us new life and hope. And if we compare this message with those of other religions we find that we have no competition, no similar offering from the other great -isms of this world.

What causes us to hesitate? Is it because we do not expect God to bless our efforts to convert the world to Christ? If our message is true and our faith contains real confidence, then the future is ours.

Hesitation is the backbone of lost causes.■

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Glorious Christian Hope Prior to the Resurrection

By Eugene Clingman



The Christian hope is the resurrection, and what a blessed hope it is! Yet the resurrection cannot be considered the Christian's only hope. In fact, without other godly hopes, the hope of the resurrection would be but a selfish ambition. I have to confess that I am exceedingly glad I am saved and that the resurrection is indeed my hope. Yet as I have grown as a believer these past nearly thirty years, I have begun to understand that the Christian life is to be lived for God's purpose and glory, and not to secure my "fire-insurance." Every Christian will be raised to glorious eternal life. If we know our Bible, we can have assurance that the resurrection and eternal life are ours (*1 Jn. 5:13*). Wonderful! Glorious! But now what? Does God intend for people to get saved and live life eager to exit this world? Is this world merely a holding place for saved sinners until they die and go to Heaven?

Between Now and the Resurrection

What is there between now and the resurrection? The right answers to these questions greatly encourage me in my Christian walk and service. They create in me vision and purpose, hope and motivation to build Christ's kingdom, and help me understand why it is so important to teach diligently and train my children in the ways of God. I hope you sense something of the excitement and passion that stirs my heart when I think about what God is doing and will do on

planet Earth prior to the resurrection through the kingdom of Christ.

In order to make clear what I believe the Bible teaches about the future of planet Earth prior to the resurrection, I need to say something about what I believe the Bible does *not* teach about last things. I believe the Bible does *not* teach an end-time hope like that being re-popularized through the *Left Behind* film and books. This popular series teaches a secret rapture, a two-stage second coming of Jesus, and a two-stage resurrection.

Another view of the future, held by a different portion of the body of Christ, believes the world is getting worse and worse. According to this belief, the gospel of Christ will have some success, and the church will be built up to some degree (some even say to a significant degree) yet she will not have much effect on the world. A few people, or maybe even a lot of people get saved, but the church will have minimal success in opposing the flood of evil and darkness coming upon the earth. The final solution will be for God to rescue the church from the whelming darkness and flood of evil by the rapture. I believe this view is also in error.

What then do I believe the Bible teaches about how things on planet Earth will progress before the resurrection? When Jesus came, He planted His kingdom in the earth (*Lk. 11:20; 1:32; Ac. 2:30-36; Col. 1:13*). Before He returned to heaven He told His dis-

ciples, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (*Mt. 28:18*). When He ascended to heaven, He sat down on the promised throne of David (*Ac. 2:30-36*). From there, seated at the right hand of God, He waits until all His enemies are made a footstool for His feet (*Heb. 10:12, 13*). The last enemy is death, conquered on Resurrection Day (*1Cor. 15:24-26*).

Daniel's Prophecy

Daniel foretold that the planting of the kingdom of God would take place in the days of the Roman Empire, and so it did. Daniel wrote, "In the days of those kings [Roman Empire] the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (*Dan. 2:44*). This kingdom, Daniel says, will grow into a great mountain and fill the whole earth (*Dan. 2:35; 2:45*). Jesus illustrated this same truth in the parable of the leaven — the leaven of the kingdom has been inserted into the world and will eventually leaven the whole lump, so that most, if not all, the nations of the world will be made disciples (*Mt. 28:18-20; 13:33*). God will bless those people and nations that serve King Jesus, and He will remove those people and nations who do not serve the King: "For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and the nations will be utterly ruined" (*Isa. 60:12*; see also *Ps. 2; 72:4, 8-11, 19; 22:27, 28; Isa. 2:2-4*).

Jesus is now in the process of subduing His enemies. He will remain in Heaven until the process is complete (no special coming in a secret rapture). Death, the last enemy, is conquered at the last day (*Jn. 6:39-40; 6:44, 54; Heb. 10:12, 13; 1 Cor. 15:23-28; Ac. 3:21*). When death is conquered there will be a single (general) resurrection in which the dead, both the righteous and the unrighteous, will come forth (*Jn. 5:28, 29; 6:39*). The righteous are raised to everlasting joy and eternal life, the wicked to everlasting shame and punishment (*Mt. 25:46*).

