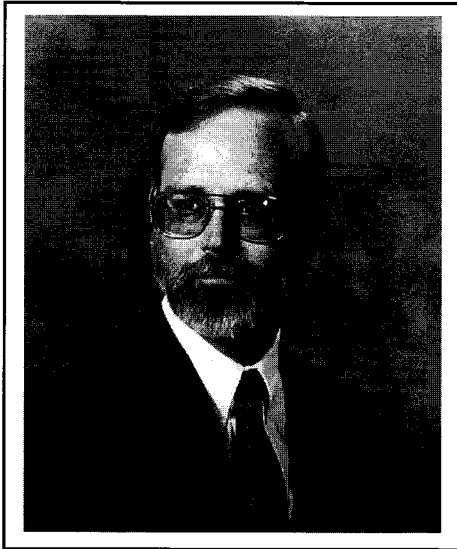


CHALCEDON *Report*

No. 385, August 1997



Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.
*Christian Reconstructionist
Pastor and Author*
(see page 11)

Plus...

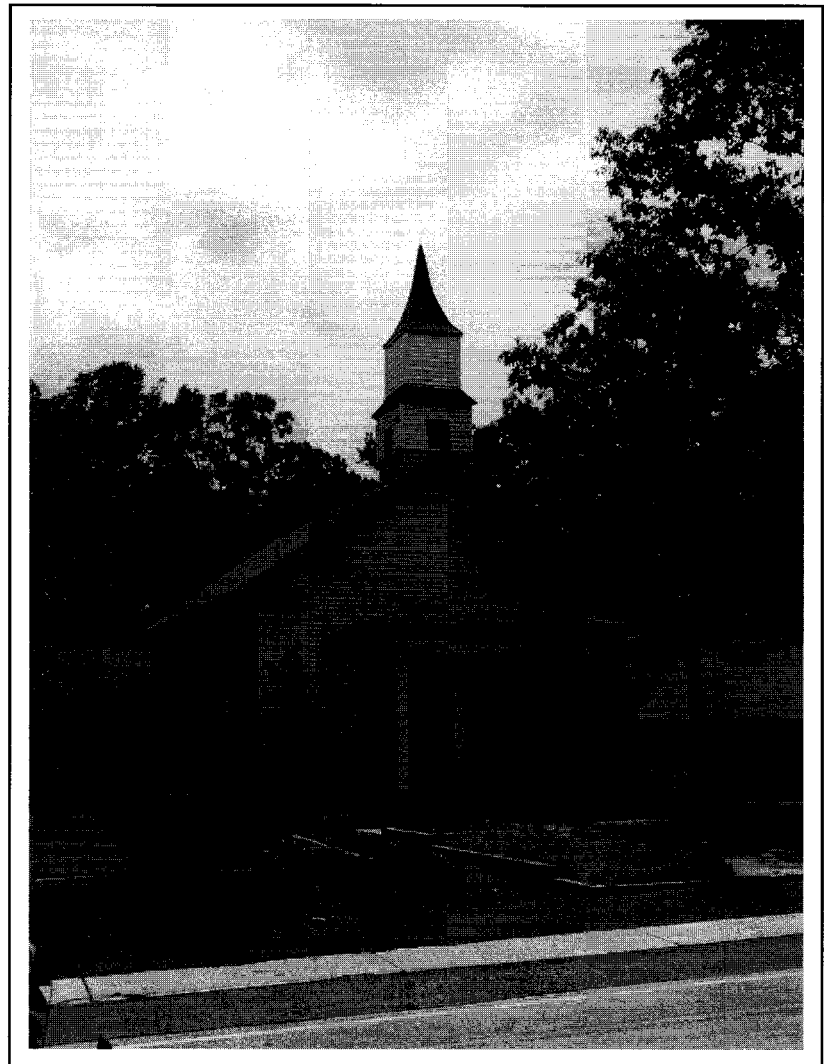
**Jack Kettler on Church
Incorporation and Political
Action**

**Brian Abshire Reviews Gary
North's *Crossed Fingers***

**Randy Booth's Open Letter
for Christian Unity**

**Steve Schlissel on Organic
Reformed Church
Government**

**R. J. Rushdoony, Andrew
Sandlin, and More!**



The Creed of Christian Reconstruction

Rev. Andrew Sandlin

[May be Freely Reproduced]

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Calvinist**. He holds to historic, orthodox, catholic Christianity and the great Reformed confessions. He believes God, not man, is the center of the universe—and beyond; God, not man, controls whatever comes to pass; God, not man, must be pleased and obeyed. He believes God saves sinners—He does not help them save themselves. A Christian Reconstructionist believes the Faith should apply to all of life, not just the “spiritual” side. It applies to art, education, technology, and politics no less than to church, prayer, evangelism, and Bible study.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Theonomist**. Theonomy means “God’s law.” A Christian Reconstructionist believes God’s law is found in the Bible. It has not been abolished as a standard of righteousness. It no longer accuses the Christian, since Christ bore its penalty on the cross for him. But the law is a statement of God’s righteous character. It cannot change any more than God can change. God’s law is used for three main purposes: First, to drive the sinner to trust in Christ alone, the only perfect law-keeper. Second, to provide a standard of obedience for the Christian, by which he may judge his progress in sanctification. And third, to maintain order in society, restraining and arresting civil evil.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Presuppositionalist**. He does not try to “prove” that God exists or that the Bible is true. He holds to the Faith because the Bible says so, not because he can “prove” it. He does not try to convince the unconverted that the gospel is true. They already know it is true when they hear it. They need repentance, not evidence. Of course, the Christian Reconstructionist believes there is evidence for the Faith—in fact there is nothing *but* evidence for the Faith. The problem for the unconverted, though, is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of submission. The Christian Reconstructionist begins and ends with the Bible. He does not defend “natural theology,” and other inventions designed to find some agreement with covenant-breaking, apostate mankind.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Postmillennialist**. He believes Christ will return to earth only after the Holy Spirit has empowered the church to advance Christ’s kingdom in time and history. He has faith that God’s purposes to bring all nations—though not every individual—in subjection to Christ cannot fail. The Christian Reconstructionist is not utopian. He does not believe the kingdom will advance quickly or painlessly. He knows that we enter the kingdom through much tribulation. He knows Christians are in the fight for the “long haul.” He believes the church may yet be in her infancy. But he believes the Faith will triumph. Under the power of the Spirit of God, it cannot *but* triumph.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Dominionist**. He takes seriously the Bible’s commands to the godly to take dominion in the earth. This is the goal of the gospel and the Great Commission. The Christian Reconstructionist believes the earth and all its fulness is the Lord’s—that every area dominated by sin must be “reconstructed” in terms of the Bible. This includes, first, the individual; second, the family; third, the church; and fourth, the wider society, including the state. The Christian Reconstructionist therefore believes fervently in Christian civilization. He firmly believes in the separation of church and state, but not the separation of the state—or anything else—from God. He is not a revolutionary; he does not believe in the militant, forced overthrow of human government. He has infinitely more powerful weapons than guns and bombs—he has the invincible Spirit of God, the infallible word of God, and the incomparable gospel of God, none of which can fail.

He presses the crown rights of the Lord Jesus Christ in every sphere, expecting eventual triumph.

CHALCEDON Report

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

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Chalcedon Scholars:

Rev. R. J. Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon and a leading theologian, church/state expert, and author of numerous works on the application of Biblical Law to society.

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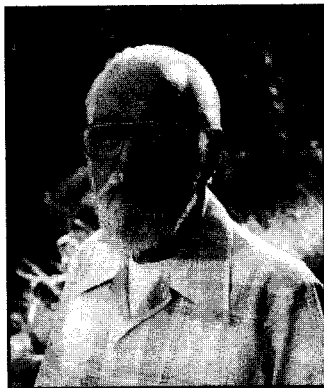
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<http://www.chalcedon.edu>
Circulation: Rebecca Rouse
Printing: Calaveras Press

This Is the Victory

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



Having been born into an immigrant family and attending a foreign language church, I was isolated from many of the theological currents of the day. It was thus only as I started college that I became aware of a startling development in American theological thinking: eschatologies of defeat. Perhaps no other nation in all history

has been so remarkably blessed as the United States. As a student, I knew that in one sphere after another, the United States was very successful: uniformly successful in wars, in the economic sphere, as a missionary force, and so on and on. And yet, strangely, they saw only evil ahead in history, either a future of growing grimness (amillennialism) or the triumph in history of Satanic forces and the necessity for a supernatural rescue of the Lord's people (premillennialism). And there I was, a child of a long persecuted people, expecting victory!

But that faith and hope colors one's outlook. In the past year, some have passed on to me publications criticizing and misrepresenting Christian reconstruction. One called us an "Identity group" (a movement we regard as evil because it sees salvation as by race, not grace), and a militic movement (whereas we believe in salvation by conversion, not coercion)! One person recently asked how misrepresentation affects me: I had to say that I don't like it, of course, but it does not upset me because I know from the Scriptures that I am on the winning side, and these people are losers. From my early years I have believed that "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). These losers hate God, so it is logical for some of that hate to be directed against us. Some losers are full of anger and hatred, and they are to be pitied.

Are we winning? Well, when I began in the late 1940's to collect materials that led to the publication in 1963 of *The Messianic Character of American Education* (with *Intellectual Schizophrenia* preceding it by about five years), some near me thought the triumph of state schools so final that I was

wasting my time trying to create a Christian school movement.

I cite this to show that our advancement is real. The old compromising churchianity that baptized the fallen order around it has now begun to fall apart. A polarization is setting in. In any case, however, we must not look to history for our hope but to the sovereign and triune God. He has not grown old since Bible times, nor has his omnipotent hand grown arthritic! He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

In the late 1940's . . . some near me thought the triumph of state schools so final that I was wasting my time.

The full and final accounting is in the hands of the Almighty, and we must leave it there. We are neither the Judge nor the jury, and to attempt to be so is to usurp God's prerogative. We do our duty, and we leave the results in God's hands, whose mercy and judgment both far exceed ours.

We cannot make a stand in terms of truth and justice in a fallen world without paying a price, and to expect only good from the hands of men is to be very foolish. Our lives can be blessed ones if we accept the realities of the fallen world around us and recognize that God is the determiner, not man.

News from Sudan

Christian forces in Sudan recently won a major victory: the freeing of an entire province from Islamic forces. Please continue to pray for and support the Christian forces in Sudan fighting against the Islamic "government" forces.

See p. 26 for Peter Hammond's report on distributing Bibles and giving medical training to Christian forces in Sudan.

Next month's *Chalcedon Report* will include Mr. Hammond's article on the freeing of Western Equatoria from Islamic forces.

Chalcedon Report, published monthly by Chalcedon, a tax-exempt Christian foundation, is sent to all who request it. All editorial correspondence should be sent to the editor-in-chief, Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251 or faxed to 209-736-0536. Laser-print hard copy and electronic disk submissions firmly encouraged. The editors are not responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of Chalcedon. Chalcedon depends on the contributions of its readers, and all gifts to Chalcedon are tax-deductible. ©1997 Chalcedon. All rights reserved. Permission to reprint granted on written request only.

The Character of Christ's Kingdom

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

(Is. 42:2, 3)

A principal theme of the Old Testament prophets relating to Messiah's glorious kingdom is the manner in which it was to

contrast with merely human kingdoms. The kingdoms of man arrive with and feature great pomp, pride, and power, crushing all who dare oppose them. They constitute visible manifestations of man's glory, and are usually attended by an arrogance toward both God and man.

Alternatively, Christ's kingdom was predicted to arrive in humility, far from the centers of human power (*Mic. 5:2*). When we examine the gospel accounts of Christ's birth, life, and death, we discover that the Old Testament prophecies were infallibly fulfilled: Christ was born in poverty and humility, attended not by royal heralds but humble shepherds. The kings of the earth did not hail him; the principal ruler in Israel at the time tried to murder him. Our Lord was reared by a humble, God-fearing family in relative obscurity. His adult teaching and healing ministry, while attended by thousands, did not bear the character of earthly royalty. His ignominious and cruel death in punishment as a common criminal was the most humiliating execution known in the ancient world.

Truly, if we consider his life on earth, the kingdom of Christ bears little resemblance to human kingdoms.

There is a good reason for this. The kingdom of Christ is not chiefly a political kingdom. Nationalist Jews at Christ's first Advent expected that this Man who claimed to be King and Messiah would fulfill the old covenant Scriptures which prophesied that God's Chosen would break the yoke of Israel's Gentile oppressors (*Jer. 23:5-9; Ez. 34:24-31; Mic. 5:5, 6*). In this assumption they were absolutely correct. They were grossly mistaken, however, in their assumption of the manner in which Messiah would do this. They presumed—like the dispensationalists of the modern era—that Christ's is a cataclysmically induced, centrally enforced political kingdom. They somehow missed those old covenant Scriptures which foretold that the Messiah-King would accomplish his will through regenerative, humble, non-coercive means (*Is. 15:14, 15; 42:1-7; 52:13-53:12; Zech. 9:9*). Christ indeed will crush his opponents (*Ps. 2*); but he will not crush them in the manner

of a merely human king.

The principal amillennial error is in holding that Christ's kingdom is limited to the Christian family, church, or the intermediate or eternal state. It does not recognize all the promises of the Messianic kingdom which pertain to the Godly Golden Age of the entire earth, including politics and the state (e.g., *Ps. 2; 22:27; 47:2, 3, 7; 72; Is. 2:2-4; 11:1-10; 42:1-4; 65:17-25; Mic. 4:1-5*).

A central error of all dispensationalists, most premillennialists, and even some postmillennialists, on the other hand, is in supposing that Christ's kingdom is a fundamentally political phenomenon. The first two foresee Christ returning physically to earth accompanied by the deceased saints with, as it were, guns firing and eyes blazing, intent on mowing down the Antichrist and his wicked disciples in cold blood. Some mistaken postmillennialists, though, trip into a similar error. They seem to think that if Christians can just capture state power they will be poised to usher in an intensified millennium by imposing Biblical law, punishing God's enemies, and creating a Christian state. While their sincerity may be impeccable, their agenda is unthinkable.

The earthly Kingdom of Christ begins in the hearts of regenerate man (*Lk. 17:21; Col. 1:13*). Under the power of the Holy Spirit, as the Christian reorders his life, family and all other areas he influences in terms of the Christian Faith and Biblical law, God gradually rolls back evil and its effects in all of human life and society. Politics is one such—but never the chief—area. It is a fatal flaw of those suckled on the heresy of the ultimacy of political solutions to suppose that Christ's kingdom will progress mainly by means of politics. It will not. It will advance mainly by the operation of the Spirit in the lives of increasingly sanctified, law-keeping Christians who practice their Faith in family, work, school, church, and all areas of their lives.

Fathers inculcate the orthodox Christian Faith into their families. Pastors lead their flock into greater obedience. Educators instruct their pupils in terms of a comprehensive Christian life-system. Churches revive the diaconate and care for the sick, the needy, the widow, the orphan. Christian doctors practice the godly craft of natural (sometimes, perhaps, supernatural) healing by following God's law and the products of God's common grace. Entrepreneurs create wealth by starting new businesses that benefit others. And on and on in all spheres.

Make no mistake: politics (like medicine, the arts, the media, technology, economics, etc.) is a legitimate area of principled Christian action. To surrender politics, or any other legitimate sphere of Christian activity, to the Devil and his disciples is an evil tack. But establishment of an explicitly Christian state will be the effect of broadly based Christian faithfulness beginning with the regenerated individual and family and reformed church. It will not be the effect of electing a few Christian politicians (though they are needed), nor even a Christian President (as beneficial as such an election would be). Elect a Christian President and Congress in November, 2000, and appoint an all-Christian Judiciary, and the nation's most vexing moral problems would not evaporate. It is as Christ's kingdom progresses among men—by means of Christ's gospel and

individual submission and obedience to the law-word of God—that politics and the state will enjoy Christian redemption.

Christ's kingdom is less externally spectacular than earthly kingdoms, just as his birth was less externally spectacular than merely human kings' births. But the small mustard seed and pinch of leaven of Christ's kingdom (*Mt. 13:31-33*) will not fail ultimately to dwarf other kingdoms in its profound efficacy in the earth.

Christ's is a quietly and unobtrusively advancing kingdom. But it cannot fail.

Call for Papers for *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*

The *Journal* is dedicated to the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1 — to subdue the earth to the glory of God. Toward this, the *Journal* provides a forum for serious discussion aimed at advanced laymen, working pastors, and others interested in the reconstruction of all spheres of human existence in terms of the standards of the Old and New Testaments.

To foment *regeneration*, not revolution, the editors seek articles that provide theoretical and theological background so that readers better understand how to think about the topic of the symposium. The editors also seek articles that apply the theory to our present situations, that teach us how better to live and go about our business. Both theory and practice are essential for Christian reconstruction.

The *Journal* Symposia for 1998 are the

- Covenant (submissions due Dec. 1, 1997)
- Business and Technology (submissions due May 1, 1998)

Most published articles are 5 to 30 pages in length. Submissions must be on floppy, preferably in Microsoft Word 6.0, WordPerfect, ASCII format or text only files, and include a good "scannable" hard copy (laser printed, 11- or 12-point font size).

Contact the editors for the style guide used. Please follow the journal format — especially for footnotes: no publication company, no "p." or "pp.," page citation in multi-volume works is like "3: 144", all Latin terms (*e.g., i.e., et al.*) italicized and never capitalized, and the shortened repeated reference form (*i.e.* author, page) rather than use of *ibid.* and *op. cit.*). And please include a brief bio.

Work hard on conciseness. Avoid redundancies. Use the passive voice sparingly. Consider obtaining the little book *Edit Yourself*, by Bruce Ross-Larson (Norton and Company). Write in good standard English. Subject your writing to rigorous criticism and proofing (do not expect the editors to do this for you!). Make your writing crisp and sharp.

BIBLICAL STUDY

Praying for All Men

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony



Exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior;

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (1 Tim. 2:1-6)

It is easier to pray for what we want or what we think we need than for God's will to be done "in earth as it is in heaven." As sinners we often have difficulty praying for God's kingdom to come to fruition because we cannot imagine what it would be like. We even have trouble understanding God's will when we see it done. But God never expects complete understanding of us, only faith and obedience.

One way we show our faith in God's providence is by our prayers. Here Paul exhorts us to prayer for "all men," particularly those in authority. Now to a first century Christian the thought of praying for princes and leaders would have been especially repugnant, just as we could probably name any number of leaders we would have a hard time praying for. Of course, we could view this as part of the fourth commandment's injunction to honor authority. Human sin does not diminish their roles as the ordained of God. We must honor wicked leaders just as a righteous son must honor a wicked father. Rebellion against God's ministers is no solution.

But Paul is talking about more than obedience or civil honor. He is telling us to pray earnestly for them in very clear terms. Of course there is the expedient reason — that they might allow us to live in peace and quiet and serve our God (v. 2). This is always our wish even of the most ungodly.

A more important reason, however, is that prayer for all men is "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." This is to be the criteria for all our thought and action. Our prayers, as all else, should be regulated by conformity to the revealed Word. Even our Lord prayed to the Father that "not my will, but thine, be done" (*Lk. 22:42*).

