


CHALCEDON

No. 397, AUGUST 1998

Report

The
Authority
of Old
Testament

LAW



R. J. Rushdoony

On the Legacy of Marcion

Andrew Sandlin

On the Old Testament
as a New Covenant Era

Brian Abshire

On the Authority of the
Old Testament in the Church

Michael Foulner

On the Free Kirk's Attack on Biblical Law

Steve Schlissel

On All I Ever Wanted to Know
I Learned from the Old Testament

Plus much, much more . . .

Chalcedon Vision Statement

Chalcedon labors to articulate in the clearest possible terms a distinctly Christian and explicitly Biblical solution to the prevalent evils of the modern world. Our objective is nothing short of setting forth the vision and program for rebuilding the theological fortifications of Christian civilization. These fortifications have been eroded by the forces of humanism and secularism over the past three centuries. We are not committed, though, merely to reproducing a glorious Christian past. We work to press the claims of historic Christianity as the Biblical pattern of life everywhere. We work for godly cultural change across the entire spectrum of life. We strive to accomplish this objective by two principal methods.

First, Chalcedon is committed to recovering the intellectual foundations of Christian civilization. We do this in two main ways. Negatively, we expose the bankruptcy of all non-Christian (and alleged but compromising Christian) systems of thought and practice. Positively, we propose an explicitly Biblical system of thought and action as the exclusive basis for civilization. Only by restoring the Christian Faith and Biblical law as the standard of all of life can Christians hope to re-establish Christian civilization.

Second, Chalcedon is dedicated to providing the tools for rebuilding this Christian civilization. We work to assist individuals, families, and institutions by offering explicitly Biblical alternatives to anti-Christian ideas and practices. In this way we guide Christians in the task of governing their own spheres of life in terms of the entire Bible: in family, church, school, vocation, arts, economics, business, media, the state, and all other areas of modern life.

We believe that the source of godly change is regeneration by the Holy Spirit, not revolution by the violence of man. As God regenerates more and more individuals, and as they reorient their lives and areas of personal influence to the teachings of the Bible, He employs them to advance His kingdom and establish Christian civilization. We believe that God's law is the divine pattern of sanctification in every area of life, but it is not the means of justification; man is saved by grace, not by law. The role of every earthly government—including family government, church government, school government, vocational government, and civil government—is to submit to Biblical law. No government in any form can make men Christians or truly obedient; this is the work of God's sovereign grace. Much less should civil government try to impose Biblical law on an unbelieving society. Biblical law cannot be imposed; it must be embraced.

A guiding principle of Chalcedon, in fact, is its devotion to maximum individual freedom under God's law. Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition of Jesus Christ as God of very God and Man of very man, a formula directly challenging every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; only Christ may announce that "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Historically, therefore, the Chalcedonian creed is the foundation of Western liberty, setting limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of all human freedom (Galatians 5:1). Consequently, we oppose top-heavy, authoritarian systems of government which are, by definition, non-Christian. We advocate instead a series of independent but cooperative institutions and a highly decentralized social order.

Chalcedon is an educational institution. It supports the efforts of Christians and Christian organizations to implement the vision of Christian civilization. Though unapologetically Reformed, Chalcedon supports the kingdom work of all orthodox denominations and churches. Chalcedon is an independent Christian foundation governed by a board of trustees, Christian men in accord with Chalcedon's vision statement. The foundation is not subordinate to the authority of any particular denomination or ecclesiastical body.

CHALCEDON *Report*

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

Contents:

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD	2	
<i>The Power of Heresy</i> , by Rev. R. J. Rushdoony		
EDITORIALS	3	
<i>The Authority of the Old Testament</i>		
<i>The Unity of God's Covenantal Plan: A Dissertation Review</i>		7
by Rev. Andrew Sandlin		
COUNTER-CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY	9	
<i>The Role of the Old Testament in the Church</i>		
by Rev. Brian M. Abshire		
METHODS ARE PRIMARY	12	
<i>It's Bad for the Birds and Worse For Your Children!</i>		
by Rev. Ellsworth McIntyre		
MODERN ISSUES IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE	14	
<i>The Authority of the Old Testament in the State</i> , by Rev. William Einwechter		
<i>The Free Kirk of Scotland Against Theonomy</i> , by Martin A. Foulner		18
<i>Urban Nations Update: Equality—Myth and Reality</i>		
by Steve M. Schlissel		21
<i>Answering Questions About Christian Reconstruction and The Association of Free Reformed Churches</i>		
by Jeffrey A. Ziegler		23
POSITION PAPER NO. 227		
<i>Dethroning God</i> , by R. J. Rushdoony		26
RANDOM NOTES, 81	27	
by R. J. Rushdoony		
MY BACK PAGES		
<i>All I Really Need To Know I Learned in the Old Testament (Part 1)</i>		
by Steve M. Schlissel		28

Chalcedon Scholars:

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

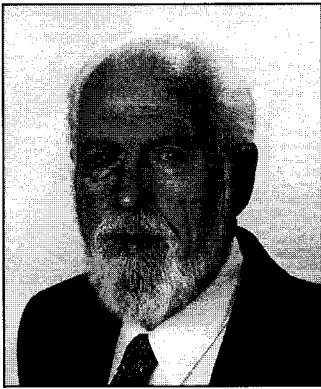
Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon.

Rev. Andrew Sandlin is executive director of Chalcedon, editor-in-chief of the *Chalcedon Report* and the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, and president of the National Reform Association.

Rev. Brian M. Abshire is the pastor of Reformed Heritage Church, Modesto, California; a Chalcedon board member; and Chalcedon's conference director. He can be reached at 209-544-1572 or Abshire@thevision.net.

The Power of Heresy

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



The power of heresy and false belief seems at times to outweigh that of the greatest men of God. Compare the power in the twentieth century of Karl Barth as against Cornelius Van Til. Fallen men, and too many are in the church, find it easier to affirm the church than Jesus Christ, God the Son.

An example of the power of heresy is clearly seen in Marcion, who founded the Marcionite movement near the middle of the second century, A. D. His father was a bishop, but Marcion was very early expelled from the church and refused re-admission by his father. There are uncertainties as to some of Marcion's beliefs, but one thing is clear: he held that there were three first principles, in effect, three gods. The world of matter, ruled by law, was the work of one god, and this material realm was the world of evil.

Because Marcionite thinking now rules in too many circles, modernist, "orthodox," and "fundamentalist," this heresy must be a major concern to all of us.

The good god was the author of grace and of charity and is the father of Jesus Christ. This view led at once to dispensationalism. It separated Jesus from the old god to make him a product of the new god and age. In time, third-age thinking developed.

The Jews were the chosen people of the old god, the Christians *a la* Marcion, of the new. The law being nullified, so too were the creation ordinances and categories, and women were given status in the church which the orthodox held to be non-Biblical.

The Bible, in the early years of the church, included Old and New Testaments as one undivided book. Marcion's division led to a separation into Old and New Testaments, while retaining the format of a single volume, a compromise.

Marcion's thinking was at times close to that of Mani and Manicheanism, *i. e.*, a belief in two gods, one evil, one good, both of equal power and ultimacy.

Much of twentieth-century evangelicalism, with its reduction of God to love, its hostility to God's law, and its tendency, like Marcion, to limit the valid points of the Old Testament to prophecy, reveals that too many "Bible-believing" churches resemble Marcionite chapels more than anything else.

Another great evil of Marcionite thinking has been its depreciation of creationism. Salvation is stressed to the point of making God as Creator almost irrelevant. In the world of Marcion, the creation of the physical universe did not compare with its redemption, whereas for orthodoxy the two doctrines are inseparable, and only the Creator can regenerate.

Again, for Marcion the law and the gospel were irreconcilable, whereas for the orthodox salvation means, first, the satisfaction of the law by obedience, and, second, sanctification by faithfulness to God's law-word. Where orthodoxy sees a total unity between Old and New Testaments, and between the law and the gospel, Marcionite thinking sees an irrevocable division.

The question then arises, why be good if the law is bad? Not surprisingly, very early charges of immorality were raised against the Marcionites, which scholars since have held to be invalid. We have no way of knowing whether the charges were valid or not, but we do know that, logically, immoralism had been vindicated. We also know that, in some church circles where Marcionite thinking prevails, so too in time does immorality.

Because Marcionite thinking now rules in too many circles, modernist, "orthodox," and "fundamentalist," this heresy must be a major concern to all of us. It eliminates as invalid a vast portion of the Bible, the law; it separates law from grace, and love from justice. Can we be loving if we deny justice to men, or do we show grace if we allow evil to prevail? Do we not then reduce the Faith to sentimentalism and a whitewash of sin rather than man's removal by atonement? Is it any wonder that atonement is becoming a fuzzy doctrine to many when law and restitution are denied? Are we Christians or Marcionites?

The Authority of the Old Testament

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



It was Melito, Bishop of Sardis, who sometime before A. D. 180 first designated the Hebrew canon the “Old Testament,”¹ just as the heretical Alexandrian father Origen first labeled the Greek canon the “New Testament.”² Each of these designations reflected a particular theological motivation not expressed

or even implied in the Scriptures themselves. To mention this is not to suggest the church overturn approximately seventeen centuries of Christian usage by dismissing the time-honored canonical designations and adopting new ones, or to imply that these designations are mistaken. Rather, we may wish to consider how they may lead us to approach and interpret the Holy Scripture incorrectly.

For one thing, since in the vast majority of cases the expression translated “testament” in the New Testament simply means “covenant,”³ the designation “Old Testament” or “New Testament” actually denotes old covenant and new covenant. But why would we want to refer to the Hebrew canon as the old covenant? No doubt because of a certain interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3, Galatians 3-4 and the book of Hebrews: that the Old Testament era represents the old, and therefore inferior and perhaps even sinful, covenant, while the New Testament era constitutes an intensified operation of the Holy Spirit, a more liberated or liberating gospel, and a relatively higher standard of religious life and experience. This interpretation, though widely held, is incorrect. The old covenant is not a particular historical epoch any more than the new covenant is. Each of these covenants represents particular subjective states of religious individuals enrolled among the visible people of God. The old covenant, then, does not refer to

the Old Testament era, but to particular individuals in either the Old Testament or New Testament era—or, for that matter, our own.⁴ The same is true of the new covenant. It refers to God’s gracious, intimate relation with his elect whom he has regenerated by his Spirit, whose sins he has forgiven, and whom he has caused to walk in his law (*Heb. 8:8-13*). Of course, this new covenant was no less operative in the Old Testament era. For this reason, we observe in Hebrews that the faithful new covenant saints in the Old Testament are held up as examples for the members of the visible New Testament church in jeopardy of falling into the old covenant—unbelief, formalism, works-righteousness, and so forth, like the majority of Old Testament Israel’s wilderness church (*Heb. 11; cf. 3-4*). The visible church is ever in danger of falling into the trap of sinful, and eventually, old covenant, religion.

The Biblical alternative is the new covenant religion revealed in the Bible in both Old and New Testaments, which set forth particular examples of both forms of religion. When we resist the temptation to approach what we have come to call the Old Testament as either theologically, ethically, or experientially inferior revelation, or worse yet, as describing a relatively inferior form of religion, we clear the path to an appreciation for and a joyous recognition of the unity of the Bible and, more importantly, the authority of the Old Testament itself.⁵

No “New Testament Christianity”

Aside from potentially misleading designations “Old” and “New” Testaments, however, the modern church is readily lured into maintaining erroneous views of the Old Testament because it does not think clearly about the historical context of Biblical authority. A prime example: Christians today frequently refer to “New Testament Christianity” or “New Testament Christians” or starting a “New Testament church”; yet no Christian actually living in the era covered by the writings of the New Testament would have thought in such categories. The Christians

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, 1385 Roaring Camp Drive, Murphys, CA 95247. Laser-print hard copy and electronic disk submissions firmly encouraged. All submissions subject to editorial revision. Editor’s e-mail: chalced@goldrush.com. 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. ©1998 Chalcedon. All rights reserved. Permission to reprint granted on written request only. Editorial Board: Dr. R. J. Rushdoony, Chairman of the Board and Publisher; Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony, President; Rev. Andrew Sandlin, Executive Director and Editor; Walter Lindsay, Assistant Editor; Brian Abshire, Conference Director; Susan Burns, Managing Editor and Administrative Assistant. Circulation: Chalcedon, P. O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251. Telephone Circulation (8 a.m.-4 p.m., Pacific) (209)736-4365 or Fax (209)736-0536; e-mail: chaloff@goldrush.com; <http://www.chalcedon.edu>; Circulation: Rebecca Rouse. Printing: W. W. Hobbs Printing, Ltd.

living in Christ's lifetime and the apostolic era simply perceived the coming of the Messiah and the religion and teachings he espoused as the evident fulfillment and natural culmination of what the saints in the pre-incarnational era had anticipated and what, in fact, the Hebrew Scriptures had taught all along (*e. g., Mt. 2:23; Lk. 2:25-32; 24:13-35; Ac. 7:2-53; 13:16-43; 24:14; Rom. 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 4:21-31; Eph. 2:20; cf. Lk. 4:21; Jn. 5:39-47*).

Another angle from which to approach this issue is to recognize that *the Old Testament is the charter book of the New Testament church*. The only objective, propositional revelation which the church of that era could consult was the Old Testament. Of course, that church also had Christ's words in memory (*Ac. 20:35*), and the apostles and prophets were granted supernatural insight (*Jn. 16:13*). But these sources of information were not understood to be anything other than the natural culmination of what the Old Testament had taught and predicted. The inspired words and writings of the apostolic era which eventually comprised the New Testament canon were rightly considered the capstone of the revelational structure of the Hebrew Scriptures. For instance, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is often rightly suggested as the Bible's leading defense of its own divine inspiration; but it discloses another vital point as well: the inspired Scriptures that Timothy knew from a child were frankly the Hebrew Scriptures; none (or few) of the apostolic writings were yet available. Thus, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 reveals not only the fact of the divine inspiration of the Hebrew Scriptures, *but also the fundamental authority of the Hebrew Scriptures in the New Testament era*.

When the New Testament states that the law and the prophets were until John, but that since then the kingdom of God has been preached (*Lk. 16:16*), it means that Christ's coming and its herald by John the Baptist signaled the culmination and fulfillment of all that the Hebrew Scriptures had pledged (*Jn. 1:45*). John's ministry or Christ's incarnation did not signal a heightened theological understanding or religious experience or "new dispensation" or new historical epoch. The pre-incarnational saints like Simeon and Anna, or for that matter, Abraham, Noah, Enoch, Moses, David, Isaiah, and so forth, were not one whit religiously inferior to the early apostles and prophets, or to certain Christians today. Abraham saw Jesus Christ's day and was glad (*Jn. 8:56*); Moses spoke with God face to face (*Dt. 34:10*); Enoch's fellowship with God was so intimate that he was translated to Heaven before death (*Gen. 5:24*); the gospel was preached to the Old Testament individuals no less than to the New Testament individuals (*Heb. 4:2*); and godly Old Testament saints are held up as examples to wavering New Testament saints (*Heb. 11*). *These sound suspiciously unlike descriptions of saints experiencing a relatively inferior religion*. We post-incarnational saints rejoice in the historically completed atonement of Christ and his present session at the right hand of the Father;

but, as Dabney observes, it is a mistake to limit the efficacy of Christ's atonement to post-incarnational Christians:

With reference to the state of the Old Testament saints in the other world we discard to whole fable ... [of] the postponement of the application of redemption to them till Christ's death. Christ's suretyship is such that His undertaking the believer's work, releases the believer as soon as the condition is fulfilled.... Christ being an immutable, almighty and faithful surety, when He undertook to make satisfaction to the law [from eternity], it was, in the eye of that God to whom a thousand years are but as one day, as good as done.⁶

Dabney insightfully observes that the religion of the Old Testament era is not substantively different from the religion of the New Testament era;⁷ the godly religion of the Old Testament era is in substance just what it is in the New Testament era and since.