Present Day Implications

What are the implications of this? The church of Jesus Christ, though but a seed when it began, has grown to significant proportions. Today about 10% of the world's population is Christian, and Christianity continues to grow. Rather than the world eventually becoming dominated by evil and darkness, the kingdom of Christ will continue to grow (as it has been doing since the Cross), pushing back the powers of darkness, until all of Christ's enemies are under His feet. The struggle of the church against the powers of darkness continues, and though her visual victory waxes and wanes, and though evil may flourish for a season (*Ps. 92:7*), yet righteousness will spring up and fill the earth (*Is. 61:11; 11:9; Hos. 2:14*). Abraham's descendants will possess the gates of their enemies (*Gen. 22:17; Gal. 3:29*). For the "meek shall inherit the earth." And the wicked will also be rewarded, not only at the judgment on the last day, but *in the earth* as well (*Pr. 11:31*). As the meek inherit, the wicked are disinherited. The righteous flourish (*Ps. 72:4-7; Ps. 112*), but the wicked, like chaff, are blown away; they are like the grass that sprouts on the roof of a house and withers (*Ps. 1; Ps. 129:5-8*). Good things are in store for Christ's kingdom, His people, and the church, and all this be-

fore the destruction of the last enemy at the resurrection!

So what's the big deal about all this? How you see the future determines how you live today, and how you plan and build for the future (*Pr. 6:6-8; Dt. 6:2*). If you believe that Jesus is coming any minute to rapture you away, you will tend to live with a short-term-single-generation view of life. If you believe the church will be defeated by evil, or will narrowly escape such defeat by a rapture, you will *not* be inclined to expect much in the way of victory or advance for her. This will affect how you serve in the kingdom. If on the other hand you believe the church is destined to fill the earth (*Dan. 2:44; Lk. 13:21*), to triumph over every foe (*Gen. 22:17; Heb. 10:12, 13*), to crush the head of Satan (*Rom. 16:20*), that the meek inherit (*Mt. 5:5*), and the wicked are disinherited (*Ps. 37*), you will have a different view of life. You will have a different view about possibilities for the future, about what God is willing to do for you, for your children, and for your children's children. In short, you will have a multi-generational view. You will live for bigger things; you will build for the future (*Jer. 29:11*); you will rejoice that your labor is not in vain in the Lord; and you will rejoice

that the Living God is the God who rewards righteousness in this life with blessings of all sorts, and with generational favor and success (*Dt. 6:2; Ex. 20:5, 6; Ps. 37*).

The good news for the church and the kingdom of Jesus Christ is this — "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet...."

I hope you will find time to look up the referenced verses and ponder them. I hope this article will impart something of the hope that we have in the glorious resurrection and God's multi-generational blessing upon our faith and labors. May our heart's cry be that of the Psalmist: "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and do confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands" (*Ps. 90:17*). ☒

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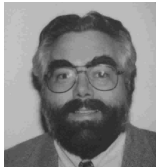
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A Christian America: Earl Warren and Our Christian Roots

By Roger Schultz



In 1954, *Time Magazine's* religion section included coverage of a Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. Some 600 dignitaries, businessmen, and politicians met in the Mayflower Hotel for a "sturdy breakfast (grapefruit, scrambled eggs, sausage, ham, hominy grits and gravy)." Among those present were President Eisenhower and Vice-President Nixon (who read from John 15: "[T]his is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you...").

Earl Warren

Time was especially interested in the last speaker, Chief Justice Earl Warren. An Eisenhower appointee to the U.S. Supreme Court, Warren had been the liberal Republican governor of California. (California conservatives knew him as "pinky Warren.") Warren is remembered today as the architect of "judicial activism" on the Supreme Court and as the head of the infamous Warren Commission, which investigated the Kennedy assassination.