He reinforces the exhortation to prayer by telling us that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." This is a powerful reason for us to pray, but it does not mean God wills every single individual to be saved, for we know that God's will is determinative and that

many are not saved. The “all men” God wills (v. 4) is to be equated with the “all men” for whom we pray (v. 1). It refers to all sorts of men, those of every race and status. It cannot refer to every single individual on earth. We cannot pray for men as individuals whom we do not know as individuals. Moreover, we do not pray for all the dead men in heaven or hell and Paul had just said he had delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan (1:20).

God wills all sorts of men to be saved — rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, young and old, black and white. We therefore pray that his will be done and obey the great commission’s charge to go into all the earth to preach the gospel.

It is hard to pray for God to change the heart of those whose judgment would give us a sense of personal satisfaction.

The command to pray for all men reflects the will of God that we preach and teach to all the world. We therefore pray that God’s will be done. The command to pray for all men is really just a consistent extension of the requirement to take the gospel to all nations and the prayer that “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” The gospel is light and life. God has decreed that all men and nations are to be reached with the gospel.

It is easy for churchmen to be exclusive and to set artificial limits on God’s kingdom and grace or even to decide who is worthy of the gospel. When I was very young I remember being told why it was wrong to say “Go to hell” or “damn you.” I was told (I wish I could remember by whom for they deserve to be honored for the impression they left with me) that “Only God has the right to damn anyone to hell.”

We must see them as what God wills them to be.

We do not have the right to decide who is beyond God’s mercy and grace. It is appropriate to pray for justice and for judgment on the wicked, but sometimes this might reflect our own desires rather than God’s glory. It is hard to pray for God to change the heart of those whose judgment would give us a sense of personal satisfaction. What would have been more productive of God’s glory — Saul’s conversion or his condemnation — on the road to Damascus? When it comes to “kings, and for all that are in authority” personal judgment often brings dire social consequences.

Prayer for their conversion or at least that God would cause them to do right is more productive.

It is easy to only see what men and nations are (or what their leaders project them to be). We must see them as what God wills them to be. If we care that God’s will be done we should care enough to pray that He change men’s hearts to do it.

God could have ended creation with death and eternal damnation after the first sin in the garden. Instead he has and continues to show his grace to untold multitudes. We must pray that these numbers increase among men and nations we know nothing about. God showed us grace rather than judgment. God may display his grace in kings and magistrates and the most ungodly of men. This only resounds to his eternal praise and glory and to the furtherance of his kingdom. This must be our preference.

We do a wrong to Jesus Christ to exclude any from our prayers for regeneration.

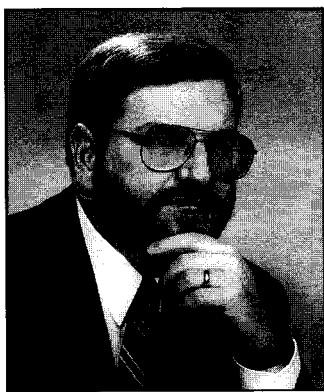
Paul continues by reminding us that we have one God and one Mediator. The first refers to his sovereignty over all Creation. We must not presume in our politics, economics, or theology to exclude any group or class of men from the hope of God’s grace. Because there is one Mediator for all men we must not limit Christ to any race, geography, culture, or historic period. We must not limit Christ or his salvation to how we envision his kingdom. At the time Paul wrote, most men and nations were alienated from the truth of God. The prayers of first century believers and the obedience of many to the great commission has, with the blessing of God, produced much progress. We must pray for and work for more. We do a wrong to Jesus Christ to exclude any from our prayers for regeneration. We advance the kingdom by preaching and teaching. We pray for God’s Spirit to do great things. Retreat and exclusion is nowhere in view.

Paul concludes with a view of Christ as Redeemer. The two aspects of Christ’s priestly office are his sacrifice and his continual intercession for us. Now what is Paul asking us to do? He is asking us to pray that “all men” would know Christ as Savior and to pray this to God through our Redeemer and Mediator, Jesus Christ. No wonder Paul says such prayer is “good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.” It honors Christ as Redeemer and Intercessor before the throne of God.

The only hope for men personally before God and in social relations is to know Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Mediator and serve him in obedience all the days of their life. Not only is it not a burden to pray for “all men” but it is at the same time the most selfless and selfish prayer we can pray for nations, friends, family, and enemies. It is for their eternal salvation and our temporal joy and gladness in seeing the blessings of God’s grace and enjoying its fruit. Pray for all men.

Crossed Fingers: A Review of Gary North's History of the Liberal Conquest of the Northern Presbyterian Church

By Brian M. Abshire



Beyond a doubt, Dr. Gary North is one of the most colorful and controversial figures in the Christian Reconstruction world. Love him or hate him, you certainly cannot ignore him. He won't let you! With the publication of *Crossed Fingers, How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*, Gary North has written one of his most

provocative, potent and effective books yet. While ostensibly a history of the battle within the Northern Presbyterian Church at the beginning of this century, in reality, it is a blow-by-blow description of the strategy and tactics used by power religion to gain its ends. Though this is good history (made interesting in the way that only Gary North can write), this book is not really about obscure denominational battles a hundred years ago. It's really about what's happening right now in the PCA and OPC. And if history is not to repeat itself, present-day leaders in both churches need to read and heed Dr. North's warnings.

Not unsurprisingly, a number of Presbyterian leaders are avidly reading *Crossed Fingers*—for some, the first Reconstructionist book they've ever deigned to open. Granted, some want more ammunition against Christian Reconstructionists in general, or "Scary Gary" in particular. They won't find it here. Dr. North makes his case powerfully and documents it every step of the way. Others may read it out of a gruesome sense of curiosity, the same way some people slow down at an accident. For those familiar with Presbyterian church history, the loss of Princeton and the Northern Church was a massive blow. But more importantly, a number of important men are reading this book because they know, from personal experience, that there is no relief from the forces working to undermine and destroy even the last remnants of historic American Presbyterianism. The battles North discusses may have been fought and won by the liberals fifty years ago, but the same battles are being refought on the floors of

presbyteries and general assemblies today.

One of the most telling aspects of North's book is that he reveals how the Arminian evangelicals actively conspired with the liberals to oust J. Gresham Machen from the Northern Church. The experientialists and the power religionists worked together to destroy historic Calvinism. However, even more telling is North's analysis of how the Old School Presbyterians destroyed themselves by compromising on certain crucial issues. The title of the book comes from the crossed fingers all three camps in the Northern Church had when they took their ordination vows. To be ordained in the Presbyterian Church, a minister must vow to uphold and support the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. The liberals were openly deceptive, believing in nothing of historic, orthodox Christianity. The Broad Evangelicals were largely Arminian and rejected the Calvinism of the Confession. Yet North demonstrates that even the Old School Presbyterians, the staunch defenders of the Confession, took exception to certain aspects of the Confession (especially on six day creation and oaths) that undermined their position.

As in most of his books of the past decade, North is hung up on his "five point covenant model" and applies it to anything and everything under the sun. For me, this was the book's only serious weakness because if one rejects North's five-point covenant model, he might then think it safe to ignore the rest of North's analysis. And that would be a great tragedy. For if there is a recurring theme in this book, it is that the Presbyterians lost their church because they refused to impose negative sanctions against heresy. Church discipline was too painful, too uncomfortable, took too much time and effort. And the only time they imposed it was when the rhetoric of heretic C. A. Briggs became too much. The lesson learned was that it was OK to be a heretic, as long as you were a nice guy about it. So the heretics bred and flourished, all the while crying for peace and tolerance until they gained control of the denominational machinery. But tolerance for them worked only one way. Once the heretics held power, Machen, who insisted on disturbing the peace by showing the wolves in their midst, was the first to go.

Recommendation: Organize for Faithfulness

The most controversial portion of his book is also the part I personally found the most interesting and useful. Gary North is famous for his appendices. Appendix B contains his suggestions on how to immunize Presbyterianism from a liberal takeover. While it is too much to expect denominational leaders to take his suggestions seriously, at least North has offered some solutions. North states something that every PCA pastor knows from personal experience. Conservative Presbyterian churches eventually become divided between confessionalists and church-growth advocates. Once this division appears, the confessionalists always lose control of the denomination. Votes count, and the bigger the churches, the more votes they have.

Added to this phenomenon is the fact that young men seeking ordination have to run a humanist gauntlet in college and seminary. North has some extremely insightful things to offer in this regard (OK, he says the same thing I've been saying

since I went to seminary 20 years ago, but he says it better and it bears repeating). While North does state the problem of allowing power and money to flow to independent boards he did not explicitly discuss the implications for home missions programs. Once the broad evangelical church growth advocates capture the denominational boards, then its defenders require church planters to run their gauntlet, ensuring that only other broad evangelicals receive monetary support to start new churches. Hence the church growth people are always slated to win, because a pastor cannot play unless he agrees to play by their rules.

North is perfectly correct when he says, "the agency that writes the paycheck holds the institutional hammer." Therefore, when churches, presbyteries or even general assemblies hand over money to various boards, agencies and committees, they have implicitly also handed over the power. Dr. North then argues for a restructuring of the Presbyterian church to keep control to the lowest level.

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North subtly resurrects his arguments here from *Tithing and the Church*, requiring voting members of the church to tithe only to the church. He's a wily one, is Dr. North. If he can't win an argument from exegesis, he'll try pragmatics. His point is that only those who tithe to the church have the vote. To be fair, his main point is that members of Presbyterian churches are not required to take an oath of submission to the Westminster Confession. Yet they are the ones responsible for choosing elders, who are. He traces this back to what he sees as a fundamental flaw in the original confession, that it does not discuss how the Confession itself is to be used.

Membership

North wants a two-fold membership; voting and non-voting. The non-voting members subscribe to some ecumenical creed such as the Apostles' or Nicene. Voting members must subscribe to the Confession. He argues: "People who impose covenantal sanctions should also be under those sanctions. If a local church member is not by oath consigned under the stipulations that

govern the imposition of church sanctions, then he should not impose church sanctions. If he cannot be deprived of his authority to impose sanctions for publicly denying or compromising the stipulations enforced by these sanctions, he should not be allowed to exercise them."

The problem he is getting at is that since the only requirement for church membership presently is a simple affirmation of faith, communicant members of Presbyterian churches therefore will tend to call pastors and elders who believe what they believe. If a man is too Reformed, he'll never pass the elections because the members call the elders to govern them. But since there is no provision for the members themselves to adhere to the church's confession, there is nothing intrinsic to Presbyterian structure to help keep the church from, over time, becoming ever less Reformed and more and more Arminian as the people call to themselves elders who say what they want them to say.

While I do not necessarily agree with his solution, Dr. North has certainly put his finger on the central challenge of membership in Presbyterianism. The bigger the church grows, the faster the accommodation to prevailing norms. The only way to make the present situation work is to keep the church fairly small, evangelize mostly from one's own children, who have already been instructed and catechized in the core doctrines of the Faith. Such a tactic may work for keeping the church pure, but in North's words allows Arminian Baptists to multiply like weeds while Presbyterian churches are like prize rose bushes, magnificent, but rare. North states that this is the primary reason why Presbyterian churches historically move from Calvinism, to experientialism, to Arminianism, to Liberalism. The lowest common denominator wins, and the liberals rush into the power vacuum to steal the Calvinist's inheritance.

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Ordination

North also demonstrates how the presbyteries have *de facto* transferred their authority to ordain men to the seminaries. Normally speaking, candidates for the ministry must attend both an accredited college and seminary (there are provisions for exceptions, but they very rarely occur). The seminaries themselves are manned by men who have had to run the

humanist gauntlet in graduate school to meet secular accreditation standards. Once they achieve tenure, they can teach what they like, and they have often developed a taste for liberalism in graduate school. Once the seminaries have been captured, they then control who eventually becomes ordained. While the Presbyteries may examine a candidate, they do not know him. How could they? He's spent the last three years studying German Liberal theology!

Hence, generation after generation, the men become theologically weaker, and the church loses its orthodoxy until, finally, the liberals take over. North's solution is to abandon the requirement for college and seminary and require instead apprenticeship under a proven pastor. A man could go to seminary if he liked, but would not be required to. Candidates would be rigorously examined in all the normal subjects, but no outside institutional requirements may be imposed. Furthermore, he suggests that every fifth year, every ordained minister in the Presbytery undergo the exact same examination. In other words, either a subject is really important and therefore *all* ordained men ought to be competent in it, or get real and get rid of checking off blocks (*e.g.*, such as the requirements for Greek and Hebrew that most pastors, including this one, forget as soon as their ordination exam is over!).

Funding

The key to North's restructuring of the Presbyterian church is in funding. He says, "To lodge both money and judicial authority in a permanent oath-bound agency of government is to invite a take-over of that agency." Historically, this is what has happened again and again. My solution is different than North's: no independent boards or committees at all, period, *de nada*. If the PCA, for example, would simply dismantle the Atlanta office and decentralize its functions back to the churches and presbyteries, the problem would be largely solved. There is no need for a mission's board, or CE board, or anything else. Let the free market do its work. If a particular presbytery has some great Christian Education ideas, let others buy them. Why should the PCA be sending out missionaries? Are the churches incompetent? Are the Presbyteries too poor? It is sheer insanity to send one's tithe up the chain of command and expect those who receive it to still be accountable to you.

North recommends that each higher court receive a tithe of the lower court, a practice that has Biblical precedent in regards to the Levites and the temple. I think he is being too generous here. I see no good reason for the General Assembly to have any money at all. We pay for attending, we pay for the publications, and we pay for our own hotel rooms and transportation costs. Apart from the Stated Clerk and an executive secretary, the denomination as a whole needs nothing (which in fairness to North, he also recommends). The work of the church needs to be done at the lowest level of the church. This fosters accountability, responsibility and thrift.

Seminaries

North's best suggestions come into play in regard to restructuring the seminaries. He wants students to become proficient in Calvinism, and therefore suggests requiring a

three-year course in Calvin's *Institutes* and the Westminster Confession. Presbyterian teaching elders are the most rigorously trained of all evangelical Christians, right? They know Reformed theology, right? Then why do a significant number of PCA teaching elders not know that Question 109 of the larger catechism forbids pictures of Jesus? (Go ahead, call your local PCA pastor and ask him if the Confession forbids images of Jesus. If so, where? I'll bet you six out of ten won't know.) OK, OK, I admit I have a hang-up on this one, but don't you find it significant that most elders who took a vow to subscribe to the Westminster Confession don't even know about the issue?

North offers a challenge to Presbyterians to look through their denomination's seminary catalogue and find two required courses on Calvin's *Institutes* and the Westminster Confession. I only know one place where you are likely to find them, Greenville Seminary (great school, by the way, one I cannot praise highly enough. While they are not Reconstructionist, they are consistently Reformed, will not seek secular accreditation, do not have women students and are rigorously preparing a new generation of men for the ministry. But they pay the price in being small).

Conclusion

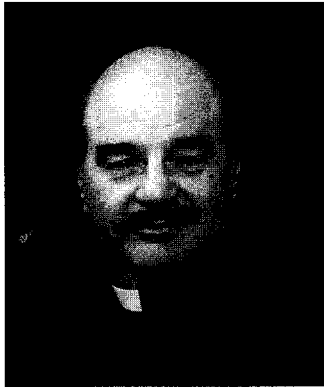
This review cannot begin to do justice to the scope of North's work. If I have focused on his practical applications, it is only because of something I picked up from him seventeen years ago when I read my first Reconstructionist book: *you can't beat something with nothing*. North does not just wail and beat his chest at the loss of Christian culture through the capture of Presbyterian's Citadel at Princeton. He explains why we lost, and more importantly, how not to lose again in the future.

Sadly, my personal opinion is that it is already too late. The rot has gone on too long for there to be a reasonable hope of turning things around (though God can and do whatever he wills). If the PCA does not split again within the next ten years, my guess is that within twenty, it will be a broad evangelical, Arminian denomination with a great history but no future. Functionally, it will be a Baptist church who sprinkles babies (and maybe not even that!). While the OPC may remain orthodox longer, their amillennial presuppositions will keep them tiny and insignificant to the broader cultural issues (North points out that the entire OPC, after over fifty years of life, would fit in two large Dallas Baptist Churches!).

However, there are about forty million Arminian Baptists and charismatics out there. Many, many of them are asking some hard questions and looking for answers. The charismatics especially are not hindered by a slavish adherence to a pessimistic eschatology (and once the year 2000 passes, dispensational premillennialism is going to fade into obscurity among the Baptists). Maybe, just maybe, God is going to pass the torch to them. And guess what, Christian Reconstructionists just happen to have the answers they will need.

How to Put a Smile on Your Child's Face

By Ellsworth McIntyre



I had never taught children below the seventh grade until the spring of 1986. About three weeks into my new experience at teaching two- to five-year-old children, I discovered the secret of how to put a smile on the face of little children. A four-year-old boy, waving his hand frantically, interrupted my introductory Bible routine with this question, "Reverend,

doesn't the 23rd Psalm come next instead of the Lord's Prayer?" I was astonished. Experienced teachers learn quickly to assess whether a child is being rebellious or just acting his age. I read the child's demeanor and was sure it was not rebellion stimulating the interruption, but then the alternative explanation of just acting his age didn't fit any of the textbook predictions of how young children react. The experts who wrote my textbooks tell us classroom teachers that little children despise structure. Structure is an educational term which means routine, schedules, rote activity, and such things. The experts, as a matter of fact, regard anything other than free play as deadening to early child development. Yet here was a child demanding that the schedule be followed more closely.

It was not just in the classroom that this hunger for order, predictability, and structure was apparent. On the playground, the children would ask me to referee. They would put it this way, "Let's play a game or give us a game to play," or they would come endlessly with questions and disputes asking me to bring order to their playtime. They were most happy when they were playing games that were familiar. The more repetition, the more familiar they were with the game, and the more strictly the game's rules were followed, the happier they seemed to be. The same held true for pre- and after school activities. My wife and I soon found that listening to and identifying a familiar music program each day, or coloring papers of familiar cartoon figures, was much more satisfying to them than the random chaos of a room full of children fighting for attention and toys. Therefore, we began to structure their pre- and after school time so that they became more "orderly." We also structured their playground time, keeping their favorite games and slowly introducing them to a variety of new games.

Oddly, we found that new games were welcome only if introduced slowly. The opening exercises with the pledges to the flags, prayer and commandments were all very welcome to the children, provided they came in a very predictable and scheduled fashion. A few months of adding structure to the day

of the children brought surprised comments from parents and visitors to the school. One vendor whose job was delivering playground equipment to pre-schools all over the eastern seaboard stood marveling at the children's behavior. He said, "I have never seen children at any day care in America so happy."

Since none of this agreed with the educational experts, I began to look into the Scriptures for an explanation. There I saw the doctrine of predestination from a different perspective. Since God is in total control of the minutest details of our total existence, we can relax, smile, and even laugh at adversity, because faith and godly experience have taught us that everything will come out all right, and there is no need for undue concern. Hence the people that most strongly believe in predestination can laugh. Arminians, or people who believe their personal actions will send people to Hell, on the other hand, find that such enormous, godlike responsibility crushes all humor from life. Because, you see, if God has no hands but your hands, no feet but your feet, no voice, but your voice and your brother is going to burn in Hell for eternity because of your personal shortcomings, life indeed is a terrifying, fearful trial. On the other hand, if the predestinating God will reward you for witnessing and punish you with loss of reward for failing in your duties, that is sufficient burden for a sober life, but should you fail (and we all do), we can justifiably laugh at our shortcomings, brush ourselves off when we fall, and run back into the game, because the ultimate outcome is safely in the hands of an all-powerful Referee. Christ will permit no injuries or losses beyond his all-powerful will. Under such a Referee, the Christian life is a privilege and a very happy one indeed. It is freedom that we cannot handle and cannot understand, with responsibility too great for us to bear, that robs life of its joy.