The Old Testament as a Concrete Jewish-Christian Book

A final misunderstanding of the nature of the Old Testament which threatens Biblical authority emerged quite early in the church. It is not so simple as the ones just described, nor as easily understood. It pertains to a method of interpreting the Old Testament that began early in the history of the patristic church. The heretic Marcion had lopped off the entire Old Testament and significant portions of the New Testament under the guise of purging alien elements from the Holy Scriptures;⁸ he was what we today might call a consistent dispensationalist. He was convinced that the Old Testament was a Jewish and not a Christian book, and that it revealed a god different from the God of the New Testament. The church recognized and excoriated this obvious heresy, and in fact, hammered out the orthodox canon as a result of it.⁹ To a certain degree, however, the early Fathers, despite their deep perceptiveness on a number of issues, were confident that the only way to posit the Old Testament as a Christian rather than a Jewish book was to interpret it highly symbolically¹⁰ (either allegorically or typologically) and adopted, in some cases, a ringing anti-Semitic polemic.¹¹

For the patristic church, the key was to retain the authority of the Old Testament as a Christian book in the face of unbelieving Jews who held that it supported their own traditional religion rather than that preached by Jesus and the apostles (*e. g., Ac. 18:13; 21:28*). The post-New Testament Christians maintained continuity with the Old Testament by interpreting it Christologically. In this they were only following the example of Christ and the apostles and New Testament writers themselves (*e. g., Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:39; Ac. 2:22-36; 1 Cor. 15:1-4*). They posited discontinuity with the Old Testament by asserting that the church of Jesus Christ

had superseded Old Testament Israel as the covenant people of God.¹² This too was just what the New Testament had taught (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:25; Gal. 3:7, 29; Gal. 6:15-16*). One unwarranted effect of both of these assumptions, however, was that it was often thought necessary to find some deeper meaning in the Old Testament than what it straightforwardly expressed, because on the surface it is an incontestably Jewish book, and the majority of the Jews in Jesus' earthly ministry had turned their back on the Messiah to whom the Old Testament abundantly testified. *This led to the wholly erroneous assumption that to interpret the Old Testament Christologically one must interpret it symbolically.*¹³ The Fathers did not seem to realize that a Christological interpretation is, in large measure, entirely compatible with a concrete, non-symbolic interpretation.¹⁴ Christ himself declared that the Old Testament Scriptures testified of him (*Jn. 5:39*); and the New Testament writers interpret the Old Testament as extensively prophesying of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Yet the New Testament equally upholds the concrete, abiding authority of the Old Testament without dissolving it into a maze of unintelligible Christological symbols (*1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18*).¹⁵ Christ upheld every stroke of Old Testament law (*Mt. 5:17-19*); John defines sin as law-breaking (*1 Jn. 3:4*); St. Paul asserts the authority of Old Testament case law (*1 Tim. 5:18*); and St. James reminds his readers that they are required to uphold every aspect of God's (Old Testament) commandments (*Jas. 2:9-10*). The Old Testament, like the New Testament, is intensely Christological revelation and *therefore* manifests the abiding authoritative word of Jesus Christ. In short, the Old Testament is not a revelation merely of Christ's ministry; it is equally a revelation of his *will*. To do away with the binding ethical authority of the concrete Old Testament law by interpreting it in a symbolically Christological way is to dishonor Christ.

The Old Testament (like the New) is a Jewish-Christian (in other words, a *Christian*) revelation. It presents a concrete historical message, sometimes couched in tropes. When it reveals the facts of the creation of the universe (*Gen. 1-2*), or the laws of human life (*e. g., Ex. 20-23*), or the prophecies of the coming Messiah (*Ps. 22:1-2; 110; Is. 53; 61:1-3; 65:8-9*), it presents the authoritative word of God couched in the words of men. It—like Christ himself—is both eternal and historical. It communicates not in “elite-speak” but, for the most part, in common, historical language and occasional tropes. It is not somehow less ethical because it is Christological nor less Christian because it is Semitic nor less authoritative because it is historical.

The Basis of Old Testament Authority

The authority of the Old Testament rests fundamentally on its inclusion in the canon of Holy Scripture itself.¹⁶ In short, the Old Testament is authoritative because it is Holy Scripture; it is not

authoritative fundamentally because of its content, but because of its source (God himself). Surely, its source is inextricably woven into its content; it is known to be authoritative, however, because it is the word of God; it is not the word of God because of its content.¹⁷ This is Paul's plain statement in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where he describes all Scripture as God-breathed and *therefore* profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. The Holy Scriptures, including the Old Testament, confront us as a divinely authoritative command-word; they are authoritative not primarily because of their content, but because of their Author.

No Christian in the “New Testament church” would ever have dreamed of arguing that Jesus Christ, or Paul, or the other apostles, or their teachings had *superseded* the teaching of the Old Testament. To the contrary, the New Testament preachers and writers were intent to assure their listeners of the harmony of their teaching with that of the Old Testament. New Testament revelation, as noted above, was considered the culmination of Old Testament revelation, the capstone of God's revelational superstructure.

Furthermore, the Bible itself confirms the authority of the Old Testament.¹⁸ The Old Testament prophets in prosecuting covenant lawsuits against an apostate Israel (as well as heathen Gentiles) verify the authority of Mosaic revelation (*e. g., Is. 24:1-6; Jer. 11:1-17; Ez. 16:6-43*). Jesus asserts that heaven and earth will pass away before all of the Old Testament is fulfilled, and that his intention is not to deviate one stroke from Old Testament law (*Mt. 5:17-19*). St. Paul describes the Old Testament law as “holy, just and good” (*Rom. 7:12*) and declares that his ministry is designed to “establish the law” (*Rom. 3:31*). The same is true of other New Testament writers (*Jas. 2:9-10; 1 Jn. 3:4*).

The unquestioned authority of the Old Testament is likewise attested by the very manner in which the New Testament speakers and writers quote the Old Testament. Roger Nicole draws attention to a fact whose significance is not often sufficiently recognized:

In their formulas of quotation the New Testament writers give expression to their conviction as to the eternal contemporaneity of Scripture. This is manifest in particular in the many (41) instances where the introductory verb is in the present: “He says,” and not “he said.” This is reinforced by the use of the pronouns “we,” “you,” in connection with ancient sayings: “That which was spoken unto you by God” (*Matt. 22:31*); “The Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us” (*Heb. 2:5*; cf. also *Matt. 15:7; Mark 7:6; 12:19; Acts 4:11; 13:47; Heb. 12:5*).¹⁹

The fact that the New Testament sees the Old Testament chiefly as a contemporaneous word for New Testament (and, by clear implication, modern) times diminishes the force of argument for an unbridled use of

the so-called grammatical-historical method of interpretation, crystallized in the popular evangelical maxim, "A text cannot mean what it never meant." This is amplified as, "[T]he true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean when it was first spoken."²⁰ While it is quite true that "the true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean," its meaning is often not tied—and certainly not tied preeminently—to its meaning "when it was first spoken." Above it was asserted forcefully that the word of God is a concrete, historic word, but to recognize this fundamental fact is not to assume that the meaning is limited to a particular historical context. To argue that the meaning of the Old Testament derives wholly from "when it was first spoken" is to contradict a great deal of New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament. Psalm 110 in its immediate historical context, for example, does not convey the meaning given it in Ac. 2, 1 Cor. 15, and Heb. 1.²¹ The point is not that the historical denotation is fictitious or misleading—it certainly is not—but that in many cases the meaning of the verse must be supplied by the Bible itself, not by certain assumptions about its historicity. When we operate with this interpretive approach, we learn that the New Testament sees the Old Testament principally as a contemporaneous word designed by its very inclusion in the canon (and not simply by "application"²²) to transcend its initial historical context. This is "canonical interpretation,"²³ and it powerfully underscores the authority of the Old Testament. It implies the authority of the New Testament too, for if the latter interprets the Old Testament as a contemporaneous word, we may presume that this is how the New Testament itself should be interpreted. The Bible is a "command word"²⁴ originating in eternity (Ps. 119:89), mediated in history (2 Pet. 1:20-21), and calculated to confront man directly in his own historical situation in every age. Its meaning is not circumscribed by its original historical appearance, the unbelieving presuppositions of the last 200 years notwithstanding.²⁵

Conclusion

The Bible conceives of itself as a unified revelation and therefore we would do well to excise the blank page between Malachi 4:6 and Matthew 1:1 as indicative of our recognition that the Bible is a single revelational unit.²⁶ It is not, as "evangelical liberal" Clark Pinnock describes it, a "bipartite" book.²⁷ It is a single revelational unit designed to be *read* and *interpreted* as a single revelational unit. The Old Testament was the charter revelation of the New Testament church; and that revelation, along with the divinely inspired capstone of New Testament Scripture, constitutes the revelational authority of the church—and of mankind in its totality—today.

-
- ¹ Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, 1992), 29, 65-66.
 - ² Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1978), 231-232.
 - ³ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, in Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville, 1985), 2:135.
 - ⁴ Robert S. Rayburn, "The Old and New Covenants in the New Testament," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1978.
 - ⁵ If, however, "Old Testament" as the designation of the Hebrew Scriptures is meant to denote that, during the historical epoch which it comprehends, the form of religion practiced was predominantly "old" (i.e., sinful and unbelieving), while "New Testament" is meant to denote that during the historical era of the incarnational and apostolic era the form of religion practiced was more consistently "new" (faith- and obedience-based), these designations are entirely accurate and, indeed, coincide quite well with the postmillennial vision.
 - ⁶ Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids [1878], 1972), 462.
 - ⁷ *ibid.*, 458-460.
 - ⁸ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago, 1971), 71-81.
 - ⁹ *ibid.*, 79-81.
 - ¹⁰ *ibid.*, 81.
 - ¹¹ Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews* (Louisville, KY, 1991). It is true that a great number of Jews were among the most vicious enemies of early Christianity (*Rom. 11:28*), but this fact was the result of their serious misinterpretation of the Old Testament and abounding unbelief, not their Jewishness as such (*Rom. 9:30-10:3*). The teaching of the New Testament, and particularly of one of the greatest Jews of history, the Apostle Paul, was that God had temporarily suspended his covenant dealings with ethnic Israel but would one day resume those dealings in a glorious revival (*Rom. 11*) and that, in the meantime, he would add to the faithful Jewish remnant a great number of believing Gentiles who, with believing Jews, would constitute the true Israel (*Rom. 2:24-29; 9:7-8, 24-29; Gal. 6:15-16*). Please note: this was not a reduction of national Israel, but an expansion of covenant Israel to include all believers of whatever race. The Old Testament is frankly a predominantly Jewish book, and it is not less Christian just because it is Jewish. See John Murray, *Epistle to the Romans*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1959, 1965), 2:91-96.
 - ¹² Charles D. Provan, *The Church is Israel Now* (Vallecito, CA, 1987).
 - ¹³ Rowan A. Greer, "The Christian Bible and Its Interpretation," in James L. Kugel and Rowan A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia, 1986), 126-145.
 - ¹⁴ R. P. C. Hanson, "Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church," in eds., P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (Cambridge, 1970), 1:422-426.
 - ¹⁵ Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1984 edition).
 - ¹⁶ Eugene Osterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, 1971), 86. This differentiates the Reformed from the Lutheran view. The latter sees the entire Bible as validated primarily on the grounds that it testifies to Christ, not that it is in fact the word of God, a fact which derives from its Christocentricity. See Herman Sasse, *Scripture and the Church* (St. Louis, 1995), 162-165.

¹⁷Contrary to the view of evangelicals like Bernard Ramm, "Is 'Scripture Alone' the Essence of Christianity?" in ed., Jack Rogers, *Biblical Authority* (Waco, TX, 1977), 113-114.

¹⁸John M. Frame, "Scripture Speaks for Itself," in ed., John Warwick Montgomery, *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis, 1974), 178-200.

¹⁹Roger Nicole, "The New Testament Use of the Old Testament," in ed., Carl F. H. Henry, *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, 1958), 140.

²⁰Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, 1982), 26-27.

²¹Crawford Howell Toy, *Quotations in the New Testament* (New York, 1884), 61-64. Cf. Heinrici's comment: "[T]he use of the Old Testament in the New can not [sic] be regarded as exact exegesis, it is rather instruction in regard to the inner relation of the words of Scripture to the facts which establish the Christian faith (cf. Luke xxiv. 25-27; I Cor. x. 11)," G. Heinrici, "Exegesis or Hermeneutics," in ed., Samuel Macauley Jackson, *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of*

Religious Knowledge (New York and London, 1909), 4:244.

²²John Frame observes that there can be no strict separation of meaning from application, in *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, 1987), 97-98 and *passim*. To uncover the meaning of Scripture is to discover how it should be applied. If the source of the knowledge of the application of Scripture is something besides Scripture we have abandoned *sola scriptura*.

²³Joseph Braswell, "Interpreting Prophecy: The Canonical Principle," *Chalcedon Report*, July, 1997, 26-28.

²⁴Rousas John Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology* (Vallecito, CA, 1994), 1:23-26.

²⁵Alan Richardson, "The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship and Recent Discussion of the Authority of the Bible," in Ackroyd and Evans, 3:295-305.

²⁶Steve Schlissel, Reformed pastor and Chalcedon columnist, has actually done this in public preaching.

²⁷Clark Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco, 1984), 62; see also 67.

The Unity of God's Covenantal Plan: A Dissertation Review By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

Rarely has Chalcedon published reviews of academic dissertations or theses, not even in the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, our occasional scholarly organ. But Robert S. Rayburn's "The Contrast Between the Old and New covenants in the New Testament" (doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1978) warrants just such attention.

Rayburn's principal thesis is that, contrary to certain sectors of traditional understanding, the old and new covenants do not describe religio-historical ethics or eras, but the subjective conditions of individuals since the fall of man. It has been assumed in some quarters, for example, that the old covenant refers to the dispensational period comprehending the Old Testament, or at least the Mosaic economy, while the new covenant refers to that heightened religious life and condition ushered in by the redemptive work of Christ and described in the New Testament. In its cruder forms, this notion reduces to old covenant = Old Testament, new covenant = New Testament. It is this thesis which Rayburn's dissertation effectively confutes.

After surveying the covenant idea as it appears in the Old Testament, in Judaism, and in the New Testament, Rayburn addresses the three chief passages in the New Testament in which the old and new covenants are contrasted: Galatians 3-4, 2 Corinthians 3: 6-18, and the book of Hebrews (specifically 8:6ff., 9:15f., 12:15f.). While these three principal passages manifest minor variations, Rayburn asserts they are variations on the same

theme: the Biblical writers' dissent from and assault on a Judaistic misunderstanding of the Old Testament and its religion. Rayburn observes that, far from positing the relative inferiority of Old Testament religion—including Old Testament law—properly understood, St. Paul and the author of Hebrews condemn the Judaizing misunderstanding and misuse of Old Testament religion.

This conclusion (buttressed by careful, extensive exegesis) leads to several conclusions highlighting the unity of Biblical revelation.

First, because the old covenant and new covenant are subjective conditions rather than objective religio-historical eras, we can expect to find new covenant religion practiced in the Old Testament historical era, and old covenant religion practiced in the New Testament era. Indeed, as Rayburn notes, the guiding concern of the writer of Hebrews is to warn his hearers of falling into just such old covenant religion which he identifies as obsession with religious externals to the neglect of Christ, with unbelief, and with apostasy. Rather, Hebrews holds up as examples for New Testament Christians the numerous new covenant individuals in the Old Testament (*Heb. 11*).

Second, the old and new covenants represent an absolute, and not relative, contrast; they are antithetical to one another. It is often simply presumed that Galatians 3-4 and especially 3:21-4:11 describe the contrast between pre-incarnation, Old Testament religion and post-incarnation, New Testament religion; but Rayburn notes,

quite correctly, that this simply cannot be the case. In 3:24, 4:3, and 4:9, the state of childhood or subservience to the law is described as one of condemnation, bondage, and estrangement from God—this can hardly describe the godly saints of the Old Testament era! By no means is St. Paul indicting the law in this context, or even implying its inferiority in contrast with Christ's redemptive work. Rather, the Apostle has in view the law's enslaving function among those filled with unbelief and estranged from Jesus Christ. The variable is in man, not in the law.