Fifty years after the fact, however, it is fascinating to read excerpts of Warren's speech. "I believe no one can read the history of our country without realizing that the Good Book and the spirit of the Saviour have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses," wrote Warren. "Whether we look to the first Charter of Virginia ... or to the Charter of

Massachusetts Bay ... or to the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut ... the same objective is present: a Christian land governed by Christian principles.... I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their express belief in it ... I like to believe we are living today in the spirit of the Christian religion. I like also to believe that as long as we do so no great harm can come to our country."¹ The address raises interesting questions about Warren's convictions and his understanding of the role of religion in American history.

Christianity in the Colonial Documents

There can be no dispute that the Virginia Charter of 1606 had a Christian focus. The colony was founded, in part, for "the propagating of the Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God, and may in time bring the Infidels and Savages ... to human Civility and a settled and quiet Government."² The baptism of Pocahontas, shortly after the arrival of the settlers, seemed a confirmation of what the Charter had commissioned.

Similar goals were clearly stated in the Massachusetts Bay Charter of 1629. The Puritan colony's religious and peaceful administration was intended to win "the Natives of the Country, to the Knowledge and Obe-

dience of the only true God and Savior of Mankind, and the Christian Faith, which is ... the principal end of this Plantation...."³

Connecticut was founded in 1639 by zealous Puritans from Massachusetts under the leadership of Thomas Hooker. The "Fundamental Orders of Connecticut" is usually remembered as the first written constitution in the colonies, and one that created a more democratic order. But Earl Warren remembered what historians today often overlook: this early constitution was clearly Christian. The settlers entered into their confederation "to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus, which we now profess...."

Warren's reference to the religious roots of the Bill of Rights is particularly interesting. In March 1991, I attended a Symposium on the Bill of Rights, which was sponsored by the U.S. Congress and held in the Senate Office Building. We met just down the hall from Ted Kennedy's office, and former Chief Justice Warren Berger delivered the opening address. In an address on the "Pedigree of the Bill of Rights," Constitutional historian Donald Lutz argued that the roots of our American liberties could be found in colonial documents, many of which were authored by ministers. Three-fourths of the provisions from the U.S. Bill of Rights, in fact, were outlined in the 1641 Massachusetts Body of Liberties, a Puritan document that came complete with Bible verses attached to

each of the rights. (Conference participants gasped in horror when they realized that for their cherished liberties they were indebted to the hated Puritans.) Keep this as a handy fact with which to shock liberals: the roots of our Bill of Rights are in New England Puritanism.⁴

Please do not get me wrong. I am not arguing a reconsideration of Earl Warren. One could easily document the mischief of the Warren Court, in decisions on federal supremacy, and school prayer, and the special privileges given to criminals. Nor should one read the 1954 Prayer Breakfast address uncritically. (Prayer breakfasts are not known for theological depth, or for the spiritual commitment of the participants. They typically combine neighborliness with generic spirituality, and offer a “can’t lose” political photo-op.) Warren’s references to “the spirit of the Saviour” and the “spirit of the Christian religion” are very broad and very vague, and could be used to justify almost anything. It is, furthermore, important to look at the address in context. In 1954, “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance and the United States was in the middle of a Cold War with atheistic Communists. 1954 was a prudent time to celebrate a Christian America.

It is also important to read founding documents critically. The Virginia Charters, for instance, refer to specific Christian motivations. But what did the references to Christianity mean? For early Virginians, was “the Christian Religion” a redemptive religion offering salvation through Christ’s sacrifice? Or was it purely moralistic, creating an ethical system and the observance of outward commandments? Or was Christianity merely a cultural ideal, involving the maintenance of a civilized government and a European standard of living? (Or, as I suspect, did they see “Christian religion” as some

combination of such things?) The Third Virginia Charter (1612) perpetuates this ambiguity, listing as colony goals “the Propagation of Christian Religion, and Reclaiming of People barbarous, to Civility and Humanity.”⁵

America’s Christian Roots

That said, it is important to stress America’s unique Christian roots. We live at a time when Christianity and vestiges of the Christian past are hated by the cultural elite. The recent attack on the posting of the Ten Commandments is an example of the secularist jihad against Christianity. Rushdoony notes: “Historically, there are two major stages in the attack on religious liberty. First, the state is secularized in the name of freedom, and second, every prerogative of the church is attacked in an indirect manner so that, in a disguised fashion, its right to exist is denied.”⁶ Rushdoony proceeds to show, drawing upon George Washington’s brilliant Farewell Address (1796), that there is a necessary connection between religion, and morality, and social stability.