So, likewise, a four-year-old child faces a world that he cannot predict, cannot control, and can barely understand. As good Christian parents, we present the rules of life, the Ten Commandments, the law-word of God, and we say, "Follow these rules and the all-seeing, all-knowing, predestinating God will make all things work together for your good." The application of this doctrine extends even to God himself for we read in Psalm 2:4, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: The Lord shall have them in derision." The Lord laughs at the childish behavior of the rebellious men of the earth, because everything lies within his control.

Little children who come from normal homes, broken homes and dysfunctional homes, all alike crave and need structure in their lives.

Teach your child the basic catechism, have meals at regular times, have recreation at regularly scheduled times, reward him for following the rules, and never reward him for behavior you do not want. Be as consistent as you can be, and a smile will be on your child's face. You have God's word on that and our experience at Grace Community Schools. If you are the kind of person who would like to investigate putting a smile on a child's face as a career, write to me for a copy of my book, *How to Become A Millionaire in Christian Education*, Nicene Press, 4405 Outer Dr., Naples, Florida 34112.

Dr. Ellsworth McIntyre is founder of Grace Community Schools and one of America's leading Christian educators.

Urban Nations Update: Status-Seeker

By Steve M. Schlissel

The official number of immigrants in New York City is just over two million, but those of us with two eyes and two ears open know the number is closer to three. One only has to add up various *New York Times* estimates of this and that ethnic group to come up with a much higher total than that provided by the U. S. Census Bureau.

Sometimes the official numbers are laughable. One report stated that there were less than thirty Mexicans living in the southern tier of Brooklyn. I can introduce you to twice that many in a one-hour ambulation along one street, Brighton Beach Avenue.

One reason for the discrepancy is surely the undercounting of illegal immigrants. This is not to fault the Feds here; counting illegals is a virtually impossible task. Only our Lord knows how many people enter the USA with visitor visas, for example, and then just stay.

In a Bible-based English class last night, I asked the students how many of them were here illegally. I asked them not as a census-taker, but as a minister—I wanted to test the trust-level. After all, I'm an agent of Christ, not the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Five out of the six in attendance admitted to being here illegally. Though I was gratified with their forthrightness, I must admit to being taken aback by the percentage. The only legal immigrant was a woman from Argentina, now a citizen, who has been here 27 years (that's right; she's just now taking English lessons—level one!).

*But we never forget our
principal calling: to make
known to these lost souls the
everlasting gospel of our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ.*

I repeat: I'm not an INS agent. At Urban Nations we do what we can to "normalize" immigrants' relations to our nation's statutes. We do not condone lawbreaking. But we never forget our principal calling: to make known to these lost souls the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's a matter of calling. And the opportunity to serve Christ by serving immigrants here is irresistible.

In an assignment last night, I had the students write a paragraph on "Why I Came to America." Alex is a ship navigator from Vladivostok, Russia, a port city on the Sea of

Japan. Because of his occupation, he is a remarkably well-traveled man, having visited many Pacific-rim, Subcontinent and European nations. The only place he recalls meeting Christians was in Australia, through some sort of harbor ministry. Alex wrote, "I wanted to find friends here. I would like better know American people. I'm living in New York about three months. I didn't meet any friends for this time. If somebody asks me, 'Will you stay in New York?,' I would answer, 'Never.'" Status: Unbeliever. Needs Christ and Christian friendship.

Another student, Aziz, from Belarus, wept as he read his composition: "America is a beautiful country, and people are very independent. I think a long time, all time. I came here but my family in my country. They need be with me, and I need this too. I love my country, but America nice for me. The End." Status: Unbeliever. Needs Christ and Christian guidance.

All my students, along with scores of other immigrants, are expected to attend a fellowship dinner at the parsonage this summer. There, once again, they will be clearly told that the most important citizenship is in heaven (*Phil. 3:20*). Please pray that God will grant repentance and faith to those whom he has ordained to life from before the foundation of the world. That is the main matter. After all, unbelievers are the most illegal of earth's residents, squatters on God's globe, and the ones who should be most desperately concerned about their status. Don't you agree?

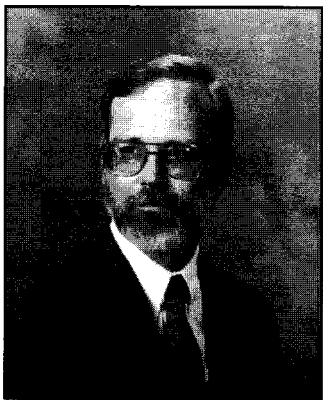
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Anti-Semitism, Reconstruction, and Dispensationalism

By **Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.**



Thomas Ice, author of several dispensational works and director of the Pre-Trib Study Group, is convinced that Reformed theology, and especially its Reconstructionist branch, is anti-Semitic (Ice, "Hal Lindsey, Dominion Theology, and Anti-Semitism," *Biblical Perspectives*, 5:1 [Jan.-Feb., 1992]). His argument is fraught with error.

Ironically, the question that should naturally arise in this setting is wholly omitted. That question is: *What is "anti-Semitism"?* Nowhere in the article does he define "anti-Semitism." What is worse, he *assumes* anti-Semitism (or at least its philosophical underpinning) is any theology that does not hold that Jews will one day dominate the world.

What Is Anti-Semitism?

On page 82 of *Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary* "anti-Semitism" is defined (appropriately) as: "1. prejudice against Jews; dislike or fear of Jews and Jewish things. 2. discrimination against or persecution of Jews." This is the only legitimate definition in alleging anti-Semitism. A view of history that lacks a future era in which Jews will be rulers of the world is simply not "anti-Semitism."

I know of no published Reconstructionist that disdains or seeks to persecute Jewish people. In fact, our view of history holds that one day the Jews will be blessed of God — but on an equal footing with all who know the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Throughout the era of Christ's rule, creational distinctions will continue to function (male/female hierarchical relationships), but not pre-Cross redemptive distinctions (Jewish superiority over Gentiles).

To demonstrate anti-Semitism, Ice needs to prove malicious intent against Jews because of their race. Being opposed to the policies of the modern state of Israel for its West Bank atrocities or for its socialism or for its anti-Christian laws will not suffice as anti-Semitism. If any Reconstructionists are opposed to the policies of Israel's government, that is not the same as being opposed to Jews as such. We were long opposed to Russian Soviet governmental policies, but were never prejudiced against people of Russian heritage.

Why Is This Charge Laid before Us?

What is it that makes Ice set forth this charge? The

theological "problem" is the doctrine known either as supercessionism or replacement theology. That is, the doctrine that teaches that the international church has replaced national, racial Israel as the people of God.

Ice comments:

I noted, similar to Rausch, that there was potential for anti-Semitism because of a few statements, but mainly because of their replacement theology (p. 1).

He continues:

The danger lies in their misunderstanding of God's plan concerning the future of the nation Israel. Reconstructionists advocate the replacement of Old Testament Israel with the church, often called the "New Israel." They believe that Israel does not have a future different from any other nation.

He then documents this "wicked" doctrine: "I then quoted Reconstructionist David Chilton as an example of that belief. 'Although Israel will someday be restored to the true faith, the Bible does not tell of any future plan for Israel as a special nation'" (p. 1).

Ice goes on to note that:

Lindsey does not say that Reconstructionists are full-blown anti-Semites. He does say that Dominion/Reconstructionists engage in "the same sort of rhetoric that in the past formed the basis of contempt for the Jews that later developed into outright anti-Semitism." He then warns Christians to "not sit idly by while a system of prophetic interpretation that historically furnished the philosophical basis for anti-Semitism infects the Church again" (p. 2).

Note that Reconstruction is faulted as having a similar kind (same sort) of argument (rhetoric) as some in the past held that later evolved (developed) into the sin. That is as strong an argument as he can make.

A few paragraphs later, Ice cites Rushdoony's charge that the premillennial view of the future of Israel is a "heresy" because of its "exaltation of racism into a divine principle" (p. 2). He then concludes: "These statements are clearly replacement theology and thus theological anti-Semitism, which has historically been the foundation for overt anti-Semitism within Christendom" (p. 2). His argument is: replacement theology is theological anti-Semitism.

The problem is that dispensationalism is redemptively retrogressive. Dispensationalists are prone to make Zionistic statements. Because we disagree with these, we are labeled "anti-Semitic" — even though we argue that Israel will one day be converted to Christ (*Rom. 11:11-25*)! According to dispensationalism the millennial kingdom will be fundamentally Jewish in character, even to the point of rebuilding the temple, setting up David's tabernacle, re-instituting the Jewish sacrificial system, and exalting Jewish believers over Gentile believers. Let us note just one sample: Herman Hoyt, past president of Grace Theological Seminary, writes:

The redeemed living nation of Israel, regenerated and regathered to the land will be head over all the nations

of the earth.... So he exalts them above the Gentile nations.... On the lowest level there are the saved, living, Gentile nations.¹

Ice's basic "problem" with Reconstructionist thought is that it has no special place for the exaltation of national-political Israel in a special Jewish millennial era. Worse still, Reconstructionist theology follows the pattern of virtually all other non-dispensational, evangelical theologies in interpreting the flow of redemptive history supersessionally. That is, we believe that in the unfolding of the plan of God in history, the Christian church is the very fruition of the redemptive purpose of God. As such, the multi-racial, international church of Jesus Christ supersedes racial, national Israel as the focus of the kingdom of God. But since the church is international, it does include racial Israel, as well. All converted nations will be on an equal footing in the Messianic kingdom in the "church" age (see for example: *Is. 19:23-25; Rom. 11:11-25*). We believe that Jew and Gentile are eternally merged into a "new man" in the church of Jesus Christ (*Eph. 2:12-18*).

We believe that the international church has superseded for all times national Israel as the institution for the administration of divine blessing to the world... Jew and Gentile merged into one body forever.

Consider Ice's complaint: "Reconstructionists advocate the replacement of Old Testament Israel with the church, often called the 'New Israel.' They believe that Israel does not have a future different from any other nation" (p. 1). In summarizing a charge by Lindsey, Ice writes:

What is the basis upon which Lindsey makes such claims [of philosophical anti-Semitism]? His basis is that historically replacement theology (the church replaces the Jews as the new or true Israel, and Israel has no future as a distinct nation within God's plan) has been the theological foundation upon which anti-Semitism has been built within the confines of Christianity. Therefore, Lindsey has seen in the 1980s a revival of replacement theology (the historic cause of anti-Semitism) spearheaded by Dominionist leadership. His concern is that for the first time in our lifetime, there is a decline of those who believe in the Pretrib Rapture and a future for national Israel, often known as Dispensationalism, and a dramatic shift

towards replacement theology (p. 2).

Note: Lindsey also saw in the 1980s a countdown to Armageddon that did not come to pass! Hal Lindsey, *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (New York: Bantam, 1980).

Turning the Tables

But his ill-founded complaint against supersessionism, replacement theology and his laying at the feet of Reconstructionists the scurrilous charge of anti-Semitism is a two-edged sword. The "logic" he uses can be and, indeed, has been used to discredit Christianity and the Bible, as well as our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Let us see how this is so.

Ice apparently does not realize that the idea of supersessionism is fundamental to the Christian Faith itself. The basic idea of supersessionism is that Christianity has superseded Judaism as the true Faith. This is heresy? Supersessionism — which is despised by liberals, as well as by Ice — shamelessly endorses the words of Christ: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (*Jn. 14:6*).

Ultimately, supersessionism is orthodox Christianity proclaiming that "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (*Ac. 4:12*). Supersession theology is exclusivistic in arguing: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (*1 Cor. 3:11*). Supersessionism arrogantly proclaims that "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (*1 Tim. 2:5*). Let me illustrate how this is so from a recent spate of letters and articles to the *Biblical Archaeology Review* magazine.

A Roman Catholic article by Eugene Fisher, entitled "The Church's Teaching on Supersessionism," attacks the Protestant view of the necessity of converting from Judaism to Christianity.²

For Catholics, the era in which it was possible to espouse any theory that the Christian Church has "superseded" or "replaced" the Jewish people as God's Chosen People in the history of salvation ended definitively on October 28, 1965. On that day the world's Catholic bishops, together with the bishop of Rome, Pope Paul VI, signed the declaration, *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time), of the Second Vatican Council.

He laments ancient contempt for "Judaism" because it "was posited on the erroneous notion that God had 'repudiated' the Jews because of their so-called failure to accept Jesus as the Christ"! Is this not what Ice is saying in essence?

Fisher continues:

The destruction of the Temple and the Diaspora are not to be utilized polemically as a proof of divine punishment from Jewish "failure" to "recognize" Jesus. Rather, the Jewish "no" is properly understood as a "yes" to God's continuing call to them. Jewish refusal to convert to Christianity is not to be understood as anything less than a faithful witness to God.

Of a statement by Pope John Paul II, Fisher comments:

Clearly, such language...indicates how far Church [*i.e.*, official Roman Catholic dogma] teaching on the official level has come from anything resembling supersessionism or the old "replacement" theologies of the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people. No Catholics who wish to consider themselves in conformity with the Magisterium of the Church can espouse or countenance such views today.

Nor may dispensationalists!

C. Nicky Blackford, a United Methodist pastor, wrote to BAR:

It always saddens me to read of Christians and ministerial colleagues whose theology has not advanced beyond the Middle Ages. Nicola Greci, a fellow United Methodist minister, wrote in the March/April 1991 issue that the Jews must accept the Christian covenant to be accepted by God. It seems important for me to say that such a god is not the God that most of us worship.... I have no doubt that my Jewish friends have a vital relationship with the God I serve.³

Blackford despises supersessionism, as does Ice. Bruce A. Broterton, United Methodist pastor, also recoils at Christian exclusivism in supersessionist theology:

Our denomination has long fostered a relationship of respect and cooperation with our Jewish brothers and sisters. Such bigoted intolerance and arrogance as Mr. Greci displayed in his letter would indicate to me that he is seriously at odds with the United Methodist Church.... I can only feel very sad for him and pray that someday he will grow in his ability to tolerate and accept others different from himself (*ibid.*).

Kathleen Marble responded with disgust: "What kind of 'pastor' would spew out such hateful bigotry against the Jewish people and the way they worship God? I am not Jewish, but I was brought up to respect all manner of worship, be it Catholic, Protestant, Charismatic, Jewish etc. We all believe in God, whether we call him Allah, Jehovah or just plain God" (*ibid.*). Is dispensational-like anti-supersessionism leading to the Antichrist's One-World Church?!

An excellent letter by Lewis Entze, who defended supersessionism, read:

It seems that the thing currently in vogue in intellectual circles is the seeking and finding of anti-Semitism. It seems the uprooting of anti-Semitism has such priority that, if need be, basic Christian doctrine can be jettisoned. If Pastor Greci's... is your worst anti-Semitic letter, you are blessed indeed. The letter stated that God's cleansing is "given in the Christ." That is basic Christian doctrine.... Would you consider the Christ to be anti-Semitic if He said, "I am the way.... No one comes to the Father but by me" (*Jn. 14:6*)? I am not anti-Semitic. I feel that anti-Semitism is extremely detestable, second only to denying Jesus Christ as the only Savior (*ibid.*).

Another defender of Greci's supersessionism was George E. Mohun:

Pastor Greci goes on to say that Judaism rejects Christ as the Messiah. That is neither anti-Semitic nor a gratuitous insult. It is a statement of fact. The difficulty with such words as "anti-Semitic" and "racism" is that they lack clear definition while implying and imputing immoral motives and behavior. As such, they make the perfect meat-ax (16).

Lawrence M. Downs defends John Strugnell's basic alleged anti-Semitic sentiments:

John Strugnell's great crime, it seems, is in being bold enough to say today what the apostle Paul said 2,000 years ago and what orthodox Christianity has always believed. I quote Mr. Strugnell: "The correct answer of Jews to Christianity is to become Christian." ...I realize that such statements are not popular, diplomatic or acceptable to your editorial philosophy, but if that is bigotry, anti-Semitic and contemptible, then all of us who still subscribe to classic Christianity are guilty also(*ibid.*).

Robert T. Tuten followed suit: "You are in error to suggest that supersessionism... equals anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism do exist in the world, but they are not defined by supersessionism" (19). Rev. Robert F. Cerar wrote: "You assume that supersessionism is anti-Semitism. I have never heard such a thing before. Really, your continued ranting verges on paranoia. Anti-Semitism is hatred." Kenneth M. Sears: "To believe that God would supersede the old covenant with a new one is to be no more anti-Semitic than the prophet Jeremiah... (*Jer. 31:31*). Evidently God intended his new covenant with Israel to displace the old. Real anti-Semitism is not a matter of these theological concepts; anti-Semitism is a matter of murderous hatred" (*ibid.*).

Thus, supersessionism is orthodox Christianity. Ironically, the anti-supersessionism of Ice and Lindsey is more compatible with official Roman Catholic dogma and liberalism than with evangelical sentiments.

Reconstruction thought does hold to supersession: We believe that the international church has superseded for all times national Israel as the institution for the administration of divine blessing to the world. We believe the church is composed of Jew and Gentile merged into one body forever (*Eph. 2:12ff*). We believe that from now and until the end of history the church is the sole agency of the redemptive purposes of God. We believe the church is the fruition of Israel, even though we believe that Jews themselves will one day be converted in mass (*Rom. 11:15-25*).

Supersessionism is not heresy; neither is it anti-Semitic. In fact, it is orthodox Christianity. The dispensational denial of supersession does border on blasphemy, though. Let us see how this is so. Let us notice that orthodox supersession is deemed anti-Semitic by ecumenical liberalism and modern Judaism. Biblical linguist and liberal scholar James H. Charlesworth, writing in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, provides a case in point.

He lashes out at David P. Crews, an orthodox Christian, who states that Jews cannot be saved apart from trusting in Christ. He recognizes that this is the principle of supersessionism: "Regarding supersessionism: Crews cannot acknowledge that Jews who don't accept Jesus as the Messiah have not endangered their relationship to God. Thus he enters the world of anti-Semitism." Notice carefully: to promote the view that Christ is the only means of entry to God is supersessionism. And this is, to the liberal, arrogant anti-Semitism.⁴ Ice is so blinded by his dispensational oddities that he does not realize the true nature of supersessionism.

A Christian respondent to Charlesworth complains:

James Charlesworth erroneously states that supersessionism "certainly is not typical of Jesus".... I have visited Israel twice and have many Jewish friends. I am still a strong "supersessionist." Does this make me "anti-Semitic?" Hardly.... I am not "against" these people. On the contrary, I am for them — praying daily for their welfare, both temporal and eternal. Am I "anti-" their belief systems? Absolutely, and so was Christ.⁵

Another wrote:

I have been following the continuing argument regarding supersessionism in your magazine for several months. As a practicing Catholic who was born and raised Jewish, this issue has quite naturally grabbed my attention. In James Charlesworth's response to David Crews, he says that by accepting the doctrine of supersessionism, one "enters the world of anti-Semitism"! Earlier letters have made the same point — that the mere acceptance of this doctrine by itself makes one an anti-Semite. This is inflammatory and demonstrably untrue.⁶

I agree. Lindsey and Ice make inflammatory statements regarding anti-Semitism that are demonstrably untrue.