Third, Christ's historical-redemptive work is the hinge on which godly religion in both the Old Testament and New Testament eras turns. The relentless attack by the author of Hebrews, for instance, on the sacrificial and Levitical system practiced in the Old Testament cannot be construed as a debasement of those systems *properly understood*—the external cultus and testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ and his redemptive work. Rather, they are dangerous economies and practices when sequestered from that redemptive work itself, and from a lively, active faith that flows from union with Christ. Likewise, in his treatment of 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 (in what may be the most dazzling interpretive insight in this remarkable work), Rayburn observes that the contrast between the ministries of Moses and Paul which the latter addresses is not that the religious economy that Moses and the Old Testament upheld was somehow different from and inferior to Paul's, but that the ministry of the latter was sovereignly crowned with success—God graciously blessed the gospel preaching of St. Paul in a way he did not graciously bless the gospel preaching of Moses. Note carefully the prediction that when the sovereignly blind Jews turn to the Lord, the veil over their eyes will be taken away—but the object of their investigation which will one day disclose to them the truth of Christianity and the glory therein revealed is found in what Paul calls the "old testament" (2 Cor. 3:14). This of itself puts to lie the notion that either the Mosaic economy or the Mosaic revelation is somehow substantively different from and

inferior to the message of the New Testament, the gospel preached by St. Paul.

Rayburn therefore concludes "that the only interpretation of the two covenants which does not involve a fundamental disruption of the Scripture writer's categories is that which understands the old covenant to be the relationship established by God with an unbelieving people (Israel) and the new covenant to be that relationship with God which is entered into by believers" (p. 228). For this reason, even to this day, unbelievers stand in covenant relationship with God—the old covenant of unbelief, works-righteousness, and Christlessness for which they will be judged unless they repent and turn to Christ.

In addition, Rayburn's thesis unwittingly refutes the popular notion that A. D. 70 constitutes an epochal pivot in God's redemptive plan in that (one hears argued) it signals the definitive destruction of the old covenant historical order. For Rayburn, the old covenant is not an historical order at all, but a subjective condition. The old covenant is destroyed experientially every time a sinner is regenerated. Rayburn asserts that the new covenant is not fully consummated until eternity but that certain of its benefits are experienced in the present historical order—in both Old and New Testament eras.

This dissertation presents potent evidence of the fundamental unity not merely of the Biblical revelation, but of God's covenantal and soteriological plan through the ages. It builds effectively on R. L. Dabney's work, who, in explaining the New Testament writers' seeming attacks in the reading of the Old Testament religion and the law, notes, "[W]e must always remember that the Apostles are using, to a certain extent, an argumentum ad hominem: they are speaking of the Mosaic institutions under the Jewish view of them. They are treating of that side or aspect, which alone the perverse Jew retained of them. Here is the key" (R. L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids, 1878, 1976], 458).

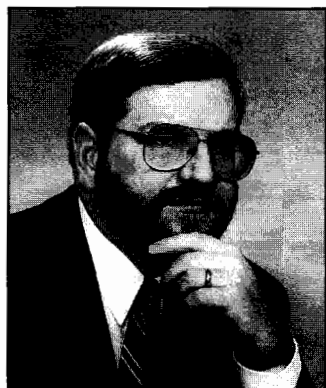
The Contrast Between the Old and New Covenants in the New Testament

Rayburn's extensive building on Dabney's insightful foundation warrants the most apt attention of all students of Holy Scripture. A clean and newly typeset copy of Rayburn's thesis can be obtained for \$25.00 from:

Michael J. Pfefferle
4935 S. SW Dawson Street
Seattle, Washington 98136

The Role of the Old Testament in the Church

By Rev. Brian M. Abshire



As I write this column, I am also celebrating(?) my 44th birthday. Middle age has come with an unexpected vengeance. I still think of myself as fairly young and am constantly shocked by the old man looking back at me out of the mirror. My manly red beard has more than a

few strands of white in it these days, and the bulging muscles of my arms and shoulders that I had in my twenties seem to have all migrated south around my mid-section. Just so I wouldn't miss the significance of the loss of youth, cards and letters have poured in from friends and family commiserating with me for reaching such an advanced age. My wife teases me about the inordinate amount of pink scalp peering through the crown of my head ("My, my, Dear, looking a bit Benedictine these days, are we?"), while my children warn me about not blowing out my birthday candles too hard lest my teeth fall out. Though I am still vigorous enough to chase my wife around the house, when I finally catch her, by mutual agreement we usually decide that a good night's sleep is ample enough reward.

There is a relationship, I think, between our attitudes towards age and our appreciation of the Old Testament. In our youth-oriented culture, age is often associated with obsolescence. That which is new is, by definition, superior. Across the world, the broad evangelical church has largely abandoned the Old Testament, assuming it to be nothing more than the quaint musings of an old man not quite in touch with today's modern world. Consequently, while we may occasionally pay polite attention to his reminiscences, we do not really think he has anything of value to say.

From the start, as the church imbibed deeply from the wells of Greek philosophy, problems developed in both understanding and applying the Old Testament. It has either been spiritualized away, or simply ignored. Old Testament religion is a gutsy, earthy, visceral religion that, quite frankly, offends the sensibilities of Greek-influenced Christianity. As a result, modern Christians are sundered from their past and fail to understand the unity of the Scriptures. New Testament Christianity sits on a pyramid of Old Testament religion. If you remove the foundation,

then the capstone collapses. Without a proper understanding of the role and significance of the Old Testament, the church is susceptible to every kind of error. The apostate, bland, ineffectual, culturally compromised church of today has only to look at its rejection of the Old Testament to discover the source of many of its errors.

From the start, as the church imbibed deeply from the wells of Greek philosophy, problems developed in both understanding and applying the Old Testament.

In Authority (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

When the Apostle Paul wrote to encourage Timothy in his duties, he said that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God." Amazingly, this verse, so often quoted as evidence of the authority of the Bible, is seldom quoted in context. The Scriptures Paul was talking about here was NOT the New Testament (after all, it was in the process of still being written!) but rather what we call the Old Testament. For first-century readers, the Bible WAS the Old Testament, and Paul consistently appeals to it as his source of authority. God had spoken to his church authoritatively and sufficiently through the Old Testament which is sufficient to "make one wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15). Therefore, the Old Testament was to be revered, read, studied and applied. True, Jesus rebuked the traditions of men that had grown up around the Scriptures, but he fully affirmed their authority (Mt. 5:17-19). Granted, the Old Testament spoke in shadows, types and figures and a great part of the New Testament revelation was designed to show the reality that the ancient prophets and writers only glimpsed dimly. But the fact is, one cannot understand New Testament revelation without understanding the Old Testament foundations.

Hence, repeatedly, Paul appeals to the Old Testament to demonstrate the authenticity of his message.

In today's church, the authority of the Old Testament is either ignored or so reinterpreted as to become meaningless. I remember a painful sermon on Elijah and the Shunammite woman who built and furnished him a little room on the top of her house. We listened for a good hour about all the hidden, spiritual meanings behind the furniture (as I recall the bed represented rest in the Lord, the lamp for study, the chair for discipleship, etc). But we never heard about the necessity of hospitality. In other words, the CLEAR message was ignored, and instead we were treated to men's imaginations. The Old Testament is simply not allowed to speak for itself, and therefore the church's foundations are undercut and destroyed.

In Worship: the Regulative Principle

I deeply appreciate our Puritan and Presbyterian ancestors, but they must be understood in their historical context. Coming out of the corrupt church of Rome, they struggled against the apostate, man-made religious practices that, like weeds, had choked true worship out of the church. As a consequence, they sometimes overreacted in their own theology of worship. It's almost as if they said, "If Rome did it, then it MUST be wrong," rather than develop a consistent Biblical view. Hence, while most Christians today take for granted singing hymns with musical accompaniment, the seventeenth century Reformers in Scotland and England rejected this. Strict psalmody with no instruments was the rule. There are still a few brothers today who maintain this position, but in doing so, I fear that they have become operational dispensationalists, demanding a radical break between Old Testament worship and New. Old Testament worship was replete with musical instruments of various kinds all making a joyful noise unto the Lord. I always find it a bit amusing to worship with my exclusive psalmody brethren and, while singing the Psalms with them, watch them pointedly ignore the commands to worship with stringed instrument, flute or lyre! When Scripture enjoins us to clap our hands, or raise them in prayer, most Reformed people wish those verses would ago away. Because, you see, if the charismatics do it, it MUST be wrong! And hence, a full-orbed worship service, demanding all of our strength and heart and soul is often missing because we do not appreciate God's requirements for worship. Those commands cannot possibly be relevant today, because, of course, WE have never done it that way. We ask, "Can any good come out of charismatics?" And we maintain this position even though there is not a shred of New Testament evidence that these practices somehow passed away with the establishment of the New Testament church. A strong argument can be made that many Christians are drawn into the deviant theology of so many charismatic churches simply because that worship is so heartfelt, so vigorous—dare one say, "so BIBLICAL!" We ignore the Old Testament to our peril. As a friend of mine

once noted, many Reformed Christians worship as if they were baptized in pickle juice! It is astounding that the sheer exuberance of so many of the Psalms is hidden by singing them to tunes that deny the very joy the words so powerfully command!

*For first-century readers,
the Bible WAS the Old
Testament, and Paul
consistently appeals to it as
his source of authority.*

In Polity (1 Tim. 3:1 ff.)

As a convinced Presbyterian, I believe that our form of government is the one ordained by God himself. Notice I said the FORM of government, not necessarily all the particulars. God's church is to be ruled by elders. This is very clear from 1 Timothy 3:1ff., 5:14ff., etc. But this method of church government did not just spring full blown from the Apostle Paul. In Acts 15 at the Jerusalem council, the church was already being ruled by the apostles and elders. Where in the New Testament do then we find the specific instructions that this is the right form of government? Simple answer: no where. It just suddenly seems to appear! The reason, of course, is that the church is to be governed exactly the way that Israel was to be governed under Moses—by elders. Elders were to govern their homes, their families, their tribes and ultimately the nation. Elders were to govern the Tabernacle and Temple. Elders governed the local synagogues. But you will not find this explained in the New Testament; it is found only in the Old. Bannerman, the classic Presbyterian apologist for church polity, understood this and based his concepts on their Old Testament origins. One cannot possibly understand, let alone rule, God's church apart from the theological and practical basis laid out in the Old Testament.

A related issue is the procedure used to place elders over a congregation. In this country, Presbyterian elders are always elected by the congregation. But in the two passages that teach about elders, we find that the elders were to be appointed by Timothy and Titus. Think about this for a moment, especially you good Presbyterians. If we base our polity ONLY on the New Testament, guess what—the two relevant Scriptural passages seem, on the surface, to support Episcopacy, rather than historic Presbyterianism! However, if one finds the origins of church government in the Old Testament in the way Israel as to be ruled, Jethro's advice to Moses allows an

“avenue of escape.” The people were to elect their elders. Moses then ORDAINS them to rule over the people. Hence, when the church is being organized, one can assume, because of testamental continuity, that a similar process was followed. When Paul therefore instructs elders to be “appointed,” Timothy and Titus would have followed the same procedure as ancient Israel: they would have asked the congregation to select worthy men, and those men would have been approved, appointed and ordained by the apostolic messengers. This in fact is very similar to the way that modern Presbyterians choose their church officers. Men are elected by the congregation, but ordained by the session or the presbytery.

*Neither the modern church
nor the para-church can
adequately understand or
fulfill the Great
Commission because it
does not acknowledge the
Old Testament background
behind it.*

A subject near and dear to every pastor’s heart is where his paycheck is coming from (and how much is in it!). While Paul says that elders are worthy of a double honor (1 Tim. 5:17) he bases their RIGHT to be paid for their ministry (as opposed to all the other ministries that people do for the church gratis) on the Old Testament law regarding muzzling the ox. Hence the theological basis for paying elders is not out of expediency, and not by direct command (though Jesus did say the “laborer is worthy of his hire”) but rather an obscure Old Testament reference to animal welfare! Look what happens if we ignore the Old Testament basis. Pastors are either starved into submission (people will give money to anything in the church EXCEPT to pay most pastors a living wage) or the pastor becomes a vampire, sucking the life out of the church. There is no balance, because there is no theology of how much is enough. Broad evangelicals do not know the theology and therefore pervert the practice. (How would you like to submit YOUR tax returns to the church so everyone can criticize how you have spent the Lord’s money? You think I am joking?) The point here is that the New Testament, in and of itself, does not and

cannot form the foundation of the doctrine of the church. Without the Old Testament, we are left in a morass of subjective opinion, with no clear basis for developing a Biblical church polity.

In Vision (Mt. 28:19-20)

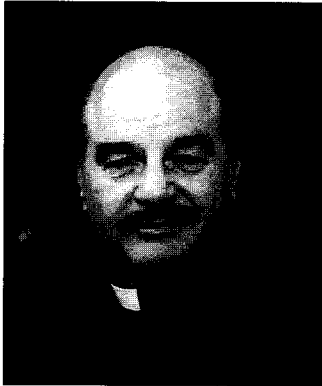
One of the first verses I was required to memorize years ago while involved with a parachurch ministry was the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. Evangelism and discipleship were the life blood of this ministry, and we were all expected to share a “simple” explanation of the gospel; and, when people prayed the prayer with us, we were to “disciple” them by taking them through one of those fill-in-the-blank Bible study booklets. Even with all the deviant theology and practice that this method represents, it is still LIGHT-YEARS ahead of the average broad evangelical church. At least we took these verses seriously and were personally committed to doing something about them. The average broad evangelical is quite happy leaving the Great Commission to the Bible geeks and four-eyed girls with sensible shoes who want to go to the mission field. Neither the modern church nor the para-church can adequately understand or fulfill the Great Commission because it does not acknowledge the Old Testament background behind it. Jesus was not doing something new here. He was not instituting some radically new program, because the Great Commission is simply the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:27 all over again! We are to fill the earth and subdue it, not just through natural generation, but through evangelism. Furthermore, it is not just the odd branch plucked from the fire that is to be evangelized; instead, it is entire nations that are to be disciplined to obey Jesus. In the Great Commission we simply have the final statement on how the original Covenant of Creation is to be fulfilled. It is a resounding postmillennial commission, implicitly assuming that as the church goes forth and depends on the sovereign power of the resurrected and ascended Christ, our enemies will be converted, the nations subdued, and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The church cannot know who she is, where she is going, or even what she is supposed to be until she understands her Old Testament roots.

Without the Old Testament, the church is susceptible to every kind of error and heresy. There is no doubt in my mind, that the current deplorable state of the church is directly attributable to her abandonment of truly Biblical religion.

Hey folks, there are no “New Testament” churches; there are only Biblical ones. And that means understanding and applying what the WHOLE Bible says, not just a few bits here and there.

It's Bad for the Birds and Worse For Your Children!

By Rev. Ellsworth McIntyre



There are signs all over south-west Florida which read "Please don't feed the pelicans!" One reason is that pelicans are magnificent catchers of fish. If fishermen toss them fish, however, the pelicans stop fishing and wait for their meals to be provided in this easier

way. They stand quietly a few yards behind the fishermen, staring with unblinking eyes, looking deceptively, both mournful and comic. It is difficult for a pelican to look too mournful, though, for it is comedic in everything it does.

One wants to laugh while watching the pelicans. They have small, domed heads, huge eyes, 10-inch-long beaks, and a pouch made of great folds of droopy skin. They look something like a modern 13-year-old draped in 30 yards of baggy clothing. Pelicans drop abruptly from the sky with their wings and feet flailing in all directions and smash their 6-foot wingspan into the water with such force that you would think they would break every bone in their body. However, this mirthful, carefree, independent bird is reduced to a pitiful beggar by taking handouts.