Fifty years ago most Americans would have had a positive view of the United States, the importance of religion, and the role of Christianity in the nation’s past. Academics and the secularist cultural leaders, today, however, are largely hostile to the legacy of America and the role of religion. Christians who stress the importance of faith in history are invariably criticized. When Jerry Falwell emphasizes America’s Christian heritage, he drives liberals and the ACLU crazy. But what is now considered a right-wing conservative perspective on history was commonly understood and broadly accepted a half-century ago, even by the lefties.

I don’t care much for Earl Warren, but what he said in 1954 was true. America was a Christian land, gov-

erned by Christian principles. The country was built upon the Good Book, the Savior, and the principles of the Christian religion. And as long as we are faithful to our Lord, no great harm will come to us.■

Dr. Schultz is Chairman of the History Department at Liberty University, teaches Church History at Christ College, and is the home-schooling father of nine children.

¹ *Time* (February 15, 1954), 49.

² “First Charter of Virginia,” in *Documents of American History to 1898* (9th edition), ed. Henry Steele Commager (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973), 8. Three years later, a subsequent charter affirmed that a key goal of the colony was “the Conversion and Reduction of the People in those Parts unto the true Worship of God and Christian Religion” and also warned about and took preemptive action against the “Superstitions of the Church of Rome.”

³ “The First Charter of Massachusetts,” *ibid.*, 18. Spelling modernized. The official seal of the Bay Colony depicted the English Christians arriving, with the Word of God in hand, preparing to offer it to an Indian who is stretching forth an ear of corn. It is a great symbol of the missionary impulse emphasized by the early charters.

⁴ Charles Hyneman and Donald Lutz, *American Political Writing During the Founding Era, 1760-1805* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1983). Unfortunately, Lutz interprets the 1641 Body of Liberties from a “rights consciousness” perspective, thus de-emphasizing the Biblical roots of the document. The paragraph above is adapted from my article “A Celebration of Infidels,” *Contra Mundum* (Fall, 1991) — http://www.visi.com/~contra_m/cm/features/cm01_celebration.html.

⁵ “Third Virginia Charter,” in *Settlements to Society, 1607-1763*, ed. Jack Greene (N.Y.: Norton, 1975), 12. One must also be careful of documentary collections; critical information is sometime edited out of the texts. The information about religious motivations in the Third Virginia Charter, for instance, contained in the Greene text, is edited out of the Commager documents reader.

⁶ Rousas Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1978), 45.

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The Body

By R. J. Rushdoony

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When we come to the “question” of life after death, it is necessary for us to begin by dropping all the pagan ideas which prevail on this subject, most of them being summed up in the doctrines of ancient Greece. The Greeks saw man as made up of two substances or two kinds of being, mind or soul on the one hand, and matter or body on the other. Some Greeks held to a tripartite view which is shared today by many churchmen, man as body, mind, and spirit. For the Greeks, the body perished forever at death, whereas the soul continued a pallid existence as a shade.

The Bible emphatically gives us a different doctrine. Man is created as a unity by God; man is one being, [a] created being. There are different aspects of that being, but it is a unity, a created unity. The Bible does not teach the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul, i.e., that man’s spiritual being is imperishable and thus survives the death of matter. On the contrary, we are told that God “only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto” (*I Tim. 6:16*). Strictly speaking, immortality means life *before* birth and *after* death, and paganism often so understood it. We receive a different kind of immortality as a part of God’s grace and plan, so that we who are corruptible put on incorruption by God’s decree, and we who are mortal put on immortality (*I Cor. 15:53*). God, by His sovereign grace, has created us to put on immortality, but it is not of the pagan variety, and Paul speaks of immortality in I Corinthians 15 in terms of the resurrection of the body.

Our Lord gives us a very telling vision into the subject in Matthew 22:31-32:

31. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

God is emphatically separated by our Lord from the realm of death or extinction. God is life, not death, and separation from God is death. Because sin separated man from God, sin brought death into the world. The essence of death is thus separation from God, who is the essence and the principle of life. When God created man, He created man “very good” (*Gen. 1:31*). Man was not created a transitional being who was to outgrow his body and realize himself as a spirit. When we are told that God created man “a living soul” (*Gen. 2:7*), the meaning of *soul* in the Hebrew is “a breathing creature;” it has clear reference to man as a living bodily being. A Greek meaning is commonly read into the word “soul.”