A Jewish writer, Lillian Freudman, engages the supersession view, in an anti-Christian fashion:

The belief that salvation is only through Jesus Christ is a denial and a rejection of the Torah, of Judaism and of the covenant that God made with Israel.... Many Christian scholars... have long realized that supersessionism... denies the legitimacy of the Torah.... When Christians insist that theirs is, as he writes, the "sole true faith" and consider Judaism as false, but a good try," the wise professor [Jacob Neusner] should understand that they are denigrating Judaism. Although some Christians who profess these ideas maintain cordial relations with Jews and may even disavow anti-Semitic behavior, their statements indicate a lack of respect for Judaism and its believers.⁷

Considering the "Logic"

Let us suppose, for sake of argument, that Ice's "supersessionism=anti-Semitism" logic is valid. Ice feels that since Jews have been persecuted by some Christians, we should look for a sufficient cause for that persecution. Ice finds a causal factor in the doctrine of supersession. But let us consider an even "better" argument for anti-Semitism and intolerance of

Jews that provides us with an even more obvious smoking gun, employing Ice's "logic."

Ice's logic goes something like this: (1) Anti-Semitism is evil bigotry that must have some explanatory cause behind it. (2) Some Christians hold that God no longer maintains a special place in his plan for the Jews. (3) These Christians have a sufficient cause for anti-Semitic persecution of the Jews.

Consider this argument, which seems even more plausible, using Ice's logic: (1) Anti-Semitism is evil bigotry that must have some explanatory cause behind it. (2) Christ taught that God's wrath and curse were to fall on the Jews and that their Temple was to be utterly forsaken and destroyed. (3) Therefore, Christ is anti-Semitic and all of his followers have a sufficient cause for anti-Semitic persecution of the Jews.

The supersession-leads-to-anti-Semitism argument is quite general and rather nebulous. And wholly erroneous. But here in the very words of the One adored by Christians throughout history, we have very strong language that could more readily be laid as a foundation for anti-Semitism! Consider some of these strong statements by Christ:

Matthew 8:11-12: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." A modern no-no!

Matthew 23:32-33, 35: "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?... Upon you [shall] come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." Of the very heart institution of Israel, Jesus charges in Matthew 23:38: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

The supersession-leads-to-anti-Semitism argument is quite general and rather nebulous. And wholly erroneous.

Luke 23:28-31: "But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.' Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.' For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Our hypothetical argument presented from the words of Christ could just as easily base anti-Semitic charges on the Biblical calling for the wrath of God on the Jews! Jesus affirmed their rejection from the kingdom favor of God to a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, the desolation of their beloved Temple, the pouring out of their blood for the sins of their fathers, and the call to weep for the wrath to come on them.

Could not the words of either Christ or Paul (e.g., *1 Thess. 2:14-16*) be used as the "philosophical basis for anti-Semitism" (Ice's argument)? *A logical anti-Christian could more easily generate an anti-Semitism argument from Christ's words than from the general theological notion of supersessionism.* But, of course, his argument would be wrong. And so is Ice's.

A Jewish reader of *Biblical Archaeology Review* is convinced that Christianity *per se* is anti-Semitic: "Anti-Semitism is the basic foundation of Christianity as preached by its clergy and practiced by its faithful."⁸ Another Jewish reader discredits salvation-in-Christ-alone advocacy:

I have been reading with dismay, but not surprise, the ongoing discourse in BAR concerning supersessionism. I could not help but think that in "less civilized times" such a discussion would have been a prelude to crusades, inquisitions and pogroms. The there-is-only-one-way protagonists may do well to contemplate the following, which I found in the back of my prayer books by Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel....⁹

But there is more: Let us now turn the anti-Semitic argument on Ice and the dispensationalists. We teach that God has rejected Israel as his specially favored nation and that the Jews must come to God through Christ and his church to be saved. But we also teach that if they turn to Jesus Christ (and they will in mass numbers someday) they will be saved along with us. This is supposedly anti-Semitic. But what may be said about Ice's theological position? It is purely *sadistic* and when believed by Messianic Jews is *masochistic*! Consider the following.

Ice writes in another newsletter:

I just returned from a Christian Zionist Conference in San Antonio, Texas at Cornerstone Church. It was great! There were interesting and informative speakers from Israel and many of the leading Christian Zionists including Hal Lindsey. You would have liked it as well.... It should not be surprising to anyone that a dispensationalist, such as myself, is a Christian Zionist, if you know our history. Zionism is simply the desire for the Jewish people to occupy the land of Israel. Christian Zionists are Christians who advocate Zionism.¹⁰

This is institutional sadism. How so? Because of Ice's dispensational theology. Consider what he is saying in the above statement: He and other dispensationalists are Zionists because they desire for the Jewish people to occupy the land of Israel.

But while Ice and friends are supporting and encouraging the return of Jews to Israel, what are they expecting to happen there soon, according to their view of prophecy?

An article in a dispensationalist publication is especially

interesting in that it is attacking Reconstructionism: "Passages such as Joel 3, Zechariah 12-14, and Revelation 16 indicate that Israel's worst time will take place immediately before Christ's physical return to earth at his Second Coming. At that time the armies of all the nations of the world will gather against Israel and Jerusalem.... This future time of trouble for Israel will be so terrible that two-thirds [sic] of the Jews will perish (*Zech. 13:8-9*)."¹¹ Walvoord agrees that "two-thirds [sic] of Israel in the land will perish."¹² Hal Lindsey speaks of these coming events, when dealing with Revelation 16: "This chapter closes with multiplied millions of soldiers slaughtering each other in and around Israel."¹³ Pentecost teaches:

The Scriptures teach that the future judgment program will begin with a judgment upon the national Israel.... It is evident from the passage just cited in Ezekiel, as well as the numerous passages dealing with Israel's restoration, that this judgment will be upon all living Israel, all of whom are to be regathered and judged. Matthew 25:1-30 envisions a judgment on the entire nation.¹⁴

If one believes this theology, then to urge Jews to return to Israel is sadistic.

¹ Herman Hoyt, "Dispensational Premillennialism," in Robert G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downer's Grove, IL, 1977), 81.

² Eugene J. Fisher, "The Church's Teaching on Supersessionism," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 17:2 (March-April, 1991), 58. Fisher is Director of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. This is a one-page article, so all citations from it are from page 58.

³ In "Queries and Comments," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 17:4 (July-August, 1991), 14. All the following quotations and page references are from this issue of BAR.

⁴ James H. Charlesworth, "Supersession or God's Awareness," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 18:1 (January-February, 1992), 72.

⁵ Garry Hanvey, "Did Charlesworth Look at the Context?," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 18:3 (May-June, 1992), 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Lillian Freudman, "Shanks is Dishonest and Neusner Speaks Double-talk," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 18:5 (September-October, 1992), 25 and continued on 78.

⁸ Rose Z. Smith, "An Anti-Christian View of Christianity," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 18:5 (September-October), 78.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Thomas Ice, "Christian Zionism and Dispensationalism," *Dispensational Distinctives*, 2:1 (January-February, 1992), 1.

¹¹ Renald E. Showers, "Further Evaluation of Christian Reconstructionism," *Israel My Glory* 49:4 (August-September 1991), 19.

¹² John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, 1966), 195.

¹³ Hal Lindsay, *There's a New World Coming: A Prophetic Odyssey* (Santa Ana, CA: 1973), 227.

¹⁴ Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, 1958), 413, 414.

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several books and numerous essays. He can be contacted at 46 Main St., Conestee, SC 29636 or KennethGentry@CompuServe.COM.

Dr. Gentry explains his "conversion" from dispensationalism:

From 1966 until 1975 I was a dispensationalist. I was attracted to the movement because it boasted of a consistent Biblical outlook, which could explain the times. I was saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ at a dispensationalist youth camp in Boca Raton, Florida; I attended a dispensationalist church (Calvary Bible Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee) pastored by my dispensationalist uncle (Rev. John S. Lanham); I graduated from a dispensationalist college (Tennessee Temple University, Chattanooga, Tennessee) with a degree in Bible; I attended a dispensationalist seminary for two years (Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana); and I even owned a loose-leaf New Scofield Reference Bible, filled with all the notes necessary to make and keep one a dispensationalist.

In many ways it was great being a dispensationalist, yet also frustrating. It was great to know we had the reasons for the problems of modern society. It was frustrating that as a Christian I was not expected to have any hope of successfully promoting any Biblical solution to those problems, even though I was taught that the earth is the Lord's and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. At the age of 20 I even turned down a life insurance policy because I was convinced that I would not be around long enough to have a family that would need it. My college days were lived "with anticipation, with excitement" because I thought "we should be living like persons who don't expect to be around much longer." I wish I could take some of the courses over: I was around long enough for graduation day to come.

While studying at Grace Theological Seminary, two influences converged causing me to reject dispensationalism. The first was my researching a paper on the Lordship Controversy. This led to my discovery of the significance of the Acts 2 enthronement passage, which shook my dispensationalism to its very foundation. The second was the discovery at about the same time of O. T. Allis' Prophecy and the Church. This work bulldozed the residue of my collapsed dispensationalism. A couple of friends of mine (Rev. Alan McCall and Mr. Barry Bostrom, Esq.) and I not only soon departed dispensationalism but transferred from Grace Seminary to Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. Previously we had been partial Calvinists, now we had become fully reformed, hence non-dispensational.

At Reformed Seminary I took two courses that initially seemed implausible and misguided extravagance. The courses were "History and Eschatology" (in which was defended postmillennialism) and "Christian Theistic Ethics" (in which was set forth theonomic ethics). Both of these courses were taught by Dr. Greg L. Bahnsen. Regarding the eschatological question, even though I was no longer a dispensationalist I had assumed Pentecost, Lindsey, and other dispensationalists were correct in affirming "postmillennialism finds no defenders or advocates in the present chiliastic discussions within the theological world." Unfortunately, I still had dispensational blinders on my eyes, for in the very era in which Pentecost's book was published (1958) there were at least four notable works in defense of postmillennialism—one of them endorsed by the famed, orthodox Old Testament scholar, O. T. Allis: J. Marcellus Kik's *Matthew Twenty-Four* (1948) and *Revelation Twenty* (1955), Roderick Campbell's *Israel and the New Covenant* (Introduction by O. T. Allis, 1954), and Loraine Boettner's *The Millennium* (1957).

Regarding eschatology resources, Dr. Gentry explains:

The American confusion on eschatology is so tied to confusion

over Israel, that once the Israel question is taken care of, then a Biblically-based eschatology can be established upon the rubble that remains. These two books (besides my own!) are now at the top of my list of eschatology recommendations, even though they are not specifically eschatological:

David Holwerda's "Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?" At times he sounds almost postmillennial and theonomic. This is an extremely helpful antidote for people suffering from dispensationalism. Helps cure reflexive dispensational withdrawal symptoms by striking at their causes: confusion over the role of Israel in redemptive history.

P. W. L. Walker's "Jesus and the Holy City." This fascinating book is the best analysis I have seen of the pending doom of Israel as evidenced in the New Testament record. I could hardly put the book down when I started reading it.

Dr. Gentry's works include:

The Christian Case Against Abortion (Footstool, 1982, 1986). Five printings; two editions.

The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages (Baker, 1986, 1990). Two printings.

The Charismatic Gift of Prophecy: A Reformed Response to Wayne Grudem (Footstool, 1986, 1990).

The Beast of Revelation (Institute for Christian Economics, 1989, 1994).

Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation (I.C.E., 1989; Christian Universities Press, 1997).

House Divided: The Break-up of Dispensational Theology (I.C.E., 1989; 1997).

The Greatness of the Great Commission: The Christian Enterprise in a Fallen World (I.C.E., 1991, 1994).

He Shall Have Dominion: A Postmillennial Eschatology (I.C.E., 1992; 1997).

Lord of the Saved: Getting to the Heart of the Lordship Debate (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992).

God's Law in the Modern World: The Continuing Relevance of Old Testament Law (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1993).

Regarding tapes and speaking engagements, Dr. Gentry writes:

I have an extensive tape library of conferences, interviews, debates, sermons, and so forth on various Reconstructionist themes. A catalog is available for \$1.00 from me: 46 Main St., Conestee, SC 29636. I enjoy radio interviews and speaking at Bible conferences, though I have to limit them due to my first calling which is pastoral ministry.

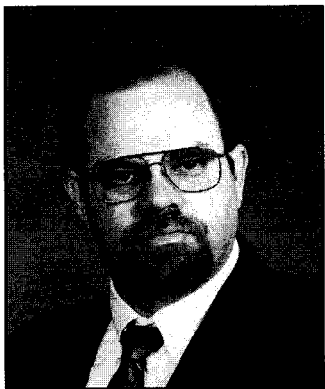
For writing assistance from Dr. Gentry:

Dr. Gentry's "RIGHTEOUS WRITING" course is designed to polish the God-given talents of the aspiring Christian writer and diligent student. The correspondence course includes instruction in academic reading, library research techniques, writing effectively, securing a publisher, and marketing your work. It consists of 23 tapes, two texts, syllabus, and interactive oversight.

Contact Dr. Gentry for more information.

The Party's Over: An Open Letter for Christian Unity

By Randy Booth



God promises in his word the triumph of his kingdom. Nevertheless, when we look at the many divisions existing among God's people, a unified effort to advance this cause seems distant at best. Personal disputes, theological differences and organizational rivalries often characterize the disciples of Christ rather than love for one another (Jn. 13:35). Instead of an

ecumenical and charitable spirit flowing between believers, it is common to find a party spirit—an “us and them” attitude. I find such discord saddening and discouraging. Well, as for me and my organization, the party is over!¹ This declaration is made in the context of my own acknowledgment that I have, at times, been guilty of such attitudes and am hereby publicly repenting of such.

The tendency toward a party spirit is one born out of our sin nature, wherein pride drives us to promote ourselves or our organization at the expense of others. In our defending or promoting what we perceive to be “sound doctrine,”² it is easy to forget the necessity of having our doctrine “accord [*i.e.*, harmonize] with godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). Paul goes on to warn that when this does not occur we are “proud, knowing nothing. . . obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions and useless wranglings of men. . .” (1 Tim. 6:4-5). In our efforts to defend one truth of Scripture we may find ourselves violating the Scriptures at ten other points.

God's people comprise a single kingdom. Yet too often Christianity looks more like a series of private sandboxes with “no trespassing” signs posted. Our exclusive little club can soon reach the point where virtually no one else can meet the membership requirements. In a list of “thirty things we believe,” the tendency is to place our particular “distinctives” at the front rather than at the end of the list.³ Fellowship with other believers is thereby cut off from the beginning. Again, Paul's admonition and warning seems appropriate: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” (Gal. 5:14-15).

Unnecessary Conflicts

Since we are finite sinners, conflicts and disputes are inevitable between individuals and organizations. Personal conflicts should be resolved quickly. If you know that a brother

has something against you, it is your obligation to go as quickly as possible to seek reconciliation with him (Mt. 5:23-24). If you have something against a brother, you likewise have an obligation to go as quickly as possible and seek reconciliation (Mt. 18:15). We can never excuse ourselves from these obligations to initiate reconciliation by reasoning that it's “the other guy's responsibility” to seek the reconciliation. Neither are these principles confined to one's own church or denomination. All Christians are under obligation to fulfill these requirements of our Lord. We must all be pursuing “*the things which make for peace and the building up of one another*” (Rom. 14:19). Failure to resolve these personal conflicts is simply an indication of immaturity. This is especially egregious when displayed by Christian leaders who should be examples to the flock. When we hear that this or that Christian does not speak to some other Christian it is a shame and disgrace to the name of Christ. We may not be able to unscramble every egg, but we can pledge to set aside our petty disputes and seek the good of our brothers (Rom. 15: 1-2). A careful distinction must be made between that which is sin (*i.e.*, a lack of conformity to or transgression of the word of God), and those cases in which people may not have agreed as to the best course of action or procedure. Too often it is personal revenge or humiliation that is sought over the good of our brother and genuine restoration of fellowship. “*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men*” (Rom. 12:18).

We are all seeking to advance the cause of the gospel and not our personal or organizational agendas.

Individual or personal conflicts may easily spill over into organizational relationships. Divisions between groups may also develop due to rivalry or jealousy. One of the fastest ways for a man to fall out of favor with many of his brothers in Christ is for him to experience some visible success in his ministry *i.e.*, growth, notoriety, etc. Such ministerial envy is simply sin. May our desire be to see the gospel go forth. “*Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice*” (Phil. 1:15-18).

As a result of this organizational strife, sniping and shunning have become common—with Christians delighting in the failures rather than the successes of their fellow Christians—losing sight of the fact that we are all seeking to advance the cause of the gospel and not our personal or organizational agendas. We ought to work as hard as we can to build successful ministries and

realize the blessing of God and at the same time earnestly pray (even for those with whom we may have disagreements) that they will exceed our success at every point where they are faithfully serving Christ. In fact, whenever we can, we should help them achieve that goal. When other Christians and their ministries advance the work of God at any point, all Christians and their organizations are the beneficiaries.

Healthy Community

Association with other Christians or other groups is not a wholesale endorsement of everything they do or say. We don't even have to preface our mention of them with words like, "Well, I don't agree with everything Mr. Smith says . . ."—of course we don't agree with everything. Neither should we ignore legitimate differences. Nevertheless a maximizing of common goals and agreement is in order. Oh, how the enemies of God must delight as they observe Christians cannibalizing one another.

We must develop a greater sense of community—we are the "people of God." We are friends, not enemies. As members of the covenant household of God our disputes are "in house." The enemies of God and his people are outside the camp. Jesus laid down his life for his friends. Any friend of Jesus is a friend of mine. When theological differences arise among the people of God, let there be *vigorous* debate, but let that debate be exegetical in nature and gracious in tone. Genuine Christian love for one another requires us to engage in exegetical discourse with one another. Passionate presentations and spirited debate should be exchanged. Nevertheless, good arguments should not be ruined by quarrels. If we are to present our views to unbelievers with "gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet. 3:15), how much more so with our fellow Christians? Criticism can be legitimate and even helpful when offered in the spirit of Christ. "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:1–3).

Having gone through the unhappy trial of a church split over a theological issue, I know the pain that can come from such divisions and I am certain the pain is likewise felt by my brothers on the other side. The pain is deep because of the affection we had and still have for one another. If we could but nurture that affection perhaps the wounds might heal.⁴ Charles H. Spurgeon (an English Baptist preacher), known for his broad spheres of fellowship, wrote concerning one common area of disagreement between Christians:

Surely to be a Baptist is not everything. If I disagree with a man on 99 points, but happen to be one with him in baptism—this can never furnish such ground of unity as I have with another with whom I believe in 99 points, and only happen to differ upon one ordinance.⁵

I use this as an example only, for many such issues divide brothers and organizations and we are all losers as a result. One thing is certain, we will never convince someone of their theological error if we cut them off and do not speak to them—neither will we be able to learn from others who just might

know something we don't.

Genuine Christian love for one another requires us to engage in exegetical discourse with one another. . . .

Nevertheless, good arguments should not be ruined by quarrels.