Other Bird Brains

We humans should not look down at the comical pelican, for we share their sinful, depraved tendency. Ask yourself, Which do many people admire most—a farmer who works diligently to raise a crop or a gambler who lives by his wits? These opinions reflect original sin. By following this sin nature, many Christians are impoverished. We often refuse to pursue the vocation that God has given to us as our personal road to wealth; instead we want to steal our daily bread by methods that transgress the law of God. We are more intelligent than a bird-brained pelican, so we arrive at our impoverished condition by a more tortured and complex path than the simple-minded bird.

Are We Able to Speak Salvation?

Christians, for example, often believe the modern

heresy, called the "Simple Plan of Salvation," in which the sinner can simply repeat the sinner's prayer to be guaranteed entrance into the kingdom of God. When I was a young lad in the Presbyterian church, we used to sing the hymn, "Pass me not, O gentle Savior, hear my humble cry! While on others thou art calling, do not pass me by." The hymn writer understood that Jesus did not have to save us just because we wanted him to save us. The choice is always his and not ours.

The modern false gospel teaches young lads to fear neglecting to exercise their self-righteous glorious power to presume their way into paradise. So the sinner logically reasons that if we can demand salvation and make Christ his servant, why should he work or live a life of obedience to the Bible? On the other hand, under the true plan of salvation taught in the Bible, our works indicate whether salvation is genuine or just an illusion. Under today's false plan of salvation, works indicate nothing except that "everybody's doing it."

Phony Fish for Phony Christians

Much like the ugly, imbecilic pelican, we stand idle, doing nothing. But we are worse than the pelican, for we have deceived ourselves. We think we have a fish in our pouch. Not just an itty bitty fish, but the only fish we will ever need. Even the pelican knows better than that. Fellow pelicans (I mean, Christians), do you have salvation, or do you just think you do? A real salvation can be tested in the here and now by asking yourself this question, "Do I have the power to keep the commandments better and better?" If you don't, that's no fish. It's just an evil illusion that you call salvation. The pelican would never settle for an imaginary fish or a fish that can be eaten only after death.

Salvation The Beginning—Not the Whole Package

Our marvelous ability to manufacture evil illusions doesn't stop with dreaming up an imaginary salvation after we die. For example, it is necessary to illustrate what I mean by the rest of salvation.

The modern Christian thinks of a fire escape to heaven as the total plan of salvation. In other words, he has to wait until after he dies to be certain the plan works. The old-fashioned Protestant gospel, on the other hand, is tested by asking yourself daily if you are escaping from poverty, sickness, and premature death. We should

also ask, "Are we successful in delivering our children from the pain of this life that comes from being outside the plan of salvation?"

The gospel of the Protestant work ethic made Christians in northern Europe and the United States the wealthiest in the history of the world. The Bible's genuine plan of salvation is comprehensive. A profession of faith is the beginning of our salvation—not the end. The goal is to have an abundant life and an easy yoke here and now so that we have reason to hope that our entrance into heaven is assured. It is a path that grows brighter and brighter so that we here on earth will not be disappointed when we die. Throughout his writings, R. J. Rushdoony talks about socialism as presenting a false plan of salvation. When I first read that, I was puzzled like others who had not read Rushdoony. Until I did, I looked on salvation as something to be enjoyed only in heaven and that it had no relationship to making one's life on earth more productive, fruitful, and happy on earth.

A Hundredfold Now in This Time!

One day while researching Matthew 6:33, I realized that the verse, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" is a promise of an abundant life here on earth. Of course, there are other verses with a similar message that I had not previously understood before, such as 3 John, verse 2, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." Everywhere I looked in the Scriptures after that day, my eyes were opened.

I saw the apostle Paul laboring for a crown (read reward) and the Lord Jesus Christ promising his followers "a hundredfold in this life" (*Mk. 10:30*). Scholars tell us that the hundredfold means to the hundredth power in this time or that wealth promised "now in this time" to an obedient Christian is beyond calculation. Modern Christians not only are in danger of imagining a false salvation in the great by and by, but they also imagine a false salvation here on earth. We cling stubbornly to our illusions. We would rather stand on the threshold of an abundant life, like a sorrowful, ridiculous bird. It is our plan and not God's that we love and make a lie (*Rev. 22:15*). Such is the fruit of original sin. If we are saved, our eyes are opened to see how foolish we are to pursue money, love, happiness, or personal fulfillment by any means other than obedience to the commandments. If we are saved, we will enjoy the growing power to obey the covenant. By a swelling hope based on real evidence, we will gain an entrance into heaven when we die.

Only God Can Speak Reality

We cannot speak anything into reality. Only God can speak and reality take place. We are creatures who must

work and have our work blessed by our God who can speak, bless our work, and cause our dreams to come true. But if we speak contrary to his calling (vocation) for our life, regardless of how hard we work, our efforts will result in a curse. We will heap up treasure to put in a bag with holes in it (*Hag. 1:6*). The Lord smiles at us, as we might smile at a spoiled child, having a temper tantrum. The Lord says, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" (*Lk. 12:25*). We must ask the Lord to prosper us by the bountiful covenant of the Lord's service. We must forever pray to forsake the fantasy that we can live by our empty words and emptier wits. Psalm 31:23 reads, "God plentifully rewardeth the proud doer." The New Testament adds, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (*Rom. 2:13*). The economic rule of the Bible, then, is that those who "do" are reward more than those who merely dream.

God everywhere rewards those who do or who produce things more than those who stand in disobedience waiting for a free fish. The proud doer is rewarded by our God. Therefore, if we are in grace, we will recognize that the majority of modern Christians are dead or dying or are not fruitful. They live in a barren and cursed world of illusion.

Curse or Blessing?

What does this have to do with education? We teachers and parents must teach our children to have the hope of going to heaven based only on the power to obey and work more productively (*1 Cor. 15:1-3*). If the children cannot develop the work habits and the self-discipline to follow the law of God to become successful, it is because they are cursed and not blessed, lost and not saved. Let's not be as silly as the pelican, or should I say, *more* silly than the pelican. Our greater mental capacity produces greater foolishness. May God bless us as teachers. May God deliver us from the curse of the false doctrine. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (*Pr. 9:10*). Preach, pray, and lead your children to say, "I am saved," only when they see themselves delivered from today's generation of unproductive Christians. As you love the birds, so love your children. I can help you become a better teacher. Please send for a copy of my book, *How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education*.

Ellsworth McIntyre, one of America's leading Christian educators, is pastor of Nicene Covenant Church and founder of Grace Community Schools, and author of How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education. He is available for speaking engagements, often without charge. For further information, contact him at 4405 Outer Drive, Naples, Florida 34112. E-mail EMcin24158@aol.com.

The Authority of the Old Testament in the State

By Rev. William Einwechter



The question of the authority of the Old Testament in the state is tied inexorably to the issue of the authority of the Old Testament in general.¹ Those both within and without the church who reject the authority of the Old Testament as canonical Scripture will, of course,

consider the topic of this article to be superfluous. But those who consider the Old Testament to be the inspired word of God cannot dismiss the question of the authority of the Old Testament in the state with a mere wave of the hand. If God has spoken his infallible word in the Old Testament, and if that word specifically speaks to matters that directly concern the state, then does it not follow that the Old Testament teaching on the subject of civil government is authoritative today?

We believe it does; and we also believe that the Old Testament provides the state with the only full, objective, and reliable standard for civil justice and civil law.

The Authority of the Old Testament

The testimony of the creeds and confessions of the church have always affirmed that the Old Testament stands with the New Testament as the inspired, authoritative word of the living God. The Westminster Confession of Faith states:

Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the Books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these: ...[all sixty-six books of the Bible are listed by name]. All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life (Chap. I, Art. II.). This confession of the church concerning the canonicity of the entire Old Testament and its consequent status of being, along with the New Testament, the rule of faith and life is based on the testimony of Christ and his Apostles (cf. Matt. 5:17-19; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:1-2; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). The law, the prophets, and the writings² are considered the word of God written throughout the whole New Testament, and their authority is unquestioned.³

The authority of the Old Testament was considered

comprehensive by the Apostle Paul, *i.e.*, its teaching applied to all spheres of life, and, therefore, the man of God will be thoroughly equipped for every good work by giving heed to its doctrines (2 Tim. 3:16-17), including his work in the sphere of civil government. In other words, Paul taught the church that the Old Testament is authoritative on matters relating to the family, the church, and the state; hence, by searching its pages, the man of God could discern God's will for him in his duties as a family man, church member, and citizen. The idea that the Old Testament retained its authority in certain select areas (*e.g.*, family, and church) in this age, but not in others (*e.g.*, the state) is foreign to the New Testament. The canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament contain extensive instruction in righteousness for both magistrates and citizens; and the teaching of Christ and the apostles and the statements of the confessions of the church affirm that this instruction continues as part of the rule of faith and life.

Therefore, the doctrine of full inspiration and authority of both Testaments provides a potent argument for the authority of the Old Testament in the state. If God has spoken to the issues of civil government in the Old Testament (*e.g.*, the duty of magistrates to judge justly, [Dt. 16:18-19]), then we must grant that word the same divine authority to instruct us in righteousness for that sphere as we grant it, say, for the sphere of family (*e.g.*, parental instruction in discipline, Pr. 23:13). The authority of God's revelation in the Bible is seamless. The Christian view of Scripture is: the Bible is thought of as authoritative on everything of which it speaks. And it speaks of everything.⁴

The Nature of the State and the Role of the Magistrate

God, the Creator of all things, has established three governing institutions for man's good and the ordering of human society: the family, the church, and the state. Each has been given specific duties by God and has received authority from God to carry out their respective commissions. The state, therefore, is a divine institution (Rom. 13:1-2). The state, consequently, is not autonomous, does not owe its legitimacy to man, and does not derive its authority to rule from man. God is sovereign over the state (Dan. 4:25, 32, 34-37). The state is subject to him and it is there to serve him by carrying out his will for it.

God's will for the state is that it establish justice and restrain evil in society by the punishment of evildoers (Dt. 1:16-17; 16:18-20; Rom. 13:3-4; 2 Pet. 2:14). The state is

not the agent of mercy or charity, but is the instrument of God's vengeance against those who disturb the public peace through theft, violence, or negligence. To the state belongs the power of the sword, which consists of the right to execute those who are worthy of death, to inflict corporal punishment, and to require restitution to the victims of theft and bodily injury.

Since the state is a divine institution, it definitely follows that the civil magistrate is God's servant. This is the specific teaching of Scripture (*Rom. 13:2-4*). The Bible indicates that God is the one who puts men into civil authority, that they serve as his ministers and representatives (*2 Chr. 19:5-7*), and that all kings and rulers should serve in the fear of God (*2 Sam. 23:3*), recognizing that God rules in the kingdom of men (*Dan. 4:25*). As God's servant, the magistrate is required to rule according to God's will and carry out the divine purpose for the state. The civil magistrate is charged with the duty of judging righteously and punishing evil doers.

But if the magistrate is to carry out his role as God's minister executing God's vengeance on evildoers, there must be a standard by which the magistrate discerns God's will for him. For those who accept the authority of Scripture and its definition of the state and the role of the magistrate, this is an inescapable question: To what standard of justice does God hold the magistrate accountable when he commands him to rule justly? Where should the magistrate look to determine what evil he should punish and how he should punish it as the minister of God's vengeance? All who believe that the state is a divine institution and the civil magistrate is a servant of God must face this question and provide a definitive answer.

The Standard of Biblical Law

The answer proposed by most Christians to the question of by what standard the state discerns God's will is clearly God's law. But, this answer is not precise because there are two basic conceptions among Christians (evangelical and Reformed) on how God's law is revealed to magistrates. The first is natural law, and the second is Biblical law.

Those Christians who adhere to a natural law view on the standard of civil government believe that God reveals his moral law to magistrates and citizens through creation and conscience. According to this view, the law of God written in the hearts of men (*Rom. 2:14-15*) is the ideal standard by which the state discerns justice and carries out its divine commission. It is believed that through the right use of reason, all men are able to determine the moral law of God as it relates to all matters of civil government, including penology. Modern Christian natural law adherents reject the standard of Biblical law because they believe that the state should be based on a pluralistic secular compact, that natural law is the only proper and workable standard in such a context, and that Biblical civil law has no authority or application outside the confines of Old Testament Israel.⁵

Those Christians who advocate the standard of Biblical law for civil government believe that God reveals his moral law to magistrates and citizens through the written revelation of Scripture. According to this view, the ideal standard of righteousness by which the magistrate carries out his divine commission is Biblical civil law. The Bible provides explicit revelation on the matters of civil government, including penology, and this revelation applies to all men and nations. Modern Biblical law adherents (often called theonomists) reject natural law as the standard for civil government because they believe that it is wholly inadequate, while also rejecting the model of a pluralistic secular compact for an explicitly Christian covenantal view of the state.

Of these two views, the teaching of Scripture calls us to the Biblical law standard for civil government. Consider the following.

First, the doctrine of total depravity teaches us that it is folly to believe that man can adequately discern God's will for the state on the basis of natural law. The Bible declares that man is fallen and his reason is corrupted. By nature, man suppresses the truth of God revealed to him by creation and his conscience (*Rom. 1:18-28*). Van Til speaks eloquently on this point, and his words need to be applied to the moral questions concerning civil government:

This doctrine of the total depravity of man makes it plain that the moral consciousness of man as he is today cannot be the source of information about what is the ideal good or about what is the standard of the good.... It is this point particularly that makes it necessary for the Christian to maintain without any apology and without any concession that it is Scripture, and Scripture alone, in the light of which all moral questions must be answered. Scripture as an external revelation became necessary because of the sin of man. No man living can even put the moral problem as he ought to put it, or ask the moral questions as he ought to ask them, unless he does so in the light of Scripture. Man cannot of himself truly face the moral question, let alone answer it.⁶

Second, if the will of God is to actually be the true standard of justice for civil government, man must have an objective, detailed written revelation from God. This is exactly what we have in Biblical law (*Ps. 19:7-10*)! Natural law, based as it is in man's ability to discern it through reason, is not objective, written, or detailed. To make natural law the ethical standard of justice in the state is to make reason and conscience the standard of justice. In his discussion of the authority of the written text of the Bible to establish Christian doctrine and ethics, John Bright shows the folly of making reason and conscience the authority in determining such matters:

First, the fallibility of conscience. I do not trust the reader's conscience, nor does he trust mine. It is notorious that men have often in good

conscience done horrible things. Nor does a desire to do the will of God or the conviction that God's will is indeed being done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ensure that such is the case. How does one know that it is the Holy Spirit that speaks?... The conscience is a very subjective authority that speaks to each man with a different voice; and there are no tests for determining the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit, save the test of the biblical teaching itself. If the conscience and reason of the individual, however enlightened, be the final authority in matters of faith and practice, then let us face it: Each individual is his own authority, and the Christian faith is what each individual thinks it is.⁷

We add, that if man's reason is the final authority in matters pertaining to civil government, then each state becomes its own authority (legal positivism⁸), and justice in civil law is what each magistrate and citizen thinks it is. But if we take the written text of the Bible as our standard for civil law, then God himself is in theory and in fact given his rightful place as the sovereign King who alone determines for man what is just in civil law. Any retreat from the standard of God's written revelation to the standard of man's reason is a retreat into human autonomy, moral chaos, and tyranny.

Third, it is true that nations that have not received the written revelation of God in Scripture concerning civil government will be judged by the standard of natural law and can operate on no other standard (*Rom. 2:14-15*).⁹ However, it is absurd to argue that nations that have received the bright light of God's written word should limit themselves to the dim light of natural law in determining God's will for the state.¹⁰ To say that nations of today should be guided by natural law rather than Biblical law is to say that nations should continue to operate as they did during the times of this ignorance (*Ac. 17:30*). To advocate natural law as the standard of civil government where the Bible is known is to advocate ignorance of God's will for the state! "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (*Isa. 8:20*)!