Warfield, in commenting on Matthew 22:32, said:

From the standpoint of the Bible the souls separated from their bodies, though living, are *dead*: they are under the power of death. They are, because dead, still enduring the penalty threatened against sin. The Living God is the God of the living, not of the dead: he cannot have proclaimed himself the God of those hopelessly under the power of death, suffering the penalty of sin. If he proclaims himself, therefore, the God of

Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, this is proof beyond cavil, that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whatever temporarily may be their state, belong fundamentally to the realm of the living, not to the realm of the dead; and cannot therefore be permanently held by the bonds of death. And the realm of the living is the realm where not dead souls are, but where living souls are, souls not suffering disabilities through death. Death cannot have permanent dominion over those whose God is the Living God: in the very nature of the case they belong to the Kingdom of Life. They must therefore emerge from Sheol and return to the light of life—soul and body alike partaking of the undivided life that belongs to human nature. If we believe this, and so far as we believe it, we shall cease to wonder at the effect of our Lord’s argument on the people: “And when the multitudes heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.” It is the strength of the Old Testament religion...that the Living God has nothing in common with the shades of Sheol: that “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living;” that in him is the fountain of life, which to quaff is to abide forever in fullness of life.¹

Warfield’s point is very important, and it gives us a clear understanding of Scripture. Creation was not an intermediate stage in God’s eternity, nor are matter and the physical body created and ordained for a short span of years.

To view the material creation as merely a way-station between eternity and eternity is to import Greek philosophy into the Bible. The whole of creation was in God's sight "very good" (*Gen. 1:31*). Evil is not metaphysical but moral; it is not a matter of time and matter but of moral choice. Satan was never a material being, but by his moral choice fell into sin and reprobation. The birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the vindication of matter and its reclamation together with all other aspects of creation. This vindication and restoration is completed with the resurrection of the dead and the regeneration of all creation (*Matt. 19:28*).

Life in heaven is thus an intermediate state; man's normative condition is a physical existence without sin or death. The Bible speaks of life in heaven as a "sleep" (*I Cor. 15:51*), but this is not the heretical doctrine of soul sleep. It is the body that sleeps, not the man, who lives on in heaven. To cite Warfield again,

These all, dying in Christ, die not but live—for Christ is not Lord, any more than God is God, of the dead but the living. We must catch here the idea that pervades the whole of Jewish thought—inculcated as it is with the most constant iteration by the whole Old Testament revelation—that death is the penalty of sin and that restoration from death, that is resurrection, is involved, therefore, in reception into the favor of God.²

Thus, it is clear that sin, sickness and death are not natural to the body but are malformations and perversions thereof. God made the body for life; man by his sin has made it the locale of moral and physical death.

The eschatology of the body thus has a key place in Scripture in both the end-point and end-time aspects.

First, to treat the body with disrespect is to despise God's handiwork and to sin. It is not an accident that dietary laws are a part of scripture. The commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," tells us that all life can be dealt with only in terms of God's permission. Life can only be taken in terms of God's law. One of the horrors of abortion is its contempt for physical life.

Second, the practice of medicine is a priestly calling. The word *salvation* comes from a Latin word meaning health. When Jacob, in Genesis 49:18, says, "I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD," the word he uses, common to the Old Testament, means victory, deliverance, and *health*. This should not surprise us. Since sin means death, and sickness is a step towards death, salvation means in part deliverance from death and therefore health. This tells us too that the quest for health apart from Christ is ultimately self-frustrating, because to reject Him is to deny life and affirm death. A concern for health is thus a valid and necessary Christian concern.

Third, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:35-44, the bodies we are born with are only a pale shadow of the resurrection body. The Fall and sin have warped our physical existence, and our total being, dramatically. With our regeneration, the restoration of our total being begins. Basic to this restoration is the moral factor, and this means a faithfulness to God's law-word. We are sanctified by God's law, and this has an effect on our total being. Isaiah 65:20 tells us that, as the whole world comes under the lordship of Christ our King, our life expectancy is dramatically increased. Because holiness and righteousness or justice are life, life in Christ brings about changes in man's health and life expectancy, and in the weather (*Deut. 28:12*).