We may wonder, though, about those Christians or organizations with whom we may have substantial doctrinal disagreements. The greatest efforts on some matters may never produce agreement in this life. Again we would do well to learn from the life of Spurgeon as he both gave and received the blessing of Christian charity in such situations. In a sermon delivered in 1875, he offered general praise for D. L. Moody's and Mr. Sankey's evangelistic work in South London (men with whom he had substantial theological disagreements):

Here are two men who have for months consecrated themselves to the preaching of the gospel with no object in the world but the winning of souls for Christ. They have no design or object to gain but the sole glory of God. They seek conversions, conversions to Christ only; and brethren, if there were a thousand faults in them, who am I or who are you to judge them, to say we will not help them in such a work and with such motives?⁶

Spurgeon also voiced specific criticisms of this evangelistic campaign while upholding the integrity of the men involved.

Likewise, when Spurgeon was vilified by many churches during the famous "Downgrade Controversy"⁷ evangelical Anglicans supported him. They welcomed him to speak at packed meetings of the Evangelical Alliance and gave him a warm reception.⁸

Naiveté?

Is such a desire and call for Christian charity and unity a profound act of naiveté on my part? If so, then I am comforted by my good company. Jesus prayed to the Father, "that they [the disciples] may be one as we are" (Jn. 17:11). Paul admonishes, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another . . ." (Rom. 12:10), and Peter writes, "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8–9). Surely, to fail here is to fail everywhere, for if we do not have love, we have "become sounding brass or a clanging symbol" (1 Cor. 13:1). David declares, "Behold, how

good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Ps. 133:1).

Striving for Christian unity and harmony begins with each of us individually resolving to implement the Biblical requirement of humility and brotherly love. We must seek the good of our brothers in Christ—even in wrath, remembering mercy. "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mt. 20:26-28). "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Gal. 6:3).

My dear brothers in Christ, will you pledge with me to diligently work with one another for Christ's sake—to work (or overlook—"love covers a multitude of sins") to settle any unresolved conflicts with other believers and other Christian organizations, and to promote the advancement of God's kingdom wherever the word of God is faithfully being proclaimed and implemented? The parties must end. "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:5-7).

¹ By "organization," I mean local churches, denominations and special ministries. I serve as pastor of Grace Covenant Church in Texarkana, AR, and I am the director of Covenant Media Foundation.

² It may indeed be *sound doctrine* that we are promoting. At issue, though, is the *manner* in which we promote it.

³ The "list of thirty things we believe" is meant to represent our particular creeds—written or unwritten. Placing particular items at the front of the list may not be done literally but functionally.

⁴ It is my sincere hope and prayer that God would grant a reconciliation between the two congregations and the individuals involved. It is unlikely that the theological differences can be resolved, but I am confident that the love of Christ is sufficient to enable us to have genuine Christian fellowship with one another once again.

⁵ *Sword and Trowel*, XXIV, 1883, 83.

⁶ *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1875, 335.

⁷ The "Downgrade Controversy" came about as the result of an article published by Spurgeon titled, "The Down-Grade," (*Sword and Trowel*, 1887), in which he decried the fact that in many churches (including many in the Baptist Union of which he was a member), "The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Ghost is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into a fiction, and the Resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren and maintain a confederacy with them!"

⁸ *A Marvelous Ministry: How the All-Round Ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon Speaks to Us Today*, (Soli Deo Gloria Publications) 1993) 61.

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Should We "Dumb Down" or "Teach Up"

By Larry Bailey



Last summer while listening to Andrew Sandlin speak at a conference in San Jose on "Big Brother and the Abuse of Language" I was struck by this thought: if the "dumbing down" process has affected English-speaking Christians how has it affected other languages. For the past five years my wife and I have served as trainers and advisors to Cambodian-speaking

Christians here in the California Central Valley. We have been friends with Sam Blumenfeld since he stayed at our home in 1985 in the middle of a speaking at Washington State University, which is located in Pullman, Washington. It was through him that we became more fully aware of the "dumbing down" process taking place in the public schools. As Mr. Blumenfeld has often explained, years ago our schools used to challenge our children more by "teaching up" with progressively more difficult English literature rather than "dumbing down" to the lowest common denominator. The King James Bible itself, of course, is not easy reading. God gave us his written word to ponder, grapple with, and put into action. Of course, the Holy Spirit—who is called alongside to help—is vital in illuminating our understanding to propel us toward obedience to his word. With many of the newer English versions it is obvious that many are paraphrases and not translations. In the process of simplifying the Holy Writ scholars have "dumbed down" some of the potency of the word of God. In some cases it seems to have blunted the spiritual effect in the level of obedience seen in believers' lives.

In the Cambodian Christian community we have observed a similar "dumbing down" taking place in Cambodian Bible translation. Portions of the original Cambodian translation of the Bible were completed in 1954. The Cambodian translation of the entire Bible was completed in the early 1960s by Arthur Hammond, a dedicated Christian and Missionary Alliance linguist and missionary.¹ Like the King James Bible, the Cambodian Bible is an almost literal translation not a paraphrase. It isn't an "easy read" but requires the reader to fully engage himself with the unction of the Holy Spirit to discover God's truth and to obey it.

Currently there is a debate going on between Cambodian-speaking church leaders about a new simplified version of the Cambodian Bible that has recently been completed in France. In the revisers' attempts to communicate by simplifying the scriptures into modern Cambodian they have unintentionally "dumbed down" the content and potency of the word of God.

Unfortunately this new Cambodian Bible version has not borne good fruit. Many well respected Cambodian-speaking pastors in Cambodia and elsewhere are sternly warning their people to stay away from it. They say it is better to struggle over a challenging more literal translation than to regularly read a more shallow version of the Scriptures. The difference has been compared to food. The original Hammond literal translation has been compared to a hearty oriental chicken dinner while the modern Cambodian paraphrase is more like steamed white rice. Both are filling but only the meat gives lasting sustenance. Now wiser Cambodian-speaking Christian leaders are “teaching up” to challenge their people to grapple with the blunt commands and promises of God as stated in the Hammond translation of the Bible. We’ve observed that it is better to improve our Christian literacy, by wrestling with and fully embracing God’s commands and claims on us rather than accepting a “dumbed down” version of his Truth. Modern paraphrases of Scripture may have their place as a commentary on Scripture but they should not replace more literal translations. As teachers of his word it should never be our intent to show our intellectual prowess through a “high brow” approach to the Scriptures where only scholars understand us but common people do not. Instead we should continue to seek his face as revealed in the word of God to clearly communicate, explain, and obey his word by our own life example. Perhaps some will learn from the sad lessons that have occurred in the “dumbing down” of the level of our Christian literacy in the English-speaking world in part due to the numerous modern English Bible paraphrases and their watered-down interpretation of Christian truth. Easy believism based on shallower modern paraphrases of the Bible can never replace a challenging full orb ed instruction and application of God’s Word to all of life.

¹ It is interesting to note that the translation of the Holy Scriptures into Khmer required the production of a new higher level Cambodian typeface which was eventually used by the Cambodian media and by scholars.

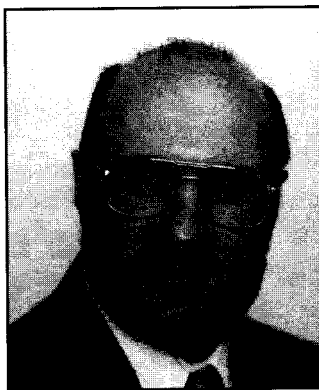
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The *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, a Chalcedon publication, is designed to “teach up” by providing longer articles than are possible in the *Chalcedon Report*.

Contact the Chalcedon office for the topics of current and back issues of the *Journal* on topics where you want help “teaching up.”

Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*

By Walter Block and
Michele Cushing



Although Edward Bellamy’s twentieth century society in *Looking Backward* appears to be the perfect utopia, it could never exist. The very factors that Bellamy claimed contributed to the society’s establishment and success are, in reality, what would lead to its failure. The twentieth century society lacked the possibility for advancements in technology while at the same time lacking competition and appropriate incentives. Even if we ignore these faults, we observe that when Bellamy created his society for *Looking Backward*, he made several false assumptions about human behavior and failed to realize that the only way his society could be imposed would be involuntarily.

Technology definitely has played a role in shaping the utopian society of *Looking Backward*: “The purposeful, positive use of technology—from improved factories and offices to new highways and electric lighting systems to innovative pneumatic tubes, electronic broadcasts, credit cards—is, in fact, critical to the predicted transformation of the United States from a living hell into a heaven on earth” (Segal 91). Even though technology made “hell into a heaven on earth,” Bellamy does not seem to leave much room for further advancements in technology. The regimentation of the twentieth century society does not allow for it. In Bellamy’s society, a strict path is laid out for the citizen to follow at a very early age. In fact, this path is the law: “We require, indeed by law, that every man shall serve the nation for a fixed period. . .” (Bellamy 100). From age six to twenty-one, the young child attends school. School, among other things, teaches about specific trades and their histories and about the national industrial system. At age twenty-one, the man enters his twenty-four year long involvement in the industrial army. The first three years of service include common labor during which time a person may choose an occupation. After three years, the person enters an apprenticeship and will finally become a full workman. Until age forty-five, when service is over, the person has an opportunity to move up in the ranks of the industrial army. Under this system, it appears to be quite impossible for young men to come up with new inventions and innovations since they must follow this course in their lives. It is often those who are in their early years who become entrepreneurs, but in Bellamy’s society, youthful years are spent in service to the industrial army. One critic stated that

“... *Looking Backward* nevertheless recognizes the need for economic and especially ethical constraints on otherwise unadulterated technological advance and unbounded materialism” (Segal 104). Contrary to this belief, if it was not for the supposedly “unadulterated” technological advance, Edward Bellamy’s society, with its large warehouses and credit cards, would not have appealed to the public as much as it indeed did. Without advancements in technology, an economy’s production possibilities curve may not shift outward, and the economy basically will be going nowhere fast.

A lack of competition is another fault of the twentieth century society in *Looking Backward*. Bellamy’s society is controlled solely by the government. The government is the only producer, the only distributor, and the only employer in the nation. This reflects the philosophy of the time: “Competition, which is the instinct of selfishness, is another word for dissipation of energy, while combination is the secret of efficient production” (Bellamy 178). In actuality, competition is essential to an economy. Competition ensures that businesses are running efficiently. If a business failed to do so, it would eventually be forced out of the market by competitors. Competition gives the consumer a choice. If the consumer is not happy with the quality of a product, he or she can turn to another store which produces a similar product. In the case of the twentieth century society, if a person does not approve of the choices offered at the warehouse or if they are not satisfied with the quality of the product, he or she has nowhere else to turn. Competition also keeps companies searching for more efficient ways to use their resources and improve their product. If they do not partake in this activity, they will be forced out of the market.

Bellamy’s lack of incentives and inaccurate assumptions about human behavior are two interrelated faults in his society. Edward Bellamy overestimated the good qualities of human behavior and, therefore, underestimated the importance of incentives. Incentives play a key role in the functioning of a society. Incentives are even considered to be “the basic postulate of all economics” (Gwartney 8). A person’s actions are guided by incentives. A person will choose to do an act if the benefits to himself as a result of the act are greater than the cost of doing the act. Utility also plays a role in incentives. People generally want to maximize utility, and minimize losses.

The industrial army of the twentieth century required that each individual “shall make the same effort” that is, “we demand of him the best service it is in his power to give” (Bellamy 87). The incentive in this case is that the harder you work, the higher up in rank you can move in the industrial army: “high places in the nation are open only to the highest-class men” and “rank in the army constitutes the only mode of social distinction for the vast majority. . .” (Bellamy 106). Here is where Bellamy overestimated the goodness in human behavior. Bellamy believed that “Accordingly, the most rational men would recognize the importance of the principle of mutuality and consequently require no extrinsic motivation to render worthy service” (Gutek 258-259). Bellamy did feel that lower class men would need some incentive though. His solution was

that the higher class men could serve as role models for the others. “Emulation of these models would provide a constant spur to increased incentives” (Gutek 259). Unfortunately for Bellamy, human nature and behavior is not this way. In a society where everyone receives the same salary, regardless of ability, more honor, prestige or a higher rank is not enough of an incentive to motivate a person to put one hundred percent effort into his work. If one can make the same amount regardless of his output, he will do the least amount of work possible. Also, in a higher position one is taking on more responsibility and, therefore, more stress because his evaluation is now based on his workers’ productivity. He now becomes responsible for other people and not just himself. The only true incentive to work that Bellamy seems to offer his workers of the industrial army is more of a threat: “A man able to duty, and persistently refusing, is sentenced to solitary imprisonment on bread and water till he consents” (Bellamy 107).

Incentives are also lacking in the area of education. If a person believes that he has the ability to better contribute to the intellectual work force rather than the manual work force, he may try schooling in such areas as medicine, technology, music, and art. However, the schooling is quite vigorous and requires a great deal of work. After all the schooling, one is given the same set salary as everyone else. While not completely eliminating the applicant pool, the lack of incentives surely lowers the number of people interested in trying this route. If one were faced with either working or going through vigorous schooling only to receive the same pay as a common worker, the option may not seem so appealing.

As one critic stated: “The shareability and mutual cooperation of the new social order required a commonly-shared rationality. Bellamy’s writings revealed a great faith in the ability of men to achieve this rationality, to harmonize wills and efforts, and to direct the course of human destiny” (Gutek 254). Although Bellamy’s faith in human beings is impressive and admirable, it is not reality.

The final fault in Edward Bellamy’s utopian society is that it is not voluntary. There is no possible way that a society of this nature could ever be voluntarily incorporated into our lives. There will always be someone who does not want the same salary as everyone else. There will always be someone who disagrees with the idea of an industrial army in which you must serve for twenty four years. The problem with socialism comes when it is not voluntary. Voluntary socialism such as a biosphere, where participants willingly take part in living in the biosphere for a specified period of time, is fine. Involuntary socialism such as that which existed in the USSR is not so fine. Unfortunately, Edward Bellamy’s society must fall in the category of involuntary.

Edward Bellamy wrote a novel that presented a society that was seemingly perfect. In his society, there were no jails, no taxes, no crime, no money, and everyone appeared content. However, the only way in which this fictional society could become reality is if it were forced upon everyone involuntarily. Even then, the lack of future technology, competition, and incentives would prevent it from being successful. Even after

reading this novel, it still is quite clear that the capitalist system is a far better method for running a nation's economy.

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*. Editor Cecelia Tichi. New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1986.

Gerald Gutek, "Analysis of Formal Education In Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*." In *History of Education Quarterly*. Volume IV. Number 1. March 1964.

James D. Gwartney, and Richard L. Stroup ed. *Economics: Private and Public Choice*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995.

Howard P. Segal, "Bellamy and Technology: Reconciling Centralization and Decentralization." In *Looking Backward 1988-1888: Essays on Edward Bellamy*. Edited by Daphne Patai. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

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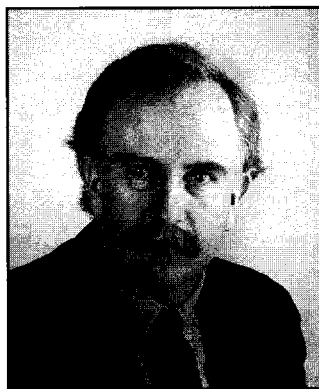
Looking Backward an excellent example of statist predestination:

The doctrine of predestination is, of course, the doctrine of total planning and control. To hold to the eternal decree of God is to say simply that God from the beginning planned, predicted, and totally controls everything that comes to pass. The modern state, as the new god, seeks total control over man in order to speak an infallible word, in order to experiment with man and control him from cradle to grave. Planning is thus increasingly a necessary aspect of the modern state, because the modern state wants to predict, to prophesy, to control. The goal is total planning in order to prophesy, total control for total power (*Is: 6*).

(R. J. Rushdoony, "Infallibility: An Inescapable Concept," *Systematic Theology*. Vallecito, CA: Ross House, 1994).

The Church, Incorporation, Political Action, and the Endorsing of Political Candidates: An Opinion in Light of Biblical and Historical Analysis (Part 2)

By Jack Kettler



If a church spends a substantial amount of time engaging in political activity its tax immunity may be challenged. This is not necessarily bad. The state has the right to challenge false groups that masquerade as churches. In the Old Testament the state had the right to prosecute idolatry. James Bannerman in his classic study of Reformed church

polity, *The Church Of Christ*, cites two groups that in his day were candidates who would Biblically lose freedom for some of their practices. These were the Mormons and the Jesuits.¹ For example, the Mormon "Danites" were instructed "that plundering all non-Mormons should be standard procedure. . . ."² The Jesuits were notorious for employing subversive tactics to bring about the influence of Popery.³ Bannerman then makes the statement: "It were absurd to allege that any number of men calling themselves a Church, and claiming its privileges, are entitled, without inquiry, to be held to be such."⁴ Bannerman goes on to say concerning the right of the state:

Independently, indeed, of positive statute, it seems to be implied in the very nature of the State, as the ordinance of God for the security and advancement of the temporal well-being of its subjects, that it has a right to make itself acquainted with the character of any society of whatever kind within its borders. . . . Secret societies are, in their very nature, dangerous and unconstitutional . . . the civil magistrate has a right to know and be satisfied that the Church which claims toleration at his hands is in truth what it imports to be, a spiritual society in reality, and not in pretense.⁵

This teaching by Bannerman may shock those who have in their reaction against intrusive government become almost

anarchistic in how they view state authority. The state has the right to monitor subversive organizations bent on the violent overthrow of our government. There are some Islamic groups that fall into this category. Some Roman Catholic orders in Latin America have been used as Marxist front groups. As Christians we should always defend the sovereignty of the church. But have we forgotten that God also created the state to give us order in society? The state is a divine creation and has legitimacy. We need to make sure that in defending the church against present day infringement by the state, we don't fall off the other side of the cliff and become anarchists. Even oppressive governments are better than complete anarchy.

Sphere Sovereignty

Laws restricting unrestrained political activity of churches may very well reflect the Reformed doctrine of "sphere sovereignty" set forth in the Westminster Confession. In a similar vein, it should be obvious that laws that limit contributions that business corporations can give to political candidates are good. When large corporations dump unlimited funds into the campaigns of unprincipled elected representatives it is not hard to figure out what type of laws will emerge. Repealing these laws would lead to some unintended consequences. Some want to blur the distinction between church and state. This is not a wise course of action. Consider the historical dispute between Protestants and Roman Catholics regarding the state. For those familiar with church history, it will be apparent that we have a far better situation than our forefathers. If independent churches and Protestants begin endorsing political candidates, will the Roman Catholics follow our lead? The current American arrangement that is the product of the Protestant doctrine of the liberty of conscience allows Catholics, Protestants, and others to work together.

Don't fall off the other side of the cliff and become anarchists. Even oppressive governments are better than complete anarchy.