Fourth, the Bible contains no commands or admonitions for the state to follow natural law. Rather, the Bible commands magistrates to obey Biblical law. There are the clear commands of God to the citizens and magistrates of Israel to follow the Biblical law for the matters of civil government. Then, through the book of Proverbs, these commands are transferred directly to the magistrates and citizens of all nations (*Pr. 16:12; 28:4; 31:4-5*).¹¹ God commands the standard of the fear of the Lord for all kings and rulers (*Ps. 2:11; 2 Sam. 23:3*); to fear God is to keep his commandments (*Ec. 12:13-14*); and to keep his commandments is to obey Biblical law. In Psalm 2 God enjoins all the kings and judges of the earth to serve the Lord with fear and to kiss the Son. This is strong language, calling for full obedience to God's law and covenantal submission to the Son who is King of all

nations. Can these commands be understood in accord with modern Christian natural law theory? Only if you think Psalm 2 means that God is commanding rulers to establish pluralistic secular compacts in their nation where God and the authority of his word are not acknowledged; only if you think that in Psalm 2 God is commanding rulers to let your conscience be your guide; and only if you think that in Psalm 2 God is commanding rulers to stay clear of Biblical law because that law is only for Israel! To interpret and apply Psalm 2 according to the natural law paradigm is preposterous, if not downright blasphemous. Psalm 2 is a command to all kings and judges of today to obey Biblical law and honor Christ as their sovereign.

We conclude, therefore, that Biblical law is the standard for the state. In Biblical law, the unchanging standard of the moral law of God as it applies to the state is set forth with sufficient detail and clarity to enable the magistrate to carry out his duties as God's minister. If Biblical law is the standard, then the authority of the Old Testament in the state is established beyond question; for it is in the pages of the Old Testament (particularly the law of Moses) that God reveals the specifics of civil law, civil procedures, and penology. The New Testament itself does not speak to these matters in any comprehensive fashion; if we had only the New Testament to guide us, we would know only the barest outline of God's will for the state. But, of course, the New Testament does not need to address the subject of civil government in a detailed way because God has already spoken his mind on these matters in the Old Testament.

Conclusion

If the Old Testament is the word of God, and it is according to the teaching of Scripture and the confessions of the church, then we are led to conclude that the Old Testament is authoritative in the state because as inspired Scripture it is authoritative on all matters of which it speaks (*2 Tim. 3:16-17*), and it speaks extensively to the subject of civil government. We cannot be selective in our approach to the authority of the Old Testament. If we grant the Old Testament divine authority on some matters because it is the word of God, then we must grant it the same divine authority on every matter that it addresses. Bright states: "[L]et it be said as plainly as possible: We cannot rightly speak of the authority of the Old Testament if we allow ourselves to appeal to it selectively, as it pleases us. We must be willing to confront its witness as a whole, even those parts that offend us. . . ."¹² Any who dismiss the witness of the Old Testament to the standards of civil law and civil justice, take a Marcionite approach to the Old Testament,¹³ and not a Christian approach.

If the Old Testament is not authoritative for the state in determining God's will for the magistrate for carrying out his duties of judging righteously, then what is? In the

end it is either the authority of the Old Testament in the state or the authority of reason and conscience.

- ¹ For a helpful discussion on the authority and use of the Old Testament see, John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1975 [1967]).
- ² This is the classification used for the divisions of the Hebrew Bible today, and was even in use at the time of Christ (cf. Luke 24:44 where Christ uses the law, the prophets, and the psalms [which stands for the writings, since it is the most prominent book in that division] to designate the whole Old Testament; sometimes the Old Testament is simply designated by the law and the prophets or Moses and the prophets [Lk. 16:29]).
- ³ For a survey of the New Testament texts that affirm the full inspiration and infallibility of the Old Testament, and, hence, its authority, see Wayne A. Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture in Scripture and Truth," eds., D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, 1983), 37-45.
- ⁴ Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, N. J., 1967), 8.
- ⁵ Nevertheless, Christian natural law proponents sometimes use the Old Testament civil laws on a selective basis when it is convenient and when it supports the views on civil law that they have deduced through reason (so they say). For example, men such as Charles Colson are committed to natural law as the standard for civil government and reject the theonomic standard of Biblical law, yet they make use of the Biblical law requirement of restitution for theft in their advocacy of criminal justice reform. In other words, they use Old Testament law when that law appears reasonable to them.
- ⁶ Van Til, *Defense of the Faith*, 54.
- ⁷ Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, 39-40 (emphasis supplied).
- ⁸ Legal positivism is the doctrine that there is no higher authority than the state, and law is whatever the state says it is. It is our contention that all natural law theories of law and justice lead, in practice, to a form of legal positivism.
- ⁹ The fact that Biblical revelation is far superior to natural revelation does not imply that there is any contradiction

between the two. There is only one moral law, because there is only one true God who is the source of all things, including the moral law. The unity between Biblical law and natural law is clearly stated in the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689: the same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments. . . . The issue, therefore, is not which one is true, but which one is adequate for man in his fallen condition, and which one is superior as a means of revelation.

- ¹⁰ William Symington, *Messiah the Prince* (Edmonton, [1884] 1990), 234-235.
- ¹¹ For the validation of this point see, William O. Einwechter, "Proverbs and Politics," *Chalcedon Report* 376 (November 1996), 16-19.
- ¹² Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, 142.
- ¹³ Marcion believed that there was total discontinuity between Israel and the church, and between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He therefore rejected the Old Testament as part of the canon of inspired Scripture for the church. Bright contends that all who believe that the Old Testament is not fully Christian, and cease to use it or regard it as canonical Scripture on the same level as the New Testament are implicitly Marcionite in their approach to the Old Testament (*The Authority of the Old Testament*, 73-76). To say that Old Testament civil law was intended only for Israel, and that it has no binding authority in this dispensation, is to follow the perspectives of Marcion, and not of Jesus Christ (*Mt. 5:17-19*) and his Apostles (*2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25*).

William O. Einwechter (Th.M.) is an ordained minister and the Pastor of Covenant Christian Church. He currently serves as the Vice-Moderator of the Association of Free Reformed Churches and Vice-President of the National Reform Association. He is also the author of the books Ethics and God's Law: An Introduction to Theonomy, and English Bible Translations: By What Standard? and editor of the newly released Explicitly Christian Politics. He can be contacted at 9385 Royer Rd., Mercersburg, PA 17236, or by e-mail at WEinwechte@aol.com.

"Biblionomy as a Reformed Presupposition"

Audiocassettes of Andrew Sandlin's lecture at Westminster Theological Seminary-West, with questions and answers, is now ready for mailing from Chalcedon. This lecture puts to rest the notion that theonomy is chiefly a matter of Biblical interpretation and argues, rather, that it springs from a consistently Reformed bibliology. It is a key statement in the theonomy debate. The total cost for both cassettes is \$8.00, including postage. Contact Chalcedon for your audiocassettes today.

Zambia Conference Messages in Audiocassette Album

Audio tapes of the messages delivered at the Chalcedon Conference on Christian Culture held in Zambia last June are now available, set in an attractive album. The cost is \$35.00 per album, plus postage and handling: domestic \$3.75 per set, foreign \$5.00 per set. California residents please add 7.25% sales tax.

Make checks payable to Chalcedon. For credit card orders (Visa and Mastercard), phone 209-736-4365 or fax 209-736-0536 (for fax, please include name as it appears on credit card, credit card number, telephone number and signature).

The Free Kirk of Scotland Against Theonomy

By Martin A. Foulner



This year the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland accepted an eight-page *Report* which declared that the “teaching known as Theonomy or Christian Reconstructionism” was “contrary to the Confession of Faith” and “inconsistent with Biblical Doctrine.” The *Report* was produced and

delivered by the Rev. Alex MacDonald in his capacity as Convener of the Public Questions, Religion and Morals Committee. This *Report* recommends to the presbyteries that no Theonomists may hold any office in the Free Church of Scotland.

From the church of such intellectual giants as Thomas Chalmers, William Cunningham and James Bannerman we could be forgiven for expecting this *Report* to be characterized by fairness, thoroughness, and a deep respect for Holy Scripture and our Reformed heritage. Yet in all these respects, it fails completely. Indeed, all things considered, this is perhaps the worst response to Christian Reconstructionist thought yet to appear. An example of this appears in the introduction: “While Theonomists deny that they are adding to justification by faith in Christ alone as the way of salvation, the very vehemence with which they argue their distinctives and their often extremely hostile attitude to critics¹ indicates that they consider their views a necessary part of the Christian message to be communicated to our society today. It is essential that we are clear about what our message to the world is. Is it the grace of Jesus Christ? Or is it grace plus something else?”

Apart from the deliberate misrepresentation of Theonomy, just what are we to make of such a sentiment? There are many precious Bible truths for which we must contend with our very lives, if need be, yet, which in and of themselves may not be necessary for salvation. It is quite possible that there will be many in Heaven who did not abandon evolutionary presuppositions, could not with clarity define the Trinity or who are mistaken on aspects of sanctification. Are we to abandon these truths because God saves some without enlightening them as to their importance? Such an attitude betrays a spirit quite foreign to Biblical Christianity.

The contempt with which Alex MacDonald holds God’s Law is manifest in his introductory words: “It

would be easy to stress one or two of the more outlandish notions of Theonomy, in such a way that the whole thing seemed to be the product of the fevered imagination of cranks, and not worth wasting time considering . . . according to most Theonomists, the state should apply the death penalty to a whole range of sins including homosexuality, rape, fornication, apostasy, idolatry and the striking or cursing of parents But before we shake our heads and consider Theonomy beneath our dignity to even debate, there are several causes for concern.”

How grievous that a minister of Christ should hold the express teaching of God’s Law up to the ridicule of the world! It is one thing to think that the penal sanctions no longer apply or are modified in some way. It is quite another thing to think that the mere mention of these holy laws of Jehovah are so absurd as to conjure up the image of “cranks,” who are “beneath our dignity to even debate.” This is blasphemy. Was our God a “fevered crank” to dare to suggest that the Israelites “Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (*Dt. 4:6-8*).

Was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews “not worth wasting time considering” because he declared that in the Old Testament “every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward” (*Heb. 2:2*)? Perhaps Jesus, who quoted (without feeling the need to explain further) “Honour thy father and mother, and he that curses father or mother let him die the death” (*Mt. 15:4*) was himself “beneath our dignity to even debate.” God is not mocked, not even by Free Church of Scotland ministers. It is a fearful thing to laugh at God’s holy law. Alex MacDonald dismisses these laws as if they are crimes against humanity. In so doing he has fully imbibed the spirit of this age. When Christians today ridicule these penal sanctions, they are in reality showing a preference for human ethical standards, rather than the eternal law of Jehovah. How different is this attitude to that of the Psalmist David: “I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed” (*Ps. 119:46*). We should not fear to proclaim the perfect wisdom of God when all around we see the disastrous effect of the ethics of humanism.²

How the Controversy Began

In 1992 The Free Church denominational magazine the *Monthly Record* carried a very favorable review of William Barker and Robert Godfrey's *Theonomy A Reformed Critique* (Zondervan, 1990). The review was by the Rev. Donald MacDonald, moderator at this year's Assembly and brother of Rev. Alex MacDonald, who drafted and delivered the *Report!* A few Theonomists, myself included, sent letters in response, which were published in the December, 1992 issue. The reviewer sought to defend his views, and others responded. He seemed to dig himself deeper into a hole and eventually the then editor drew a line under the whole matter.

No more was said on this issue until the late Dr. Greg Bahnsen in 1994 addressed a public meeting in Dundee Associate Presbyterian Church. During a question and answer session, the local Free Church minister (Rev. David Robertson) made a very hostile response to Greg who in his usual *gracious* manner dealt with his hysteric outburst. During this altercation David Robertson uttered perhaps the silliest argument in the whole history of the Theonomy debate.

They were discussing George Gillespie, who was an influential member of the Westminster Assembly; Dr. Bahnsen quoted from Gillespie³ to the effect that the judicial penalties were still in force today. Robertson interrupted him with his classic *faux pas*—"Where does George Gillespie say that the magistrate should punish people for wearing mixed clothing today" [sic], to which Greg replied that the magistrate "was not to punish those who wore mixed clothing even in the Old Testament, so why would he want to do so today? That's not even relevant."⁴ It was rather obvious to everyone present who had won the debate. Unfortunately, I think this had an adverse effect on David Robertson and appears only to have intensified his hatred of Theonomy. In the *Sunday Mail* (one of our tackiest tabloids) he said, "The reason that Theonomists do not want prisons is because everyone would be dead." David Robertson is also a convinced socialist⁵ and his opposition to the free market is just as intense as his dislike of the judicial laws of God.

Another spate of letters in the *Monthly Record* in 1996 followed an accusation by Robertson that Theonomy was a heresy, and this sparked off the current controversy. Letters from Alan, Stewart and Ewan Wilson (these three brothers, all elders in Shettleston Free Church, Glasgow and a Deacon there, Colin Gunn, are the only "outed" Theonomists in the entire Free Church) defended the Theonomic position at length and pointed out a fairer interpretation of the Westminster Confession 19:4.

David Robertson stirred up his presbytery—which included Alex MacDonald—against Theonomy and convinced them to allow him to bring an overture calling for Theonomy to be declared a heresy. He did this at the 1996 General Assembly. His overture was rejected but another—remitting the whole matter to the "Public Questions, Religion and Morals Committee" to report to

the next year's (1997) Assembly—was accepted. The convener of this committee was—wait for it . . . Alex MacDonald! The *Report* was produced by him alone and was "rubber stamped" by the rest of the Committee, most of whom I strongly suspect had little if any knowledge of the issues involved.⁶

Since Mr. MacDonald already believed that Theonomy was a "heresy" before he was commissioned to prepare his *Report*, there was only going to be *one* result. That the church knew of his opinions while delegating to him this responsibility beggars belief.

The gross prejudice with which Alex MacDonald approached the task is evident in every part of the *Report*. None more so than when he concludes that Theonomy:

... has a tendency to undermine the centrality of the gospel of grace, because of their unbalanced emphasis on the law. They fail to take seriously the sea-change that has taken place with the coming of Jesus Christ. There is the tremendous danger that Theonomy leads into a new legalism, where the touchstone of everything is Old Testament law not the gospel of Christ's love.

This is not the "careful and full study of the teaching of Theonomy" which the Assembly commissioned; it is an exercise in how to slander one's fellow believers. Such dishonesty (there is no better word for it) on Alex MacDonald's part can only discredit his testimony and dishonor the name of Christ.

There are countless examples in this *Report* of superficiality in the handling of Scripture, ignorance of Reformed history and misrepresentation of Theonomists' arguments. I will give one example of each.

1) **Scripture.** Having made various mistaken and unacceptable claims regarding Theonomy and the Confession, we read on page 37 of the *Report*—"What are examples of general equity in OT?—a man must not be punished for a crime he has not committed; two or more witnesses are required to convict; punishment should be proportionate to the crime." The allusion is to Ex. 23:7, Dt. 17:7, and Dt. 19:21. But why should we stop here? What about the capital punishments for rape (*Dt. 22:25*), kidnap (*Ex. 21:16*), witchcraft (*Ex. 22:18*), or bestiality (*Ex. 22:19*)? By whose authority do we permit the equity of the *process* of civil justice but do not admit appeal to the *standards* of civil justice? Can the *Report* arrogate to itself the right to admit the former but not the latter?

2) **History.** Consider now the appeal (page 37) to the Free Church *Declaratory Act (XII), 1846* which eschews intolerant and persecuting principles and protects "liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment." This appeal by the *Report* is a red herring which has nothing to do with the debate. Any Theonomist would subscribe to this provision of the *Act*. To appeal to it against Theonomy is unworthy of Alex MacDonald. Who is

persecuting whom? Have non-theonomists been accused before Assembly as heretical? Are non-theonomists being hounded with claims of anti-confessional and anti-scriptural views? Are they facing exclusion from the church? Is *this Report* not in itself contradictory of *Act XII, 1846*? Is private judgment and liberty of conscience permissible to anyone as long as they are not Theonomists? The hypocrisy of the *Report* at this point is quite breathtaking.

