

CHALCEDON Report

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

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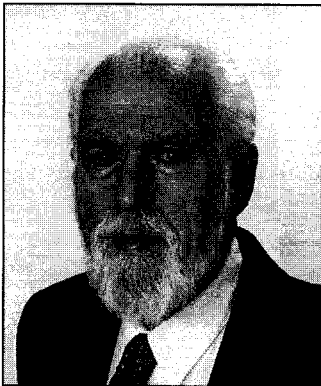
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The Failure of the Conservative Movement

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



The failure of the conservative movement in the United States has been a failure of the churches. This has been true in other countries as well. With rare exception, conservatives have lacked Biblical and theological roots. This is not surprising, given the fact that the clergy are

themselves abysmally ignorant.

I have repeatedly been amazed at the ignorance on the part of pastors and clergy of the doctrine of sin and total depravity. These are now termed by some as simply Calvinistic dogmas, but at one time they were common to all churches.

Without the doctrine of sin and total depravity, men will trust in the abilities of men and civil governments to do good, and they will concentrate powers in the hands of church and state, an action which will surely lead to evils. We have today a millennialist expectation of politics which is destructive to men and nations. In my lifetime, beginning with President Woodrow Wilson, more than a few times an apocalyptic hope has surrounded politics. The League of Nations and the United Nations are evidences of this. Many other like efforts are now forgotten. Who now remembers the Kellogg-Briand pact to outlaw war? In my early school days, it was hailed internationally as the dawn of a new era, and school teachers solemnly told us of its epoch-making nature.

Men and nations who disregard the fact that man is a sinner will never cope wisely with evil.

Again, the doctrine of soteriology, of salvation, has a great implication for society. It means that salvation comes, not by politics nor good workers, but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Man cannot be saved by acts of state,

but he can be corrupted thereby. Congress, parliaments, and other like bodies are in the salvation business, and their failures do not convince them of the error of their ways. The salvation state, instead of securing society's redemption, tends to work its damnation by shifting the hope of salvation from God to acts of state.

Furthermore, the state seeks to bring about communion though enforced community. Granted that hatred of other races and groups is evil, can it be solved by legislation or enforced communion? Community is a religious fact and it requires a unified faith. Racism is a modern fact, a product of evolutionary thinking. For Charles Darwin, evolution "explained" why some races were superior. Darwin never doubted Anglo-Saxon superiority. Like other evils of our time, racism had scientific origins, and, when science, faced with Hitler, chose to discard it, it blamed religion for racism!

Christian eschatology tells us what our hope is, and it depicts, in classic postmillennialism, the triumph of Christ from pole to pole, "From Greenland's icy mountains, to India's coral strands," as the old hymn had it. Now, on all sides, we see the decay of humanistic eschatologies, Marxist, democratic, scientific, and otherwise.

Those forms of humanistic eschatologies still surviving are weakening. At the same time, Christian eschatologies have become defeatist or escapist. They surrender the world to the devil. This is not surprising, given the fact that "conservative" churches have abandoned most of the Bible by abandoning God's law. Most modernists, by giving the prophets a social gospel meaning, have a bigger Bible than evangelical Christians.

The law of God was given as a means of dominion, of godly rule. But too many Christians limit their interest to being saved from Hell, not to the Kingdom of God. Not many pay attention to our Lord's command, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" or justice (*Mt. 6:33*).

The Christian element in the conservative movement lacks theology; the non-Christian elements are usually inconsistent humanists, closer to the Left than to anyone else.

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At present, by the grace of God, here and abroad some conservatives are beginning to rethink their position and to abandon antinomianism. As a result, a sound theology may again undergird politics. Until, then, the conservative movement will continue to retreat because it has nowhere else to go. It better represents the Left's yesterdays than conservatism's future.

But more is needed, for "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:17-26). Christians must manifest their faith in works of grace and charity. Socialism is the humanistic solution to society's problems with the sick, unemployed, needy, homeless, and broken peoples. Today statist "social services"

insist on their "right" to do what was once a part of the Christian ministry.

In recent years, more and more Christians have begun ministries to human needs, with excellent results. Certainly Christian and home schools represent a major advance in the Christian ministries, as do services to care for unwed girls who are pregnant. All across the U. S., such ministries are abounding, and new areas of relevance are steadily developed. Quietly and steadily, a major movement is underway that promises to reconstruct both church and state.

Almost any issue of the *Chalcedon Report* will tell you of a few such activities.

EXTENDED EDITORIAL

Why Conservatives Will Lose

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

*How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD
be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.*

1 Kings 18:21

*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold
nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

Revelation 3:16

The Achilles Heel of Conservatism



My review of Robert Bork's *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* in the March, 1997 issue of the *Chalcedon Report* identified what I consider the Achilles heel of the modern conservative movement: that, from an ideational standpoint, modern conservatism is nothing more than Enlightenment liberalism in

less fully developed form, an opinion Bork himself seems to share, albeit less forthrightly. I stated: "Like the late Allan Bloom in his blockbuster *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bork pinpoints the Sixties as a pivotal era of liberal radicalism but, unlike Bloom, is at pains to trace the social conflagration to a slow burning that had been going on for

decades below the perceptible surface. That slow burning Bork identifies as the corollary of the liberal vision: 'Liberalism always had the tendency to become modern liberalism, just as individualism and equality always contained the seeds of their radical modern versions' (p. 8):

"Since liberalism is a movement away from, an impulse, not a stable agenda, it continually revises the agenda it has for any particular moment. That accounts for the gradual transformation of the older or classical liberalism into the radical individualist component of today's liberalism. (p. 62)

"Two pages later Bork contrasts modern liberalism with conservatism, the latter of which he correctly perceives as a modern residue of *classical* liberalism: John Locke's political contractarianism, Adam's Smith's *laissez-faire* economics, British Whiggery, James Madison's republicanism, and so forth. Bork's panacea is the recovery of something of this classical liberal (*i.e.*, modern conservative) vision. The problem, according to Bork, is that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century classical liberalism just went too far.

"I am confident Bork does not perceive the contradiction of this thesis. He as much as acknowledges that conservatism and liberalism are cut from the same Enlightenment cloth (pp. 58-65), and that conservatism is a half-way house between Enlightenment rationalism and modern liberalism. But in so doing he delivers the historical and philosophical *coup de grace* to modern conservatism,

which is discovered to be nothing more than a transitional phase between a rigorous Christian Faith and therefore society, and the godless secularism that engulfs us today. It is forever the propensity of conservatism to shrink before the liberalism of the present—whatever form the latter may take: secular capitalism always paves the way for secular socialism; libertarianism always leads to anarchy which summons despotism; free-thinking always conduces to free-from-God-thinking; relentless franchise extension always ends in a lethal egalitarianism.¹ Conservatism is no match for liberalism, *which is simply the logical outworking of the inherent premises of conservatism.*² This inherent and fatal flaw is highlighted in the internecine debate presently rending the conservative movement.

Neocons and Theocons

By now, most conservatives (and even liberals) have heard about the flaming controversy sparked by the November 1996 symposium of the then-Neo-Conservative journal, *First Things*, titled *The End of Democracy? A Judicial Usurpation of Politics*. The text of the original symposium and much of the ensuing exchange have been bound together in a single volume under the title *The End of Democracy*.³ The symposium, headlined by Neo-Conservatives Richard John Neuhaus, Robert Bork and Charles Colson, took as its premise the statement by Hadley Arkes: “In one issue after another touching the moral ground of our common life, the power to legislate has been withdrawn from the people themselves, or the ‘consent of the governed’ and transferred by the judges into their own hands.”⁴ This assertion offered nothing novel or revolutionary inasmuch as it has been a staple of the conservative critique of modern society. What *was* revolutionary was the symposiasts’ suggestion that this judicial usurpation increasingly called into question the very legitimacy of what more than one of the contributors referred to as the “American Regime.” While, contrary to the accusations of the symposium’s frenzied respondents, the contributors did not counsel civil disobedience nor, much less, armed revolution, they did point out that if this trend of usurpation of democracy by the judiciary were not reversed, civil disobedience and even armed revolution may be alternatives worth considering.

The symposium elicited a storm of protest, including the resignation of two *First Things* board members, Gertrude Himmelfarb and Walter Berns. Conservative anchors like *National Review* and *Commentary* as well as liberal organs like *The New Republic* weighed in with comment.

While the controversy generated a gradient of opinions, it is possible to narrow them down to two schools, what Jacob Heilbrunn in the *New Republic* (in an otherwise embarrassingly inept piece) designated the “neocons” and the “theocons.” The Neo-Conservatives are essentially the New York wine-and-cheese set, former Sixties radicals converted about a quarter century ago to a more broadly conservative agenda. It includes the likes of William Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, and Peter Berger. The neocons

exerted a great influence in the Eighties during the Reagan Administration and today constitute the mostly highly visible of the intelligentsia of the conservative movement.

The neocons tend to line up with the views of University of Chicago political philosopher Leo Strauss in elevating the principles of free democracy and the American experiment expressed in its Founding Document. The neocons strongly emphasize the philosophical—but certainly not the religious—notion of “natural rights” which the Declaration of Independence and the Founding presupposes. To the neocons, it is this idea of natural rights that forms the possibility and structure of civil government.

By contrast, the theocons have come increasingly to rely on the explicitly religious notion of natural law akin to the old Thomistic conviction that God’s moral law is woven into the very structure of the universe and that man can apprehend it—cannot *but* apprehend it—apart from the special revelation of the Bible or the pronouncements of the church. For the theocons, it is this natural law that is the “founding of the Founding” and without which the underlying moral character of democracy incrementally erodes and then becomes the will of an autonomous hedonistic majority. The *First Things* symposiasts highlight recent Supreme Court decisions—especially starting with *Roe*—which extensively disregard natural law and snatch democratic decision-making from the hands of the populists and their legislature to boot.

The theocons are especially upset (and they should be) by the recent *Romer v. Evans* decision in which the Supreme Court struck down Colorado’s Constitutional Provision, Amendment 2, which prohibited the enactment of laws which would furnish preferential treatment to homosexuals; *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), in which the High Court suggested that those who questioned the Court’s imprimatur on abortion were questioning the legitimacy of the civil order and should, to put it bluntly, shut up; and finally, the case of the Ninth Circuit Court’s decision *Compassion in Dying v. Washington* which concluded that the State of Washington may not prohibit physicians from assisting suicides.

The theocons are convinced that these cases represent simply the latest in a long line of court decisions striking out against the moral law of God and arrogating to itself the task of framing law in contempt of American citizens and their elected representatives in Congress. The neocons would not disagree, but the neocons are afraid that the theocons’ appeal to the theocratic standard of natural law, however amorphous, creates an atmosphere of anarchy in which “weekend warriors” may threaten to take the law into their own hand. David Brooks of the visibly neocon *Weekly Standard* even mourned about “the Anti-American Temptation” the theocons were risking by their suggestions.

The Christian Reconstructionist Assessment

Christian Reconstructionists, Christian theocrats⁵ and many other Christian defenders of an explicitly and self-conscious Biblical social order find this internecine struggle

among the conservatives rather amusing. We also find it powerfully expressive of the inherent flaw and even deformation of the conservative movement. Beyond the issue of simple conservative turf protection, what we really observe in this literary debate is not what liberals gleefully consider (and conservatives noisily deplore) as a crack-up in the conservative ranks, *but merely the principles of conservatism carried to their (il)logical conclusions.*

The Neo-Conservative “Natural Right”

The Irving Kristol and *Weekly Standard* crowd, and to a somewhat lesser extent, the *National Review* crew, are passionately interested in playing at social criticism. Because, as Bork unwittingly admitted in *Slouching Toward Gomorrah*, modern conservatism as an heir of classical liberalism is merely a transitional phase to modern secular liberalism, we can expect that conservatives delight to defend to the death the liberal gains of the past, just so long as they can position themselves as opponents of the liberal agenda of the present. Several examples will suffice to show this observation to be accurate.

Sixties conservatives were, by and large, vehement opponents of the civil rights initiative—not, in most cases, because they were racists (although unfortunately this was occasionally true), but because they saw this initiative as usurpation of local and state self-government. Today it is hard to find a conservative anywhere who is opposed to the entrenched civil rights ethos and, in fact, some modern conservatives like Richard John Neuhaus (until lately identified as a neocon) were heavily involved with Martin Luther King in the Sixties civil rights protests. Perhaps it is not quite correct to speak of “entrenched civil rights,” since “civil rights” today does not mean lack of discrimination, but rather re-discrimination on the grounds of the logic of the so-called “affirmative action.” It was, of course, precisely this sort of discriminatory preferential treatment that the original civil rights movement calculated to eliminate. These days, of course, most of the conservatives either firmly question or adamantly oppose affirmative action, while stoutly defending the liberal civil rights agenda of the Sixties. Modern conservatives, one must understand, simply *adore* liberalism, so long as it is the liberalism of a quarter century ago. It is not surprising that the Neo-Conservatives adopt this stance. They are no less liberals today than they were in the Sixties; in fact, it may be correct to assert they are almost *precisely* the liberals of the Sixties who happened to have survived into the Nineties and now appear somewhat conservative.

Another obvious case: sexual immorality and changing sexual mores. Sixties conservatives were aghast at the sexual revolution almost as much as they were the political revolution going on right before their eyes; the two seemed to feed on each other. Conservatives were defenders of “traditional morality,” by which they meant at best a genteel Victorianism of those very forgettable Eisenhower years. By the Nineties, the Sixties sexual revolution had become the new sexual regime, and conservatives were busy

defending it against the new liberal trend—sexual perversion. *U. S. News and World Report* carried an insightful cover story⁶ detailing the psychological and social consequences of premarital sex, noting the odd silence of leading conservatives on the issue. Abortion and homosexuality are presently the defining issues for conservatives, who have left in the dust the days of arguing against “mere” immorality. Premarital sex and even adultery are unpleasant issues for nice, respectable conservatives, but they are not where the battle lies today. Of course, if this trend is not reversed, that is, when the normalization of homosexuality and abortion is woven into the consciousness of the nation by an egregious, perverted media, conservatives will maintain their courageous reticence about these issues, as they are confronting the vanguard issue of early next century—public bestiality and sadomasochism. That this scenario will—no, cannot *but*—occur should neither perplex nor horrify conservatives, particularly Neo-Conservatives. The benchmark, the defining characteristic of conservatives, is defending to the death the solid gain of the liberalism of recent date.

A final example: “primitive” conservatives from thirty to fifty years ago stoutly opposed the national socialism of Franklin Roosevelt infecting succeeding administrations. These conservatives saw Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and the minimum wage for what they were—socialistic schemes depriving the nation’s citizens of their economic freedom. Today’s conservatives talk excitedly about scaling back the welfare state, but most of them deem frighteningly “radical” the notion of scrapping the unjust larceny and chaotic programs of national socialism. They are elated to sponsor slightly smaller versions of The Great Society. *For conservatives, mark you, liberals are always right, just so long as they are liberals twenty to fifty years ago.* Modern conservatives lack (better, refuse to possess) any epistemological moral anchor, an immutable standard by which to govern life and society. This is nothing new. Arch-patriarch of modern conservatism, Russell Kirk, outlines “six canons of conservative thought”:

“(1) Belief that a divine intent rules society as well as conscience, forging an eternal chain of right and duty which links great and obscure, living and dead. . . .

“(2) Affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life. . . .

“(3) Conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes. The only true equality is moral quality. . . .

“(4) Persuasion that property and freedom are inseparably connected, and that economic leveling is not economic progress. . . .

“(5) Faith in prescription and distrust of ‘sophisters and calculators.’ . . .

“(6) Recognition that change and reform are not identical and that innovation is a devouring conflagration more often than it is a torch of progress. . . .”⁷

This is a prescription to take history seriously. The problem with conservatives, however, is not that they dislike history, but that they misunderstand historicity.⁸ Kirk is by no means offering an unchanging standard of life and morality, but merely the entrenched dogma of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The preservation of belief in a “divine intent,” preference for “variety and mystery of traditional life,” “acceptance that civilization requires orders and classes,” the essential relation between “property and freedom,” distrust of rationalism, and aversion to heady ideas of progress each springs from an unquestioning, abandoning faith in the order of the past. But the entire enterprise is virtually helpless and speechless today before the claims of a very recent past that has become quite different from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of Europe. Kirk himself was defending a serious dilution of and deviation from an explicitly Biblical and Christian social order, but by no means that order itself; he had in mind as his ideal conservative society the creepingly secularized progressivism of the Enlightenment era, the transitional phase from a Christian social order to a secular social order. Why should we be surprised that as right-wing Enlightenment lost its hold in a fanatically romantic West, conservatives would lose their confidence in Kirk’s prescription? All six of Kirk’s “canons” may seem perfectly commendable to conservatives, but without an epistemological anchor impervious to the ravages of time by which to maintain them, they eventually become nothing but hollow sounds amid a finely-tuned orchestra of a progressively decadent culture.

The Theocons

The theocons are scarcely better. They have rediscovered the moral force of “natural law.” Well, now. This is hoary tradition indeed—all the way back to Plato and other Greek philosophers, Thomas Aquinas, and certain American Founders, notably Jefferson. Ramesh Ponnura grasps the issue perceptively in his contribution to the *First Things* debate:

Adherents of natural law believe that moral truths can be discovered through reason alone. As Professor George puts it, “What people like me are arguing is that the standard of public policy should be what reason can understand, so a view should stand or fall based on its reasonableness. Biblical tradition can be the carrier of wisdom on matters like same-sex marriage, as can the Talmud. But we don’t appeal to the authority of the Bible or of the [Roman] Catholic Church in making our case. We appeal to principles of rationality that are available to all people.” So, for instance, when George and John Finnis of Oxford University testified in *Romer*—an

incident Heilbrunn records—not once did they invoke the Bible or any authority other than reason itself. Their reason was available to, and arguable by, non-believers.⁹

We hear in the theocon notion the echo of the old Thomistic dualism that man can derive from nature itself apart from Biblical revelation glorious divine truths woven into the structure of the universe. Let us not, then, introduce the Bible for fear we will be considered excessively religious, sectarian or dogmatic. These disciples of natural law wish to maintain the ethics and morality of the God of the Bible without either God or the Bible. The madman-philosopher Frederick Nietzsche last century called this bluff in *Beyond Good and Evil* when he noted:

With a stiff seriousness that inspires laughter, all our philosophers demanded something far more exalted, presumptuous and solemn [than the mere description of extant morality] from themselves as soon as they approached the study of morality: they wanted to supply a *rational foundation* for morality—and every philosopher so far has believed that he has provided such a foundation. Morality itself, however, was accepted as “given.” How remote from their clumsy pride was that task which they considered insignificant and left in dust and must—the task of description—although the subtlest fingers and senses can scarcely be subtle enough for it.