The Roman Catholic Church in the past controlled political rulers. Tens of thousands of Protestants paid with their lives. In Colorado, for example, there are three hundred and forty thousand Roman Catholics. There are probably no more than one thousand people of Reformed convictions in the state. It is not difficult to figure out who will dominate politically. Gordon H. Clark, Presbyterian philosopher and theologian, relates the following in an essay on the role of civil magistrates:

Where the Roman church controls the government, Protestants suffer oppression and physical persecution. Their churches are bombed and their ministers are murdered In our own land the Romanists are

constantly attempting to divert public funds to their own purposes. A while back they were advocating an ambassador to the Vatican, and will probably push it again when they see an opportunity And bills have been introduced into Congress to honor the Virgin Mary by issuing commemorative stamps for the Marian year. Unfortunately there are also Protestants who want a close tie-in of church and state.⁶

Turning away from "sphere sovereignty," which provides protection and freedom for the expression of individual religious and civil liberty, is potentially dangerous. Do we want to encourage the Roman Catholic bishops to get their members to go to the polls as a large block of voters? Many Roman Catholic bishops are socialists in outlook. Clark closes his essay on civil magistrates by correctly analyzing the theological issue that is at stake. Protestants would do well to take heed:

It would seem that the combination of church and state is a last remnant of Romanism that proves hard to part with.⁷

Independently, indeed, of positive statute, it seems to be implied in the very nature of the State, as the ordinance of God for the security and advancement of the temporal well-being of its subjects, that it has a right to make itself acquainted with the character of any society of whatever kind within its borders. . . . Secret societies are, in their very nature, dangerous and unconstitutional . . . the civil magistrate has a right to know and be satisfied that the Church which claims toleration at his hands is in truth what it imports to be, a spiritual society in reality, and not in pretense.⁵

The astute reader should see by now that incorporation is

not the central issue when it comes to churches and political activity. In fact a thorough study of this issue will show that there are serious Biblical considerations that have caused Christians to question whether the church should endorse political candidates. Incorporation status should be only a minor issue (if even one at all) in a Reformed church's sessional deliberations concerning endorsing political candidates. The church must constantly be on guard against Erastianism (the state ruling the church), and one of the many problems of the Roman Church (the church ruling the state). Under Erastianism individual religious freedom is threatened. Under governments dominated by Rome, individual civil and religious freedoms are lost. John Murray, the late Westminster Seminary systematic theologian, sets forth a comprehensive Biblical analysis of the relationship between church and state in his article "The Relation of Church and State."⁸

Repair the Theology

What are some of the religious issues that in reality have been responsible for Christian cultural decline? The late Richard M. Weaver from the University of Chicago wrote a book entitled *Ideas Have Consequences*. Doctrinal decline and bad theological ideas are a far better explanation for the silence of Christian churches and clergy than incorporation. It is admitted that there are many pastors who are concerned about money and do not want to threaten their tax exempt status. These pastors will not teach whole sections of the Bible because they are afraid that people will be offended and leave, causing their church to lose money. The problem ultimately has to do with lack of conviction.

This article argues as an alternative thesis that theological error is the root cause of Christian cultural impotence. The current infringement by the state into the doctrine of incorporation is the result of bad ideas. Individual Christians have been sitting on the sidelines, politically speaking, for a long time. Christian inaction caused by theological error is one of the direct causes of our current government. It has been said that "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance." What are some examples of theological ideas that can be traced to present day cultural impotence among Christians?

During the early part of the nineteenth century, a new system of Bible interpretation arose in England. The British tried to get rid of this method by exporting it to the former colonies. One of the tenets of this system is a radical separation between Israel and the church. Israel was created and ordained for earthly purposes, the church for heavenly purposes. The only valid enterprise for Christians in the church age is to save souls. Many consistent adherents to this school of theology are so heavenly minded they are no earthly good. Another popular tenet of this system when referring to this world or society is "you should not polish the brass on a sinking ship." If this is true, why vote?

Another tenet of this system is a radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. This view says Christians are not bound by anything in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was for a different dispensation. This cuts

Christians off from God's wisdom set forth in the case laws of the Mosaic economy. This has put modern Christians in the position of having virtually nothing to say about morals, economics, education, and law.

For example: Where does the New Testament prohibit the practice of bestiality? In Leviticus 19:36 we read: "just balances, just weights, a just ephah and a just hin, ye shall have." This passage along with others gives us the basis for a hard metal (gold and silver) based currency system. Psalms 78:2-12 and Proverbs 22:6 are examples of the many passages that deal with a distinctive Christian education. Today many Christians turn their children over to humanists for a supposed neutral education in the government schools. In Deuteronomy 22:8 men are instructed to put a battlement or railing on their roof top. This law is the basis for putting fences around swimming pools. In Exodus 21:28 the law concerning the goring ox gives us the basis for laws about vicious dogs and wild animals. Much could be said about business practice and families from the Old Testament. See the book of Proverbs. Until this century many laws in this country were based upon Old Testament case laws. Christians whose theology repudiates the binding principles contained in the Old Testament case laws play right into the hands of the godless humanists who reject all law except man-made law.

Rampant prophetic speculation is another characteristic of this same method. This writer used to attend churches of this variety in which prophecy bulletin boards of weekly newspaper clippings were posted. Adherents would clap and cheer when new clippings were announced that dealt with tragedies such as earthquakes, wars, and famines. This allegedly signaled that the end of the world was close at hand. About the only type of prophecy that was involved was possibly a self-fulfilling one of cultural defeat. If Christians should not be involved in society since it is nothing more than a sinking ship, then surely pagans and socialists will continue to dominate the political landscape.

This same system also fosters an unhealthy fixation with end times events or eschatology. Much time is wasted trying to identify the Anti-Christ. Date setting or trying to predict the second coming of Christ or the rapture is commonplace. This writer used to attend one church in which the pastor predicted that the pre-tribulation rapture would happen in 1981 and the Great Tribulation would be over in 1988. This same pastor is still considered an expert in the field of eschatology by his followers. Why vote if the end is just around the corner? This addiction to finding the inside scoop on end-time events may be nothing more than a modern form of Gnosticism (the gaining of secret knowledge). Ideas do have consequences, and this eschatological pessimism may be closely related to fatalism. Around the close of the first millennium, the Church was struck with millennial or last days madness. Today, whole garbage dumps could be filled with crackpot books on end-times prophecy. This writer knows a man who worked at a warehouse in the fifties where thousands of books published by Loizeaux Brothers were stored that claimed Mussolini was the Anti-Christ. Time always proves the so-called prophecy experts wrong.

Millennial madness is back again. Ideas have consequences.

Another form of weak theology is found in Charismatic or Pentecostal circles. It can be described as Neo-Platonic Pietism. This theology diminishes the material world. The only valid concern for these types of Christians is inward spiritual experience. Politics to them is part of the material world and therefore evil. Ideas have consequences.

Another very popular form of theology that has caused some unintended consequences is Arminianism. This system rejects God's sovereignty. Rejection of God's sovereignty has serious consequences. When God's sovereignty is rejected or minimized, someone or something, namely man or the state, will assert his own sovereignty. In our society a vacuum has been created which the modern state has rushed in to fill. When Christian people strongly declare God's sovereignty, this acts as a limit upon the state. Since God is sovereign and the ultimate standard, the state is limited by a higher power. Arminianism rejects Biblical predestination. The modern state is now trying to use the government school system to predestinate all citizens into good little socialists.

*Theological error is the root
cause of Christian cultural
impotence.*

Another factor is the modern day clergy's pathetic training. In times past, pastors had to know Biblical Hebrew and Greek. A Strong's Concordance is not adequate. Many pastors today have nothing more than informal training. Poorly trained people have difficulty thinking through all the issues with clarity, and this is assuming they can even understand the issues. Poorly trained people usually are not well-read, and people who are not well-read make poor leaders.

Where to Build

While the reader may not agree with everything set forth in this article, it is hoped that it will be helpful. Numerous questions have been raised in order to provoke thought. It has not been my intent to offend. There are valid Biblical issues that prevent churches from taking certain actions. The church should clearly teach the whole counsel of God and critique from a Biblical perspective the state and political issues. Christ's church has the right to Biblically define what the limits and extent of civil government are. This is the church's right because God is the creator of civil government, and we have his revelation which defines these limits. The church is to declare the whole counsel of God. Part of this counsel sets forth the Biblical doctrine of the state. We should resist attempts to merge church and state. We should resist the statist intrusion into the sphere of authority that God has ordained for the

church and family.

In summary, a number of questions will be reiterated to provoke more thought and study on the issues discussed in this article. The doctrine of incorporation is being misused by the state today. Do we reject this doctrine which is a product of Christian civilization or repair it? Disincorporation is a short term solution. It is true that by definition a corporation is a creation of the state. So what? If one is consistent, then all incorporations, families, businesses, schools, foundations, and churches, should be rejected. As shown earlier, if we operate only in terms of secular legal definitions, our actions may have disastrous consequences. The church must proceed Biblically. Those who believe in disincorporation must explain what mechanism they would propose as a vehicle for the state to relate to entities within its borders.

Bad theological ideas have caused Christians to become uninvolved in society. This in turn has allowed the state to go unchecked and to become increasingly intrusive. Immoral men have risen to power unchecked by the influence of the godly. These ungodly individuals in positions of power have turned our former blessings of education, civil government, and incorporation against us. Edmund Burk once wrote, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Individual Christians have tremendous freedom to exert influence in the political realm. Let's use the opportunities before us. Thankfully many Christians are once again becoming active in society. Let us pray that God will bless our efforts to reclaim and rebuild society.

¹ James Bannerman, *The Church Of Christ*, Volume Two (Edmonton, 1869, reprinted 1991), 386, 387.

² D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy Origins of Power*, (Salt Lake City, 1994), 98.

³ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, (Phillipsburg, 1983), 67.

⁴ Bannerman, 387.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 388.

⁶ Gordon H. Clark, *Essays On Ethics And Politics*, (Jefferson, The 1992), 24.

⁷ Clark, 25.

⁸ John Murray, "The Relation of Church and State," *Collected Writings of John Murray*, (Edinburgh, 1976), 253-259.

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Serving the Suffering in Sudan

By Peter Hammond



Frontline Fellowship has succeeded in delivering the largest shipments of Bibles and Christian books yet to the suffering Christians of Southern Sudan. Despite military offensives in the Nuba Mountains and in Western Equatoria, Frontline Fellowship mission teams delivered over 18,000 Bibles, hymn books and other Christian books in 13 languages to churches in these areas. This was accomplished in defiance of the Islamic Government of Sudan's (GOS) flight bans, the no-fly zones and the prohibition against Bibles enforced by the United Nations (UN).

The Frontline Fellowship mission outreaches to Sudan from February to April were an appropriate way to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of our mission.

The logistics were complicated, involving 5 field workers, a truck, motorbikes, bicycles, several charter aircraft, boats and lots of walking in order to distribute over 18,000 Bibles and other Christian books, in 13 languages, to 6 different regions of Sudan.

The various trips into Sudan were difficult, over some of the harshest terrain imaginable. The heat was stifling, with temperatures of 48° C (118° F) being recorded in the shade in the Nuba Mountains. The roads were treacherous, we suffered one motorbike accident, and one vehicle we were driving needed to be extricated out of a donga. The river crossings were challenging and much of my ministry inside Sudan was accomplished while sick. Scott and Miriam also came down with various illnesses.

The outreaches were dangerous as Sudan is officially an Islamic country and it is involved in a vicious war with the Christian South. We had to fly in no-fly zones, in defiance of flight bans, and behind enemy lines. Much of our chaplaincy ministry was completed at the battlefield. Our team to the Nuba experienced the warm welcome of the government of Sudan and has some of the Muslim tracts (shrapnel from rockets) as souvenirs of this apparently preferred Islamic

method of communication!

There were many obstacles which needed to be overcome. After the considerable logistical and mechanical preparations in Cape Town, our team began the 7,000 km drive overland to Sudan. At the first border post, Steve and Scott were harassed and delayed for 23 hours by Zimbabwean customs officials who demanded a 60% duty (tax) on all the (free) relief aid, medicines and gospel literature being transported to Sudan! By God's grace our team stood firm and persevered and ultimately bypassed this bureaucratic obstruction. They travelled over some of the most challenging roads and passed some of the most magnificent scenery.

Medicine for the Soul

Finally, the two Frontline Fellowship field teams to Sudan linked up and distributed over 600 Bibles and New Testaments to the war-wounded Sudanese patients in the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Hospital in Lokichoggio. Over a year previously I had received permission from Geneva to distribute Bibles to the Sudanese patients at the ICRC hospital. On that occasion the patients had almost trampled me underfoot as they eagerly and desperately clamoured for their copy of the word of God in their own language.

Several months later another Frontline Fellowship team had attempted to distribute more Bibles to new patients at the hospital. The ICRC officials explained that the Muslim government of Sudan had complained about the Bible distribution and therefore they could no longer allow it!

As we had some medical equipment to donate to the Red Cross Hospital we were allowed to drive into their compound. While Miriam went off to deliver the medicines, Elton and Scott let some of the Sudanese patients know where they could obtain Bibles. Within minutes Steve and I were besieged by an enthusiastic mass of one-legged and one-armed patients pleading for a Bible in Dinka, Bor, Zande, Bari, Nuer, Latuka, Madi or English. We couldn't distribute the Bibles fast enough. The excitement of the patients was electric. Some of the tall Sudanese men were dancing (on their crutches), raising their newly acquired Bibles high and singing a hymn of praise.

A Dutch ICRC official came to investigate the commotion and was plainly upset. I explained to her that we had come to deliver some medical equipment and when the patients saw that we had Bibles in our truck they had requested their own copies. "Well, of course they'd want Bibles!" she exploded. "They're all Christians these Sudanese — all of them!" This expatriate had a Hindu charm around her neck and was clearly hostile to the chosen faith of the Southern Sudanese. We were requested to leave.

The next day we drove into Eastern Equatoria to deliver 500 Bibles to the pastors of Toriet and Bor. At one church we found 12 pastors (representing more than 100 Dinka congregations) providentially gathered together. They warmly welcomed our teams and provided valuable research information. Each of the pastors looked forward to returning to their congregations with the Scriptures and books we had provided.

Shortly after we returned to Lokichoggio an official from the Red Cross Hospital tracked our team down and urged us to return with more Bibles! Those patients who had not

received a Bible were most upset and their discontent had forced the ICRC official to make a list of how many more Bibles were needed in the various languages. Our team promptly returned to the hospital with a further 136 Bibles — this time by official invitation!

On the night before we flew into Sudan, Frontline Fellowship hosted a special supper for the representatives of Open Doors and Voice of the Martyrs. It was a great time of fellowship and another example of how mission groups need to communicate in order to be more effective. Throughout the last 15 years Frontline Fellowship has continuously strived to network and co-operate with other ministries. We have recruited and trained many workers for other missions. We have provided many photographs and research reports for other missions. We have often taken workers from other organisations into new areas and introduced them to our established contacts. We have organised vast quantities of Bibles and other gospel literature for other ministries and engaged in many co-operative ventures.

One example of this inter-mission co-operation is how six ministries have had a part in the shipping of a twenty ton container of baby food to Sudan. Gerber donated the food, Christ For Humanity designated the consignment to Frontline Fellowship and arranged with International Christian Aid to ship the food container to Kenya. Voice of the Martyrs cleared the shipment through customs, Operation Nehemiah transported the consignment to Lokichoggio and there delivered it to Frontline Fellowship's local representative. Now Frontline Fellowship needs to transport the baby food into Western Equatoria and see that it is carefully distributed to the displaced people.

As Steve and Scott prepared for their trip to the Nuba Mountains, Elton, Miriam and I loaded our charter aircraft with over 4,000 Bibles, hymn and prayer books and other Christian books. We also took with us an off-road motorbike, two mountain bicycles and equipment, tools and paint for the restoration of a hospital and field clinic. We took off early in the morning while it was still dark. It was an awe inspiring sight to cross the mighty Nile river shortly after sunrise.

There was an enthusiastic crowd to welcome us when we landed in Western Equatoria. There were embraces and lots of handshakes as we exchanged news and sorted out our cargo. The bikes soon came in very useful as we began our varied ministries in the town.

Civil, military and church leaders gathered for the official opening of the Medical Workshop where our Registered Nurse, Miriam, was to train 17 medical orderlies and nurses. Elton organised a team of cleaners, carpenters and painters to repair and restore the Hospital for War Wounded. Elton also painted the Chaplains' Office at the military base.

I conducted various chaplaincy services for the local SPLA unit and presented lectures on the Christian Work Ethic and Grace, Faith and Works. We also delivered boxes of Bibles and Christian books to local churches, the Bible College, the Chaplains' Office, and to the local police and prison.

A Thousand Tongues to Sing

It was a privilege for us to deliver a thousand copies of the

new Zande Hymn Book to the Maridi Diocese. On a later flight we delivered 2,660 Zande Bibles for the Yambio and Maridi Diocese.

Frontline Fellowship had also sponsored the printing of the new Moru Hymn Book and Moru Prayer Book. It was a special joy for us to deliver a thousand copies of the Moru Hymn Book and Prayer book to the pastors of Mundri Diocese. There was much rejoicing and many of the pastors publicly expressed their gratitude to those friends of Frontline Fellowship who had literally enabled "a thousand tongues to sing our great Redeemer's praise!"

We were shown some of the disintegrating remains of the only available previous hymn and prayer books, which had been paperback. They had clearly been well used! The new hymn and prayer books sponsored by Frontline Fellowship are tough, quality hardcover books — each stitched and bound by hand. These will last for a long time.

On Sunday we conducted 5 services — including a special children's service beside the burnt out remains of the Episcopal church. The church building had been destroyed by a helicopter gunshot attack.

We sorted out the medical supplies and equipment which had been donated by friends of Frontline Fellowship and visited the field clinic which had been established by a previous team. Twenty-one field medics gathered for the Medical Training Course. Many of the medics had walked from the battlefield, several had walked for three or more days to participate in the course. Miriam dealt with Vital Signs, Infection Control, First-Aid (Breathing, Bleeding, Breakages and Burns), IV Fluids, Shock, Chest Wounds, Abdominal Wounds, Field Sanitation, Heatstroke, Snake Bites, Injections and Medications.

Elton presented an evangelistic message to the medics and many of them responded by committing their lives to Christ. I contributed some discipleship lectures and Bible studies. On some nights we sat around the camp fire discussing a wide variety of medical and spiritual questions. Half of the medics had attended the First Aid Workshop which I had presented last year. Most of them understood English, however the course had to be translated into Arabic for those who struggled. They related how they have had to stitch up abdominal wounds with ordinary needles and thread — without any anaesthetics, pain killers, antibiotics or anti-inflammatories! It was good to entrust the boxes of medicines and equipment into the hands of these diligent, innovative and battle-proven medics.

At a special service attended by the local civil, church and military leaders, we presented medical textbooks and handbooks to those who had excelled in the course. Badges were awarded to all who passed the written examination. The commander impressed upon the men that they are the beginning of the new Medical Corps of the SPLA forces. They had a vital responsibility to train others to care for the wounded — whether civilians or soldiers, enemies or friends: "You must present prompt and efficient medical care even for captured enemy troops. You are to be Christian medics," he said.

Straight after the formal conclusion of the course we drove the medics to the new clinic near the battlefield which Frontline Fellowship has helped restore. There we delivered the

men with their medicines and held a dedication service for the Field Clinic.

Motorbike Mission

While Miriam was conducting the Field Medic Training Course, Elton and I were travelling each day, often by motorbike, up to the Yei battlefield. There we conducted chaplaincy services and distributed Bibles amongst the SPLA soldiers in the forward trenches.

It was an exhilarating experience to worship the Lord Jesus Christ with hundreds of enthusiastic soldiers as they joyfully raised high the newly acquired Bibles and books and cheered. The distinctive Christian flag with the red cross on the blue square on white flapped in the wind as the SPLA soldiers wholeheartedly sang songs of praise.