3) **Misrepresentation.** “It is quite clear that Bahnsen’s understanding of Scripture and the Confession is at complete variance with the position of the Free Church of Scotland as expressed in *Act XII, 1846*. He believes the Confession to teach that the magistrate is to enforce the death penalty on those who are guilty of breaking ‘the first table of the law’—those who are judged to be atheists, blasphemers, heretics and schismatics (*ibid.*, pp. 538, 539). This is completely contrary to the Free Church’s position which opposes persecution and favors toleration.”

The first problem with this is that it is *not* Bahnsen who says this, but George Gillespie!⁷ The quotation from “pp. 538, 539” of *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* is actually a citation taken from Gillespie’s *One Hundred and Eleven Propositions*, #41. Did Alex MacDonald actually read “pp. 538, 539”? If so, did he deliberately seek to misrepresent Bahnsen and mislead the Free Church Assembly or is it just a case of unbelievable incompetence?

Second, *not even Gillespie* was calling for the death penalty against heretics and atheists (Theonomy rejects any such persecution for a person’s belief). All Gillespie is asserting is that such matters come under the cognizance of the civil magistrate, as taught by the Confession Chapter 23:3.⁸

Third, Gillespie is dealing with *public crime*; it has nothing to do with “private judgment or liberty of conscience.” It has *nothing to do with Act XII, 1846*. The allusion is not even relevant!

What should we make of this shocking display of “scholarship”? Was it deliberate misrepresentation or just ignorance? How can we trust a *Report* that gives a quote from Bahnsen that is not Bahnsen? A death penalty that is not a death penalty? A persecution of private judgment that is not a persecution of private judgment? And worst of all, a *Declaratory Act* to protect liberty of conscience invoked in the name of **persecution and intolerance**.

Tragically for the cause of Christ in Scotland, the deception of Alex MacDonald’s *Report* was missed by the Free Church General Assembly. Not one point of the *Report* was disputed. During the “debate” on the floor of the Assembly, Theonomy was likened to “Socinianism,” and was branded “another Gospel.” That ministers of Christ’s evangel could make such a condemnatory judgment on a movement about which they were largely ignorant⁹ is disgraceful, yet, is but a symptom of the many problems which have recently beset the Free Church and

destroyed its once considerable reputation in Scotland.

What then for the future of Theonomists within the Free Church? First of all, let us remember that this *Report*, while accepted by the General Assembly, is only a recommendation to presbytery. If the various presbyteries are less prejudiced than Alex MacDonald, they will see that the issue requires a far more in-depth study. Furthermore, no office-bearer can be removed from the church unless specific charges are laid before his presbytery. If this is done, it will be apparent that this *Report* is so vague, inaccurate and dishonest that none of the charges could be sustained. The simple fact is that when it comes to a comparison with the teachings of the Westminster Confession chapter 19:4 and chapter 23, Theonomists are far closer to the Confession than their critics. To preclude any Theonomist from the Free Church, she would have to repudiate the Confession at this point. While this would be the honest thing to do, it is highly unlikely. If this *Report* represents a year-long study by the brightest critic of Theonomy, then it will require little effort to refute by even the meanest intelligence.¹⁰

¹ Without endorsing each Theonomic response, it is only fair to ask, “When are critics going to stop lying about the teaching of Theonomy?”

² Within the past year in Great Britain we have had two women, 89 and 90 years old, raped and murdered in their own homes by uncontrollable youths. At present, two boys have been detained (both ten years old) for allegedly raping a nine-year-old girl at school.

³ “. . . he who was punishable by death under the judicial law, is punishable by death still. . . .” “Wholesome Severity Reconciled with Christian Liberty,” London, 1645 (reprinted in Naphtali Press, *Anthology of Presbyterian & Reformed Literature*, Volume 4, Dallas Texas, 1991), p. 183.

⁴ David Robertson responded that he could not preach Theonomy (*i.e.*, the penal sanctions) to his congregation. Greg then leaned upon the podium and gently said, “Well, I must tell you that you are not preaching the whole counsel of God!” At this Mr. Robertson could hardly contain himself, and like Nebuchadnezzar “the form of his visage was changed.” Rather than showing humility as a result of his display of gross ignorance, I get the distinct impression that this public humiliation only served to magnify Robertson’s bitterness towards Theonomy and may have led directly to the action that followed.

⁵ A close colleague of Robertson’s (and member of his congregation), at this year’s Assembly “thanked God for the Department of Social Security for its ‘Family Credit’ scheme,” and urged Ministers on low income to apply for these welfare benefits. Presumably it is fine to have the Gospel ministry funded by the godless taxpayer. This is Statism with a vengeance.

⁶ When I was outside the Assembly, distributing a response to the *Report* I talked to a kind gentleman, who graciously spoke with me on the subject; unfortunately, he knew nothing more on the historical aspect than that “the judicial laws had expired.” I told him that Theonomists agreed but that the Puritans still believed in the capital punishments of the Old Testament. He said “Mr. MacDonald had looked into the

subject thoroughly." This man, as it turned out, was "on the Committee who had *approved* this *Report*!" It was an example of how misinformed people are on this subject; and yet they are nevertheless willing to condemn and censure.

⁷ Gillespie just happened to help write the Confession, and oversaw its acceptance by the Church of Scotland in 1647, but his views are obviously of less historical importance than the pontification of Alex MacDonald 350 years later.

⁸ This, of course, is not in the 1788 American revision of the Confession but the original 1647 version, that which Alex MacDonald subscribed to.

⁹ During the debate at least three delegates praised the *Report* for its clarity and comprehensiveness and then admitted they knew no Theonomists and had not studied the subject!

¹⁰ A paraphrase of the words which Dr. Bahnsen said to me

regarding Gary North would apply equally well to Colin Gunn, Alan Ewan and Stewart Wilson: "They read more than their critics, they work harder than their critics and they are *smarter* than their critics!"

Since 1988 Martin A. Foulner has worked for James A. Dickson [Books] in Edinburgh, which distributes new and used reformed books worldwide. [Free catalogue on request from: James A. Dickson Books, Christian Bookshop, 12 Forrest Road, Edinburgh, Scotland, U.K., EH1 2QN.]. He attends the Edinburgh congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and is the author of Theonomy and the Westminster Confession.

Urban Nations Update: Equality—Myth and Reality

By Steve M. Schlissel

When it is increasingly difficult for the righteous to become indignant, the bottom of a cultural decline has been reached. That's surely where we are today. With our moral sensibilities and God-given rationality daily subjected to torturous abuse by the effete Pecksniffians who guard the temple of political correctness, it simply is not possible to sustain appropriate levels of indignation suitable to the occasions.

We are told that we are the bastions of intolerance. Berkley, CA, for example, has ordinances which make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual preference *or* religion. But as an Urban Nations staffer pointed out, "This is the glitch, isn't it?" For Berkley recently decided that the religion of the Boy Scouts (belief in a generic God who somewhat resembles the God of the Bible) is itself a discriminatory religion and therefore not entitled to the protection of law.

Examples are unbounded: a New York City police chaplain is forced to retire after 42 years of exemplary service. Too old? No. He "allegedly made derogatory remarks about a gay prosecutor." Pro Football star Reggie White loses contracts and is raked over the coals for telling Wisconsin legislators that homosexuals do not comprise a race: people are *born* Black, White, whatever, explained Reggie; they *choose* to engage in homosexual sin. Reggie, who also happens to be a Christian minister, said, "I am going to speak the truth. . . . If people think that's contradiction and that's hate, they need to take [it] up with God, not with Reggie White." Right on, Reg.

The Internet is home to more explicit blasphemy against God and Christians than even genteel unbelievers

would care to know. But to my knowledge, no one has been indicted, let alone convicted, for God-hate on the Internet. Yet in February of 1998, Richard Machado, 21, became the first person convicted of sending hate mail in cyberspace (he sent a racially derogatory e-mail message to approximately 60 Asian students at the University of California at Irvine). In May, Machado was sentenced to one year in prison.

Go into a school library for a sobering lesson in censorship. Evangelical and Reformed Christianity have been effectively banished. However, books on virtually every sort of sexual perversion line the shelves. This in the name of "tolerance." But in February, nine high school students in Florida were arrested for "publishing" a (mostly handwritten) booklet because it contained racist language. When Larry Flynt purveys porno and anti-Christian propaganda, he's exercising his sacred right, "however much we may personally disagree, blah, blah, blah"; but anyone, however young, however ignorant, for whatever reason, who challenges the tenets of our new Public Square religion, is to be hauled off to the gendarme. He has blasphemed against the temple!

When I say *temple*, I mean exactly that—no metaphor here. Political Correctness is never comprehended properly until it is seen as the inverted-mirror equivalent of Biblical laws against blasphemy. As readers of this periodical know, every culture, every law, every custom, is inescapably religious. Religions may hide below the surface, they may even deny they are "religious," but underneath every society's ways and means lies a worldview which directs and determines them. And

finding the deity who determines right and wrong in any given culture is not a particularly difficult task. In fact, it's a piece of cake: just find out against whom & what you may not speak in the Public Square. Bingo! There's your deity.

Ours is whatever victim-group is currently being led to (yes, *to*; we reject the claims of dilettantes that victims are being escorted *from*) the altar of sacrifice as a meal to the god of egalitarian Humanism. Egalitarianism stands in relation to Western Humanism as the doctrine of the Triune God stands to Christianity. The proposition that all must be regarded as absolutely equal (an utterly preposterous notion) is the cornerstone of the religion of our day, and public speech against that notion is *absolutely* forbidden. Even casual comments spoken by prominent people who have suggested that there might be differences among people groups have resulted in swift and immediate punishment. All this while the name of the true God is blasphemed with glee daily throughout all popular media. Say what you will about Jesus: that is a "constitutional right." But don't dare suggest that egalitarian myths are just that.

This posture has resulted in Christians not knowing what's kosher to say and what's not. Can you say, Blacks have rhythm? How about, Jews are smart? Russians are pushy? Asians are short? Italians like garlic? Germans like war? Arabs are wannabe Germans with funny headcoverings? Scandinavians sunburn easily? Whether true, false, close to or far from the mark, Christians simply don't know if they are allowed to make generalizations. We are like children in a covenant household waiting for an answer to the question, "Daddy, is it okay to say 'darn'?"

I remember reading an astonishing admission in the *New York Times* a couple of years ago. It noted that news of research proving differences between the brains of males and females was deliberately suppressed (by the *New York Times*) for fear that the data would be used as a justification to regard/treat men and women as different. It gets very difficult for a self-proclaimed "newspaper of record" to know what to report! Just as the *Times* would never have printed blasphemy against Jehovah in 1898, so it is loath to print anything at variance with egalitarian Humanism in 1998. So what do you do when the facts go against you?

Squirm. It is amusing to see the media twist in their own wind as they try to report without offense facts like this: Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Korean immigrants, children have the highest grade point averages (A's and B's), while West Indian and Latin American immigrant children performed poorest (above or below C, on average). What made the *Times* especially uncomfortable, though, was the fact that the differences couldn't be accounted for on socioeconomic grounds; nor did the "discrimination factor" help explain the trend (*e.g.*, some groups, like Cubans in Miami, belonged to the dominant group in their area, but did poorly anyway, whereas Asians

often did superbly in apparently more "oppressive" circumstances).

Now, why do I bring all this stuff up? To foster hate and encourage hate crimes? Har-har-hardy-har-har! No. Just the opposite: to glory in Christ and Christianity! You see, what these modern fools talk about achieving they will *never* achieve; yet this has been our heritage for two thousand years.

Yes, I know: our history is certainly an uneven one (at best), but the fact remains that the religion centered in Jesus Christ is the only religion to be found in *all nations* on earth. Christianity alone has found and continues to find its way into the hearts of all peoples; it is Jesus Christ, whose praise can be heard in all tongues, Whose sacrifice kindles love in the hearts of men (men whose outward appearances take up every point on the most exacting "diversity" scale). From the Day of Pentecost on, our religion alone, towering above all the religions of men, has found reception—however meager or humble, in accord with God's decree—wherever it has gone.

And this despite the fact that our "version" of egalitarianism is a very unflattering one. The only equality we insist be recognized is this: that we all share in deepest need of forgiveness, for *all* we like sheep have gone astray and have turned everyone to his own way. *All* have sinned and *all* fall short of the glory of God. And for all men there is but one solution: the work of God in Christ, something that occurred *outside* themselves. This "externalness," this objectivity means that we Christians, unlike and above all other people-group-markers, have the potential for unity found nowhere else, for our unity is in Christ the Lord.

Beyond this, we not only recognize differences, we *rejoice* in them. It is joy unspeakable and full of glory when, from Messiah's pulpit, I look upon the worshipers each Lord's Day whom God has gathered: Gentiles and Jews, Black and White, "Americans," Koreans, Russians, Peruvians, Slovaks, Japanese, Sri Lankans, Costa Ricans, Puerto Ricans, Italians, Arabs, Ukrainians, You-name-it-ians. What are the Liberals squawking about? They don't know Christ; therefore, they know nothing.

The Law of God teaches us to decisively "discriminate" against the morally wicked, but apart from this, we are free to recognize (and perhaps even imagine) differences. Men are different from women (women are the norm!). We find it no surprise that different races and different nationalities would have different characteristics, different strengths and different weaknesses. So? What's the problem? They must all give account to the one true God who made heaven and earth.

To argue for absolute equality is to argue against God at every point. For under God, distinctions abound. The chief distinction among men, according to Scripture, is *not* of race, but of grace. For everything is *different* for covenant-keepers than it is for covenant-breakers, individually and nationally. Therefore Christ's people are commanded to bring all their strength to the task of

shining the light upon the nations, the nations who are *unequal* outside him, and to bring them *up* to the full measure in Christ. If the gospel is not true, this is the most arrogant presumptuousness imaginable! But it *is* true — and God will surely vindicate the work of his Son by making its truth known to all nations, even until the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the seas.

Egalitarian Humanism seems like a mighty foe, but it's just a castle of sand poised to be knocked down by the tidal wave of God's grace, law and power. So do not fear, little flock. Speak the truth — in love, to be sure. But do not fear to speak it. It was God who from one man made

every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places they should live (*Ac. 17:26*). Now that he's made them *all* live in New York City, let's seize the day, and shine that light. A righteous church of all nations is nearer now than when we first believed.

URBAN NATIONS
2662 East 24th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11235-2610
1-800-288-6202
(Fax) 718-332-2222
UrbanNations@usa.net

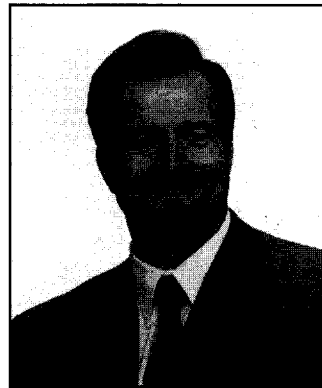
Answering Questions About Christian Reconstruction and The Association of Free Reformed Churches

By Jeffrey A. Ziegler

Editor's Introduction: Most of the main-line Reformed and Presbyterian denominations are in the hands of liberals and apostates, and even the majority of the smaller, more conservative groups are hostile to, or at best diffident about, a vigorous Reformed Faith and Christian Reconstruction; in essence, they are generically evangelical. We thank God, therefore, that groups like the Association of Free Reformed Churches are springing up as a clarion call to all who are devoted to historic Reformed Orthodoxy and a robust, relevant application of the Faith in all spheres of life. We urge Christians of like mind to contact the AFRC and join the battle.

Q: It has been my observation both through the newspapers and in casual conversation that the churches of the AFRC (Association of Free Reformed Churches) are obnoxiously aggressive. It seems relationships with other churches are unimportant to you and that all you care about is conversion to your opinions, rather than accepting diversity in the body. What do you say to this?

A: It's true that AFRC churches are aggressive to proclaim the truth of Reformed Orthodoxy and Christian Reconstruction. It is also true that we aim to make converts of churches and clergy so as to reform both the



church catholic and the world at large. That is what being "Reformed" is all about. In this context we have relationships with other congregations that are in doctrinal agreement and are committed to the same tasks and cause as the AFRC.