Just because our moral philosophers knew the facts of morality only very approximately in arbitrary extracts or in accidental epitomes—for example as the morality of their environment, their class, their church, the spirit of their time, their climate and part of the world—just because they were poorly informed and not even very curious about different peoples, times and past ages—they never laid eyes on the real problems of morality; for these emerge only when we compare *many* moralities. In all “science of morals” so far one thing was *lacking*, as strange as it may sound: the problem of morality itself; what was lacking was any suspicion that there was something problematic here. What the philosophers called a “rational foundation for morality” and tried to supply was, seen in the right light, merely a scholarly variation of the common *faith* and the prevalent morality; a new means of *expression* for this faith; and this just another fact within a particular morality; indeed, in the last analysis a kind of denial that this morality might be considered problematic—certainly the very opposite of an examination, analysis, questioning and vivisection of this very faith.¹⁰

Nietzsche was, of course, the quintessential modern nihilist and a very self-conscious nihilist at that. He saw the bland, compromised Christian presuppositions operating surreptitiously under the wolf-paws of a pretended external neutrality of Enlightenment philosophers. These philosophers communicated a diluted version of the ethics and morality of Christian philosophy quite apart from any affirmation of Biblical Christianity.

They wanted the benefits of Christianity without Christianity. *They wanted Paradise without God.*

The modern expression of natural law is the attempt to justify a very particular morality by a very universal appeal. The theocons, like most of the Enlightenment philosophers, want to be Christians of *some* sort, but avowedly not Biblical Christians. They want a morality and social order springing from that morality to which believer and non-believer can both assent. They cannot, however, afford to take the Bible seriously in their view of man any more than they can afford to take it seriously in their view of the state, because the Bible does not depict man as “neutral” and thus amenable to arguments about the existence of God and the moral structure of the universe. Rather it depicts man in his natural, unconverted state as at war with the God of the universe (*Rom. 3:9-19, 5:10; 1 Cor. 1:21, 2:14*). Though man unavoidably knows the truth since he himself is made in the image of God, he works ceaselessly and tirelessly to suppress that truth. The natural man has a vested interest in obscuring and eliminating every evidence for the existence and work of God he confronts both within himself and his environment.¹¹ The morality which the theocons champion is a derivative version of the morality of Biblical law, though they would never—*could* never—argue in favor of that morality on explicitly Biblical grounds. They assume that this morality is a “given” in the law of nature. All rational men can see it, acknowledge it, and act on it.

Nietzsche exploded this fancy. So did Dooyeweerd, Van Til, and Rushdoony, though from a distinctly Biblical perspective.¹² The latter knew that, like the Enlightenment predecessors, the natural law theorists attempt to smuggle a blandly Christian morality into the argument within the goods marked “natural law”—on which everyone can and should agree. They should possess the courage of their convictions—either return to an explicitly Christian morality, or embrace the nihilism which a denial of the Biblical basis of morality necessarily requires.

The “morality” that springs from natural law is, of course, a wax nose. For Plato, holding wives in common was natural, while for Hitler, the superiority of Aryans was natural. Natural law for the natural man is whatever man wants nature to mean. For example, John J. Reilly’s defense of the *First Things* symposium tries to allay the fears of the detractors who think the theocons are after an armed revolt: “The task of today’s conservatives is the relatively modest proposition of repairing the damage many of them did themselves twenty or thirty years ago. On the other side of the victory of today’s cultural conservatives, there is a world sort of like the Eisenhower administration, but without racial discrimination.”¹³ How comforting. This is the best that the devotees of natural law can hope for: a consolidation of the liberal gains of thirty to fifty years ago. In this tack, of course, they are no different from their Neo-Conservative detractors.

When the theocons call for a discussion of the possibility of civil disobedience or armed resistance if the

trend of judicial usurpation continues, and when the neocons respond in horror that such talk smacks of radicalism, neither can claim any objective authority beyond “transcendent morality” or “natural law.” For their part, the neocons do not even have that.

The Decadence Conservatism Has Produced

Perhaps the most fascinating and altogether ironic feature of the entire debate, however, is the conservatives’ (both neocon and theocon) total indifference to the fact that it is their own commitment to either “natural right” or “natural law” that laid the foundation for the very social decadence they now so witheringly decry. In his penetrating work, *The Sovereignty of Reason*,¹⁴ Frederick Beiser notes that the Church of England was the hothouse for the cultivation of the rationalism that eventually undermined the Faith by its appeal to natural law. Commitment to natural law subverted Christianity—and eventually Christian ethics. Both neocons and theocons desire a “reasonable” faith, a bland, civil religion, partly Christian, partly Jewish and partly whatever else, just as long as everybody behaves himself. The chief problem is that it is not clear on the premises of the most consistent natural man that Christianity, Judaism or behaving oneself is rational or reasonable. The natural man, as Van Til and Rushdoony have ceaselessly reminded us, has a stake in opposing and obliterating the knowledge of God and his law. As Van Til noted, if the unregenerate man had access to a button that could eliminate from his mind the sovereign, Triune God, his finger would always be on that button. Reason itself is not an objective “given” but is itself a divinely created instrument employed by the unregenerate to further their attack on God.¹⁵ It is one’s relationship to God that shapes the activity of his reason, not the other way around.

For this reason, natural law and natural religion is not merely useless: it is counterproductive. It flatters the unregenerate individual in his assault on the sovereign God. Each furnishes a rationalization and justification for his sin. Van Til makes this point abundantly clear in the section “The Believer Meets the Unbeliever” in his masterful *The Defense of the Faith*.¹⁶ If the unregenerate man is granted autonomy in his apprehension of the laws of nature, it is hard to argue with him when he concludes that the laws of nature do not express the God or morality of the Bible. It is this appeal to reason as final arbiter (which, after all, natural law or natural right *must* endorse) that creates the justification for the judicial usurpation of power that the Theo-Conservatives now so loudly protest. In other words, *it was the guiding assumption of their own religiously perverse ideas* (notably, rationalism) that obligingly plowed ground for the spread of the fertile seeds of modern judicial decadence. Modern liberals have simply replaced the conservatives’ autonomy of “natural law” and “natural right” with the autonomy of “postmodernism” and “judicial usurpation”; if man is permitted autonomy in one sphere he will soon claim autonomy in all spheres.

This is why neither neoconservatism nor theoconservatism can mount any effective defense against judicial usurpation or any other aspect of liberal decadence in modern culture. Conservatism assures its own doom.

The Conservative Dilemma

Conservatives lose, will always lose, must always lose, *because it is the nature of conservatism to lose*. The inherent premise of modern conservatism is the diligent quest to die a cultural death just a little more slowly than liberalism does. This is most evident in neo-conservatism (which is simply the more Rightward Version of the Old Left), but infects conservatives of all stripes. Because each expressly repudiates the epistemological anchor of the comprehensive authority and application of divinely inspired and infallible Christian Scripture, it is content (often even excited) to drift aimlessly on the turbulent sea of modern culture—just so long as it can boast that it is a drift, and not a dash, like that of the political liberals.

Conservatives do not seem to grasp that the solution to the decadence of the modern age to which liberalism has largely contributed is nothing conservatism can offer. A return to a blandly “conservative” past is no panacea, since *the past was never “conservative.”* The past, when it reflected the standards of Biblical Faith, was more or less Christian. When it did not, it was more or less anti-Christian. *There can be no such thing as a conservative past.* There can only be an opinion in the present that longs to restore certain aspects of the past that seem desirable from the vantage point of the later history we call the present. This is an unwise perspective (*Ec. 7:10*). History is forever changing—it (and each of its national, cultural, and societal components) is moving toward either greater fidelity and obedience to God, or toward greater infidelity and disobedience toward God. If the past which conservatives wish to recover is one of intense obedience like the Puritan era (and that conservatives of any stripe would favor it is highly unlikely), they should be shown that Biblical fidelity today may and must reach and exceed that even of the Puritan past. If the past which they wish to recover is merely that of a bland, hierarchical moralism (like much of the eighteenth century), they should be counseled that this era was itself a “liberal” era from the perspective of the Reformational sixteenth century (which itself the Roman Catholics at the time deemed dangerously progressive!), and merely, as noted above, a halfway house between a Biblical Faith and a full-fledged modern apostasy.

In any case, to attempt to recreate the past apart from recognition of intervening history is to insulate oneself from the benefits of the instances of progress since that era and from the lessons one may learn even from the apostasies since that era. While, therefore, there thus can be no such thing as a conservative past, there certainly can be a *Christian* future. It is this toward which we should ceaselessly work.

Why Christian Reconstructionists Will Win

“Christianity,” Rosenstock-Huessy observed, “is the founder and trustee of the future, the very process of

finding and securing it, and without the Christian spirit there is no real future for man.”¹⁷ We Christian Reconstructionists agree wholly. For this reason, we start from entirely different premises than conservatives. We start with the self-attesting Triune God speaking infallibly in Holy Scripture.¹⁸

Modern conservatives, like modern liberals and modern libertarians, lack any objective, authoritative anchor on which to base conclusions or their agenda. Liberals and libertarians are more vocal about this than conservatives are. Liberals, indeed, have an absolute authoritarian anchor, although it is far from an objective anchor. It is the absolute of man himself. Man is the measure of all things—his reason, experience and intuition. For modern liberals the standard is collective man, which reduces to elitist man in the form of the philosopher kings of the socialistic state. For the libertarians it is man as atomistic, individual man who is at the center of all things: man, by the very nature of man, is the ultimate touchstone.¹⁹

Conservatives are less forthright. Blatant rationalism or experientialism sounds too much like liberalism and blatant individualism sounds too much like libertarianism. Therefore, conservatives want to retain a respect for the past, for the orderly society, for “traditional values,” for the market (though they usually imply a “mixed” economy) and for “religion” (whatever that means). Conservatives, of course, do not elevate any of these factors to a prescriptive absolute. This means that at best one or more is a penultimate standard. The ultimate standard of conservative thought and action, like that of liberals and libertarians, is man himself. For neocons, natural right means man’s rights *qua* man and the democratic socio-political order created to secure those rights. For theocons, natural law means the morality woven into the structure of the universe knowable by man apart from special revelation. What it reduces to, however, is the philosophic justification of a bland, derived form of Christian morality. It lacks the force—and therefore the benefit—of a vibrant, Biblical Faith.

Christian Reconstructionists, Christian Theocrats, and others supporting an explicitly Biblical religion have, by contrast, an anchor for the soul and for society too. It is the Sovereign, Triune God who has expressed himself in the Bible. We therefore deny every expression of human autonomy—liberal, conservative or libertarian. We hold, in fact, that the lust for autonomy constitutes the original sin. As Van Til notes, there are only two classifications of individuals on earth, those who worship and serve the creature, and those who worship and serve the Creator.²⁰

Man made in the image of God, the summit of God’s creation, sinned by breaking the commandment of God. But sin did not catch God unaware. From eternity he had planned in the covenant of grace to redeem sinful man by the substitutionary blood-shedding of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God of very God, who became man of very man for us and for our salvation. God has chosen to redeem man by his unconditional grace which he works in the lives of

all he has chosen, all of whom appropriate justification (the judicial righteousness of Christ) by exercising faith alone, which is itself a gift of God (*Eph. 2:8, 9*).²¹

God's original calling for man was to exercise dominion over the earth under divine authority (*Gen. 1:27-29*). Though man sinned, this dominion commission is still his calling (*Gen. 9:1f*).²² In principle, the unredeemed man exercises a sinful, selfish dominion in all that he does; the redeemed man, by contrast, is restored to his place as God's vicegerent in the earth, exercising dominion in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, the True Dominion Man, under whose feet God has placed all of his enemies in the entire earth (*Heb. 2:4-13*). Man is sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit of God to more fully obey the requirements of God's law as found in his Word (*Rom. 8:4*), restoring God's created order to harmony with him by reordering every aspect of life in terms of the Bible.

This, of course, is not the belief or agenda of conservatives, who consider it too religious, too theological, too dogmatic, too radical, too dangerous. For conservatives, only slightly less than for liberals, adherence to Holy Scripture as the infallible Word of God and its application in all areas of life is abhorrent. Like modern liberals, modern conservatives are not interested in truth, and they consider any affirmation of a profession of absolute truth to be dangerous.

A Concrete Standard

Christian Reconstruction will succeed in overthrowing the liberal social order and agenda where modern conservatism has failed, inasmuch as Christian Reconstruction enjoys the anchor of a concrete standard. The conservative standard (if conservatism knowingly employs a standard at all) is a weird amalgam of bland Christian virtues, "traditional values," tradition, human reason, and so forth. Christian Reconstructionists, conversely, bow only before God and his word in the Bible. This means, as Van Til notes, that we take the Bible as our source for every datum of information.²³ By "datum of information" we mean not merely academically theological information, but information of all kinds, including information about the social order. Modern liberals are ostensibly worried about "social justice." This means, quite simply, an elitist civil government's extorting wealth from citizens in order to bribe them to keep bureaucrats in power by their vote. Liberals will (both metaphorically and literally) shed huge crocodile tears about the plight of the poor, the homeless, the uneducated, the oppressed and the handicapped in order to obtain money to employ policies that will harm each of these classes—in other words, liberals are hypocrites.

But what is the conservative answer to this liberal hypocrisy? For the most part it is to support programs only slightly less extortive and autocratic than those set forth by liberals. Conservatives continually bewail the evils of liberals. They rarely, if ever, offer concrete counterproposals to the liberal plans of addressing these

problems which in reality are power grabs under the guise of "social justice" which destroy genuine social justice. The explanation for the continual conservative failure is simple: they have no program or ideas because they have no concrete standard by which to judge anything or by which to frame an agenda.

Alternatively, we Christian Reconstructionists *do* possess a concrete standard by which to frame an agenda. For example, in the issue of increased crime, conservatives, like liberals, do a great deal of hand wringing and pious pontificating about proposed solutions. On the Left, that includes stricter gun control law and more prisons. On the Right, the solutions include more police officers and stiffer criminal penalties. Lately, the liberals have been jumping on the bandwagon in favor of "more police on the street." None of this amounts to much of anything since it dismisses or ignores the Biblical teaching that the solution to crime is restitution. This is based on the Christian idea of Christ's atonement.²⁴

Liberals wish to penalize guns for criminal human behavior; this is a supreme, if absurd, form of environmentalism.²⁵ Conservatives want to impose stiffer prison sentences. This is the equally humanistic notion of the deprivation of individual freedom as the most just penalty for crime. In Biblical terms, sin is committed first against God, his law and his order, and only secondarily against man. Biblically, no one "repays his debt to society." Sins are not committed against society; sins are committed against God and against individuals. Therefore, the Bible establishes guidelines for criminal restitution. The basic point is "an eye for an eye"; this is called the *lex talionis*, the law of vengeance or retribution. If a man steals, he restores to the victim from two- to sevenfold (*Ex. 22:1-4; Pr. 6:31*). If he steals a maiden's virginity (with her consent), he pays a significant fee to her father (at his discretion [*Ex. 22:16, 17*]).²⁶ If he commits capital offenses, he suffers the death penalty (*Gen. 9:6*). There are no "victimless crimes." If a crime has no victim, it is no crime in a Biblical sense. For example, polluters do not commit a crime against the environment or society, but against specific property owners.

None of this is to deny that crime has social aspects. For example, if a society is overcome by individual acts of civil law-breaking, it will inevitably face the judgment of God (*e.g., Hos. 7, 8; Am. 1, 2; Zeph. 3:1-13*). Further, if a society refuses to impose civil penalties, God holds the society itself responsible for its civil dereliction (*Jos. 7*). But the solution to crime is restitution paid by the criminal to the victim(s).

Imagine now, if you will, a Biblically based society employing Biblical civil law. An individual, let us say, steals a car or computer software. A judge and jury hear witnesses and pronounce a verdict of guilty. The criminal is required to restore anywhere from two- to sevenfold. If he cannot, he is required to become an indentured servant until he can repay his victim (*Ex. 22:3*).

"Horror of horrors!," both conservatives and liberals

respond. "Those Christian Reconstructionists are simply barbaric." Imagine too, this response coming from people who vigorously support the idea that criminals should be thrown into cages like animals and gleefully subjected to homosexual rape, sodomy and abuse! In the Biblical scheme, the criminal can retain his self-respect, pay his way out of debt by means of a fair restitution, and possibly learn a particular trade in the process. In the secular, liberal and conservative scheme, the criminal usually suffers humiliation and dehumanization, spends priceless hours in close proximity to the dregs of society, and gains valuable experience in being a more effective criminal.

Both liberal and conservative "solutions" to the problem of crime are not merely ineffective; they exacerbate the problem.

Another prominent social problem: welfare reform. Today even the liberals are acknowledging that the Great Society of the welfare state is severely broken and needs immediate attention. In other words, they recognize that socialism in the form of the welfare state does not work (now if only they would recognize that socialism in *any* form does not work). The liberal solution is to scale back the welfare state and require many welfare recipients to work. The conservative solution is to scale back the welfare state slightly more and to require even more recipients to work.