The commander stepped forward and raised his AK-47 assault rifle. The men chanted some slogan. Then he raised a copy of the Dinka Bor New Testament and the men cheered. As the commander lifted up a copy of *Faith Under Fire in Sudan* the soldiers cheered enthusiastically.

The commander expressed their appreciation for Christian friends who prayed and who spoke up for them in their struggle for survival. "The Muslim government is trying to destroy the church," he said. "We are fighting for freedom of religion. We are not only fighting for freedom for Christians but for all people. Not even the Muslims enjoy freedom in Sudan. No Muslim is free to change his religion. We are fighting for freedom for both Muslims and Christians. Freedom to know the word of God and to obey it." It was a special joy to proclaim God's word to these people.

Unfortunately, I was sick with a fever for the last two weeks of this trip, but I could not let that interfere with the wonderful privilege of proclaiming the word of God to such enthusiastic and receptive people. I just swallowed the medicines and kept pushing myself every day.

Sometimes we could hear the sounds of fighting as the SPLA exchanged gunfire with nearby government forces. On a couple of occasions we heard and saw Antonov bombers flying by. We met with soldiers who had deserted the government forces and come over to fight for the South.

Our ministry in the area coincided with a dramatic new offensive by the SPLA. In a series of bold lightning strikes the SPLA succeeded in capturing the strategic towns of Kaya, Yei, Lainya and Kajokeji. By the end of March the SPLA had liberated 24 towns and had killed, wounded or captured 16,000 GOS troops. They had also captured a vast quantity of weapons and ammunition, including tanks and anti-aircraft batteries.

The SPLA victories provoked the GOS to place a total flight ban on the area we were ministering in. This presented potential problems for our flights which were bringing in other team members and the next shipments of Bibles. However, by the grace of God, every one of our varied flights (although all were illegal and risked being intercepted by the GOS airforce) succeeded in breaching the blockade against Bibles. By the end of March we had safely delivered over 11,000 Bibles and other Christian books in 13 languages to five regions.

Elton and I, and later Steve and Scott when they had

returned from the Nuba Mountains, used the bicycles and motorbikes to good effect. We crossed rivers and fair distances to deliver boxes of Bibles and preach the word in remote areas. It was on the return trip from one of these outreaches that Scott and I were injured as our motorbike came crashing down on a treacherous stretch of a rocky road. Scott now had cuts in both of his legs — one from a gunshot attack and the other now from the bike spill. I lost a chunk of meat out of my elbow and was bleeding profusely. I most certainly regretted not wearing my customary leather jacket that day! But we still had hours of travelling ahead of us that day, and the sun was going down so we just had to patch up and press on.

Breaching Blockades

Following the completion of our chaplaincy, medical and Bible distribution work in Western Equatoria, Steve, Scott and Elton drove through Uganda to deliver other shipments of Bibles into Sudan. This required travelling with Ugandan military escorts who had to fight their way through various ambushes by the L.R.A. guerillas in northern Uganda. They successfully delivered a shipment to rejoicing Sudanese Christians and at the time of writing are busy attempting to get through a further shipment.

The recent SPLA victories have, at last, opened the road to Uganda for relief supplies and Bibles to be driven into Equatoria. The GOS stranglehold on Western Equatoria has been broken. The ban on Bibles will now be almost impossible for the GOS to enforce. However, the GOS surrogates in Northern Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), still threaten the lifeline as they continue their reign of terror and ambush relief and mission vehicles en-route to Southern Sudan.

Peter Hammond is the Founder and Director of Frontline Fellowship and the Director of United Christian Action (a network of 20 Bible-based groups working for revival and reformation in Southern Africa). He is an international speaker, presenting about 400 lectures or sermons each year throughout Africa, Eastern Europe and America.

Peter is married to Lenora and they have been blessed with three children — Andrea, Daniela and Christopher.

Donations for Peter Hammond should be made through:

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In Praise of Home Schooling Mothers

By Andrea Schwartz



It is not customary to praise a group to which one belongs. However, it is possible to "step out" of a group enough to appreciate and evaluate the talent and achievements of the group.

Recently, our home-fellowship hosted a home schooling seminar. About 60 persons attended and listened intently for about 2 1/2 hours to a curriculum philosophy and absorbed many practical

suggestions for implementing it. After we arrived home, my husband commented how impressive (and somewhat intimidating) home schooling mothers are. I think he was most impressed with the questions and comments that arose from the audience. The knowledge of various orientations to learning, the experience of teaching different ages at the same time, and the obvious desire to refine and improve teaching skills was apparent. It's not that he hadn't had experience with a home teacher (we have been home schooling since 1983); it's that he assumed I was the exception rather than the rule. I have received his praise over the years, but his assumption was that I could do all this because I had received a superior education growing up.

Back to my praise of home schooling moms. Many of the women across the country who have responded to God's mandate to *educate* their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord *did not* receive superior educations. Many have had to re-educate themselves in order to educate their children properly. They have managed to accomplish this without the praise of the world or even the credentials of the world. In fact, very many continue to persevere and raise the standard of education in our country—not because of taskmasters hovering over them—but in spite of those who spend much of their efforts to stop them. They are working to produce the leaders of tomorrow.

It is to God's glory and by his supernatural grace that he has allowed us home schooling moms to go beyond ourselves. Thanks to his call and strength, many of us are moving closer to the standards proclaimed in Proverbs 31 and we thus need to recognize that *our merchandise is good!* I know it's difficult to view ourselves this way when the hair is getting gray and the figure reveals our age and the number of children we've had. I know that victory isn't always evident and failure not always distant. However, a proper view of our overall effectiveness in performing the tasks God has called us to can bolster our courage. Courage needed to recognize that the future of our civilization depends very much on what we do

now and how we do it. May God grant us the vision to see the fruits of his victory.

I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works, Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shown thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. (Ps. 71:16-18)

Andrea Schwartz and her husband Ford head Friends of Chalcedon. More information about their work is available on the inside back cover.

Judy Rogers in Concert

Judy Rogers, a home-schooling mother, will be performing in concert in San Jose, CA on Saturday September 6 at 2:00 and 7:00 PM at 2350 Leigh Ave. at the facilities of Covenant Presbyterian Church. Sponsored by Emmaus Christian Fellowship (Andrea's church). Proceeds benefit the XL (home schooling) Choir of Silicon Valley.

To reserve tickets, send \$5.00 per person and a stamped self-addressed envelope to Emmaus Christian Fellowship, 4960 Almaden Exp. #172, San Jose, CA 95118.

Judy and her pastor-husband Wayne Rogers live in Jackson, Mississippi. She home schooled for eight years.

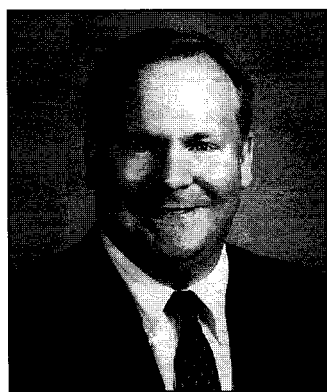
Chalcedon Web Page

The Chalcedon Web Page, managed by Paul Ferroi, has recent *Chalcedon Report* articles, and articles and book excerpts of other Chalcedon authors.

www.chalcedon.edu

Defend the Poor and Fatherless: A Call to the Church to Adopt Special Needs Children

By Gary Humble



Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy.
(Ps. 82:3)

Our lives changed dramatically in 1994. Our family had always been very supportive of various pro-life causes. We have been involved with picketing abortuaries, supporting our local crisis pregnancy center and working to elect pro-life

candidates. In 1994, we made a family decision that would turn out to be the most wonderful, sorrowful decision of our lives. We became certified foster parents through NewStart Foundation, a Christian foster and adoption agency dedicated to saving the lives of children that the world would view as expendable.

We received our first child in March, 1995. He was a beautiful, healthy boy that we had the honor to love and nurture for about six weeks. During the night feeds we would ponder this little one's future. What would his new parents be like? Would he be raised in the fear of the Lord? We knew God had providentially placed this child in our home and strongly believed this little man, although only with us for a few short weeks, would receive the blessings of the covenant according to God's word.

Soon the day came when NewStart took this little man to his new home. We felt as though we lost our own child. Even though we knew he would be in good hands, the loss and separation from him was terrible. We loved that little boy as if he were our own flesh and blood. To this day when we say prayers with our little five year old daughter, Lana, she remembers to pray specifically for him.

The very next day, NewStart blessed us again by having another child placed in our home. However, this little boy was not perfect. In fact, this little guy had numerous disabilities that required hospitalizations and several surgeries. We currently feed him through a tube connected directly to his stomach. In the beginning we fed him every four hours around the clock. Our little guy (Bubba) has seven specialists that see him on a regular basis. His condition is very rare and his "prognosis" according to modern medicine is, at best, questionable.

We took Bubba into our home when he was ten days old and felt strongly from that day forward that the Lord had sovereignly delivered this child to us, not to care for on a

temporary basis, but to adopt and raise in the fear and the admonition of the Lord.

Our lives have never been the same since. We are not as mobile as we once were. My wife is many times housebound caring for Bubba and Lana. If she is not at home, she is usually enroute to various doctor appointments, PT, OT, speech therapy and any other therapy you can imagine.

I say all of this to tell you that God has so richly blessed our lives with our little Bubba. Every morning around 6:45 AM when I go in to get him for his morning feed, I hear this happy child babbling away in his crib. As I pull the railing down I see this little boy whose eyes cannot focus on his papa, smiling in my direction. And now begins another day to love and nurture this helpless baby that, by the world's standards, should never have been born.

We have had so many people, particularly Christians, ask us why would we want to adopt a special needs child. They have a difficult time understanding why we would take on such a "burden." They tell us that this would be too difficult a challenge for them to handle. They appreciate "our sacrifice," but could never see themselves doing that. I think of the scripture that says, "My; Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into various trials, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jam. 1:2). How sad that many Christians would act like the religious leaders in the parable of the Good Samaritan and walk right past the one who needs help. Our nation is sliding into the sewer of sin and for many Christians the only concern they have is for their own well-being.

As our nation continues on its wicked path toward destruction, it is the church and, specifically, the Christian that must rescue the weak and fatherless. It is the Christian, whose faith must be worked out while on this planet, who must stand in the gap to love and nurture those innocents that the world would call burdensome and unworthy to live. It is the Christian that must set the example for pagan man on how works of mercy must be performed. It is the Christian that must Biblically reconstruct the entire foster and adoptive system.

I thank God for the agency that gives us the opportunity to be foster and adoptive parents. As stated earlier, NewStart Foundation is a Christian, private, nonprofit organization which embraces the belief that each child, regardless of sex, race or special need deserves a family. They have gained the reputation as the agency that is able to place babies with profound physical and mental handicaps with foster and, eventually, adoptive families. Why is it that an agency like NewStart is able to place these precious babies in loving and nurturing homes and the state with all of its human and financial resources can't? As Christian foster parents, we take God's word seriously when it says to "Defend the poor and fatherless."

The clarion call in this hour is to stop playing church and become the church. As America continues its love affair with death, it is imperative that each Bible-believing christian examine his individual role in this battle. We will win this war. The church will continue to expand King Jesus' Crown Rights and from its influence, will rebuild the foster and adoptive systems. We will continue to rescue those helpless little ones that have no voice for themselves. Children, like my little Bubba, are counting on us.

Rationalism and Heresy

By **R. J. Rushdoony**

The word *heresy* (from the Greek *haeresis*) means choice, a choice made against or contrary to an established faith or practice. Within the context of church history, it means opinions that go contrary to God's revealed word. The word *rationalism* (from the Latin *ratio*) is defined as "a view that reason and experience rather than the nonrational are the fundamental criteria in the solution of problems." Rationalism seeks a natural as against a supernatural explanation. Within the realm of theology, E. J. Carnell expressed the essence of rationalism in his statement, "Bring on your revelations! Let them make peace with the law of contradiction and the facts of history, and they will deserve a rational man's assent" (*An Introduction to Apologetics*, 178). In this perspective, man's reason sits in judgment on God and his revelation instead of working in terms of it. Such rationalism may agree with orthodox theology, but in its basic premise, the sufficiency, right, and necessity of reason to sit in judgment over God and his revelation, it is heresy. It enthrones man's reason as the supreme judge over all things, beginning with God.

Rationalism has insisted on identifying itself with reason, a fallacy, because it represents a misuse of reason. Fallen man's original sin is to be his own god, knowing or determining for himself what is good or evil, right or wrong, or law or morality (*Gen. 3:5*). It can recognize and approve of the God of the Bible but only as an independent source of judgment and corroboration. Theological rationalism leads in time to humanistic rationalism. Its goal may be a kind of orthodoxy, but its methodology is simply a radical heresy. God created the heavens and the earth, and all things therein, including man and man's reason. The clay cannot judge the potter nor sit as a court to verify the potter's existence. Such a procedure is an absurd arrogance.

Cornelius Van Til repeatedly demonstrated the circularity of man's reason. Man begins on certain given premises to reason to their necessary conclusions. His thinking has a context. He does not approach any subject except from the given context of a given world. Still worse, the philosophers, most obviously the rationalists, refuse to deal with the fact of man's Fall and the effect of the Fall on man's mind. As Calvin noted, "Thus they imagine that man is always possessed of reason sufficient for the proper government of himself." (John Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk 1, chapt. XV, VI; vol. I, 213, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936). Calvin continued, "The philosophers, being ignorant of the corruption of nature proceeding from the punishment of the fall, improperly confound two very different states of mankind" (*ibid.*, Bk I, chapt. XV, VII; vol. I, 214). Salvation should not confirm man in the priority of his reason but rather make him mindful of its limitations and the sufficiency of God's revelation. Man's intellect, as Van Til pointed out, is not sinless. And when man ignores the Fall, it

"is always tantamount to ignoring his creation" (Cornelius Van Til: *An Introduction to Theology*, vol I, 32. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Westminster Theological Seminary, Syllabus; 1947). As Van Til said further,

Nature has had a veil cast over it on account of the sin of man, and the mind of man itself has been corrupted by sin. Accordingly, use must not, now that sin has entered into the world, separate natural theology from the theological physics and theological psychology. After sin has entered the world, no one of himself knows nature aright, and no one knows the souls of man aright. How then could man reason from nature to nature's God and get anything but a distorted notion of God? The sort of natural theology that the sinner who does not recognize himself as a sinner makes is portrayed to us in the first chapter of Romans (*ibid.*, 1, 69).

Some of the champions of rationalism will cite man's Fall in their theological statements, but not in their philosophies. There the subject is taboo, and their thinking assumes the unfallen purity of reason. How they can do this and still retain their orthodoxy they do not explain. But to disregard the Fall of man is to deny the Faith: it is heresy, not orthodoxy. Moreover, as Calvin pointed out, such men disregard God's predestination in their reasoning. As for the atonement, the subject never touches their philosophy! Calvin noted, "What God decrees, must necessarily come to pass; yet it is not by absolute or natural necessity" (Calvin, *op.cit.*, Bk I, chapt XVI, IV, vol. I, 231). But the philosophers recognize only absolute or natural necessity, not God's decree, so that, even when they seem to agree with Biblical doctrine, they are totally at odds with it. The constructs of reason give us a god very much like man and the mind of man. To cite Calvin again, in a statement, like so many in Calvin ignored by these rationalists in the church, "Hence it happens that so many worthless characters in the present day violently oppose this doctrine, because they will admit nothing to be lawful for God, but what agrees with the dictates of their own reason" (Calvin, *op.cit.*, Bk I, chapt. XVII, II; vol. I, 234). He added,

Therefore, since God claims a power unknown to us of governing the world, let this be to us the law of sobriety and modesty, to acquiesce in his supreme dominion, to account his will the only rule of righteousness, and most righteous cause of all things (*Ibid*, Bk I, chapt XVII, II; vol. I, 235).

Statements like this, which are many, are ignored by those philosophers who claim to be Calvinists; the *man*, the thinker in philosophy, is for them a creature who has never existed, not in Eden, nor in the world since. Their rationalism is a form of heresy, an attempt to combine humanistic philosophies and Biblical Faith. Not surprisingly, such rationalism has been especially prominent in Arminian circles, where the departure from the God of Scripture begins in theology. All the same, this heresy has been too common in Calvinistic circles.

Random Notes, 71

By R. J. Rushdoony

1. I still, as I have since youth, do all my writing by pen and ink. This does not mean that I do not appreciate the importance of computers. One of the many advantages given to scholars is that the vast body of Greek literature is being brought into a workable unit. As of not too long ago, 60 million Greek words, from Homer to the sixth century AD, have been gathered together on CD ROM. This has meant that a New Testament koine usage can be checked against other uses of the same word to understand better its possible meanings. Some important insights are emerging.

2. In 1933, during the depression, my father bought me a Royal Portable typewriter, which I still have. I used it all the way through the university and I transferred my early writings and books from hand-script to type on it. The typewriter was expensive for its day, \$25, and virtually new. My father bought it when he really could not afford to because he believed that some kind of writing was basic to my future.

3. A few days ago, Gary Wagner was here with his family and some friends, and it was a happy occasion. In the course of our conversation, the name of an old friend of Gary's came up, the late Walter Brennan, the leading actor in "The Real McCoys" and in many films. Brennan was a devout Catholic who made clear his dissent with Hollywood's morals. He said plainly that he had never had anything to do with any woman outside of marriage, and he was still happily in love with the bride of his youth.

Walter Brennan became dissatisfied with the direction of the local parochial school, and, prompted by Gary, sent a committee of women to talk with me about starting an independent school, which he was financing.

4. Gary and I, in the course of our discussion, got into the subject of self-pity and victimization. I have always held that self-pity is a form of psychological cancer, and very destructive. There used to be a popular ditty ridiculing self-pity, and a member of Gary's family reminded me of the lyrics, used at a Christian summer camp, which ridiculed self-pity. I had forgotten most of it. Here it is:

Nobody likes me,
Everybody hates me,
Guess I'll eat some worms:

Short, fat, fuzzy ones,
Long, slimy, skinny ones,
Guess I'll eat some worms!

Down goes the first one,
Down goes the second one,
Guess I'll eat some worms!

Down goes the third one,
Down goes the fourth one,

Guess I'll eat some worms!

Out comes the fourth one,
Out comes the third one,
Why did I eat those worms?

Out comes the second one,
Out comes the first one,
Why did I eat those worms?

Everybody likes me,
Nobody hates me,
Why did I eat those worms?

5. When I was a student, I carefully avoided marking *my* books, a habit then which causes me grief now. I just spent about half an hour trying to locate a valuable statement in a book I read and did not mark in the 1930's. If you own the book and plan to use its materials, mark and index its important data and comments.

6. The word *lady* in Old English meant "the person who gives out the bread" (Carson I. A. Ritchie: *Food in Civilization*, 58). Gluttony is a sin we rarely hear about today, but it was once taken very seriously, especially by the Scots, for whom it was also a crime. Offenders were either strangled or drowned in a running stream (74).

7. *Focus*, in July, 1954, reported on the salaries of U. S. State governors. New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey received far, far more than most, \$50,000 a year. Gov. Theodore McKeldin of Maryland received \$4,500; Gov. Dan Thornton, \$10,000; and so on.