Our personal opinions and perspectives are irrelevant in this conversion process. The ministry in which we are engaged is not based on man-centered subjectivism, but instead on objective truth. Reformation ministry by definition means realignment of thought and action to sound doctrine. Unity is based on truth, which towers above "rel-ationalism." Therefore, we can expect casualties along the dividing line of truth. It has always been that way and it will always be this way. The AFRC was founded to draw these distinctions, win converts to the Faith, and sanction and repulse heresy and heretics within our spheres of influence. This we will continue to do, by God's grace.

Q: I've recently left a church over severe doctrinal differences resulting from my acceptance of the Reformed

Faith. I've been told by my former pastor that I "broke covenant," and that "while I may have many teachers, I only have one father." The father reference is to this same pastor. I have no lack of confidence in the decision I made but feel very guilty about this whole episode.

A: Of course you feel guilty! Guilt manipulation is what palsied pulpiteers resort to when they can't debate the issues. Now, leaving a church is a serious matter and should never be done for frivolous reasons. However, if conversion of a church to Reformed Orthodoxy and reconstruction seems remote, and you are not called as a "missionary" to that church, realignment with another church that supports and proclaims the truth is a noble act. This cannot be disparaged by weak, effeminate clergy no matter how much sentimental blather may dribble from their lips. As far as this man's being your "father," remember, you already have a Father in your Heavenly Father. We Protestants broke away from the Pope and have no need to create little ones of our own.

This kind of talk is endemic to various "shepherding movements" which were popular in evangelical ranks in the 70s and 80s. Thankfully, these man-centered, guilt-manipulating, authoritarian structures, bereft of sound doctrine, are all but extinct.

For too long the church has cowered in her pietistic-dualistic bunkers in the face of the enemy. She has ceded the plain of battle to the God-hating apostates without even firing a shot. The AFRC was founded to reverse such suicidal trends.

Q: Why do you feel it is necessary to "sanction" so-called heretics? And why do reconstructionists want to debate and win arguments all the time? Can't we all just get along?

A: No, we can't "all just get along." We're not followers of Rodney King's world-life-view. Truth matters, ideas have consequences, and we are willing to fight and die for the Faith we hold in sacred trust. Hence, we are eager to engage the strongholds of ignorance and iniquity, be they vain philosophies, anti-Biblical governmental policies, or treasonous clergymen who are leading men

astray. This, according to Titus, is our plain duty in the sight of God: to sanction and reject the heretic. Reconstructionists are not "heretic hunters." Our primary task is to advance the Kingdom of God in all societal spheres. However, when an individual pastor or groups of churches teach and promote anti-orthodox notions and through deception seek to influence others in a given locale, we will strike and strike hard and strike true.

Q: How do you view clergy who agree with the tenets you espouse yet do nothing to advance it within their own church.

A: That depends on whether the clergyman in question is struggling to master and implement the truth or is deliberately suppressing the truth lest it expose his own lack of adherence to it. It takes time to arrest bad theology and to rebuild sound theology. It's a growth process. Therefore, I have a great deal of empathy for pastors who are sincerely struggling to grasp and implement historic Reformed Orthodoxy.

However, for those who know the truth and choose to cowardly shirk their duty for fear of losing their reputation or congregation, I have nothing but disdain. Cowardice under fire is among the most reprehensible traits clergymen can exhibit. Granted, they may one day turn and act on the Faith which they've given mental assent to. When that day comes, my hand will be extended to them, no questions asked. But until that time comes, the coward must be shamed. There are lives at stake here and eternity is in the balance. The AFRC does not need moral cowards and will neither seek nor coddle them.

Q: I've followed your newspaper war with the Rev. J. W. I know that he is a liberal and that he's made absurd charges concerning the various Reformed ministries in northeast Ohio. Still, why must you respond in public? Shouldn't the church keep its infighting out of the public eye? Don't you think these fights will alienate readers from the Gospel? Finally, are you willing to stop the war?

A: Pardon me, but there is a battle and we are in the process of winning it. The war will stop when Christ exercises Lordship over all. We cannot and we will not allow liberal, homosexual-ordaining, abortion-promoting blasphemers like W. to carry the day in the public square. For too long the church has cowered in her pietistic-dualistic bunkers in the face of the enemy. She has ceded the plain of battle to the God-hating apostates without even firing a shot. The AFRC was founded to reverse such suicidal trends.

We respond in public, for that is where the fight is. No, I don't believe this causes division in the church, for W. isn't part of the body in the first place. Those evangelicals who are squeamish about our defense of the Faith, are so because in the heat of battle their own theological deficiencies are pointed out and their lack of

action exposed. The plain fact is, when truth combats error, men are convinced one way or the other. AFRC churches have benefited both numerically and spiritually from “fighting the good fight” and we will continue to “march from victory unto victory till every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord over all.”

Q: I've heard that Reformed churches believe that you are saved through baptism. Is this true?

A: No, it is not true. We do not hold to “baptismal regeneration.” Within the AFRC we have both Reformed Baptists who hold to “believers’ baptism,” meaning some verbal confession is first required, and Reformed Presbyterians who hold to paedobaptism or infant baptism. Paedobaptism from a Reformed perspective holds that children are baptized visibly into the covenant, meaning that they will be dealt with by God according to the terms of the covenant. There will be Jacobs and Esaus according to God’s election, but both will be held to the same covenant requirements.

Q: What are the main tenets of Christian Reconstruction?

A: To paraphrase the Creed of Christian Reconstruction, they are Calvinism, theonomic ethics (adherence to God’s Law), presuppositional thinking, postmillennial eschatology and dominionist orientation in social theory. For an introduction on the subject you may order from Chalcedon Andrew Sandlin’s *Reconstructionist Primer*.

For information on an AFRC church near you, contact:

Rev. Jeffrey A. Ziegler
Christian Evangelistic Endeavors and Reformation
Bible Institute
35155 Beachpark Dr.
Eastlake, Ohio 44095

Rev. Jeffrey A. Ziegler is founder and president of Christian Endeavors and Reformation Bible Institute. Christian Endeavors was founded in 1983 as a Christian educational organization providing theological lectures and materials to help churches across the denominational spectrum develop a comprehensive Biblical world-life-view and to reconstruct an explicitly Christian civilization. Rev. Jeff Ziegler has lectured in over 600 churches and pastors' conferences comprising 18 denominations and spanning the North American continent, Great Britain and Germany.

Reformation Bible Institute was founded in 1985 as a means to train pastors and laymen in the theological pinions of the historic Reformed Faith and Christian Reconstruction. Specifically RBI focuses on Calvinism, Theonomic Ethics (Biblical Law), Presuppositional Apologetics, Knoxian Activism, Christian History and the disciplines of Protestant political-economic social theory. Since 1985 over 500 students have passed through the halls of RBI in northeast Ohio and many others have taken courses through correspondence.

Rev. Ziegler is also co-founder and moderator of the Association of Free Reformed Churches and the Ohio Reconstruction Society. He is an author with articles appearing on a regular basis in Christian periodicals such as The Christian Statesman, The Forerunner and The Chalcedon Report. He is the editor of both the “Revival Flame” newsletter and “The Puritan Storm” homepage and is a board member of the 135-year-old National Reform Association.

In addition to ministry duties, Jeff Ziegler is president of The Continental Group, a think tank for political activism and the culmination of over twenty years of political involvement. In this capacity Ziegler has been a campaign advisor and strategist, press secretary, campaign manager and has authored numerous position papers and legislation at the local and state level. He can be contacted at 216-289-2553 or ceejazieg@aol.com.

NEW CALVIN CD-ROM

John Lofton is offering a new CD-ROM that contains, among other things, all of John Calvin’s commentaries.

The price is \$55 plus \$4 to mail.

For more details and/or a brochure, contact John at:

313 Montgomery Street
Laurel, Maryland 20707
Phone: 301-490-7266. Fax: 301-953-3423
Email: JLOf@aol.com

Dethroning God

By R. J. Rushdoony

The religion pages in the newspapers are usually sad reading. On Saturday, January 3, 1998 *The Stockton [California] Record* (p. D6) had three pastors write briefly on "Religion and The Family." The minister of a "Spiritual Truth Center" insisted, in answer to the question, "What are your faith's rules for forming families?", that Jesus "was not interested in the rules." The pastor of the Christian Life Center also held, "I don't think we have any particular rules concerning forming families." This in spite of the fact that four of the Ten Commandments are family-centered! The Roman Catholic priest (St. Luke's Catholic Church) did not like the word "rules" either, but he at least spoke of the family "as a call to a vocation."

These men have gone beyond, as have most of an erring clergy, using the word "law"; now they choke on rules!

I have heard people insist that they abstain from adultery, not because it is God's law, but because they respect or love their spouse. In so saying, they have denied God and enthroned their love.

Insight magazine, January 5, 1998, p. 5, tells us that "Pollsters Find God in American Hearts." The results are similar to those reported for at least half a century. Some 95% of those responding to a recent Fox News/

Opinion Dynamics poll declared they believed in God; 63% believe there is a devil; (59% of Democrats believe there is a devil but 60% of Republicans do, whatever that means); 84% believe in miracles; and 88% believe in heaven.

But this means little or nothing. I have never been to Mexico, but I know that it exists some 400 plus miles south of me. Believing that makes no difference to my life. Similarly, to believe in a God who has no rules or laws makes no difference to people's lives, and all too many church members are lawless in any Biblical sense. I have heard people insist that they abstain from adultery, not because it is God's law, but because they respect or love their spouse. In so saying, they have denied God and enthroned their love.

We have become an antinomian people, and, before we blame politicians and criminals for our problems, we had better see how the churches, with their antinomianism, have led the way into lawlessness.

A god without law is no god at all. He has been dethroned and replaced by man. We are a lawless people because we have religiously chosen to be so.

I have become used to people lying about what I believe. In speaking and writing, I have stressed our goal not as coercion but conversion, not revolution but regeneration, and no reporter has ever quoted me on that, nor any religious leader. But when they misrepresent the word of God, it is nothing for them to represent falsely a man's word!

When we dethrone God in our vain imagination, all of the offenses are simple and commonplace. I was a young man when the meaning of Isaiah 56:10 first struck me with horror: God speaks of his watchmen and shepherds as "all dumb dogs, that cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber." Now at age 82, my horror is no less.

But man's work is vain. God is not dethroned: he reigns in majesty; let his enemies repent and tremble.

Random Notes, 81

By R. J. Rusbdooony

1. Peter Hammond's excellent reports on Africa have given you glimpses of the Islamic persecution and enslavement of Christians in southern Sudan, the black and Christian area, by the northern Sudanese, Arab and Islamic. Southern Sudan became Christian by the 6th century A. D., as the Nubian Kingdom. More than once since then, Christians have been enslaved and persecuted by Islam to the point of obliteration, but the Nubians' faith has revived. As Peter Hammond has pointed out, the three great enemies of Christ in Africa are Islam, Marxism, and witchcraft. No group has been more dedicated to the slave trade in Africa than Islam. It is ironic that Black Muslims can see Islam in favorable terms. (The Islamic slave trade in Europe ended only in the late 1800s.) European involvement in the slave trade came with the Renaissance and a weakening of the Faith.

2. Much is said nowadays about child-rearing, as though there were one common U. S. practice, which is false. Every immigrant group had its own rules; among some, arranged marriages still prevail. In my background, faith and family were paramount: church attendance, prayer, Bible reading, and parental authority were taken for granted. One result: an almost non-existent crime rate prevailed. Moving from rural California to urban Detroit in 1925-1931, I found myself in an American setting, a strange experience. Perhaps someone has written on the weird Anglo-American child-rearing of those years, but it was very strange. It was believed by too many fathers that a boy's needs were cold showers and frequent enemas! Honestly, what those kids went through was horrible to imagine, but it was true. The enema was seen as a cure-all, and boys feigned hearty health to avoid the cure. As for the cold showers, it all seemed sadistic to me. Later on I found that some physical education instructors also believed in cold showers, and I developed an abiding dislike of them all! Ah, the perils of growing up American! Thank God for immigrant parents who never heard of child-rearing "experts."

3. Thank God for intelligent, very wise doctors, like mine. Among the foods now forbidden to me is the eggplant! Eggplants grow so well here, that it seems everyone grows them to give away. Do you want to get rid of your pastor? Grow a garden and give him vegetables he detests! His thrifty wife will insist that the family must eat them, and father must set a good example! Finally, when the children mature and leave, it is no longer necessary to set a good example for them. Of course, wives never need a good example set for them!

4. *The Christian Observer*, May, 1998, pp. 19-22, has an excellent account by Parker T. Williamson on "Return of the Feminists—Re-imagining Revival." A Minneapolis conference of 900 persons included c. 200 Presbyterians. The conference program cited this quotation: "I found God in myself, and I loved her. I loved her fiercely." One woman declared, "We are the light of the world. What we do with our experience makes us light to the world." These "lights" are fighting for solidarity with gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons.

One woman, a professor of ethics at a seminary, held that "capitalism destroys religion," and the right-wing churchmen are therefore destroyers of religion. Another woman seminary professor held all sexuality to be sacred and clean: "In the heart and soul of the deities, we are all loved, and it doesn't matter who we're sleeping with." Another speaker described the removal of a cross from the sanctuary as "life giving," and another speaker's denial of Jesus Christ's uniqueness as the Son of God brought forth a standing ovation.

But the key question is this: How can anyone stay in a church which tolerates this kind of thinking? It is easy to point to errors in other churches and to wink at those in our own. In some of our smaller and ostensibly orthodox denominations, a loose view of Genesis chapters 1-11 is tolerated, and in the name of theories which can be used to reduce much of the Bible to myth—and little or nothing is done to fight these views.

It is easy enough to call attention to the early medieval church's pornography era, and to a pope who actually denied Jesus to worship Venus. What about the false beliefs in our own church? Will God judge us godly if we condemn ancient Sodom and Gomorrah while tolerant of our own towers of Babel? To be an expert in condemning the sins of others while forgetful of our own is the mark of a Pharisee, and the Pharisees are now much more in evidence on all sides.

These new Pharisees, like those at Minneapolis, want to "reform," above all else, God himself, not other people, and least of all themselves. This is what modernism is at heart all about, how to reform God and to justify yourself and your sin. The modernists want to reform God and hence their extreme self-righteousness and self-justification. These Pharisees want their sin to become the new righteousness. And yet some "evangelical" seminary professors long to have the same "respectability" as the modernists! Be sure of one thing: we here at Chalcedon have no use for such respectability, nor for those who hunger and thirst for it.

All I Really Need to Know I Learned in the Old Testament (Part 1)

By Steve M. Schlissel



You've heard it said, "The Jews have the Old Testament and Gentiles have the New Testament." No. The meaning of the Old is today inaccessible apart from the New and the New is utterly incomprehensible without the Old. Better to say that *Christians alone have the Scriptures,*

for the Old and New Testaments constitute the one Word of God. Yet I shall use our traditional terms, *Old Testament* and *New Testament* throughout this article, for there is no convenient alternative.

For even in the "New Testament" people did not think of themselves as "New Testament Christians."

It was less than 1000 years ago that the Bible was divided into chapters and then verses. No question about it, this has been very helpful. It is convenient, for example, when talking to a fellow-believer to be able to tell him, "You know, it says in such-and-such a place . . ." Or, if we are in church and the minister says, "Turn to such and such a passage," everyone, because of this division of chapters and verses, can turn there together. And concordances would be a tough sell without chapter and verse numberings. The convenience is obvious. Not so obvious, perhaps, is the grave danger this splicing poses to our mindset toward the Bible itself.

For it often feels as though we've come to look at the Bible as if its contents were actually and inherently divisible into these neat (or clumsy) little sections, these

highly artificial impositions on the texts which we call chapters and verses. Thus we hear arguments that begin, "I have a verse that says . . ." when the arguer believes his snippet has independent value even though wrested from its context. It seems never to occur to some that when the verse is taken out of the sentence and the sentence is taken out of the paragraph, and the paragraph is taken out of the passage, and the passage is taken out of the chapter, and the chapter is taken out of the letter, and the letter is taken out of the general context altogether, that *meaning* is affected. Lest we forget, Paul never wrote *a verse* in his life. He wrote letters.