The Biblical solution is to get the civil government out of the welfare business. The Biblical outlines of the role of civil government are quite clear: to protect law-abiding citizens by restraining civil evil (*Rom. 13:1-4*). In the last two centuries, and especially since the 1940s in the United States, civil government has arrogated to itself the responsibility of charity and welfare, not because the number of poor and needy have increased, but because man's view of the state has changed. In short, the United States turned its back on its heritage of economic freedom and substituted instead the humanistic idea of wealth redistribution by means of extortion. Socialism is not mainly about the redistribution of the wealth from rich to poor, but about the redistribution of *power* from citizens to a ravenous civil government. Because this is a wicked, ungodly plan, it always destroys the people it claims to be helping. Liberal "social justice" is actually the gravest form of social *injustice*. Liberals and conservatives that support the modern welfare state are usually hypocrites. The welfare state destroys initiative, dehumanizes the poor, incites racism and racial hatred, extorts wealth, discourages entrepreneurs, depletes profits, subsidizes immorality, and wreaks social decadence.

Why do liberals and conservatives continue to support the notion of the welfare state (albeit in slightly reduced scope) if it is such a demonstrable failure? Because they are not interested in the populace; they are interested in power. Freedom is an empty word in the empty minds of these hollow men. They write trite, trivial little books like *Putting People First*. This is a hypocritical lie. It would be more accurately titled *Putting Power First*. The proposed welfare

reform of the liberals and conservatives, while taking a few baby steps in the right direction, will never suffice; it will simply accomplish at a slower rate the social destructiveness that has been occurring quite evidently the last three decades or so via the liberal social(ist) program.

The Biblical view is radically different. Social reform rests on two main premises: the Eighth Commandment of the Old Testament (you may not steal) and the Second Commandment of the New Testament (love your neighbor as yourself). The enforcement of the first is the province of civil government; the implementation of the second is the province of individual, family, church and other private governments.²⁷ Families are responsible for their elderly kin. Farmers are responsible to leave a portion of their crop for the poor; for modern industrialized society, this means productive management should devote a portion of its net income to the poor, widows and orphans. It is not the responsibility of a ravenous state, however, to enforce this law; God himself will enforce it in his own good time; and woe to the man who violates God's law about the treatment of the poor, widows and orphans (*Ex. 22:22-24*)!

Where, liberal and conservative critics ask incredulously, will impoverished, unwed mothers; impoverished, battered wives; and impoverished, orphaned children go for sustenance? To the government, of course: *individual* government, *family* government, *church* government and other *private* governments. God's plan, unlike the ravenous state's, encourages social cohesiveness. If I know that, humanly speaking, my physical sustenance in my old age will depend on my children and the church, rather than the state, I will cultivate the right kind of relationship with my children and the church. If the poor, widows and orphans know that God's people and even the unconverted who are influenced by a Christian ethos are motivated to help them, they will maintain the right relationship with those individuals and organizations. In other words, Biblical welfare reform undercuts human atomization and alienation. It strengthens divinely established social units like the family and the church.

Neither liberalism nor conservatism dare argue in such a Biblical fashion, of course. To argue on the basis of the Bible in addressing social concerns means eventual affirmation of what the Bible says in *all* it teaches, and this the unregenerate and inconsistent liberals and conservatives could never do. This is why their programs will fail. They are predestined to failure because they are at war with God and with his word.

Explicitly Biblical Christians do not argue, of course, that the Bible offers ultimate solutions to all social problems. Jesus himself stated that the poor will always be with us (*Jn. 12:8*). The Bible is no utopian book. There will be no absolute perfection this side of the eternal state. But we can have—no, we *will* have—an increasingly just Christian social order.²⁸ It will occur precisely because liberalism and conservatism are inherently defective and self-defeating and -frustrating ideologies. This issues from

the fact that neither starts with the premise of the absolute authority of Holy Scripture.

A Comprehensive Agenda

Conservative agendas (to the extent that conservatives have any agendas at all) are rather piecemeal and fragmentary. Christian Reconstructionists and their allies, that is, explicitly Biblical Christians, on the other hand, contend that the Bible has answers for all of the problems and difficulties of life. We do not mean, of course, the Bible offers an explicit answer for every problem in life, but that the Bible offers many *explicit* answers for many problems and an *implicit* answer for *every* problem. In other words, we believe that the word of God is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly [completely] furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We believe with David in Psalm 119 that if we meditate on and obey the law—Word of God, we can meet any challenge in life—be it artistic, vocational, educational, economic, scientific, or any other. Because we believe that all of the Bible is for all of life, we do not shrink back from addressing the great pressing issues of our times.

Above, I explicitly mentioned Christian answers to the problems of crime and welfare reform. I could as easily have discussed the economy, race relations, the break-up of the family, international relations, nuclear war and ethnic holocausts, the information revolution, and any number of other topics. Why is this? Because the Bible addresses each of these either explicitly or implicitly. The Bible gives us the answers. Because the Bible gives us the answers, we Christian Reconstructionists work hard to implement those answers.

The liberals, at least some of them, sport something of a comprehensive agenda. Because they are more epistemologically self-conscious in their apostasy than conservatives, they tend to erect worldviews more explicitly humanistic, that is, at war with God in increasingly vast areas of human life and society. Secular humanism is a rival religion. More and more liberals are embracing it. It sees man as his own god, and works to interpret all of life in terms of that secular, humanistic grid. It has answers. Its answers are the wrong answers, of course, and they are self-defeating answers, but they are answers nonetheless. In this way secular humanism is quite like Marxism, which is itself a world view and religion.²⁹ Marxism and the communist state it inspires are crumbling all around the globe. They will continue to crumble because they are evil and unworkable. However, in a world in which monarchies and empires had been long discredited, the Soviet Union did not last seventy years by a piecemeal mentality and half-way social measures. It lasted because it was a rival religion that had particular answers—evil answers though they were.

Explicitly Biblical Christianity offers the only possible comprehensive life system. Abraham Kuyper argued in *Lectures in Calvinism* that the Reformed Faith is the highest

expression of life system.³⁰ We Christian Reconstructionists agree with him. It took over 1800 years—and after the European Enlightenment—for some in the church to grasp the point Kuyper did.

The European Enlightenment³¹ was, in many ways, a blessing in disguise. While intensely anti-Christian, especially in its latter stages, it flushed out the dualistic mindset inherent in medieval and even much Reformational Christianity. The Reformation inherited from the medievalists the assumption that while the Bible is the absolutely authoritative Word of God, it is not designed to govern all areas of life. This is where natural law came in.³² This was the old medieval idea that men by nature, apart from Christ and the Bible, could know many things truly and simply needed the special revelation of Christ in the Bible as an addition to their already sound knowledge in order to enjoy God and his Word and works as the capstone of life. The Enlightenment torpedoed this spurious notion. It demonstrated that if all areas of life need not be explicitly Biblical, they may quite easily be explicitly *anti-Biblical*. Christians had assumed that matters such as science (then called natural philosophy), need not be governed by a vigorously Biblical epistemology (theory of knowledge). The Enlightenment philosophers were quite willing to operate on this assumption. They concluded that natural philosophy (and increasingly other fields) could just as well operate on an explicitly anti-Biblical epistemology. This is where we are in the modern world.³³ Secular God-haters have rushed to fill in the vacuum created by Christians who denied the necessity of an explicitly Biblical religion in all areas of life and knowledge.

How then was the heresy of the European Enlightenment a blessing in disguise? Because, like all other heresies, it forced the church to think through issues and make distinctions that were unprecedented; it thus compelled theological and cultural progress. Within the Reformed camp (which itself had not always been consistent in this matter), God raised up men like Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd and Cornelius Van Til to stem the tide. These men recognized that Christianity is a life system, and that to allow the natural man to assume some areas of epistemological agreement with the Christian is to subvert the Christian Faith itself. Even more that Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Van Til, however, Rushdoony relentlessly pushed this accurate presupposition to its logical conclusion: if non-Christian epistemology is bankrupt, only explicitly Christian—that is, explicitly Biblical—epistemology is the alternative. While the Christian Reconstruction movement is sometimes accused of being “too intellectual,” its premise is quite simple: the Bible is the authority for all of life, not just certain selected “spiritual” parts of it.

It is difficult to imagine that any professed Bible-believer could argue with that view. But there are many who do argue with it. They hold that the Bible is the authoritative word of God (which it surely is), but for some

reason it is not authoritative when it speaks to issues beyond private or church beliefs and practices. When these professed Bible-believing Christians become consistent with their Bible-believing presupposition, the Christian Reconstruction movement will burgeon in a way unimaginable. When the Christian church finally wakes up that all of the Bible is for all of life, the secular humanist Western order will be pushed to the ropes. It needs what conservatism inherently lacks: internal consistency.

Conservatism is even less consistent than liberalism. In fact, it seems ecstatic to be inconsistent. It wants nothing that smells of "ideology."³⁴ By that, I mean it wants nothing that approaches self-consistent comprehensiveness. For modern conservatives, the only legitimate comprehensive world view is that which assumes there can be no comprehensive world view. No wonder it constantly retreats before the more comprehensive liberalism. Only comprehensive world views can defeat comprehensive world views. This is why Christian Reconstructionism will defeat both liberalism and conservatism. It will defeat conservatism because Christian Reconstructionism is a world view and conservatism is not; it will defeat liberalism because Christian Reconstructionism's world view is more comprehensive and sound than the world view of liberalism.

A Certain Hope

Conservative eschatology (to the extent the conservatives espouse any explicit eschatology) is uniformly amillennial or premillennial. Modern conservatism is heavily influenced by Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. Each of these theological persuasions features a strongly amillennial tint, no matter what it may be called. In general, this is the view that Christ's kingdom is essentially "spiritual" (spiritual being defined largely as non-physical) and limited to the individual Christian and to the church: we cannot expect much progress of Christianity in history beyond these spheres. In other words, it is naive to assume that Christian social progress is inevitable.³⁵ The best conservatives can hope for, therefore, is to lose the battle very slowly. Cutting down the size of the welfare state, reducing the number of abortions, and throwing more drug dealers into jail is notable progress and all that we can expect. Conservatives, I must ceaselessly remind, are not "into" progress, but maintaining the *status quo*, just as long as the *status quo* means the radical liberalism of anywhere from twenty to fifty years ago. The conservative approach is to claw their way back into the game by losing as slowly as possible.

Conversely, Christian Reconstructionists are avowedly and unashamedly postmillennial.³⁶ Beyond its theological definition, this means that we expect Christ's kingdom to advance in time and history prior to Christ's second Advent. This advancement includes explicitly Christian Biblical ideals in society. Christian Reconstructionists espouse the notion of social progress, progress governed not by man or naturalistic means, but by the Spirit of God using his covenant people in applying the Faith in all areas

of life.³⁷ Christian Reconstructionists espouse the doctrine of historical inevitability.³⁸ This is no new doctrine. A large number of English and America Puritans were postmillennial.³⁹ Interestingly, the most successful center of European civilization on this continent was Calvinist and postmillennial: New England Puritanism. As church historian George Marsden notes, the Calvinist postmillennial vision prevailed in the United States until about the time of the Civil War.⁴⁰ Postmillennialism, therefore, is not some novel, certainly not some heretical, doctrine that Christian Reconstructionists cooked up in the oven of a fertile imagination. It is a part of our Calvinistic heritage.

Because of this, it provides an assurance in our work of Christian Reconstruction that conservatives lack. Of course, the ignorant and the slanderers (and some of them even in the Reformed camp) spread rumors that we are really Fifth Monarchy Revolutionaries poised to take up arms against a sea of secularists. Nothing could be further from the truth. It was the arch-conservative Richard John Neuhaus who suggested the possibility of armed revolution by conservatives, not Christian Reconstructionists. Those who abandon hope in regeneration often resort to revolution. When men no longer have faith in the power of God, they espouse faith in the power of man—and especially the power that grows out of a gun barrel, to paraphrase Mao. This is the faith of modern liberals and conservatives. This is why modern liberals and conservatives are almost uniformly statist. (The paleo-conservatives are, to their credit, exceptions.) Our postmillennial hope is not in fanatical revolutionary rhetoric or firebombs, but in the incomparable power of the Spirit and Word of God.

This hope energizes explicitly Biblical Christians to practice an explicitly Biblical Christianity. We do not argue that our view is justified on these grounds, but we do acknowledge that these grounds provide a great individual impetus to the implementation of our explicitly Biblical vision.

Conclusion

Christian Reconstruction will win because, unlike conservatism, it is the *nature* of Christian Reconstruction to win. It has already won the hearts and minds of significant numbers of disenchanted evangelicals and dispensationalists. It will do the same with conservatives. As younger conservatives increasingly discover the inherently unfailing failure mechanism of conservatism, they will cast about for a system of thought and life that offers hope—not only for eternity, but also time and history. This is precisely what we Christian Reconstructionists offer. We will continue to attract fundamentalists, evangelicals and other Christians committed to the full authority of the Bible who recognize in fundamentalism, evangelicalism and the modern church the denial of the application of the full authority of the Bible. We will draw even more adherents from our own

theological camp—the Reformed camp—who perceive in Christian Reconstruction the most consistent expression of historic Calvinism, a Puritanism for the modern world. We agree with Leithart that

The Christian reconstruction movement has achieved one of the most remarkable syntheses in the history of Christian thought, taking the best and most Biblical from both fundamentalists and social gospelers. Reconstructionists have stood with fundamentalists in defense of the inerrancy of the Bible, creation, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, and the resurrection. Indeed, they have “out-fundied” the fundamentalists by insisting that the Bible is authoritative and inerrant on everything, not just religion. On the other hand, reconstructionists have been critical of fundamentalism for its pietism and its neo-Platonic dichotomy between soul and body. Like the social gospelers, reconstructionists emphasize the wholeness of man (God does not save souls, He saves men) and a dynamic, but not relativistic, view of the kingdom of God. Reconstructionist Christianity is far more than a resurrection of Puritanism. It is a refined Puritanism, tried in the furnace of opposition (*Ps. 66:10f.*), and hence more consistent to the basic principles of Calvinism than seventeenth-century Puritanism. And it is the only faith that can battle secularism and emerge triumphant.⁴¹

For this reason the future belongs to self-conscious, historically orthodox and explicitly Biblical Christians—that is, to Christian Reconstructionists, whatever provincial title they may happen to don. The future is ours.

¹Note Robert L. Dabney’s prescient comments in “Anti-Biblical Theories of Rights,” *Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney* (Edinburgh [1892], 1982), 3:21-46, footnote not in original.

²Andrew Sandlin, “The Bankruptcy of Modern Liberalism . . . and Therefore Modern Conservatism,” *Chalcedon Report*, March, 1997, 28-29, emphasis in original.

³Mitchell S. Muncy, ed., *The End of Democracy: The Judicial Usurpation of Politics* (Dallas, 1997).

⁴*ibid.*, 32.

⁵By “theocrats,” I refer to Christians broadly identified with the goals of the National Reform Association (of which this writer is president), pressing for explicit Biblical Christianity in the public sphere. Their agenda is essentially Christian Reconstructionist, and they willingly work closely with Christians Reconstructionists. See William O. Einwechter, ed., *Explicitly Christian Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1997).

⁶David Whitman, “Was it Good For Us?,” *U. S. News and World Report*, May 19, 1997, 57, 58.

⁷Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (Chicago, 1953), 7, 8.

⁸See Gerhard Ebeling, *The Problem of Historicity* (Philadelphia, 1967).

⁹Muncy, *op. cit.*, 157.

¹⁰Frederick Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York, 1966), 287-288, emphasis in original.

¹¹Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, 1969), 41-71.

¹²Herman Dooyeweerd, *Transcendental Problems of Philosophic Thought* (Grand Rapids, 1948); Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense*

of the Faith (Phillipsburg, 1967 edition); Rousas John Rushdoony, *By What Standard?* (Vallecito, CA [1958], 1995).

¹³Muncy, *op. cit.*, 176.

¹⁴Frederick Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason* (Princeton, 1996).

¹⁵“Postmodernists” perceive clearly the naiveté of the Enlightenment liberal claims of objective rationality. See Stanley Fish, “Liberalism Doesn’t Exist,” in *There’s No Such Thing As Free Speech . . . And It’s A Good Things Too* (Oxford and New York, 1994), 134-138.

¹⁶Van Til, *Defense*, 225f.

¹⁷Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *The Christian Future* (New York, 1946), 61.

¹⁸Van Til, *op. cit.*, 105-114.

¹⁹David Boaz, *Libertarianism: A Primer* (New York, 1997).

²⁰Van Til, *op. cit.*, 47.

²¹The standard Reformed view may be found in Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1941 edition).

²²Rousas John Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology* (Vallecito, CA, 1994), 1:286-288.

²³Van Til, *op. cit.*, 8.

²⁴Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (no loc. [Craig Press], 1973), 461-463.

²⁵Andrew Sandlin, “Hamartiology and Gun Control,” *Christian Statesman*, January-February, 1977, 5-6.

²⁶See also Gary North, *Tools of Dominion* (Tyler, TX, 1990), 643-649.

²⁷On the vital doctrine of government, see Rousas John Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity* (Fairfax, VA [1970], 1978), 331-343.

²⁸Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (no loc. [Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company], 1957).

²⁹Mikhail Heller, *Cogs in the Wheel: The Formation of Soviet Man* (New York, 1988), 67-71.

³⁰Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1931).

³¹Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment—An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York and London, 1966).

³²August Lang, “The Reformation and Natural Law,” in ed., William Park Armstrong, *Calvin and the Reformation* (Grand Rapids [1909], 1980), 56-98.

³³Rushdoony, *Standard*, 174-175. Observe also the perceptive indictment of Christopher Dawson: “The revival of philosophy as an autonomous rational discipline and the beginnings of physical science as the systematic rationalisation of nature had their origins in the integral intellectualism of medieval scholasticism. . . . [T]his scholastic intellectualism lies at the basis of modern scientific rationalism in the same way as the Hellenic intellectualism was the foundation of ancient rationalism. For, as Professor Whitehead has pointed out, it was the medieval belief in the ultimate rationality of the world that prepared the European mind for the belief in the possibility of science, while the clear distinction introduced by the Thomists between the province of natural reason and that of faith made it possible for the former to assert its independent rights in its own sphere,” *Enquiries Into Religion and Culture* (London and New York, 1933), 146-147. The epistemological dualism introduced by the medieval scholastics (and somewhat retained by the Reformers and the Protestant scholastics) paved the way for a secularized, autonomous philosophy and science. It is this epistemological dualism which Van Til and Rushdoony deplore.