Fourth, the full restoration of our physical life awaits the end of the world. Our physical existence is a part of God's creation of the universe, and the restoration of our perfect bodily life awaits the restoration of the whole creation at the end of history. The present order shall be melted, burned, and recast into its perfect and final form (*II Peter 3:10-14*), at which time the resurrection of our bodies will also take place. In the beginning, God created a world which was entirely good as man's habitat (*Gen. 1:1-3*). In the new creation, a like act occurs. The world and all creation are remade to be eternally good, to be the habitation of life, and man is given the resurrection body to be a citizen of the new creation.

To depreciate the body is to misunderstand the faith. The body has a key place in eschatology, because God works for the redemption and regeneration of all creation. Our end-point eschatology thus calls for the care of the body as God's handiwork, and as a temple of the Holy Spirit, and as God's property (*I Cor. 6:13-20*). Biblical law does not treat physical sins, such as adultery, lightly, because it does not regard our bodies lightly.

In end-time eschatology, our bodies are ordained for the general resurrection. We thus prepare a body for eternal life or for eternal reprobation and death. Paul says, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them members of an harlot? God forbid" (*I Cor. 6:15*). We cannot in this life plumb the full meaning of these words, but they do tell us that every act of our body is an act of membership, an affirmation of faith. God is the God of the living, and our every act is an affirmation of life or death.■

¹ B. B. Warfield: *Selected Short Writings*, Vol. I. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970). p. 346f.

² B. B. Warfield, "The Millennium and the Apocalypse," in *Biblical Doctrines*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House (1929) 1981). p. 652.

Prophecy and the Power of Myth

By Greg Uttinger



The study of Biblical prophecy has often been ruled more by myth than by Biblical hermeneutics or by a careful attention to text and context. When we are enamoured of a myth — or even a very strong tradition — we are easily led astray by such dubious principles of interpretation as “Sounds the same, is the same” and “What else could it be but...?”

The myth of the Antichrist has been centuries, perhaps millennia, in the making. The Little Horn, the Man of Sin, the Beast, and other Biblical characters have all been thrown into the blender to produce a character more intriguing and impressive than any other in Scripture, save Christ Himself.¹ Some commentators have become so caught up in the myth that they find this Antichrist behind every prophetic tree.

Now, of course, the Bible does give us an antichrist — several, actually. But the title itself appears in only two books, 1st and 2nd John, and John tells us plainly whom he has in mind. “He is antichrist,² that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 Jn. 2:22b). “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 Jn. 7).³ John is talking about false teachers who were once members of the church, but who had left the fellowship of the saints and were preaching a false Christ (1 Jn. 2:18-26). These antichrists rejected the incarnation; they insisted

that Jesus was not the Christ come in the flesh (1 Jn. 4:1-6). They were proto-Gnostics and proto-Nestorians, and their false Christ was an idol (1 Jn. 5:21). There is no obvious connection between these apostate teachers and, say, the Man of Sin who “sitteth in the temple of God” (2 Thes. 2:3-12) or the Beast of Revelation 13, who is a political tyrant.⁴

The Willful King

Our concern now is with an Antichrist-like character in Daniel 11, the Willful King. He appears after a lengthy prophecy concerning Antiochus Epiphanes (d. 165 BC) and the Maccabean Revolt (11:21-35). The majority of conservative commentators are divided into two camps on the identity of this formidable king.⁵ Some say that he is Antiochus. There are obvious similarities between the two, but the Willful King does not fit what we know about the historical Antiochus at a number of points.⁶ And limiting the dimensions of the prophecy to times and things Greek obscures the Messianic focus of the book as a whole.⁷

Other commentators, particularly those with dispensational leanings, are ready to jump two thousand years or more into the future and recognize the Willful King as the Antichrist. After all, “He sounds like the Antichrist,” and “Who else could he be?” If these commentators do not blink at a two thousand year jump (read “gap”), maybe it’s because 19th and 20th Century American theology became very

comfortable with various sorts of gaps.⁸ But there is nothing in the text to suggest a two millennia parenthesis between vv. 35 and 36.