8. For officers of state to live off the public treasury is an ancient vice. On June 7, 1594, Friday, the ten judges of England's Star Chamber dined together on a fast day on ling cod, green-fish, salmon, pike, gurnard, dory, carp, conger, barbel, flounder, tarbot, whiting, lobster, crab, and prawns, also on eggs, capons, chickens, rabbits, artichokes, peas, strawberries, apples, gooseberries, oranges, lemons, quinces, and barbaries. Obviously, the ten judges had a good appetite, since this was at public expense.

Of course, this was under the stingy Queen Elizabeth! Later, in 1621, in a feast for the French ambassador, 1600 dishes were prepared by 100 cooks! Space forbids describing the meal.

The medical profession was meanwhile urging dieting, and one man claimed that over-drinking was killing more people than the wars.

If you think this was extravagant, think of the greater amounts spent on clothing. Queen Elizabeth was as extravagant here as she was stingy elsewhere (Lawrence Stone: *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 255ff). The good old days?

9. Now we have the ultimate in democracy, a recent survey on what or which prominent persons are likely to go to heaven. Mother Theresa had 79% of the votes; but Oprah Winfrey had 66%; Colin Powell, 61%; Michael Jordan, 65%; Princess Diana, 60%; Pres. Clinton, 52%; Al Gore and Hilary Clinton, 55% each; Gingrich, 40%; Pat Robertson, 47%; Dennis Rodman, 28%; O. J. Simpson, 19%. People seem to think heaven is

gained by popularity. 87% of Americans surveyed expected to go to heaven (*U.S. News & World Report*, March 31, 1997, p. 18). What next? A poll to see who deserves to be God?

10. The origin of our English word "worry" goes back to an old Germanic word meaning to *strangle*. That is what you do to yourself when you worry.

11. This is what John Adams, later second President of the U.S., wrote in his diary on February 22, 1756:

Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience, to temperance, frugality, and industry, to justice, kindness, and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love and reverence towards Almighty God. What a Utopia, what a Paradise would this region be.

Like others of his day, Adams was a theonomist!

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MY BACK PAGES

Organic Reformed Church Government

By Steve M. Schlissel



We started our discussions about the organization of the church some time ago and I'm itching to treat other subjects: body piercing, the Rolling Stones, the proposed male-neutered version of the NIV, and an examination of the Regulative Principle of Worship (you may write to us and lobby for your preferred order of treatment). But before I can move on, I must bring our treatment of church government

to a close. I intend to do just that in this article, so if it runs a little longer than usual ("if"—ha!), I trust you'll forgive me.

Our labors have been expended in the hope of altering the way we think about church. No easy task, and I again must ask for forgiveness for inherent weaknesses in my various appeals.

Yes, asking forgiveness has become a habit of mine. But thinking about church principally in terms of denomination has become a habit of mind—of many Christians in general, and virtually all Reformed and Presbyterian folks in particular. This mindset, I fear, has led a few to grossly misunderstand our position. One Presbyterian minister, for example, wrote:

I am not interested in receiving your monthly diatribes against presbyterian government. Please remove my name from the mailing list. Your repeated assertions that the church is based upon the synagogue model ring hollow in view of the fact that such is not taught in Scripture, and the explicit assertion that the church is the new-covenant temple (*1 Cor. 3:16*) and kingdom of Christ (*Col. 1:13*).

The glad reader of these pages, however, will have perceived that we have not argued against Presbyterianism, *per se* (we have said so plainly), but rather against denominationalism *posing* as Presbyterianism. The difference is as great as that between George Bailey and Mr. Potter.

Van Dalen correctly observes that "Holy Scripture does not include a direct command to the local churches to live together in some form of organized relationship," that is, in a denomination. Our desire in noting this, of course, is not to see others forsake denominations, but rather to have all admit that, in the words of Greijdanus, "The Lord has certainly not forbidden such..., but He has not prescribed them, either."

Organic Presbyterianism and the Synagogue

We are contending here for what might be called "Organic Reformed Church Government," or Organic Presbyterianism, a form of Presbyterianism which is not dependent upon a

denomination, nor upon an elaborate church order appended to Scripture and Confession. It is, however, most definitely dependent upon seeing the church as the Synagogue of Christ. Therefore, let us examine the propriety and relevance of our claim to finding the essentials of the system in the synagogue.

It is strange to be in a position of having to prove to Presbyterians the proposition that the church in the New Testament is built upon the synagogue model, seeing that this fact is ordinarily employed by them as a justification for their system of government! In 1873, Dr. Marcus Dods wrote a book entitled, *Presbyterianism Older than Christianity*, by which he meant that the synagogue system (which he regarded as identical to Presbyterianism) predated the New Testament.

Rev. John MacPherson, in his excellent handbook, *Presbyterianism*, writes, "In general, the Christian forms of worship were modeled on those of the Jewish synagogue, and so where any customs in worship or office in the Christian church are spoken of without explanation, we may reasonably look to the arrangements of the synagogue for enlightenment."

And Dr. D. Douglas Bannerman, in the book most commonly received by Presbyterians as the standard work on the subject, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church*, devotes considerable space to the establishment of the fact that New Testament church organization and worship is predicated upon the synagogue model. He, too, equates Presbyterianism with the synagogue form, and acclaims the latter as the providentially ordained mechanism by which the true religion was sustained in the world: "It was by this Presbyterian organization, on a broad and popular basis, which united strength with elasticity and capability for adaptation to varied circumstances, that the Diaspora were enabled to hold their ground everywhere throughout the Empire in the face of general dislike and frequent persecution." But even more to the point, hear his conclusion: "Both in its worship and polity the Hebrew Christian Church [read: New Testament Church] was conformed in all essential respects to the model of the Hebrew synagogue." This holds true, insists Bannerman, in regard to its worship, and "unmistakably with regard to its organization. The form of polity which had been universally established for centuries in the Jewish Church . . . was 'simply accepted and perpetuated by the apostles.'"

In this last clause the writer is quoting Dr. Marcus Dods, from the book noted above. We will conclude this section (explaining why we feel so strange in defending the synagogue model of church government to self-described Presbyterians) with the Dods quote in its original context: "This, then, is the reason you do not find distinct traces in the New Testament of the creation of the Presbyterian form of Church government. The apostles could not create what had been in use some hundreds of years before they were born. They themselves were all of them Presbyterians before they were Christians. And these are the two facts, the knowledge of which makes us intelligent Presbyterians: First, that the form of government in the Church before Christ came was Presbyterian; and secondly, that this form of government was not abolished or altered, but simply accepted and perpetuated by the apostles. It was extended to all groups of people who received Christ." (Extended, I must add, with the same features extolled by Bannerman: a solid core and a flexible exterior, elastic and adaptable.)

I now invite you to re-read the letter from our Presbyterian friend above. That the New Testament church is presented to us under many figures (including "Temple") cannot negate the

pervasive and inescapable testimony that our Lord Jesus established his church to be the Synagogue of Christ (See recent *Chalcedon Reports*). If this is not implicit in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, nothing is: Those who confess Christ constitute the true *synagogue*; those who deny him constitute the false.

The fact that the church is a continuation of the true synagogue will be a key element in our treatment of the Regulative Principle of Worship, so please keep it in mind and heart. But for now let us proceed to some features of Organic Presbyterianism, founded as it is upon the synagogue model.

Rule by Elders

Rule in the local church is by a plurality of Elders. Some in church history have indeed stretched this principle pretty thin. "In the period following the Reformation," notes J. L. Schaver, "no congregational meetings were held in a great many of the congregations of the established Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. The Consistories themselves determined the choice of their successors and other matters of importance. Their decisions were announced to the congregations. . . ." Organic Presbyterianism is content to affirm that Scripture places administrative authority in a body of elected Elders, themselves members of the local church, as opposed to an authority thought to reside in prelates particularly or members generally.

Organic Reformed government acknowledges the primacy of the local church. Clearly, each local church should seek to be as healthy and strong as it can be, which might make denominational affiliation wise in certain circumstances. In any case, the authority which comes from Christ, comes firstly to the local church, and is administered by its Elders.

The surest way to build a strong church, therefore, is to have strong Elders. The Bible is far more explicit about the qualifications requisite for Eldership than it is about details of church government.

Messiah's Congregation has ordained five Ruling Elders in 18 years. Two are now Teaching Elders (ministers) in other parts of Christ's vineyard: one is a missionary pastor in Virginia and the other serves as pastor of a 700-member Reformed church in Michigan.

Before a man can be presented to our congregation to be voted on as an Elder, he must have his own act together, his household must be in order, and he must demonstrate a competent knowledge of Scripture, doctrine, church history and the Reformed confessions. In short, he must fulfill the criteria found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. He is typically examined once upon recognition of the requisite gifts and again after an extensive training period, sometimes lasting two years. Only after he has proven himself to be of pillar quality will he be presented to the congregation for them to say, "Yes, we will have this man rule over us," or "No, we will not."

The One and the Many

An Organic Reformed church sees itself as belonging to the Reformed community of churches. Upon his admission to office an Elder must submit to the Form of Subscription which binds him to the doctrine found in the Westminster Standards and the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt, any demurals having been made known beforehand to the Elders. We are not the sole "confessors" or "possessors" of these symbols. Therefore, Messiah's Elders, though not "denominated," are nevertheless organically and

truly accountable to the whole of the faithful Reformed church, regardless of denominational call-letters. Note carefully this provision in our Form of Subscription:

...if at any time an officer of a faithful Reformed church, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion, and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to request of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confessions of Faith, the Catechisms, or the explanation of the Canons of Dordt, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned [*i.e.*, suspension from office]. We reserve for ourselves, however, the right of appeal to signatories of the Covenant of Reformed Officers, according to the procedure set forth in said Covenant, in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the Consistory; and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

It has been suggested that churches without a denomination are by that very fact operating without accountability. To those who so suggest we must say, "Show us your Form of Subscription. Does it recognize and hold you accountable to faithful brothers outside of your own denomination?"

The Near and the Far

Organic Reformed churches will seek to work as closely as the ecumenical and Reformed creeds allow with churches in their area. Bannerman: "Where neighboring synagogues stood towards each other on an independent footing, their elders met, as opportunity offered, more or less formally, for consultation and co-operation in matters of common interest."

Appealing Appeal

Organic Presbyterianism, as you saw alluded to in our Form, has a provision for appeal. This process is available to any member of Messiah's Congregation. Our method of appeal is spelled out in our Covenant of Reformed Officers (CORO—as in "heart"). It reads in its entirety as follows:

Covenant Of Reformed Officers

The undersigned, men in good standing as officers of Reformed, confessional churches, agree to serve Messiah's Congregation in the hearing of appeals and in the constitution of ordination councils, each man as providentially available in each circumstance.

The method of hearing appeals shall be: The person(s) asking for an appeal to be heard may choose one Elder signatory of this covenant. The person(s) against whom the appeal is made may choose a second signatory. The two signatories will then, together, choose a third to constitute a tribunal under God, to hear the matter in the most expeditious manner, and to render a judgment in the fear and sight of God, according to His Word and our common confession.

The officers of Messiah's Congregation agree to be bound by decisions thus rendered.

As to ordination, on an occasion when Messiah's Elders recognize one in whom they believe to be manifest the requisite gifts and calling for Christian ministry, a

minimum of three signatories shall, along with Messiah's Elders, constitute a lawful ordination council. The council will, at a mutually agreeable time and venue, conduct a thorough investigation of the life, views, knowledge and abilities of the candidate. A decision to proceed with ordination to Christian ministry must be unanimous minus one, or unanimous. Two negative votes will require re-examination of the candidate at a later time.

The officers of Messiah's Congregation agree to be bound by this procedure in ordaining qualified men to the sacred office of Minister of the word and Ordinances of God.

So signed in the sight of our great God and Savior....

[the signatures of Messiah's Elders, and of several Reformed officers, not members of Messiah's Congregation, follow.]

The Skinny on the CORO Method

The signatories now number five, and that number is growing. What's important, however, is not the number, but the uniform quality of their character. We have long said that when you are dealing with men of integrity, few rules are needed; and when you're dealing with men without integrity, many rules won't help. The CORO officers are field-tested, time-proven, solid men of the Word who have demonstrated their qualification to rule in real life during many years of Christian service. Each of us would gladly and cheerfully submit to them.

Just as Messiah's members chose men to rule over them, so our members and officers have chosen men to rule over all of us, *as needed*. If you can stand the mixture of Latin and Hebrew, this form of church government might be called *Ad Hoc Bet Din*, that is, an "As needed court." If there is a need, a court or council is constituted. They rule authoritatively according to Scripture and confession. Having ruled, we abide, they disband.

CORO is a lean and clean *method*, not a denomination. Any local church can benefit from the advantages inherent in authoritative, external counsel by adopting the same or a similar method. It provides all the upside of the wider assemblies with none of the downside. CORO is a pleasure. It meets the judicial needs of a local church without standing committees, politicking or quotas.

Who's to Blame?

You can "blame" the development of this method on the many Reformed men who have helped us over the years with no strings attached. When we were first emerging from dispensational-mission to Reformed-church status, three local ministers helped us in the pre- and re-examination of Elder candidates and in their subsequent ordination (Dr. Paul Szto and Rev. Ray Vander Laan of the CRC, and Rev. William Shishko of the OPC). When we needed more comprehensive instruction in the Reformed faith, various OPC, CRC and PCA ministers (including Dr. Greg Bahnsen, Dr. Cornelius Van Til, and Dr. Samuel Ling) provided it. When we had a crisis of ministry several years ago, Rev. G. I. Williamson graciously came to Brooklyn, heard our plight and made his recommendation. We didn't necessarily like it but we heeded it, trusting G. I. more than ourselves for we were "too close" to be confident of objectivity. Again and again we have found Reformed men eager to serve Christ by serving this church. Urban Nations is one of the most dramatic instances, with men from several denominations (as well as "Independents") willing

to serve on our board.

And so when we found ourselves thrown out of the CRC for felonious Bible-believing, the answer to the question, "Which denomination should we join," was naturally answered, "None, for we are *already a part of many*." We embrace Organic Reformed government because it is Biblical, practical, proven and alive. We keep discovering Christian men who really act Christianly!

Is Paul Appealing? How About Moses?

Thus you have some of the rationale, justification and history of Organic Presbyterianism. I fear I've demanded too much of you as a reader, even a patient one, but for the sake of completeness, allow me to say, we have made a provision for appeal even though Scripture does not *explicitly* require that such be established in the churches. Apart from Paul's frequent appeals to the hearts of his readers, the only explicit appeal we read of in the New Testament is Paul's to Caesar (*Ac. 25:11, et al.*) (you will recall that we disproved the proposition that Acts 15 requires some sort of abiding "Court of Appeal" in the churches).

Neither do we find any *explicit* appeal "system" in the Old Testament covenant administration unless we reckon the appeals made by the oppressed unto the Lord—appeals which he has sworn to hear (*Ex. 22:22-23; Dt. 24:15, e.g.*)—as being part of the justice system. Yes, there is a provision to bring more difficult cases to "the priests, who are Levites, and to the judge who is in office at that time," found in Deut. 17:8-13, but note that criminal and civil suits were explicitly in view here (v. 8), not ecclesiastical matters.

Further, it is not at all clear that the cases so brought were *appeals* following a lower court decision; they seem to have been instances of deference to a higher, more *competent* court because of difficulty (v. 8). We find an application of this principle today each time a consistory or session seeks outside counsel on a matter it regards as "above its head," not an uncommon occurrence among humble elders in difficult times such as these. Be that as it may, it is very clear in the Deuteronomic prescriptions that no appeal of the Levitical court's decision was permitted (vv. 11-12), even if they were the first to hear the case.

Does the absence of any explicit command to provide an avenue of appeal mean that we have nowhere to ground the propriety of some sort of appeal process in churches today? Not at all. It means only that any such appeal system will be based upon implicit, not explicit, warrant. Rejecting the torturous and tortuous exegetical artifices which endeavor to find in Acts 15 a text establishing a hierarchical church court system does not mean appeals have no place in the post-apostolic church.

On the contrary, they are easily justified by two indisputable facts taught in Scripture: 1) God *loves* justice (*Ps. 99:4*), and 2) Men are born corrupt and are prone to corruption. A method, therefore, which seeks to mitigate the sinful propensities of man *and* further the administration of true justice as an offering to God—a method which can do so patently, palpably and persistently—needs no further justification. Having an appellate system in place may lead to the realization of these ends.

But Is It Really Presbyterian?

Yes, it is. The details of the system are subordinate to its ends. On this view, church "courts," as such, are desirable only insofar as they tend to decrease the effects of sin in juridical administration *and* improve the likelihood of rendering judgments pleasing to

God. System particulars must not be granted a higher berth than the substance they are generated to obtain.

I urge upon you a consideration of our method: We have flatly rejected gratuitous and self-serving interpretations of Acts 15, virtually the only passage appealed to by denominational Presbyterians to justify their "court as church" systems. But we have not, for that, lost a single element of a truly Presbyterian church government. Thomas Witherow wrote what is for many the finest concise defense of Presbyterian polity extant: *The Apostolic Church: Which Is It?* Mr. Witherow wrote therein: "Let there be only one assembly of elders to which a congregation can submit an appeal, and the apostolic principle is preserved. . . . (The) subordination of church courts [*i.e.*, several levels], which some injudicious friends of Presbyterianism speak of as being a main feature of the system, is a mere accidental arrangement . . . by no means essential to the existence of the system." Messiah's Congregation is a Reformed, indeed a Presbyterian church. It is *not*, in a fair use of the word, an "Independent" church, our membership in the Alliance of Reformed Churches quite aside.

The Biblically unwarranted demand for an explicit and detailed church order has, in not a few instances, given birth to a virulent Pharisaism and bred a gaggle of unctuous Pecksniffians sitting in judgment upon their brothers, contrary to James' warning in 4:12. For our part, we long to see church government regarded as an "in-order-to" matter, a means by which God's love is communicated and his law administered; the form should not be made an article of faith. Such rethinking places Reformed polity on a surer footing. It encourages us to think covenantally rather than provincially. Rather than despising those who differ with us on the matter of church government, we should feel free to argue with them on the basis of general conformity to the Scriptural model and real-life expediency in serving the interests of Christ and his people. For is that not what ought to *truly* set apart Reformed church government from others?

Such an emphasis happily places us in the company of the great A. A. Hodge, who said, "The permanent results of biblical interpretation unite with the history of Christ's providential and gracious guidance of the churches in proving that He never intended to impose upon the church as a whole any particular form of organization. Neither He nor His apostles ever went beyond the suggestion of general principles and actual inauguration of a few rudimentary forms."

Remember the synagogue? Solid core, otherwise flexible. Let's show our strength through our forbearance. Come on, people now, smile on your brother.

We quoted one letter very critical of our series on church government. You should know, however, that the responses in general have been overwhelmingly positive. We are grateful for the encouragement (and the corrections), and pray that this last piece will help to clarify matters which, in one or two instances only, led to acrimonious replies.

Steve Schlissel has been pastor of Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He serves as the Overseer of Urban Nations (a mission to the world in a single city), and is the Director of Meantime Ministries (an outreach to women who were sexually abused as children). Steve lives with his wife of 23 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

One of the things we are proud of is the many varied activities of our associates. Some of them are publishing important newsletters, and we take this opportunity to tell you of them.

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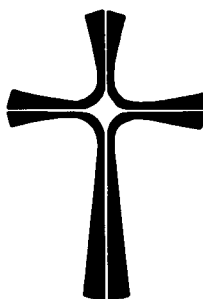
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