³⁴See Michael Oakshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis, 1991), 407-437.

³⁵For a cogent refutation of this notion, see Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, TX, 1990).

³⁶Rushdoony, *God’s Plan For Victory* (Vallecito, CA, 1997).

³⁷*idem.*, "Postmillennialism Versus Impotent Religion," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* Vol. III, No. 2 [Winter, 1976-1977], 122-125.

³⁸Note the comment of Eric Hoffer: "Those who would transform a nation or the world cannot do so by breeding and captaining discontent or by demonstrating the reasonableness and desirability of the intended changes or by coercing people into a new way of life. They must know how to kindle and fan an extravagant hope. It matters not whether it be a hope of a heavenly kingdom, of heaven on earth, of plunder and untold

riches, of fabulous achievement or world dominion," in *The True Believer* (New York [1951], 1989), 9.

³⁹See, e.g., James R. Payton, Jr., "The Emergence of Postmillennialism in English Puritanism," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Vol. VI, No. 1 [Summer, 1979], 122-125.

⁴⁰George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford, 1980), 86.

⁴¹Peter Leithart, "Revivalism and American Protestantism," in ed., James B. Jordan, *The Reconstruction of the Church, Christianity and Civilization 4* (Tyler, TX, 1985), 81.

BIBLICAL STUDY

Chalcedon Enters the New Millennium

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony



Despite the best efforts to center the Christian calendar on the birth of our Lord, it is apparent that Christ was, in fact, born no later than 4 B. C. This we can say with certainty; for Herod the Great, whose evil designs played a central role in the nativity story, died in that year.

Our Savior may actually

have been born a few years earlier. Even if we assume that Christ was born as late as 4 B. C. it means that Christmas 1997 was 2000 years later (4 + 1997 minus 1 because there was no year 0 = 2000). Thus, this past Christmas (assuming the traditional date is correct) marks the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third (if we did not miss the occasion in the recent past). I hope this does not catch anyone anxiously awaiting some great eschatological event off-guard but the fact remains that the third millennium is here.

Christmas is a time for memories. I know I am not the only one to see visions of past family gatherings every year when we decorate our home. Now that the new year has arrived, it is time to reflect on Chalcedon's past year. I thought it would be a good time to catch you up on some of our activities last year at Chalcedon.

This past March we concluded the first year of our Underwriter's Program. After some very trying times over the previous two years, we asked our supporters to send us

a regular contribution each month. The result has been a steady income that stabilized our financial situation. This has been a tremendous source of comfort for us. This stability has allowed us to move forward with a number of projects and to plan several for the future.

The first two Chalcedon monographs are now available. They are *God's Plan for Victory* by R. J. Rushdoony (reprinted after many years) and *A Postmillennial Primer* by Andrew Sandlin. These are the first two in what we hope will be a long series of booklets on basic areas of Christian life and thought.

We also released a great new video introducing the concept of Christian Reconstruction. "Reconstructing Society From the Bottom Up" is an interview with Andrew Sandlin in which he discusses the need for Biblical law and social action while answering common misconceptions about postmillennialism and theonomy.

Chalcedon was co-sponsor once again of the Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church's annual Reformation Bible Conference. This year's visiting speaker was Peter Hammond, whose Frontline Fellowship ministry provides food, medicine, Bibles, and Christian educational materials to the war-ravaged and oppressed peoples of Sudan and elsewhere in Africa.

One of our most exciting projects ever, Chalcedon's Conference on Christian Culture, took place this past June because of the generosity of our readers. Peter Hammond, Andrew Sandlin, Brian Abshire, Wayne Johnson, and Monte Wilson joined local pastor John Jere for a memorable conference in Lusaka, Zambia. Dealing with such basic but profound subjects as education, private property, eschatology, civil government, entertainment,

humanism, national defense, and capital punishment, these talks were not only what Zambians needed to hear but also what those of us in the West need to hear. The complete set of audio tapes from the Zambia conference is now available from our office (\$35 plus shipping).

Andrew Sandlin continued his busy schedule of speaking. In addition, he edits the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, the *Chalcedon Report*, and supervises our monograph series project.

R. J. Rushdoony continues to write on a regular basis. He is currently working on several projects, including a third volume of *Institutes of Biblical Law*. He continues to hold Sunday church services at Vallecito. He has limited his travels greatly but spoke at Christian Home Educators Association conferences in Fresno and Anaheim, California, and at the SepCon conference for the Separation of School and State Alliance in Arlington, Virginia, in November.

I myself have been teaching at Chalcedon Christian School full-time as well as juggling administrative responsibilities for Chalcedon. One of the challenges that face us in the coming year is the need for more attention to the latter aspects of Chalcedon's needs. We cannot operate with a single secretary as our administrative staff much longer.

Finally, our November conference in Seattle was the first of what we intend to be regional conferences featuring Chalcedon authors. Our next is scheduled for San Jose, California.

So, Chalcedon is off and running as we move into the third millennium. Perhaps our inability to exactly date our Lord's birth is a valuable lesson to us. Our thoughts must not focus on the calendar but on Christ. We must look to duties, not dates. We do not need any hope of a major eschatological event to motivate us. That event happened two thousand years ago. Our responsibility remains the same—to further Christ's kingdom.

COUNTER-CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY

Conservative Theology and Conservative Politics

By Rev. Brian Abshire



The first Christian Reconstructionist book I ever read was a brilliant little gem by the late David Chilton entitled, *Productive Christians in An Age of Guilt Manipulators*. David had written his classic barb to thwart Ron Sider, an extremely popular “Christian” socialist author and speaker on Christian

college campuses in the 1970's. To this day, I believe it is still the only Biblical response in book form taking Sider to task.

1978 saw me just out of the Air Force after spending the previous four years in Europe, now attending a Christian liberal arts college. I was at that time all of five years old in the Lord and was proud to have just shaken off a gloomy dispensationalism. The only thing I had ever heard of Christian social and political issues was that “you don't polish brass on a sinking ship” and “social issues are for liberals.”

When I began discussing the Christian alternative to “eat, meet and retreat” defeatism, I was aghast at the rampant nonsense espoused as Christian activism. I found myself in debates with students and teachers who accepted as a given that capitalism was immoral, socialism was Christian, and that refusing to pay “war taxes” was the mark of true discipleship (and this from some kids whose parents were career military families with Daddy's salary paying the tuition!). I had just spent the past six years of my life preparing to fight Marxism, and now, here it was, wrapped up in Biblical language and solemnly taught as the cutting edge of dedicated Christian theology! The publication of *Productive Christians* was literally a Godsend. At the height of one heated discussion, a young girl, dripping contempt with every word, said, “You sound like someone who would vote for Reagan!” You'll forgive me, but at the time, I had been out of the country for a while and all I knew about Ronald Reagan was that he used to host Death Valley Days when I was a kid. I did not know at that time that he was the hero of the conservative movement. But I did know I didn't want to be identified with an actor!

The sad fact is that at an evangelical Baptist college, well ranked academically and committed in writing to the

inerrancy and authority of Scripture, social and political issues were never debated, discussed or analyzed from a Biblical perspective. The liberal, humanist, leftist social agenda of the Sixties was imported in toto and accepted almost without reservation. Oh, I am sure there were many political conservatives both on the faculty and in the student body. But they kept a low profile, since they feared the same scorn and ridicule I faced. Conservatism was and is not academically respectable.

I found myself in debates with students and teachers who accepted as a given that capitalism was immoral, socialism was Christian, and that refusing to pay "war taxes" was the mark of true discipleship (and this from some kids whose parents were career military families with Daddy's salary paying the tuition!).

Christians As Operational Schizophrenics

All too often, my experience is not all that unusual. Many Christians are operational schizophrenics when it comes to social issues. No matter how dedicated they may be to the Faith in their personal lives, pietism has robbed them of a consistent Christian worldview by which to evaluate and interact with the world outside the ecclesiastical cloister. Surveys have shown that Christian theology tends to take second place to socio-economic status. As a person moves up the social scale, his beliefs change to conform to expected group norms. We fear men rather than God and change our beliefs to fit with the dominant values of our social class. Christians think humanistically about politics not just because no one has taught them what the Bible says on these issues but because the Bible is at radical odds with modern culture. Peer pressure is not just something that teenagers have to deal with.

One might think that conservative theology ought to lead naturally to conservative politics. However, the same word is being used to mean two different things. When we talk about "conservative" theology, we usually mean it as a euphemism for "Biblical" theology; *i.e.*, a theology grounded in the Scripture. In the great theological battles of the last one hundred and fifty years, the "conservatives" were those who believed the Bible was the word of God

and the liberals were those who believed it was something else. Even though conservative Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, etc., might not have agreed on what they thought the Bible taught, at least they all agreed that it was God's word. The liberals frankly did not. Thus the term has a specific meaning within the broader Christian community.

However, the same cannot be said for the word "conservative" when it comes to politics. The word in American politics has no absolute sense. It is a relative term that has to do with the whole issue of social change. The liberals have a specific social agenda they want to impose. In the old days, it was believed that the historical dialectic was supposedly moving irrevocably towards a man-made socialist utopia. The conservatives accepted the premise of social change, but just wanted to go at it a bit slower. Listening to a clip from a speech by JFK recently, I was amazed at how CONSERVATIVE he sounded compared to today's Democratic party. If he were alive today and an active politician (and held the same views) Kennedy would be running as a conservative Republican (though probably with Bob Packwood as his running mate!).

Here is the big problem with "conservative" politics: Conservatives do not have a significant agenda of their own. They can't. They've gone to the same schools as the liberals, they read the same books and accept the same assumptions. What can they offer that is really different? For the past two centuries, as Western culture has moved away from Biblical Christianity, the ancient heresy of the divinity of the state has once more reared its tyrannical head. Most people assume that civil government must do certain things because they lack an epistemological basis for affirming a free and responsible citizenry. Conservatives may want to tinker with the mechanism a little differently than the liberals, but both groups believe the civil government ought to do far more than Scripture requires. For example, right now, there is much talk about a flat tax to replace the present convoluted federal income tax. Granted, the "reforms" posited by the conservatives would mean that many of us would pay less income tax. But the tax rates would still be twice what God demands for himself. Since the War Between the States, the American people have had the option of choosing between Claudius or Caligula as their president; *i.e.*, both are tyrannical dictators, some are just more fiscally responsible than others.

Evangelical Ambivalence

Evangelical Christians fall into this same problem. Without a complete Biblical worldview, they simply have nothing to say all that much different from the humanists. They too go to the same universities, read the same books and for the most part accept the same assumptions as the ungodly, because otherwise they might hear the same sneering, scathing denunciation, "You voted for Claudius!" (er, excuse me, I meant Reagan). Christians have been terrified of pressing for a truly Christian alternative because the culture finds Biblical values repugnant.

Think with me for a moment. What is at the root of the real animosity towards Christian Reconstruction from most evangelicals? What is it that really divides Christians on this issue? Why is Biblical Law so offensive to so many people who claim the name of Christ and accept the authority of Scripture?

The answer? The judicial sanctions. That's it. Modern Christians refuse to accept that such things as sodomy and adultery ought to be treated as capital crimes. The thought is outrageous, unthinkable, ghastly! They believe that somehow, we must get rid of this terribly offensive (and embarrassing) part of God's law. Our culture has so mainstreamed sodomy and adultery that we fear the inevitable ridicule, scorn and animosity if we publicly hold Biblical beliefs and teach them. Therefore, we must get rid of them. And if in so doing, we have to become antinomian, then so be it. We fear men more than God.

What is so amazing is that Christians are so propagandized by humanistic presuppositions of civil government that they don't want Biblical law because they fear an oppressive police state peeking into people's bedrooms! As if God's law authorized the state to have a secret police! They have adopted the modern revolutionary concept that government is a top-down imposition of law via the state, rather than the Biblical bottom-up reformation of self governed men taking personal responsibility. God's law will not be imposed by a cabal of clerics and reactionary politicians, but rather as his Spirit gives grace, grants repentance and regenerates wicked hearts. We will have Biblical law, when in God's grace, we are Reformed to the point that we WANT God's law. One can understand the fear of the sodomites and humanists, for they do not know any better. But the widespread ignorance on this issue of God's elect is astounding!

The Dilemma for "Conservative" Politicians

Here then is the dilemma for "conservative" politicians in a constitutional republic. They cannot get elected unless they represent the view of a majority of the electorate. If the electorate want ungodly policies, the politicians must promise them, or they won't get elected. And if those policies are counterproductive to the wealth, prosperity, safety, security and freedom of the people, well, too bad. *Vox populi, vox dei!*

God will not be mocked. Romans 1:18ff is very clear. When a nation turns its back on God, God will turn his back on the nation. He will give them over to foolishness. He will make them do stupid things like paying women to have children out of wedlock and creating a cycle of dependency, giving money to build the military apparatus of our sworn enemies, destroying the economic infrastructure by creating fiat money, wasting scarce tax revenues on schools that do not educate, or supporting drug addicts and drunks, or whatever other outrage you watch on the evening news. Men will vote themselves into tyranny under the slogan of "equality, fraternity and liberty!" And sometimes, a Claudius will rise up and make

the bread more affordable, the circuses a bit more cost effective, or shore up the military to keep the barbarians at bay for another decade. But the fundamental problems will not go away until there has been a genuine reformation of the hearts of the people. Don't get me wrong: if as a slave I have a choice between Claudius or Caligula as my master, I'll take Claudius every time. But that's the point. I don't want to be a slave. I want to be a free man. And conservative politics can offer only a more palatable form of servitude.

Political conservatives will always take the back seat in the bus because they are an intellectual rearguard action to the dominant forces of social change. The humanists will push so far until people react, and then the conservatives will win an election or two. But the conservatives will slowly adapt to and adopt the new ideals. And the nation will get weaker and sicker and more chaotic and then more tyrannical.

As Rushdoony has noted, a few thousand barbarians successfully conquered the millions of the Roman Empire, largely because the citizens were so oppressed and taxed by Rome, that the depredations of the barbarians were seen as a relief. An anecdote from the peninsular war against Napoleon comes to mind. A young British officer trying to comfort a bleeding comrade started brushing the flies away from the wound. The dying man said, "No sir, please sir, don't flick them away. They're almost full, and they don't hurt half so much as the hungry ones." And that sadly, is the state of the Republic. Real social change is more painful than simply letting the parasites continue feeding.

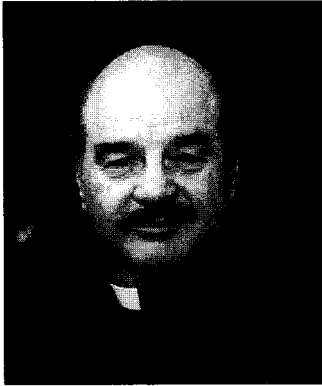
The present system cannot and will not last. The only answer is a radical re-thinking of the relationship between the one and the many that is possible only through the implementation of Biblical law. When Rome collapsed, a vigorous Christian Faith replaced it. As the Empire's courts grew corrupt, church courts replaced them. As the bread gave out and the circuses grew more depraved, Christians gave alms, started hospitals, adopted orphans and saved exposed infants. As Rome sank into depravity, Christians built strong families and parallel institutions. And when the barbarians came, God's people were ready to step into the gap, pick up the pieces and rebuild civilization.

We Can Do It Again!

We've done it before. It looks as if we are about to do it again. But this time, we have two thousand years of Christian history and experience to draw on. We know the mistakes our ancestors made, and there is now a growing consensus that Biblical law offers the only possibility for a free and prosperous society. Conservative politicians would be wise to read Deuteronomy 28 very carefully, and consider the future. It does not belong to the liberal, humanist, statist, tree-hugging, tax-and-spend big government guys. Neither does it belong to those who are satisfied with tightening the belt, cutting the capital gains tax and loosening federal regulations on business. It belongs to those who love God and keep his commandments.

Oh, Say Can You See?

By Rev. Ellsworth McIntyre



I became a political conservative during the Goldwater Presidential campaign. I read the books, *None Dare Call It Treason* and Phyllis Schlafly's *A Choice, Not an Echo*. These books persuaded me to join the John Birch Society. I was a wholehearted convert. I have never believed that moderation in the pursuit

of liberty is a virtue. I live by the motto, "If liberty is extremism, then give me extremism, or give me death." I became a night-and-day, sleeping, waking, fire-breathing anti-communist. I read through the entire collection of books provided to each home chapter of the Birch Society. I sat up nights reading every new book from Western Islands Publishing. Soon, in addition to JBS chapter meetings in my home, I became active in other conservative groups and began to appear on television on behalf of conservative causes.

My parents, who were registered Democrats, found my behavior frightening. As I look back at it now, some of my deeds were certainly bizarre. For example, I got myself thrown out of the Allegheny County Fair for displaying a sign. It was a glorious sign, lovingly crafted on two 4' by 8' sheets of plywood. It read, "Impeach Earl Warren," on one side and "Get the U. S. out of the U. N." on the other. I can't understand why I was evicted; I only wished to provoke good deeds. (Where was the ACLU when I needed them?) My mother woke up the next morning to find that the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* devoted their headline to my ejection from the fair. On the front page was a photograph and story about my Volkswagen camper and plywood sign.

Ah, those were the good old days! The publicity got the Birch Society a lot of new members. Such antics, however, have a darker side. Two of my friends suffered nervous breakdowns from the stress and persecution stemming from our activities. Another became an anti-Semite. Still another went down to an alcoholic's grave. The great majority of the conservatives did survive this warfare, however, by becoming "serious Christians." Our anti-Christian enemies first took away our reputations, and then, not satisfied, they destroyed our careers. Our foes desired our death, but only succeeded in driving us to life. Relentlessly, we were driven for refuge to the Rock, Christ Jesus. The King dressed our

wounds and gave us new assignments. Some he sent to the ministry and Christian education. Others went to entrepreneurial parachurch activities that are cursed by Pharisee/churchmen but blessed by our God. I believe that the hardened soldiers who were bloodied in organizations like the Birch Society elected Ronald Reagan and pushed this nation away from the precipice of collectivism.