The Erroneous "Great Divide"

More deeply affecting than chapters and verses, however, is the grand divide imposed by man: that little page which *divides* the Old and New Testaments. For even in the "New Testament" people did not think of themselves as "New Testament Christians." They did not say, "We are New Testament Christians," nor would the thought ever have entered their minds! They rather said, "We believe the Scriptures. The Scriptures have been fulfilled in our presence."

The Bible is the Word of God. That page between the Old Testament and the New Testament was placed there by man. If someone wants to keep it there to mark a relative place within Scripture, I suppose that's fine. Yet it is commonly looked upon as the divider between two separate revelations. That is wrong. Such thinking fundamentally alters the character of Scripture as a medium and thus necessarily alters its message. Though the saints in "the second section" never thought like that, *we* have come to think like that.

We commonly bind the New Testament separately from the Old Testament. Yet (ironically!) when we turn to the New Testament, the very first thing it says is, "This is a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." Now who is David and who is Abraham? Where can I find out? The Old Testament. It is as if the New Testament is saying, "What are you doing here? You must begin at the beginning." For the New Testament is not just pregnant with the Old Testament; it's giving birth to its thinking, hope, ideology, worldview, orientation, language, promise, and texts all over the place!

And so when Mary is given the great news about her

appointed role, she goes to visit her relative and talks about her soul glorifying the Lord and her spirit rejoicing in God her Savior in “Old Testament” words. All (future) generations will call her blessed, she says. And by this she does not mean that from now on she is going to be portrayed wearing blue and hanging out in gardens with lambs and little children around her, all kneeling before her and worshipping her. She means that everyone will say that she is unique because the promises given to all the people of Israel in the past, *i. e.*, in the Old Testament, are finding fruition in what she shall bear! All that the fathers of the Faith looked for is to begin its fulfillment on earth through her. The seamless theme of the covenant is coming to fullness in a most special way and her role is unspeakably blessed. She shall “deliver” the Deliverer into this world. A most extraordinary thing.

The Bible is the Word of God. That page between the Old Testament and the New Testament was placed there by man.

But people say, “No. This is altogether new. And from Mary’s story on, we really don’t need the Old Testament.” Yet such an idea could not possibly have existed in the mind of any New Testament believer, let alone Mary. See how Mary expresses her joy? She exclaims that what is happening to her is nothing other than God’s helping his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever. You see the way she thought? She didn’t say, “Wow, I hope this ‘Magnificat’ makes it into the New Testament!” No, for her this was simply the fulfillment and the continuation of Scripture. And so Zechariah also praises the God of Israel. The New Testament, looked at this way, is a thoroughly “Jewish” document, *i. e.*, a covenant document, just as the Old Testament is a covenant document, together forming one document. The two *testaments* are not two *covenants*. The new is a *realization* of that which had gone before, not a negation. For verification of this we have the words of Jesus Christ himself. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

It says in Acts 17, “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.”

Note well Paul’s methodology. How did he witness? Did he take out Colossians and say, “Look, I wrote this letter to Colosse, and I want you to see what I wrote. Give me a minute while I exegete it for you.” No, he pulled out a scroll and he unrolled it and he reasoned with them *from the Scriptures*. Which means what? It means, whatever Scriptures were there. And at the time, it happened to be the Old Testament.

The New Testament is simply the completion, the finalization of the Scriptures that we already had. *It is not a new and separate book*. It is new only in terms of fulfilling, of “realizing” the Old Book. The Old Book was perfectly adequate to testify to Jesus Christ in its own right, on its own feet without a New Testament. Why, the New Testament itself testifies to the adequacy of the Old Testament!

The Unitary “Two” Testaments

The “early church” did not have a New Testament. They had only what we call the Old Testament Scriptures, yet never did anyone say, “Boy, these are so inadequate. I wish I had some New Testament.”

Of course, in the plan of God we certainly came to need what we call the New Testament. Among other benefits, we have in the New Testament, ripe for all the world, the inspired interpretation of what Christ has done in history and what it means that he has come. Therefore, God has given it to us in writing, in permanent form, available to the whole world. But at first there was no such thing as a New Testament. And even for a couple of centuries afterward it wasn’t called the New Testament. It was called the writings of the apostles.

The early Christians had a different mindset, consisting of the old Scriptures—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—and the new Scriptures, the writings of the apostles. They had “divisions” in the law. They had “divisions” of the Bible, to which God has added one more. *The Bible is not the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is the Law, the Prophets, the Writings, and the Apostles.* One Scripture, one covenant, one Word of God.

Thus Christ bore witness to the witness of the “Old Testament.” “Search the Scriptures,” he said, “for they are those which testify of me.” Search the Scriptures, he told them. What Scriptures would they look up? 1 Corinthians? What would they look up? The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings: that is all they had.

A Single Book, a Single Message

And Jesus spoke about what concerned him in the Scriptures and opened up the minds of the apostles after his resurrection to what the Scriptures taught so that they might understand the Scriptures. In one of the most telling passages in this regard, “He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And

beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Lk. 24:25-27).

We are talking about a mindset here. Failure to grasp the mindset of “New Testament believers” regarding “Old Testament Scripture” has led to a radical mindset too often encountered twenty centuries down the pike. People think, “The Old Testament, well that tells of one way of salvation. And the New Testament, that teaches another way of salvation.” Many Jews at the time of our Lord were very mistaken in their view of the Old Testament, but Jesus was not mistaken. And neither were the apostles. Read properly, the Old Testament taught the way to eternal life.

The New Testament is simply the completion, the finalization of the Scriptures that we already had. It is not a new and separate book.

The Old Testament Gospel

When somebody asked Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” did he say, “I didn’t inspire Paul yet. You have to wait until Paul tells you.” No, he didn’t. He said, “*What do the Scriptures say?*” And the man quoted what they said. Jesus said, “You are right. Go do this and you will live.” Now the man said, “I have done all that.” Jesus replied, “Let’s see if you really have.” And then Jesus told him something that didn’t sit as well with him. Jesus referred over and over again to the Old Testament Scriptures as containing the keys of life. In fact, in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Jesus tells of a wicked rich man who was calloused to the needs of a poor righteous man outside his gate. When they both died, the rich man went to Hell and was in torment, and the poor man, Lazarus, went into Abraham’s bosom (quite a figure for heaven!). And when Lazarus got there, the rich man was looking to him longingly, saying, “Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my relatives so that they won’t have to come to this place. Send somebody. If you want, send me; I don’t much like it here myself.” But Abraham said, “No, they have Moses and the Prophets. If they want to avoid hell let them listen to *the Old Testament*” (Authorized Brooklyn Version).

It is one Bible, one Word of God. Now the man in Hell, the rich man—church history has given him the name Dives—said, “No, no, but if someone rises from

the dead, then they will really believe. Do a miracle and they will really believe, I know it.” And Abraham said to him, “If they don’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, they won’t believe even if someone rises from the dead.” Even if someone does zippity-do-da’s through the air, even if someone circumnavigates the globe on fire and comes down with unsinged clothing, no matter what happens, no matter what is done in their faces, if people will not listen to and be saved by the Word of God—and what is the Word of God here? It is Moses and the Prophets—they will not listen to and be saved on the basis of independent evidence or even by witnessing a miracle. The problem then and now is not in the Scriptures; it is in the hearers. It is because their hearts were hard that they heard not the Word of God. This is the uniform testimony of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, “I don’t even have to condemn you at the last day. You know who I am going to call as a witness against you? Surprise! Moses. You talk a lot about Moses. But guess what, Moses is going to be in the accuser’s box. Not in the defender’s box. Moses is going to say to you, ‘*I don’t know you. I never justified the way you think at things. I testified of Jesus Christ*’” (ABV again!).

No Old Testament Inferiority

It is impossible to think—upon reading the New Testament—that there is the slightest disparaging or disrespectful attitude among the righteous toward the Old Testament, any attitude that regarded it as in any way inferior, inadequate or imperfect. Just as Moses is not less perfect for the Prophets having been added, so is the Old Testament not a whit less perfect for the New being added. But that New Testament *title page*, that one page between the two Testaments, has changed the way we look at *the Bible*.

There is really only one covenant, one Book: the Bible, the Scriptures. This is Jesus’ teaching. This is Peter’s teaching. This is Peter’s preaching. What does he preach on Pentecost? “Hey, everything that the Bible talked about is happening here right now.” He didn’t say, “Let’s have a New Testament.” He said, “This is it. This is the Old Testament come into its own” (ABV). And Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, tells the one who is going to follow in his footsteps that he should continue in what he has learned and become convinced of “because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures.”

What were these Scriptures? The book of Revelation? Hardly! Isn’t it a wonder that people today commonly start their Christian life by reading the book of Revelation? “I am a new Christian, and I have read Revelation. I know that Ronald Wilson Reagan is the 666 because there’re six letters in each of those names. I know.” Well, such people know nothing. Because the New Testament Christians got the book of Revelation as

an encouragement *to them*, and it is uninterpretable apart from a thorough familiarity with Old Testament imagery. So if you want to understand Revelation—just like Matthew’s genealogy—go back to the Old Testament and start there.

The Bible’s Testimony to its Unity

The Bible is one book, no matter what you may have been told to the contrary. The Book itself—except for that page between the testaments—testifies that this is the case. “And how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

When somebody asked Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?,” did he say, “I didn’t inspire Paul yet. You have to wait until Paul tells you”?

What was the manual that Timothy carried around with him? It is what we would call the Old Testament. Of course, once the New Testament Scriptures are extant, that is to say, once they exist, they are fully, equally authoritative with the Old Testament Scriptures; and naturally they are bound together in the same way that the Prophets were bound together with Moses. Or that the Psalms were bound together with Moses and the Prophets. They form one book as the Word of God. Therefore, all I really need to know I learn in the Old Testament.

That is why the New Testament teaches me that Abraham believed in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ said, “Abraham saw my day and he rejoiced.” The father of the Jews, therefore, was a Christian. This sounds funny only

because people insist on these imposed divisions.

And they will say, “If you are a Jew you are not a Christian.” Well, okay; I understand what that might mean. But really, if you are a true Jew, you are Christian. And if you are a Christian, you are a true Jew, because you are a child of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ, the one that Abraham believed in. Because Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. And he became the father of all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. Because when he believed he was not circumcised. And God justified him as a Gentile to show the way of salvation and justification has always been, is now and shall always be by faith.

The Bible tells us in Heb. 11 that Moses had faith. And guess who the object of his faith was? Christ! Isn’t that peculiar? Moses was a Christian. He believed on him whom we believe in. And so those who say that they are Jews but who do not believe in Jesus Christ are not really full Jews. Isn’t that a painful thing to think about? The power of self-deception is great. And we all know how powerfully we can deceive ourselves. But while screaming, “The Book, the Book!” they sound just like the people in the times of the prophets. When the prophets would come and indict the people of Israel, some of them who were “religiously observant” but wouldn’t believe would cry, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!”—meaning that, “The temple is among us and therefore nothing can happen to us.” And so people think that if they have some superstitious attachment to some book, or they say to somebody, “Hey, pray for me,” that is very religious and that they are safe. But there is no safety outside a true belief in Jesus Christ and compliance with his Word. And that teaching is from the Old Testament on through the New Testament, the one Book. Thus, all I really need to know I learned in the Old Testament.

(Part 2 will appear in the September issue.)

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 24 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

NOW AVAILABLE!

Restoring Christian Civilization

Tapes of these historic lectures at Reformed Heritage Church are now available. Hear Andrew Sandlin and Brian Abshire share chapters from their new book. Topics include: Evangelism and the 21st Century, The Sociology of Christendom, The Roots of Social Rot, Reconstructing the Church, Family and State, Why the Reformation Failed, and much more.

Cost: \$5.00 each postpaid

To subscribe to this series, contact:

Susan Burns

P. O. Box 369

Vallecito, CA 95251

(209) 736-6396

email: sburns@goldrush.com

THE BIBLE, YOUR CHILDREN and THE FUTURE

Chalcedon's Regional Conference

Chalcedon Presbyterian Church
Dunwoody, Georgia

November 21, 1998

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Family Economics and Wealth Production
College-Level Home Schools
Christian Expectations in the 21st Century
Strategies for Survival and Victory

Speakers: R. J. Rushdoony, Andrew Sandlin and Brian Abshire

For more information, call (209) 736-6396

**The Baptism of Infants in the Old and New Covenants,
by Pastor Jim West**

This is an excellent study booklet containing 21 short chapters each with review questions for further study. Topics include "The Meaning of Baptism," "Baptism in the Old Testament," "The Meaning of the Covenant," "Principles of Interpretation," "Circumcision and Baptism," "Family Baptisms — Premises and Principles," "Children are Disciples," "The Apostasy of Baptized Children," and much more.

It is suitable for Sunday School, small group study, family worship or personal study.

Cost: \$5.50 + \$1.25 shipping

To order contact:

Jim West

5216 Locust Avenue

Carmichael, California 95608

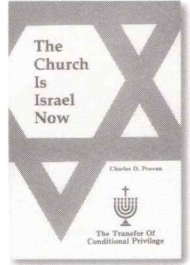
(916) 488-5569

email: jimwest@jps.net

Ross House Books

The Church Is Israel Now

By Charles D. Provan. During this century, Christians have been told that God has an unconditional love for persons racially descended from Abraham. Membership in Israel is said to be a matter of race, not faith. This book repudiates such a racialist viewpoint and abounds in Scripture references which show that the blessings of Israel were transferred to all those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Paperback, 74 pages, \$7.50



The Institutes of Biblical Law (Volume I)

By R. J. Rushdoony. Biblical law is a plan for dominion under God, whereas its rejection is to claim dominion on man's terms. The general principles (commandments) of the law are discussed as well as their specific applications (case law) in Scripture. Many consider this to be Rushdoony's most important work. Hardback, 890 pages, indices, \$35.00

Law and Society (The Institutes of Biblical Law, Vol. II)

By R. J. Rushdoony. The relationship of Biblical Law to communion and community, the sociology of the Sabbath, the family and inheritance, and much more are covered in the second volume. Contains an appendix by Herbert Titus. Hardback, 752 pages, indices, \$25.00

Name	E-mail
Address	
City	State Zip
Daytime Phone	Amount Enclosed
<input type="checkbox"/> Check <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> M/C Account Number:	
Signature	Card Exp. Date

The Church Is Israel Now	Qty. _____ at \$7.50 equals	\$
The Institutes of Biblical Law	Qty. _____ at \$35.00 equals	\$
Law and Society	Qty. _____ at \$25.00 equals	\$
Sales Tax (7.25% for CA)		
Shipping		\$
Total Enclosed		\$

U.S. postage: add 15% (minimum of \$3)
 Foreign postage: add 20% (minimum of \$4)

Payment must accompany all orders. We do not bill.
 Foreign orders: Make checks payable in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank.
 Make checks payable to Ross House Books and send to:
 PO Box 67 • Vallecito, CA 95251, USA
 Phone: (209) 736-4365 • Fax: (209) 736-0536
 e-mail: chaloffi@goldrush.com



CHALCEDON

P.O. Box 158
Vallecito, CA 95251

Phone (209)736-4365 or Fax (209)736-0536
e-mail: chaloffi@goldrush.com; <http://www.chalcedon.edu>

NON-PROFIT U.S. Postage PAID Sacramento, CA PERMIT #1002
--

THE MINISTRY OF CHALCEDON

CHALCEDON (kal•see•don) is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and to cogent communication of a distinctly Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested ministers, scholars and laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches.

Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), which produced the crucial Christological definition: "Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man . . ." This formula directly challenges every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; Christ alone can announce that "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (*Matthew 28:18*). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the One who is the source of true human freedom (*Galatians 5:1*).

The Chalcedon Report is published monthly and is sent to all who request it.

Your donation in support of this ministry is appreciated.
All gifts to Chalcedon are tax deductible.