Liberal theologians and critics, of course, already consider the Book of Daniel a pious fraud, a piece of religious fiction. They take the author to be a devout forger who lived sometime in the Maccabean period. He was able to put so many accurate “prophecies” into the mouth of Daniel because, for him, these things were already a matter of history. The liberals, then, simply write off the prophecy of the Willful King; they assume that either the writer was ignorant of Antiochus’s real history and so manufactured some, or that at this point in the text he passed out of real history into fraudulent prophecy.

But what if there were another interpretation, one that took the prophecy seriously, and yet sidestepped the myth of Antichrist and actually helped to dismantle it? Philip Mauro gave us one in the 1920s with the publication of his book, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*.⁹ But let’s approach his solution through a back door.

The Battle of Actium

On 2 September, 31 BC, a Roman fleet commanded by Octavian Caesar (later Caesar Augustus) met a combined Roman-Egyptian fleet commanded by Marc Antony and Cleopatra VII. The fleets joined battle near Actium on the western coast of Greece. In the middle of the conflict, Cleopatra

withdrew. Antony tried to follow her and lost most of his fleet in the process. They fled to Egypt. Octavian followed by land, passing through Palestine. Along the way, he dispatched a task force to subdue the regions southeast of Judea, but it failed. Octavian himself pursued Antony and Cleopatra into Egypt, where, upon their suicides, he made Egypt his personal possession and secured for himself its enormous treasures.

Actium was a turning point in Earth's history. Had Antony and Cleopatra won at Actium, Egypt would have once more been the center of the world. Redemptive history would have moved on within the framework of an Egyptian empire, and all of Western history would have been radically different. But instead the course of the empire continued its Western march, and Rome became mistress of the Mediterranean world. Egypt began its slide into obscurity (cf. *Ezek. 29:15*).

Now if we look closely at Daniel's prophecy beginning with verse 40 we should be able to make sense out of the details. The king of a northern power comes against the king of a southern power in a sea battle, enters Palestine, fails to subdue the regions to the south and east, and goes on to Egypt, which falls into his hands, together with its treasures. What we have here is the Battle of Actium. This means that Octavian is "the king of the north" and Marc Antony is "the king of the south." But who then is the Willful King?

Who Fits?

The Willful King belongs neither to the north or the south: he is "the king" (v. 36): that is, he is a king of Israel. He does as he pleases. He does not regard the God of his fathers or any deity. Instead, he worships military force (v. 38-39). He has no regard for "the desire of women" (v. 37). He plants his palace in the holy mount, in Jerusalem (v. 45).¹⁰

At the end, he is troubled by tidings from the East and North, and responds with great violence (v. 44).

At this point, anyone with a good reading knowledge of the New Testament can recognize the Willful King. He is Herod the Great. "Herod the king" the New Testament calls him. Herod was an Idumean, a descendant of Esau, but a Jew by culture and religious profession. Antony pushed *with* (not *at* him) at Actium (v. 40); that is, Herod lent Antony and Cleopatra considerable support. But after their defeat, Herod threw that support to Octavian, who confirmed him as ruler of Judea and enlarged his kingdom. Towards the end of his life, Herod was troubled by tidings from the East (the wise men) and from the North — his son stirring up trouble in Rome. In both cases he reacted violently. His slaughter of the innocents illustrates all too clearly his blasphemous war against the Almighty and his contempt for the promised Messiah — the desire of every Jewish woman.

Michael the Archangel and the Time of Trouble

What follows in Daniel 12 confirms what we have seen so far. For the prophecy reaches its climax in the saving appearance of Michael the archangel. Now Michael appears by name only here, in Jude 9,¹¹ and in Revelation 12. He alone in Scripture is expressly called "the archangel." He wages war against the Serpent. He commands the armies of heaven. The Old Testament, of course, recognizes a unique Angel who is the Captain of the LORD's host (cf. *Josh. 5:13-15*). Calvin writes, "As we stated yesterday, Michael may mean an angel; but I embrace the opinion of those who refer this to the person of Christ, because it suits the subject best to represent him as standing forward for the defense of his elect people."¹² Messiah is Israel's Prince (*Dan. 9:25*). That she should have another prince,

another protector, seems odd at least. But if we recognize Michael as a name taken by the Angel of the LORD, the pre-incarnate Christ, then this lengthy prophecy brings us at last to the Messiah and to His salvation.