Today, I believe these same soldiers are pressing for a new Christian reformation that is lifting and will continue to lift America to a new golden age. I know it is popular among those who have blind eyes that cannot see the kingdom of God to say, "The conservative movement is dead." It is not. The King has just changed their assignments. The movement is marching toward Biblical law, the home school movement, the Christian Coalition, the Promise Keepers, and other parachurch endeavors. We are winning and will continue to win, because we are willing to die for our cause. Anti-Christians are not willing to die for their cause; as a matter of historical fact, they are not even willing to put up a good fight. When confronted with determined opposition, they will flee. The counsel of our Lord is, "Be not afraid of their faces."

*You will know the dawn
of a new age is breaking
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people.*

I anticipate the day soon when conservative leaders will find it wise to quote Scripture to support their ideas. Politicians will one day sniff out the fact that quoting the Bible will get them a majority. When they do, politicians

will have instant conversions like those who followed Constantine in 312. R. J. Rushdoony writes of the public opinion before Constantine (in many ways public opinion today is the same): "They failed to see that the empire was already dying, and that the death of Christians would not save Rome's failing life. It was Constantine's grasp of this fact that led to the recognition of Christianity" (*Institutes of Biblical Law*, The Craig Press, 1973, p. 560). Constantine became emperor and is remembered for all ages as "Constantine the Great." After Constantine's victory, hordes of "wannabe" heroes cried out, "Jesus is God," but too late to win the prize. Winners must cry out by faith before the will of God is revealed to losers.

You will know the dawn of a new age is breaking when you hear the first major Presidential candidate say that we cannot tax the rich a higher percentage than the poor, because an equal tax is the only tax that will be supported by the American people. The American people want God's law, and none other. It was the sacred intention of the framers of the Constitution to tax all men equally. The progressive income tax is the handiwork of an envious thief named Karl Marx. When the Presidential candidates hum that tune, the chains of millions will rattle and dance in agreement. As of now, the politicians from their sick, constipated bellies, belch out words like "fairness." They

are too weak and too fearful to pick up the word of God, the sword of the Holy Spirit. Remember those who stood around watching Elijah challenge Jezebel's prophets, "They answered not a word." So it is with today's "Jezebel" politicians.

This then is the glorious future of the conservative movement—to roll back the enemies of darkness using Scripture instead of failed reason, failed emotions, and failed humanism. In the words of God, "Even so, come" (*Rev. 22:20*). This opinion is not mine alone. Otto Scott, the author and editor of the great newsletter, *Compass*, recently told me in private conversation, "We are in and have been in a new and great Christian Reformation." Our "National Anthem" asks the question, "Oh, say can you see?"

God's Word asks, "Having eyes, see ye not? . . ." (*Mk. 10:18*)

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.

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Conservative Or Christian?

By William Einwechter

Editor's Introduction: We introduce William O. Einwechter's new column, "Modern Issues in Historical Perspective." Einwechter, an ordained minister, pastored for 15 years. He is Vice-President and Publications Director of the National Reform Association and editor of its publication, the *Christian Statesman*, as well as Vice-Moderator of the Association of Free Reformed Churches. He has written two books, *Ethics and God's Law: An Introduction to Theonomy*, and *English Bible Translations: By What Standard*, both published by Preston/Speed. A graduate of Washington Bible College and Capital Bible Seminary, he specializes in theology and Biblical exegesis, and is currently engaged in writing a commentary on Deuteronomy from a theonomic perspective.

Twentieth Century, informs his readers "that reasonable and well-informed men differ in their understanding not merely of what conservatism is, but of what are its provenances, political, historical, and philosophical."¹ He says that conservatism defies a "one sentence" definition, but when a questioner persists in seeking one, he gives (with a straight face) the one formulated by Richard Weaver that conservatism is "the paradigm of essences towards which the phenomenology of the world is in continuing approximation" (got that?).²

We believe that it is not advantageous to the cause of Christ for Christians to align themselves with political conservatism.



Political conservatism is often considered the natural avenue for the expression of Christian principles of politics and civil government. It is the common understanding of the media and of the political parties that evangelical and fundamentalist Christians who are active in politics

are "conservatives." In fact, this is the comprehension of most Christians on both the Left and the Right. The Religious Right is perceived as an expression of political conservatism. And fittingly so, for those Christians involved in the Religious Right largely rely on conservatism for their identity, ideas, and inspiration. If you would ask a political activist, politician, or voter of the Religious Right to identify his political stance, nine out of ten would simply call himself "conservative."

But is this identity between Christian political activity and conservatism a good thing? Is it advantageous to Christ's interests in the world that his followers have so closely aligned themselves with political conservatism?

To answer these questions we must begin by considering the nature of political conservatism. Conservatism is hard to define in a precise fashion. William Buckley, in his *Introduction to American Conservative Thought in the*

Conservatism is difficult to define because it is not so much an "ideology" as it is a perspective on the state of things. Conservatism gives great respect to history and tradition. The very term "conservative" indicates that its goal is to conserve and apply to the problems and challenges of today the wisdom of the past forged on the anvil of the collective experience of society. The key concepts of conservatism are history, convention, custom, and tradition. As such, it is opposed to abstract principles of liberty and social theory, and clings to the tried and proven; *i.e.*, that which has been tried and proven in the common experience of men in society. The conservative puts his emphasis on society as opposed to the libertarian who stresses the individual. Paul Henry states:

Political conservatism is a tradition of political thought having its origins in reactions against the libertarianism and individualism of the French Revolution of 1789. Its earliest spokesman was Edmund Burke (1729-1797) who in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) attacked the theoretical and abstract notions of liberty being voiced by the French revolutionaries. Burke maintained that *a priori* declarations regarding the rights of man were meaningless until given substantive applications within the historical context of a given society. Government, argued Burke, was a matter of practical wisdom stemming from the historical experiences of a given people. Hence, reform of political life could

not be achieved simply by abstract declarations based on a *priori* argumentation. Accordingly, Burke stressed the importance of history and tradition as the basis for social and political change, and argued that a society is a partnership not only of the living, but of the dead and those yet to be born. Burke's conservatism was not based simply on opposition to all change, but rather the belief that change must always be incremental and evolutionary and generated from the self-conscious and historical traditions of a given people.³

Conservatism, according to Russell Kirk, is "not a fixed and immutable body of dogmata," but rather, its essence is the "preservation of the ancient moral traditions of humanity."⁴ Therefore, the goal of conservatives is to re-express these ancient traditions for their own time.⁵

Although political conservatism is not a fixed body of doctrine, it does, nonetheless, exhibit a certain set of principles that conservatives adhere to with some consistency as being the basic wisdom inherited from the past moral traditions of Western society and culture. There is some difference on how to catalog these principles. Henry reduces these principles to four, while Kirk comprehends them in six. Henry says:

Twentieth century political conservatism has been characterized by several recurring themes. First, political conservatives have generally acknowledged some sort of universal moral order.... Second, political conservatives concede the inconsistencies and imperfections of human nature.... Third, political conservatives are generally agreed that some inequalities within society are both natural and beneficial.... Fourth, political conservatives stress that man must be regarded as more than simply a purely rational being; symbols, traditions, and feelings are important to men, and hence to the governing of society.⁶

Kirk delineates the principles of conservatism as follows:

(1) Belief in a transcendent order, or body of natural law, which rules society as well as conscience.... (2) Affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of human existence, as opposed to the narrowing uniformity, egalitarian, and utilitarian aims of most radical systems.... (3) Conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes, as against the notion of a "classless society".... (4) Persuasion that freedom and property are closely linked together.... (5) Faith in prescription and distrust of "sophisters, calculators, and economists" who would reconstruct society upon abstract designs.... (6) Recognition that change may not be salutary reform: hasty innovation may be a devouring conflagration, rather than the torch of progress.⁷

By considering the principles of conservatism one can understand why Christians have been attracted to it. There is much in conservatism that appears to align, at least partially, to Biblical truth. In accord with Henry's summary of conservatism, the Bible agrees that there is

a "universal moral order"; that human nature is imperfect; that due to God's providence there are and will be some inequality in society; and that man is a spiritual being. Equally, the synopsis of conservative principles by Kirk is paralleled by the Scriptural teaching that a transcendent body of law rules society; that human existence has been endowed by God with variety and mystery; that society has a prescribed order; that liberty and property are closely linked; that the abstract designs of thinkers and philosophers are poor foundations upon which to build or reconstruct society; and that reform may be nothing more than anarchy and revolution.

Divorced from a Christian context, the principles of conservatism become deadly enemies to the cause of righteousness.

But the supposed affinity between conservatism and the word of God is more apparent than real. The ostensible agreement of Christian truth as revealed in Scripture with the principles of conservatism is not due to a conscious effort on the part of today's conservatives to construct a social order on the foundation of Biblical law. Rather, the agreement is due to the conservative reliance on history and tradition. The historical tradition and political conventions of the West have been significantly influenced by Christianity and the Bible. As the West has consisted primarily of Christian men and nations, so its collective experience has been affected in large measure by the church and the word of God. Hence, the affinity of conservatism to aspects of Biblical truth is best explained by recourse to Western history and not by any present motivation by conservatives to obey the teaching of Scripture and build their society upon it.

Furthermore, the political traditions of conservatism are a mixed bag; by no means are they only of Christian origin. The political and social experience of Rome, Greece, and a corrupt Western church (to name other primary factors, but not all—each individual nation having its own experiences stretching back even to the days of paganism) have all made major contributions to the "conservative mind." Elements of the conservative tradition may be Christian in origin; but they may also be non-Christian, descending, for example, from Rome.

Another factor that must be kept in mind when considering the correspondence of conservatism and Christianity is that modern conservatives have overtly rejected the divine authority of Scripture in political and social matters.

The modern conservative is often as secular in his politics as his liberal counterpart. Therefore, the conservative adherence to Christian principles is the vestige of a past Christian consensus, a consensus that he consciously rejects even as he unconsciously defends some of its principles. The controlling force for most conservatives today is Enlightenment rationalism. How long will it be until the principles of conservatism are defined from the perspective of the Enlightenment rather than from the perspective of Biblical faith? It is already happening. In conservative circles Christ and Biblical law are out, while Locke, rationalism, and natural law are in.

We believe that it is not advantageous to the cause of Christ for Christians to align themselves with political conservatism. Why should they? What benefit is there in it for the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Yes, there is some concurrence between Biblical truth and conservatism. But that concurrence is, as we have seen, more apparent than real. And as Christian culture fades more and more into the dim memory of the past and the more recent cultures inspired by Enlightenment rationalism, deism, and common-sense realism push it aside, the principles of conservatism are now being defined by modern conservatives in a non-Christian context. *Divorced from a Christian context, the principles of conservatism become deadly enemies to the cause of righteousness.*

The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom but that fools despise wisdom and instruction (*Prov. 1:7*). Conservatism rejects the fear of the Lord and despises the wisdom and instruction of Scripture. The Bible says that Christ is King of the nations and calls on all magistrates to bow in humble submission to the authority of Christ (*Ps. 2:10-12; Rev. 1:5*). Conservatism says that man is king, has no place for the exalted Christ, and despises his scepter (*cf. Ps. 2:1-3*). The Bible says that the entrance of the word of God gives light (*Ps. 119:105, 130*). Conservatism says that the Bible is unnecessary in the councils of state, and advocates the dim and uncertain rays of natural law and human experience (*cf. Ps. 74:20*). The Bible says that we ought to reconstruct our culture on the express teaching of Biblical law (*Deut. 4:5-8; Isa. 58:12*). Conservatism calls upon us to preserve "the ancient moral traditions of humanity." The Bible says, "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*). Conservatism says, "To the deposit of wisdom forged in the collective experience of men in society."

What is needed is an explicitly Christian approach to politics.⁸ The time has come for Christians to disassociate themselves from the ranks of conservatism. In casting their political fortunes with conservatism, they have grievously erred and aligned themselves with a movement, that in spite of historical ties to Christianity, is now as much an enemy of Christ as is liberalism because of its rejection of the fear of the Lord. When Christians are asked if they are conservative or liberal in their political orientation, may

it be true and may they learn to say: "I am neither a conservative nor a liberal, but rather I adhere to an explicitly Christian approach to politics." As John Fielding so aptly admonishes us: "May God help us to shuck Thomas Jefferson for King Jesus."⁹

¹ William F. Buckley, *American Conservative Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1970), xvi.

² *ibid.*, xvii.

³ Paul Henry, "Conservatism, Political," in *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed., Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids, 1973), 130-131.

⁴ Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 7th ed. (Chicago, 1986), 8.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Henry, *op. cit.*, 131

⁷ Kirk, *op. cit.*, 8-9.

⁸ For a collection of essays setting forth such a vision see William O. Einwechter, ed., *Explicitly Christian Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1997).

⁹ John A. Fielding III, "Libertarianism, Conservatism, and Christianity," the *Christian Statesman* Vol. 140 No. 5 (September-October 1996), 14.

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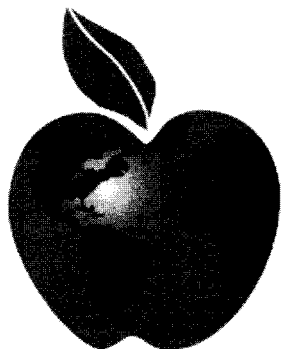
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Urban Nations Update: Mapple Turnovers

By Steve M. Schlissel



The Urban Nations' logo is a map of the world contained within an apple. It's a pretty straightforward way of saying that the world is now gathered, representatively and truly, in the Big Apple. We call the logo a "mapple."

As we go into our sixth year of reaching the world where the world's within reach, we are grateful to God for what he has accomplished. People from more than 70 different nations have had the Gospel of Righteousness proclaimed to them, several have been converted, many Urban Nations-type ministries have begun in far-flung places, we are cooperating with international ministries for referrals and follow-ups, and the work locally grows.

But like the fisherman who mulls over the ones that got away, we think of, and are sobered by, the multitude of "mapple turnovers." At any given time we have about 100 students learning English through the gospel, yet we have registered literally thousands. The turnover rate is phenomenal.

It is extremely rare for a student to leave because of the gospel, *per se*, though this has happened. Students are told from registration that this is an explicitly Christian, Bible-based program. This has not deterred the many Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and atheists who have enrolled. Yes, one Muslim woman from Egypt got "fed up" with hearing that she must turn and believe in Jesus, but it wasn't crystal clear, even in her case, that that was her reason for leaving the program.

Sometimes students stop coming because they move, or because of a change in work or work-hours, and very frequently because English proves to be more difficult than they had ever imagined it would be. Whatever the reason, we lament the loss of further opportunity to make Christ's claims known. The fact is, however, that the high "mapple turnover" facilitates our ability to reach more people. For, you see, they hear of Christ's claims from the very first class. If God causes them to move along sooner rather than later, that gives us an opportunity to bring someone off the waiting list and into the class, making the best use of our very limited resources.

One thing for which we can be profoundly grateful is the very low turnover of "mapple" staff. Furthermore, those who have left have gone on to other noble Kingdom work:

one man is now a pastor of a church in California, another is doing a fabulous work among immigrants (especially Sikhs) in Toronto, another is finishing seminary this year, and the only other mapple staff turnover is the seminarian's wife (and momma of his child)!

So, despite the high student turnover, there is still the feeling of stability here on the field. And on their behalf, I submit to you the following prayer requests: Rev. Ken Brown: We are seeking to move the Hope Caribbean Reformed Church up from the basement of Ken's apartment building and into a storefront on Nostrand Avenue. Pray for adequate funds for the rent, for a successful transition, and for the Truth to go forth to the enormous Caribbean population of Crown Heights.

Gerry Wisz: Gerry and Betty's eighth child, Zachary, was born with Fanconi Anemia, a disease which typically kills sufferers in youth. Gerry will be making trips to Philadelphia for surgery on the boy's hands (he has no thumbs). Two siblings have been ID'd as suitable bone-marrow donors, so the Wisz's are grateful to God and have hope for Zach to reach manhood, D.V. In the midst of this, Gerry's work among the Polish not only continues, but new opportunities are presenting themselves.

David Schildkraut began a new class composed of Russians, a Burmese, Buddhist, Ahnitian, a Korean, a Macedonian, two Muslim women and, this a rarity, a Jewish woman from Yemen (she wears a *hijab*, *ie.*, a traditional headcovering, and seems to have been much influenced by Muslim culture). Bob Ciago has students from more than a dozen nations. He is especially desirous to see God's grace in the life of Sophia, a Russian woman who kicks against the goads. Peter Wortman has seen some of his students come to church and he prays they will return, and that many more will come out. Elena Pertgen continues her work among Indian, Eastern European and South American women in Queens, NY. She is praying for a new facility closer to the Hindu center of population. Lastly, pray for volunteers Kevin Brendlar and Calvin Wortman as they bring the word clearly and faithfully to many students.

If you remember these "mapple" matters, please "turn them over" to the Lord. Thank you.

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Those Savvy Neo-Cons: Hardly Conservative

By Carlo DiNota



My advice to those aspiring pundits yearning for membership in the Neo-Conservative Cognitive Elite Club: embrace the Establishment, avoid “hot” Buchananesque statements, and keep God and Christianity out of your public lexicon. And never, ever talk about fearing your government, which is

a Neo-Con no-no. Once you’re labeled “extremist” and “conspiratorial,” there is no turning back. Remember, the goal of a Neo-Con upstart is not only to be on as many talk shows as possible, but to be invited to as many Beltway cocktail parties as well, so don’t even think about revealing any isolationist streak (translation: be kind about the UN, extol NAFTA and GATT, and avoid all phrases of the “America First” kind). Speak global-ese and say with conviction that Communism is dead, even if you really believe otherwise. Who knows, if your wardrobe is deemed acceptable, maybe you’ll even be courted by the “Neo-Con chic” crowd of Arianna Huffington. But remember, TV is the thing, even if it takes away from your writing. Don’t worry. Your TV commentary need only include speculation and predictions. Research and analytical strain not required.

The Neo-Conservative movement is alive and well. With the emergence of glitzy cable news stations, it has never been easier for a Neo-Con pundit to market his mainstream wisdom on a seemingly endless number of political talk shows on CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, the FOX News Channel, and other TV venues. And I’m sure that the younger Neo-Cons are hoping that they will one day be as sought after as William Bennett or Fred Barnes, ubiquitous role models indeed. For those seeking political office, New Deal Republican Jack Kemp, despite his recent national setback, epitomizes Neo-Con genteelness. Yes, you too can have a fetish for big government and still be called conservative.

It is not that Neo-Cons haven’t contributed anything positive to the genuine conservative cause. As a graduate student at New York University, where Jacques Derrida and his hermeneutic mafia were force-fed to all English majors, I found solace in the likes of Roger Kimball and Dinesh DiSouza and their brilliant indictments of deconstructive literary criticism. To this day, Kimball’s *Tenured Radicals* and D’Souza’s *Illiberal Education* are the

most incisive spankings of Derrida, Paul de Man, Stanley Fish, and their snobbish circle of obfuscating nihilists. In addition, there’s *Commentary*’s scathing critiques of affirmative action in the 1970s, with Neo-Con guru Norman Podhoretz teaching paleo-conservatives a thing or two. Give credit where credit is due.

However . . .

Watching William Bennett, the self-anointed education authority of Neo-Conservatism, spew nebulous school reforms on Meet the Press, truly captures the Left-leaning Neo-Con mentality. As Secretary of Education, he bloated what was then an already out-of-control U. S. Department of Education, while laying firm foundation for Richard Riley’s current Outcome-Based Education initiatives at the Department. Rather than acknowledging the intrinsic dangers of government schooling and its welfare system, Bennett always plays it safe with banal chatter about parental involvement, school choice, and, of course, “virtues.” Never will you hear him utter any significant indictment of whole language or school-to-work, and never will you see him rallying behind the homeschool movement, clearly the great education revolution of today. The same could be said for another former Education Secretary and influential Neo-Con “outsider,” Lamar Alexander.

Don't worry. Your TV commentary need only include speculation and predictions. Research and analytical strain not required.

Bill Bennett, following an unwritten tenet of Neo-Conservatism, is uncontroversial in his controversy, appearing reform-minded when in fact his reforms are hardly ground-breaking. With his pie-in-the-sky Establishment belief that government schools are reformable if we “empower” parents and make Washington more “pro-active” than it already is, Bennett is in fact embracing the destructive welfare system which is our

nation's public schools. Perhaps too enthralled by his acceptance from the *Weekly Standard* crowd, or suffering from myopia, Bennett fails to see that his belabored angst about the lack of virtues in our schools has contributed nothing to reshaping America's educational landscape for the better. To the mainstream press, William Bennett, like *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol and the ever-present Fred Barnes, is considered a conservative, yet the reality is that the Neo-Con cabal has little in common with genuine conservatism and its Jeffersonian distrust of expansive government.

*Yes, you too can have a
fetish for big government
and still be called
conservative.*

To use education as an example, Neo-Con leaders smugly dismiss the notion of removing government from the education business as the brainchild of Religious Right "kooks." Neo-Cons, instead, have done everything to promote a centralized, hyper-regulatory Education Department in Washington, tacitly approving increased funding for the Department every year as it continues to dictate its brazenly humanist agenda to the states.

The Neo-Con cocktail party circuit, in its Establishment elitism, does not welcome iconoclasm, especially when such iconoclasm casts a harsh light on the dubious legacies of Woodrow Wilson, FDR, Harry Truman, or JFK. Whether it be promoting the public school welfare state, or advocating world regulatory institutions that threaten our sovereignty, Neo-Cons lack the conviction to dismantle destructive institutions and Faustian alliances.

With Neo-Conservatism owing its existence to New Deal anti-Communists of the 1960s such as Podhoretz and

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Irving Kristol, one should not be surprised by the liberal penchant of William Kristol or Fred Barnes, and how they toe the Establishment line on such issues as education and world trade or how they critique—with kid gloves—the far-reaching and dangerous tentacles of our federal government and the United Nations.

Yet paleo-conservatives must not allow such neo-cons to monopolize the public forum. Unfortunately, the media-savvy Neo-Con operatives are successfully bringing their ravenous pack of big-government Republicans to the forefront, and they are skillfully redefining the essence of conservatism and manipulating the psyche of the American electorate.

Since the Republican Revolution, which was clearly more a victory for the neos than for the paleos, the battle of ideas in Washington D. C. favors the Neo-Cons, with true conservatives appearing to have undergone a tracheotomy. Rarely does one see a conservative firebrand even on C-Span express outrage over President Clinton's cozy rapport with the oppressive Chinese Communists or his ozone hysteria that will tighten the noose on our already suffocating industries. When a Ralph Nader or Dick Gephardt is carrying our Washington media water on the NAFTA issue, and when a William Bennett is viewed as a hard-line Right-winger by the mainstream press, it becomes abundantly clear that genuine conservatism needs to regroup fast.

Carlo DiNota is an associate of Samuel L. Blumenfeld. He is a former Roman Catholic high school English teacher and city councilman in Yonkers, New York. He holds a B. A. from Villanova University and an M. A. in English from New York University. He resides in Boston. He can be reached at Carlo2834@aol.com.

Of Meat Axes and Purists

By John E. Stoos

The statues of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the LORD is pure, en-lightening the eyes.

Psalms 19:8

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure.

James 3:17a



Our legislative halls have become an "Alice in Wonderland" where purity is now a vice and anyone suggesting surgery for the patient with advanced cancer is a barbarian. As Christians, we have an obligation to be active in the political realm; however, proposing real Biblical solutions to the major problems facing our

nation will provoke attacks from all sides.

In California, conservatives began the battle to reform welfare with the right agenda: restore the Biblical principle of valuing work and end government sponsored-dependency. Of course, the liberals put a former social worker in charge of the reform committee. The battle lines were drawn, and soon the state budget was weeks overdue. Finally, a few brave conservatives began running radio ads explaining what was going on and soon thereafter the liberals announced that they were willing to "compromise."

A conference committee drew up an agreed-on list of reforms, everyone shook on the deal and it appeared that conservatives had won an impressive victory. The conservative leadership still managed, however, to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

First, they sent liberal staff off to draft the details of the reforms, creating over four hundred pages of legal jargon to implement the few simple reforms. The final product actually moved California to the Left of the reforms signed by President Bill Clinton! When this was pointed out to the conservative leadership, they simply said it was the best they could get!

Next came their favorite legislative game: Announcing major reforms, while voting to do just the opposite. There were the obligatory debates, and when the dust had settled, only Senator Dick Mountjoy and Assemblyman Tom McClintock were willing to vote NO, after speaking against the phony reforms in the public debates.

What did these brave members get for their principled stand? As expected, they were vilified from the Left for being extremists, but the real surprise was the attack from fellow conservatives. When the Republican leader rose to defend the phony reforms, he proudly stated that they were good reforms supported by everyone but the "purists" in both parties. How far we have come from the principled, Biblical debates that used to fill our legislative halls! Saying that someone is pure is now a derogatory remark.

Heavy attacks will also be leveled on anyone who proposes eliminating counterproductive programs like bilingual education. In California some 23% of school children have a limited understanding of the English language. The educrats have designed a program only a bureaucrat could love. Teach children in their native language for subjects like math, history and science, with only a half-hour of English instruction each day. The result is what you would expect: about 95% of the children fail to learn English well enough to transition into regular classes.

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analysis.*

For years, the educational industrial complex has blocked any efforts to reform these failed programs. A California businessman and an award-winning Hispanic teacher have teamed up to put an initiative on next June's ballot. Their "English for the Children" initiative would end these state-mandated programs and return control to the parents.

So-called Hispanic leaders, and even some conservatives, have denounced the initiative, saying that while we need to fix the existing programs, that there is no need to use a "meat-ax" approach. The "meat-ax" attack has become the favorite of those who are unwilling, or simply afraid, to solve the problems caused by today's intrusive civil

governments. It may have been liberal Republican Governor Wilson who began this tactic when he referred to the historic property tax reductions in Proposition 13 as a meat-ax approach.

This mode of attack is often effective because people usually picture using a meat cleaver to do brain surgery. However, it is important to remember that the imagery can cut (and cleave!) both ways. Would anyone care to try using a scalpel to butcher a 2,000 pound steer? Most problems caused by civil government like welfare dependency or bilingual education do not need minor adjustments, but rather major overhauls or outright elimination.

As Christians we need to ask ourselves, Does the Lord want us to be pure or to “cut deals”? Should we pretend that so-called reforms are not what they really are? The answers should be obvious, and I would encourage any activists or legislators to proudly wear the label of “purist” and to always boldly present a Biblical analysis.

How about engaging in the large battles and proposing comprehensive solutions? Again, I think the Bible is on the side of the real warriors. The next time someone raises a concern about meat axes, refer him to the story of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter four. The Lord’s commandment was simple: “Hew down the tree and cut off his branches.”

After King Nebuchadnezzar experienced the Lord’s “axmanship,” he was a disciplined and repentant King: “Now, I Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble.” Sounds like good medicine for today’s politicians, and our nation.

John E. Stoos is director of California Conservative Opportunities and a member of the Covenant Reformed Church, Sacramento. He can be reached at Stoos@msn.com.

The Guttering Out of the GOP Revolution

By Patrick J. Buchanan

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The *coup de force* intended to topple Speaker Newt, in which faithful lieutenants betrayed him, only to re-embrace their beloved leader, had the makings of a Broadway comedy.

Unfortunately, the farce is also a tragedy. A great party, for whose principles good people have worked their whole lives, has been abused by those accorded

its highest honors. The House leaders have done what Bill Clinton could not do. They have made the party of Ronald Reagan look ridiculous.

Republicans are already trying to put the debacle behind them, which is the tradition. Rank-and-file Republicans are stand-by-your-man, union-shop people. They close ranks about the fallen.

But loyalty to this cast of characters seems incompatible with loyalty to the institution. What does this crowd truly stand for anymore, other than a tax cut so timid that Bill Clinton will not stuff it down their gullets as a “giveaway to the rich”?

This party crisis is going to endure because it is about more than the erratic and unbuttoned behavior of Newt.

The Republican Party is today in a crisis of the soul, unable to decide who and what it is. Is it to be a populist, conservative, traditionalist, fighting party—an exciting, perilous but ultimately promising journey? Or does it wish to be an uncontroversial collaborator of Bill Clinton?

The bizarre behavior of Newt betrays the schizophrenia of a leadership that seeks irreconcilable things: the loyalty and love of true believers, and the approbation of big media.

But it cannot have both.

This battle within the GOP is certain to intensify until one side prevails or departs. Consider the foreign policy issues upcoming: granting Clinton “fast track” authority to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement, extending the U.S. troop presence in Bosnia and expanding NATO to the borders of Russia. Populists and nationalists oppose all three. Yet, rely on it, the Beltway Republicans will again be found around the Clinton campfire. This recurring collaboration with Clinton is tearing the party apart. On the House vote to appease Beijing by renewing a trade status that gave China \$40 billion last year, social conservatives and populists locked arms — as the GOP colluded in Clinton’s triumph. According to *The Weekly*

Standard, Jack Kemp distributed a letter to the Senate opposing restrictions on the sale of super-computers to Beijing, some of which reportedly have been diverted to perfecting a Chinese missile designed to hit Kemp's home state of California. Does that "Empower America" or the strategic rocket forces of Communist China?

In the provinces, the party remains full of fight. It is unafraid of defeat and knows what it believes. Unfortunately, it is afflicted with a leadership more concerned with press clips and power than with policy and principles.

On immigration, four out of five voters want a "time out" to assimilate the 30 million people who have come since 1965. The GOP balks. "Could hurt us with Hispanic voters," it says. Meanwhile, Clinton enlarges the Border Patrol and builds the San Diego fence. On affirmative action, the GOP leadership, cowed by civil rights militants, will not fight for equal justice under the law, though a majority of Americans want all discrimination ended now.

In the provinces, the party remains full of fight. It is unafraid of defeat and knows what it believes. Unfortunately, it is afflicted with a leadership more concerned with press clips and power than with policy and principles. To watch the GOP Congress vote Clinton an extra \$1 billion in foreign aid recently raises a question as to whether the party is now operating on autopilot.

Ever since the White House routed Congress on the shutdown of the government, the GOP establishment has sought to recast its image. At San Diego, party nominees repudiated a platform written by their own delegates, censored conservatives and showcased the Eastern liberals the media love. The ticket then ran a campaign that consciously skirted those social and cultural issues that had been the party's defining stands. And what did it all profit them?

The Republican Party must grow up and accept that Reagan is gone and his era, the triumphant years of the Cold War, is over. The Evil Empire is not coming back to bring us together again. Nor is the old Democratic Party

of Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis and Joycelyn Elders. Unencumbered by ideology, tutored by Dick Morris, the Clintonites learned the lesson of 1994. They will not default again to the GOP by embracing the agenda of the loony Left.

When it finally decides who it is, the Republican Party is going to have to save itself. No one else can — and fewer and fewer care.

Pat Buchanan has been a senior adviser to three Presidents, and twice a candidate himself for the Republican nomination.

From 1966 through 1974, he was a confidant and assistant to Richard Nixon, and from 1985 to 1987, he was White House Director of Communications for the Great Communicator, Ronald Reagan.

In 1992, Mr. Buchanan challenged George Bush for the Republican nomination for President and almost upset the President in the New Hampshire primary. In 1996 he won the New Hampshire primary, and went on to finish second to Senator Dole with three million Republican votes.

Mr. Buchanan was born in the nation's capital, educated at Jesuit schools, and received his master's degree in journalism from Columbia University in 1962. At twenty-three, he became the youngest editorial writer on a major newspaper in America, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*.

In 1966, Mr. Buchanan moved to New York to become the first full-time staffer in the legendary comeback of Richard Nixon. He traveled with the future President in the campaigns of 1966 and 1968, and served as the Special Assistant to the President through Mr. Nixon's final days of Watergate.

On leaving the White House in 1974, Mr. Buchanan became a syndicated columnist and founding member of three of the most enduring—if not most-endearing—talk shows in television history: NBC's *The McLaughlin Group*, CNN's *Capital Gang*, and *Crossfire*.

In his White House years, Mr. Buchanan wrote foreign policy speeches and was present at four summit meetings, including Mr. Nixon's historic opening to China in 1972, and Ronald Reagan's Reykjavik summit in 1986 with Mikhail Gorbachev.

Mr. Buchanan has written three books, the last, a Washington best-seller about growing up in the nation's capital, in the 40's and 50's, titled *Right From The Beginning*. He is currently completing a book on U. S. trade policy, from the Revolution to the Battle of NAFTA, and has returned to *Crossfire*, *The McLaughlin Group*, and his twice-a-week column, now distributed by Creator's Syndicate.

Mr. Buchanan is married to the former Shelley Arm Scarney, who was a member of the White House Staff from 1969 to 1975.

The Problem with Conservatives

By Colonel V. Doner

“Conservatives for the most part lack an internal belief system.”

—Conservative Godfather Paul Weyrich, March 1997



At first blush this is an extraordinary statement from the father of the beltway conservative establishment. Bear in mind that he's not talking just about Republicans. No, he's addressing the mystery of the hapless and rudderless crew of Republican conservatives in Congress; flailing their arms, desperately beseeching for

someone—anyone—to take the helm of the Good Ship GOP as it descends in increasingly tight spirals ever downward into a whirlpool of compromise, neutrality and irrelevancy.

The GOP is visionless in large degree because its one component capable of generating vision—the conservative movement—has failed to do it. This has happened for two reasons. First, most men in leadership lack the time or interest in forming an internally coherent belief system on “the way up.” And they certainly have no time to do it now that they're in charge. It's a little late to take navigation lessons when you've just been handed the helm. How does one form a coherent, comprehensive worldview (as opposed to an eclectic collection of contradictory notions inherited from childhood and cobbled together haphazardly as we hurdle through life)? Once upon a time when most public servants actually possessed a Christian worldview, it was imparted by the local Calvinist minister who was probably the best educated man, and not coincidentally, the foremost leader in almost every town. Thanks to the influence of a century's dose of dispensational pietism, now the local pastor is likely to be the least educated “leader” in town. What education he (or she) does have will most likely be the antithesis of a Christian worldview. The Devil owns the earth, culture is doomed, the church is destined to experience increased corruption, weakness and death. Only a remnant is to be saved by a extra-Biblical “rapture” previous to the second coming of Christ. Consequently, to form a worldview today means devoting painstaking years (perhaps decades) to disciplined self-study—the rough equivalent of structuring your own Ph.D. program. This

is not the road preferred by most men of action—at least not by those who strive for political office.

Normally, our public servants have “arrived” through one of two paths. A minority have spent their lives as political junkies, graduating from Teenage Republican's (T.A.R.'s) to Young Republicans (Y.R.'s) or Young Americans for Freedom (Y.A.F.) to become party hacks or legislative aides. Then they get lucky and win their boss's old seat. The second route and by far the one that sees the most traffic, is that traveled by the businessman-politician. In this model one spends his university years focusing on his career goal: law, medicine, business, etc. Then another decade or two is invested in becoming the most successful lawyer, doctor, dentist, hog farmer, car dealer, real estate broker or rancher possible in Middletown. Then comes service in city, county or state office (usually in that order) where one spends endless days mastering the intricacies of zoning ordinances, water policy, land management and the politics of subsidizing whatever the local crop is (hogs, oil, tobacco, gas, fisheries, tourism, etc.). Not much time for intensive study here. Then the big break comes with “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington”; and all filled with heady idealism, he is sworn into the House of Representatives.

Unhappily he is soon informed that most of his time and energy must be spent in “constituent service”: pothole fixing, expediting government wealth-transference checks, and meeting with delegations from the local metal workers union, 4-H Club, Catholic Bingo League and Hog Farmers Association. He quickly learns that all this is vital to his re-election campaign—which incidentally starts TODAY since his primary is a scant eighteen months away and Billy Joe Bob, whom he barely defeated, is already out on the hustlings, raising money, kissing anything that moves, promising voters everything he can think of (but will never produce), and otherwise garnering pledges of votes.