We are told that in connection with Michael's appearance there "shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation to that same time"; but the elect will be delivered (*12:1*). This is the Great Tribulation that came upon Israel in AD 70 (cf. *Mt. 24*, esp. v. 21-22).¹³ The prophecy reaches no farther.¹⁴ It ends with the scattering of "the power of the holy people" (*Dan. 12:7*), with the destruction of Jerusalem. And so the phrases "latter days" (*10:14*) and "the time of the end" (*11:40*) that appear earlier in the text make perfect sense. They do not point beyond Messiah, but to Messiah. Jesus Christ was manifest in "these last times" (*1 Pet. 1:20*), "in the end of the world" (*Heb. 9:26*), and "in these last days" (*Heb. 1:2*). Daniel gives us the end of national Israel and the end of Gentile dominion; then he brings us to Christ. Isn't that what we should expect?

Conclusion

What if the commentators of the past had not been so entranced with the Antichrist myth? Maybe the liberals would have had a harder time writing off Daniel as a pious forgery. Maybe evangelicals today would be a little less obsessed with headlines from Egypt and Iraq. And maybe, just maybe, there would be a few less books on Armageddon, and a few more on the sovereign hand of God in the details of history.■

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¹ For the last fifty years, who has been the centerpiece of more novels and films, secular and evangelical? Christ or the Antichrist?

² Literally, "the antichrist."

³ Literally, "The deceiver and the antichrist."

⁴ Whether or not the Man of Sin and the Beast are identical is another question. Aside from their delusions of godhood, they do not have that much in common. And the desire to play god is not that uncommon; it is, after all, the sin of Adam.

⁵ Calvin takes a different tack. He argues that the Willful King represents the Roman Empire. He even mentions the Battle of Actium.

⁶ See Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel, A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 250f and C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983 reprint), 468f.

⁷ See, for example, T. Boersma's anti-dispensational work, *Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle?* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1978). He makes the prophecies of Daniel to spiral in and around Antiochus Epiphanes — as if he were the focus of the book!

⁸ See James Jordan, "Groping Through the Gaps," *Biblical Chronology*, II, 2.

⁹ A reprint appeared from Reiner Publications (Swengel, PA) in 1944. But as Mauro went to press in 1922, he found that he was not the first to identify Herod the Great as the Willful King. James Farquharson of Aberdeen, Scotland had reached the same conclusion in 1838.

¹⁰ See Mauro's arguments for a shift of subject back to the Willful King at v. 44.

¹¹ Compare his words here with those of the Angel of the LORD in Zechariah 3:1-2.

¹² *Calvin's Commentaries, Daniel*, Lecture Sixty-Fifth.

¹³ I have no space to argue this here, but see J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (N. p.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974); David Chilton, *The Great Tribulation* (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987); Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991).

¹⁴ On 12:2, see Mauro, 169f. See also James Jordan's *Preliminaries Commentaries on Daniel* (Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 1994), 83-84. Cf. Ezekiel 37:11-14.

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ties by faith — a faith he had plenty of opportunity to practice.

We would be terribly remiss if we neglected the great stories of faith and character we find in the Scriptures. These stories possess the added virtue that they are true. They represent precise life lessons, as they are the very Word of God. Moreover, they represent the timeless and fundamental principles of good storytelling. Other literature will necessarily contain omissions or corruptions of God's view of life, because they are the product of sinful men. While we ought not to dismiss the literature of men for the Christian testimonies they represent, we ought to consider the stories of Scripture the greatest of treasures.

These are just a few examples of the available stories of Christian literature. Christians should seek out the rich heritage of Christian literature based upon a carefully developed Biblical method of scholarship. If we do so, we may recognize and perhaps achieve the elevated character of our forefathers in our children's and our

own lives. Such Christian character will serve the work of the Great Commission. ☐

¹ Rosalie J. Slater in James B. Rose, Ed., *A Guide to American Christian Education for the Home and School* (Camarillo, CA: American Christian History Institute, 1987), p. 327.

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