If anything in the Congressman's background prepared him for rigorous thinking, weighing competing truth claims (or even recognizing the distinctions between various philosophical systems), or for plumbing the depths of the religious assumptions that undergird particular cultural and governmental models (which always express the dominant religious *zeitgeist*, whether humanism, Calvinism or Marxism), he now realizes that he is out of time. Whatever he has learned to this point is all he is going to learn. Whatever time and energy and mental focus he can muster up must now be devoted to his political survival.

What to do? Fall back on the usual Washington practice of total dependency on party-certified “policy experts”—the antithesis of anything remotely visionary. Incidentally, to reach outside the beltway networks for ideas or “vision”

is to risk alienating “the mainstream,” the media, and more important, scaring off big corporate contributors. Even Ralph Reed plays this game, preferring in his books on the future of the Christian Right to quote Tony Campolo or Martin Luther King rather than Abraham Kuyper, R. J. Rushdoony or Francis Schaeffer, none of whom, interestingly enough, he appears to have read. So our hero searches for a conservative “think tank” chuck full of conservative “wise men” with world-shattering vision. The problem is that they don’t exist. Political strategists, fundraisers and sycophants of every description yes—conservative worldview philosophers, no.

So now our beleaguered true-blue conservative representative finds the most accessible “vision” to be the self aggrandizing and eclectic “futurism” of a former college history instructor: Newt Gingrich. His only other viable alternative, or so he is led to believe by his Washington staff, is to rely on a never-ending stream of policy papers generated by “Neo-Conservatives.” These “policy studies” are most notable for their avoidance of any discussion of principles, first causes or morality. In keeping with the Neo-Conservative secular temper, they are pragmatic or scientific in nature (*e.g.*, welfarism isn’t wrong because it’s immoral; it’s wrong because the statistics prove it’s counterproductive) rather than principle-driven. Thus our new congressman finds himself looking for guidance to 1950s style centrists (as exemplified by the former Vice President of the United States, Dan Quayle, appointing Bill Kristol, son of Neo-Con patriarch Irving Kristol, as his chief of staff).

What I’m asserting is that there is no longer an intact “conservative movement” or vision. What we have now in its place is a twenty-first century melding of corporate America’s internationalism with the Utopian Global-Democratic Capitalist New World Order of the Neo-Cons.

The Disappearing Conservatives

“It now seems increasingly likely that the New Right is on its death bed.”

—*The Conservative Movement*, Paul Gottfried, page 116

The question that now arises is, whatever happened to the conservative movement? How could it so easily be supplanted by a “Neo”-Conservatism? Indeed, what was once a vital conservative movement has been so thoroughly consumed by its Neo-Con predator that only a few brittle bones remain. Or, to employ a different metaphor, it’s not that the conservative emperor is bereft of clothing; it’s that he’s clothed in a Neo-Con skirt, the political equivalent of a cross dresser.

In exploring the roots of modern conservatism, we encounter our first clue as to its surprising vulnerability to a hostile takeover. Simply stated, American conservatism never had its own worldview or coherent, “internal belief system,” as Weyrich correctly surmised. Ironically enough, the history of the conservative moment

has been one of progressive syncretization. It began with a coalition of isolationists and free-market theorists reacting to FDR’s “war-mongering” and quasi-socialist government interventionism. In 1944 a handful of them founded the weekly newspaper *Human Events*, still the flagship publication of “The Old Right.” This small but vocal group evolved into an *ad hoc* alliance with “Traditionalists” like Russell Kirk (who authored his definitive work *The Conservative Mind* in the early 1950s). Kirk’s philosophy was largely drawn from a confluence of European conservatives: the British philosopher Edmund Burke; Roman Catholic “natural law” theories, and from a school of thought known as “New Humanism.” With Senator Joseph McCarthy’s (and Senator Richard Nixon’s) communist-hunting forays, the movement took a distinctly anti-communist turn and grew significantly. In the early 60s the movement further expanded its already eclectic range with the addition of various stripes of libertarians and Randians (devotees of “objectivist” novelist Ayn Rand), alongside fundamentalist communist fighters like Rev. Carl McIntire and Rev. Billy James Hargis (the predecessor to Jerry Falwell). The movement’s quantum leap in popularity came with the formation of the “Draft Goldwater Committee” in 1963. For the boomer generation of activists this was the beginning of our (including my) self-conscious identity as “conservatives.”

The movement, ill-defined as it was (which enhanced its ability to attract sub-cultures as diverse as Randians and fundamentalists) was bonded together by five central concerns: 1) anti-communism, 2) “anti-big government,” 3) free enterprise, 4) anti-abortion and 5) “traditional values,” whatever the last may have meant (and surely its meaning was in the eye of the beholder). Of the five, a fierce anti-communism was clearly the driving force and the primary bonding agent which held the movement’s otherwise disparate elements together. Badly out-flanked by the media, academia, and the political establishment, conservatives were in some ways what the Left characterized them as: “reactionaries.” We were, in fact, so overwhelmed “reacting” to the seemingly unstoppable march of communism across the globe and frightening cultural disintegration at home that we had little inclination or time to develop a coherent worldview. Just protecting children at public school from a myriad of wild-eyed social programmers seemed a full-time task. In such a setting, concentrating on immediate threats seemed entirely justifiable. When the barbarians are at the gates, it’s not the time to wax philosophical. It’s time to man the walls and start dumping cauldrons of boiling oil.

In sum, with a highly visible enemy, we didn’t need a coherent philosophy (or so we thought). Besides, we knew what we stood for: free enterprise, traditional values (meaning we were for conserving anything the Left proposed changing), and “freedom” (meaning “Better Dead Than Red”). Ironically, it was this over-arching priority of

destroying the Red Menace that opened the gates to the Neo-Conservative Trojan Horse.

The Neo-Conservative Trojan Horse

“The old conservatives of the 80s were being swallowed up by the alliance they initiated and sustained.”

—*The Conservative Movement*, Paul Gottfried, page 90

“The offensives of radicalism have driven vast herds of liberals across the borders into our territories. These refugees now speak in our names, but the language they speak is the same one they always spoke. [The conservative *Intercollegiate Review* (Spring 1996) as quoted in *The Conservative Movement*, Paul Gottfried, page 91].

The conservative movement of the 70s, dispirited from successive annihilation of its two most prominent anti-communist heroes, Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon (exactly one decade apart), was desperate for new allies, especially ones with impeccable academic credentials and media connections. Enter the “Neo-Cons,” the “New Conservatives.” In brief, “Neo-Conservatism” came about as establishment 1950s Harry Truman-Scoop Jackson anti-communist liberal intellectuals (many of them former Marxists) were repelled by the violence and anti-establishmentarianism of the radical Left. A mostly Jewish group, they were also alarmed by the New Left’s rabid anti-Israel pro-Arab rhetoric and the radical sea change that was swamping the Democratic Party as illustrated by the growing popularity and influence of Senators Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern. Disillusioned by liberalism’s receptivity to the Marxist critique of Western culture, and concerned for Israel’s security (the Soviets were effectively surrounding Israel with their client states) this Gideon’s band of “liberal anti-communists” searched for a new home. Deeming themselves the “New Conservatives,” they began writing for conservative magazines and supplying the intellectual capital for a handful of conservative foundations. Nevertheless, they remained classic establishment liberals, or “Democratic centrists,” with their twin goals of establishing a new world order of democratic pluralism and a well-managed, budget balanced, neatly ordered welfare state here at home. These “New Conservatives” were, in fact, anything but, then or now. They were conservative only in relation to the far-out radicalism of their former comrades.

By insinuating themselves into the heart of the conservative movement this small band of less than a hundred was gradually able to dominate intellectually or financially (or both), the key publications (*National Review*, the *Washington Times*, the *Weekly Standard*) and think tanks (The Heritage Foundation, The Hoover and American Enterprise Institutes) of the Right. As Gottfried notes, Neo-Cons’ progressive influence over foundation purse strings (with grants of \$30 million a year!) gave them

“control over the form and content of movement conservatism” (*The Conservative Movement*, Paul Gottfried, page 129). Not a few of the Old Guard objected to these brazen house guests evicting their hosts, but with the Neo-Cons’ media cachet and their new found pot of gold, opponents were easily marginalized or black-listed as anti-Semitic, a tactic that was most recently employed with some success against Pat Buchanan.

In short, most of the old post-WW II conservative movement that didn’t die off was run off by the neo-con blitzkrieg, or absorbed by the New Right (circa 1970-1980). In turn, during the 80s the Neo-Cons co-opted the few real assets the New Right possessed (which wasn’t much beyond their heavily incestuous and burned-out mailing lists). In 1997, the breathtaking success of the Neo-Con sweep was dramatically underscored by “The First International Conservative Congress” (“Reinvigorating Conservatism Worldwide”) held in September 1997 where the vast majority of several dozen featured speakers were Neo-Cons. In fact, the only name from the Old Right was Neo-Con convert William F. Buckley. The lone Christian Right token was, of course, Ralph Reed.

The Neo-Con Agenda

“Almost all Neo-Conservatives . . . remain qualified defenders of the welfare state.”

—*The Conservative Movement*, Paul Gottfried, page 85

To inquire about the specifics of the Neo-Con agenda, all we need do is observe the Republican agenda in Congress. Ironically, while “Newt’s Freshmen” complain that “the revolution” has stalled, that things have gotten boring for lack of action, the Neo-Con agenda (which has subsumed the Speaker and his minions) is rolling along quite smoothly. In foreign affairs we continue to use tax dollars and American troops to transplant American-style “democratic capitalism,” while encouraging “open immigration” from the Third World and accelerated emigration of blue-collar jobs to Red China and sundry Third World concentration camps. This seemingly disastrous policy is the Neo-Con’s *raison d’etat* in foreign affairs—the pursuit of international cultural and political homogeneity based on secular democratic values.

At home the Neo-Cons betray their true colors as neo-liberals with their vehement defense of big government (albeit a well-managed one!) and the welfare state (again, an efficiently run one!). As a whole, Neo-Conservatives are interested in containing or moderating the civil government’s role as sovereign caretaker for the people, not replacing it. Irving Kristol (Bill’s father) and the progenitor of the Neo-Conservative movement, freely confesses “we are not at all hostile to the idea of a welfare state,” inferring it was merely the gross mismanagement of the welfare state Neo-Cons found irksome.

The Future

“Real conservatives are a populist anti-establishment force that is not represented by ‘establishment’ conservative parties.”

—*The Weekly Standard*, Paul Weyrich, September 1, 1997

The unexpected victory of the conservative coalition over its two great enemies of the last half century, communism and liberal Democratic control of Congress, has revealed the movement’s bankruptcy in terms of a coherent vision for the future. In fact, it seems the movement even lacks agreement on the first principles (*i.e.*, worldview) necessary to construct such a vision. Now that the “tie that binds” (resistance to the Evil Empire) has dissolved, what’s to hold the increasingly diverse elements of the movement (Libertarians, America Firsters, Isolationists, interventionist Neo-Cons, corporatists, country clubbers and Christians) together? Remember the five-legged stool of the prototype conservative agenda: 1) anti-communism, 2) anti-“big government,” 3) free enterprise, 4) anti-abortion and 5) “traditional values,” ? Number one is moot. Number two is now axiomatic for everyone not living in Cuba, China, North Korea, or humanities departments of elite American universities, and is consequently no longer of interest to most activists. On points 3 and 4 Christians will most likely find themselves at loggerheads with the rest of the movement, especially the Neo-Cons. The last issue, “traditional values,” surely will turn out to be the most divisive, as the recent “Neo-Con/Theo-Con” war vividly demonstrates. What we have yet to perceive is that 80% of the GOP—from Libertarians to country clubbers, from Neo-Cons to secular conservatives, are purposefully uninterested in Christian Right issues. Read one hundred conservative pundits, peruse the policy papers generated by conservative think tanks and you will find ninety percent deal with balancing the budget or fine-tuning the bureaucracy.

War of the World Views

“... if the evangelicals should lose their foothold within the Republican party or if the abortion battle should swing against them with an aura of irreversible finality, a larger number of conservative Christians will begin to think more seriously about overt forms of social protest and resistance. If that should occur, the Reconstructionists will be waiting for them with open arms.”

—*Heaven on Earth*, Bruce Barron, page 148

While the Neo-Cons are high on “traditional values,” they’re really talking about “generic” civic virtues that provide the gravitational grounding to keep our culture from flying apart. Antithetical to their concept is anything as divisive as Christianity’s exclusive truth claims. The Neo-Cons fancy themselves managing a polite, pluralistic, secular, democratic capitalistic society where everyone gets

along nicely, a “kinder, gentler” society. Thus we have the stage set for a replay of the Neo-Con vs. Theo-Con war. Having successfully vanquished their opposition from the conservatives’ Old Guard (see Andrew Sandlin’s extended editorial), their next most likely target is the Christian Right, at least those who cannot be co-opted or who stubbornly insist on the primacy of a Christian worldview which mandates “disciplining the nations to follow all God’s Law” (*Mt. 28*).

If the Neo-Con bile spat at Pat Buchanan, or the charges of sedition launched against Christian Neo-Cons (now called Theo-Cons) are any indication of the tenor of the coming attack, the Christian Right is in for quite a mudslinging contest. Unfortunately, it is a contest wherein the Neo-Cons enjoy almost every strategic advantage: deep financial pockets; excellent access to, and approbation by, the secular media; and control of the conservative media, and increasingly, of the movement itself.

The one critical ingredient that both Neo-Con and the Remocrat establishment lack is popular support. That large slice of culturally and religiously conservative Southerners, Northern Catholics and Western independents loosely identified as “populists” are determined to defy the political establishment, be it Center-Left or Center-Right.

The Christian Right must decide whether it is content to stay in the Neo-Con dog house, learning to love our ugly stepchild role, or whether we will seek to independently build a bridge to these culturally conservative but independent voters. If the Christian Right gets the courage to leave the Remocrat plantation and hook up with these political rebels, we may have a fighting chance. Nevertheless, it will be a long and difficult road. As Professor Gottfried observes in *The Conservative Movement*: “Not only Neo-Conservatives but the Republican party flourishes with the expansion of the welfare state. No one is likely to ‘break the clock of the great society’ without first having to take on the ‘respectable’ conservative movement and the Republican Party” (page 164). A formidable challenge, to say the least.

But then there’s that second advantage which the secularists lack. It’s called God’s Sovereignty, and the timetable is exclusively his.

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In 1984, he served as chairman of the national Reagan/Bush Christian voter registration campaign, and co-founded The American Coalition for Traditional Values, the broadest based coalition of major evangelical leaders ever to unite behind a political objective since prohibition.

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The Tory Mentality: Predictable Political Losses of Conservatives

By Larry Pratt



Conservatism in America has been on a long, steady retreat for over a century. The Presbyterian theologian of the last century, Robert Dabney, had concluded that conservatives acted to consolidate the gains of liberals and then resisted any further erosions of freedom from that point—until the next liberal

victory. The process would then be repeated from the new point of liberal victory with the conservatives tagging along a respectable 20 years or so behind.

The last time I can find in our history a strong, winning program for conservatives was when the Whig philosophy dominated conservative thinking up to and just after the War for Independence. Whigs believed that the law is above the government because God is the King of Kings and he is the author of law. The eighteenth century Tory, the precursor of today's conservative, believed that the government is over the law, having sovereign lawmaking authority.

The Tory view that pervades conservatism has neutered (Newtered?) its ability to confront the agenda of the liberal humanist. Both the Tory and the humanist views assume that the government has the authority to speak on anything and everything. The jurisdictional boundaries that enclosed government in the past are now being removed by the conservatives almost as quickly as by the liberals. We see the double mindedness spoken of by James in most conservative politicians ("... a double-minded man is

unstable in all his ways," James 1:8). Campaigns are waged and often won by proclaiming conservative rhetoric. But the Tory mentality is generally powerless to restrain the liberal agenda, let alone pursue a conservative agenda. A conservative agenda would set a course for dismantling most government divisions, bureaus, agencies and whatever else they are called. Once the Tory has been installed in office he succumbs to the pressures of the media, his colleagues and the interest groups—all of whom praise him when he "grows" in office. Growth is defined as betraying campaign pledges in favor of political correctness.

The eighteenth century Tory, the precursor of today's conservative, believed that the government is over the law, having sovereign lawmaking authority.

It must be said at this point that the politicians can and will behave better when their constituents do not ignore them after they are elected. What they lack in philosophical commitment can be replaced by the raw fear of losing their job. A dedicated, vocal minority can overcome, in many cases, the pressure from the establishment. The principle

here was articulated by the late Sen. Everett Dirksen, one-time Republican minority leader: "When I feel the heat, I see the light." Biblically the principle is that of the woman in Luke 18 who finally got justice by persistently petitioning the judge who did not fear God.

The system can work; it can control a civil government that is now out of control. A good part of the reason we are in our present state is that not enough people are sufficiently dissatisfied with the excesses of civil government over against the perception of benefits being received. The constituents must return to a Whig philosophy if Whigs are going to be elected to office.

A look at some recent developments illustrates the need for not leaving Tories to themselves. We must not assume that a good speech before the Rotary Club back home automatically translates to constitutional action inside the Beltway. In 1934, Joseph Keenan, Assistant Attorney General under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, testified before Congress: "The federal government has no police power." The only thing surprising about his statement was that a spokesman for a radically anti-constitutional government would acknowledge such a plain and simple truth. What is truly distressing is that conservatives such as Rep. Bob Barr (R-GA) have never seen a federalization of local police powers they did not like. In 1996, Barr introduced a repeal of the semi-auto ban (which by itself was good) but included language that would have federalized every state and local gun law in the country. This would have allowed the federal Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) to bring charges against someone accused of brandishing a firearm. After a tremendous pounding from constituents, Barr finally agreed to drop the federalization provision of his bill.

From the feds having no police powers in 1934 to having over 60,000 heavily armed paramilitary agents with arrest powers in 1997 is quite a growth. And the Republicans have been pushing that agenda as hard as any Democrat without ever so much as a change in the Constitution to permit it. Constitutional change has come by redefining words and observing restrictions on governmental activity in the breach.

President Clinton commented on the record following the 1994 Republican takeover of Congress that the firearms issue had cost his party control of the legislative branch. On this occasion the President was speaking the truth. In fact, in those races in which firearms became a defining issue, the gun banners almost always lost in both suburban as well as in rural districts. What was the Republican response? They did not want to have votes on gun issues. They specifically reneged on public and private promises to have a vote on repeal of the semi-auto ban (the so-called "assault weapons") enacted in 1994.

Why would the Republicans not leap at a chance to revisit one of the hot-button issues that helped bring them into power in 1994? Why not force the Democrats to vote on the record? This establishes an objective measure for

which legislators can be held accountable. Then, at election time, they can be made to pay for their votes that violated their oath of office. The answer to the puzzle seems to be that the leadership is protecting the rather large number of Republicans who, in spite of their own campaign rhetoric, do not want to vote on the firearms issue. There are even a substantial number of Republicans who are not pro-Second Amendment at all.

The Tory mentality is so pervasive that many Republicans could be said to be suffering from the Stockholm Syndrome (captives identifying with the captor). Yes, the Republicans won the election, but they still behave as if they are a minority. That is why the Stockholm Syndrome seems to help explain their near total inability to advance their publicly articulated agenda.

Republicans have a fairly substantial pro-life majority in the House of Representatives, yet when Mother Theresa died, they were unable to pass a resolution celebrating her fight against the scourge of abortion. The best they could get through was a wimpy mention that she cared for the unborn. A resolution spends no money and punishes no criminals. It is just words. Even there, the accommodation to the committed humanists went unchecked.

*The constituents must
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If we grade conservative success financially, then an F minus is the grade they have earned. Our Tories have not cut one federal agency, the deficit grows, and the funding for the countless unconstitutional programs balloons constantly. When it came to a showdown with the President, and part of the civil government might have had to stay shut down, the Republicans blinked. There were notable exceptions who refused to act like Tories, but it is on balance all too true that the Republicans surrendered and went over to the other side.

Conservative issue-advocacy organizations also inclined to the Tory mindset. In their case, the co-oping process can be understood by considering the words of Proverbs 23:1-3: "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food."

The deception referred to here by Solomon is self-deception. Many observers assume that when an organization acts so contrary to its stated objectives, subversion must be occurring, but the reality is harder to

deal with. People who still think of themselves as solidly and staunchly pursuing the agenda for their group do not often see that they have switched from lobbying for their constituents to lobbying for the politicians. That is the price of the ruler's delicacies.

At a rally a few years ago, I condemned then Senator Bob Dole (R-KS) for having almost single-handedly used his considerable parliamentary legerdemain to allow the Brady Law to pass the Senate. After I spoke, a prominent board member of the NRA gave a spirited defense of Bob Dole, explaining the political realities that had "compelled" him to do what he did. Poor Bob Dole. Just a vector sum of forces in a universe of chance.

Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) gained some deserved notoriety when the conservative magazine *National Review* featured Mormon Hatch as a "Latter-Day Liberal." Hatch has become a personal friend of Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA). The friendship has paid numerous legislative dividends for Kennedy and the liberals. One of Hatch's projects has been the promotion of S.10, a juvenile crime bill. The first objection to this bill is that the Constitution has not delegated police powers to the Congress. The Congress has no business legislating in this arena. It was intended to remain a state and local function.

Hatch's juvenile crime bill would make a Racketeering in Corrupt Organizations (RICO) offense out of taking two or more of your kids out for handgun target practice—if they did not have written permission in their pockets even though you were with them the whole time! You could get 20 years for that threat to society, Bucko! There are other egregious provisions, but perhaps one more example will suffice. If you and a couple of guys regularly take your kids (a total of at least five persons) out to shoot without that permission slip, that is a criminal gang offense that could get you from a minimum of five years up to 20 years in jail. And the NRA urged its members to support the bill with this language in it.

The NRA is not alone in failing to heed the warning of Proverbs 23 cited above. They were joined by the Christian Coalition and the National Right to Life Committee in supporting Senator Dole in his Presidential nomination battle. They provided the critical support Dole needed to win the South Carolina primary which gave him the momentum to go on to win the nomination and lose the general election. Their chief argument was that he was going to win anyway. The often unarticulated premise was that access is critical; they would continue to have access to Dole; therefore, we should support him. These groups were not happy talking about his record that was contrary to their stated objectives.

Dole's loss was quite predictable. He had no way to define himself as different from Clinton. When Dole was

silly enough to criticize Clinton for his judicial nominees (which are a Constitutional abomination), Clinton was happy to respond immediately that if Dole had such a problem with Clinton's judges, why did Dole vote for them? Indeed, as Senate Majority Leader, Dole could have blocked any or all of Clinton's judicial nominees. After that episode, Dole barely raised any issues at all, because Clinton would have had the same easy comeback: "You voted for it."

What is remarkable, though, is that the Stockholm captives numbered among the conservative advocacy groups were unable to see that Dole, even if he had won, would have been as captive of the Beltway Barons (media, other legislators and interest groups) as he had been as Senate Majority Leader. Another indication of the Tory mindset of many conservatives occurred during a Heritage Foundation panel discussion on welfare. A number of conservative groups explained that it is possible to take federal money and maintain one's fidelity to the principles of private charity. A question about legitimacy was raised: "If we find no grant of power in Article I, Section 8 for redistributing people's money, and if charity is by its nature voluntary, not compulsory, how do you defend taking federal funds?" Here is the answer given by the Heritage Foundation spokesman: "Well, it's being done." Did Mommy ever accept the defense when we were kids: "Everybody else is doing it?" The Tory mentality will continue to secure defeat until Whigs with resolve are elected who will then force recorded votes on controversial issues that rekindle the debate on whether civil government is our servant (the Founders' idea) or our master (the current establishment's idea). This goal can be greatly furthered when conservative advocacy groups are willing to confront politicians who vote wrong. The present desire to have access at any cost has only led to accelerating the erosion of freedom in America. Politicians understand that if all we want is to have a place at the table with their delicacies, they can knife us in the back and we will pretend that nothing has happened; we won't even say: "Ouch!"

Confronting politicians gets them as upset today as was King Herod when John the Baptizer pointed out that the king had broken the law by marrying his brother's wife. When enough of us get them upset, they either change their minds or we succeed in changing them. We ought to get serious about doing this lest we end up the way John did.

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Time to Bid the Political UN Farewell

By Sheldon Richman



President Clinton has announced a renewed U. S. commitment to the United Nations. In his attempt to show American enthusiasm for the world organization, Clinton has promised that the United States will pay the \$819 million it is said to owe, and he supports expansion of the Security Council. It will be no surprise if

Clinton comes to accept other ideas floating around: watering down of the Security Council veto, UN involvement in international gun control, and even UN authority to levy taxes. That is because in the Clinton world view, enlightenment requires unrestrained embrace of the United Nations.

But in fact, the United Nations is little more than an expensive way to impose obligations on an already burdened American people. Apparently it is not enough that the taxpayers are at the mercy of whatever domestic need or misfortune is discovered by Washington; they must also be ready to sacrifice blood and treasure whenever the "international community" says so. That is not the way it was supposed to be.

When George Washington warned against "entangling alliances" in his farewell address, he had in mind the sort of open-ended commitments embodied in UN membership. It was widely understood in Washington's day that Americans couldn't be really free if the government could commit them to participate in foreign conflicts whenever their leaders declared such participation to be in the national interest. Nothing is easier for a president than to announce that strife in Haiti, Rwanda, Somalia, or Bosnia impinges on the security of the American people. He may even believe it. The problem is that he can force the taxpayers to finance an intervention and send troops into a strange land torn by an obscure dispute, and there is nothing the American people can do about it. Even if they protest, it is unlikely their representatives in Congress will do much about it. Over the years, Congress has been reluctant to thwart a President in matters of foreign policy. A common criticism of the UN is that it erodes American sovereignty. In a way, it is a little late to be complaining about that. The Senate approved treaty obligations to the organization when the United States joined the UN after

World War II. Under the Constitution, treaties are part of the supreme law of the land. UN critics pointed this out at time, but they were not heeded.

To the extent that the American people have obligations that come from membership in the UN, the unique political system built by the Founders has been undermined. The Constitution set up a federal government whose powers are, in James Madison's words, "few and defined." But UN membership obligates the American people in ways that go far beyond what those few powers were intended to do. Their tax money is used to meddle in foreign civil wars, promote state power in the developing world, administer disaster relief, and even sponsor abusive "population control" programs. Authority for such missions is not found in the Constitution.

Concern about sovereignty is not the whole story. After all, the missions the United States has been involved in were not forced on reluctant American Presidents. On the contrary, Presidents use the UN to disguise essentially unilateral foreign adventures. If a President had tried to go it alone in Iraq or Somalia, the public and much of the Congress would have objected. But as soon as a President announces that a mission has been blessed by the "international community of nations," much criticism is silenced.

Apparently, it is Neanderthal to dissent from the "international community."

Thus, the real danger of the United Nations is that it licenses the executive branch of the U. S. civil government to make war in violation of the checks and balances built into the Constitution. Recall the war against Iraq. President Bush was able to circumvent the Constitutional requirement of a congressional declaration of war by having the UN authorize the operation. Bush asked Congress for authorization only after the troops were in place and the UN had set a date for the launch of hostilities.

What can be done about this covert undermining of the Constitution? If we take seriously the limits on government power that the Constitution was intended to impose, there is only one thing to do. The United Nations is not a debating society. It is an organization dedicated to meddling in foreign disputes. As such it is costly in money and potentially in American lives.

The United States should get out at once.

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Rationalism and the Chain of Being

By R. J. Rushdoony

Very early, a deadly notion from Hellenic rationalism entered into the Christian church, namely, the transfer of the idea of the good from ethics to metaphysics. In terms of this, sin became a thinness of being. In the supposed Great Chain of Being, sin was at the bottom of the chain. Instead of being *moral* opposites, good and evil were *metaphysical* opposites. Gnosticism carried this notion to strange and fantastic conclusions. In scholastic philosophy, evil is seen as a thinness of being, and, for Dante, in *The Divine Comedy* in the last round of the ninth circle of hell, where Lucifer is, all are ice-bound.

There is a world of danger in this view, because the concept of the Great Chain of Being means a continuity of being; it means that both God and man share a common being and therefore are open in their rationality one to another. In terms of Biblical faith, there are two kinds of being, created and uncreated, creation and the God of creation. The mind of God is uncreated, man's mind is created. Because man is a creature in all his being, he bears the stamp of the Creator, even to his image (*Gen. 1:26-28*). Man's being is discontinuous with God's while imaging it with respect to God's communicable (but not incommunicable) attributes.

To return to the notion that sin and virtue are metaphysical facts, this means that sin leads a person into a thinness of being, and then into virtual or actual non-being. This idea is a useful one for those who wish to dispose of Hell: those in Hell are fading away in their being into non-being and are destined to disappear. But sin is not a slenderness of being but the willful transgression of the law of God. Sin is thus not the metaphysical wasting away of man but his moral rebellion against God and his law. It is a moral, not a metaphysical, declension.

This Hellenic view has important considerations for rationalism. The rationalist does not self-consciously accept all aspects of his Hellenic inheritance. Being non-historical in his approach, he assumes that his reason has all the attributes that philosophy in his day ascribes to it. It is, for example, a shock to read Aristotle *after* Aquinas and to realize that the Aristotle we know is a very different person from the ancient Greek, a somewhat distant relative, in fact.

In either an early or a later form, however, rationalism presupposes a continuity of being between God, or the ultimate ideas or forms, and the mind of man. It is this impersonal continuity of being that is the mainstay of rationalism and its source of truth. The rationalist does not posit a discontinuity, and, with the rare one who might, he does not see this human rationality as fallen. To do so would destroy his rationalism.

Now if there is a stream of continuity in all of history, that stream, will, in its pseudo-Christian forms, absorb the incarnation of Jesus Christ into its continuity. The results of this absorption are startling. The historical Jesus becomes less important than his continuity in some mystical form. This can take several forms. The sacrament of communion can outweigh the historical atonement. Salvation, instead of being from sin, becomes deification, *theosis*. The historical incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ is seen as continuing mystically in his church, and so on and on. In Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism, we have varying forms of these beliefs. They represent the transmutation of Christianity from a Hebraic to an alien form. The necessity of Scripture gives way to alien and rationalistic premises which insist on the necessity of the church.

In the Greek Chain of Being idea, human autonomy is possible in a way that it is not under the doctrine of creation. Creationism sees the creation of man and of all things else as declaring the total and absolute dependence of all things on God. Having been created out of nothing, and having brought nothing to their making, all creatures are totally dependent on God and totally subject to his sovereign predestinating will. In the Great Chain of Being, all creatures and beings share in God's divinity and are aspects of a common being. Men can rise or fall on the Great Chain of Being, and man's use of Reason determines his status. Man is thus essentially autonomous, and he can rise or fall in the chain as his Reason determines. The determining force is thus not the personal God but a common and impersonal Reason, available alike to God and to man.

The universe of the Great Chain of Being is open in that there is no absolute and determining God over all. Predestination then cannot be a seriously held idea if one is logical. It is an open universe in that man's Reason can penetrate all things determinatively. The rational is the real in this kind of world. But it is a closed world to the God of Scripture, because he is excluded in the name of rationality from the spheres of philosophy and history. Rationalism can "prove" God but its god is always a dead one, a figment of man's imagination and Reason. In the earlier years of modern philosophy, men sought to "prove" the existence of God. The logic of their thinking came into focus with Hegel and after Hegel, the philosopher in his thinking as the actual God of being. Nietzsche clearly saw himself as the new god but apparently did not like what he saw!

Random Notes, 75

By R. J. Rushdoony

1. Hilton Kramer, in "Shock Treatment" (*Art and Antiques*, Summer, 1997, p. 116 f.) documents the fact that "art" today is too commonly simply an assault on religion and morality. For example, a sculpture by a woman which depicts a naked young woman urinating on the floor "reached a record breaking price at one of our most prestigious auction houses." A British pair had photo murals at another gallery showing "the artists' own excrement" for which they were "proclaimed as great masters." It is Christian civilization which is under attack, by these Yahoos.

2. In the early years of this century, Mario Praz, in *The Romantic Agony*, called attention to the logic of Romanticism. It progressively develops the bizarre and abnormal aspects of romanticism and becomes favorable to evil, perversion, savagery, and the like. Life since then has confirmed Praz's analysis. A recent study, very favorable to Proust, is titled *How Proust Can Change Your Life*. Proust spent fourteen years in bed, feared mice, was a hot-water-clutching Mummy's boy, had indigestion, constipation, "a neurotic need for tight underpants and a chronic suspicion of doctors." This was not the worst about Proust! Can you see why you and I are not great men among the moderns? We are too normal!

3. Modern man is often insistent that problems, supposedly created by our Christian forebears, are insuperable, and we are doomed. Before my time, when the San Joaquin Valley of California was first farmed, a serious problem developed. Not far from our farm, alkali surfaced where farming began, and at first rich farms became white deserts. Mile after mile was simply alkali flats. After World War II, it was found that alfalfa could take out the alkali and restore the soil. At first, a 20-acre area might have only a dozen alfalfa plants that survived planting; in time, these grew, penetrated deep into the soil, and eliminated the alkali. The area was soon very choice farm-land. In recent years, the panic button has again been sounded by some because of the selenium build-up in the west valley, with genetic damage to the bird life in the area's ponds. That too is now being taken care of.

4. *U. S. News and World Report* is one of the better periodicals of the day, but it also shares in the modern sickness. In a series of issues, it has listed all of the various kinds of institutions in order of important, *i.e.*, best colleges, graduate schools, hospitals, etc. Its guidelines for ranking these institutions is a very superficial. For example, in rating law schools it looks at various external factors. A law school placed near the top is one which permitted its students to disrupt and break up a lecture by a guest

speaker. (This has been a common event at secular and some Christian institutions.) The faculty did nothing. Now, how can a law school which is regularly lawless gain a high rating? Obviously, students and faculty know nothing about the real law. Instead of being highly rated, such institutions should be avoided because they are schools of and for barbarians. This particular law school has a great number of graduates who are highly placed in American life. No wonder we are in trouble.

5. History favors the winners usually, and historians are ready to tell us much about the failings of the "losers." These failings are very much common to all nations! Consider, for example, Lithuania. At one time, its realm extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, one of the greatest states in European history. Now not many know of its once great power. The same is true of Serbia, and other peoples. Even greater powers are usually forgotten *unless* a religious reason prevails. The empires of Biblical antiquity are still known to us. Religious humanism has led to the continuing regard for the Greeks and the Romans.

6. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., in *Lord of the Saved* rightly called attention to an aspect of the Gospel now forgotten, its *demand* aspect. God *requires* our faith and service; he does not beg for it.

7. Scott Shane, in *Dismantling Utopia* (1994), noted that the Soviet Union was "the world's leading oil producer," but, all the same, there were "mile-long lines for gasoline" (p. 60).

8. In 1972, over 10.3 million *violent* crimes were committed, but only some 165,000 led to convictions, and even here the convicted men did not serve even half their sentence (*Body Count*, p. 85, by W. J. Bennett, J. J. Di Julio Jr., J. P. Walters, 1996).

9. Some of the early Darwinians tried to develop a moral system on evolutionary theory. Nietzsche instead stressed the struggle for survival and self-assertion. This is the background of "self-esteem" thinking. "Only I count," is the rationale. It is now held that Biblical morality has no validity, and every man does that which is right in his own eyes, *i.e.*, creates his own private value system. The conclusion of such thinking is only evil.

10. Ann Bradstreet, in a lovely poem of 1678, to her husband, wrote,

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me ye women if you can.

Covenant Education: Grade School Through Seminary

By Steve M. Schlissel



It is not to be wondered at that many today are discussing and implementing alternative methods of preparing young men for ministry (often with the local church, rather than an off-site seminary, assuming the responsibility.) We hear many complaints about the generally sad product

being turned out by seminaries (even Reformed ones) today. I have my own share of stories I could tell. A few years ago, for example, I was at the examination of a ministerial candidate, a graduate of Westminster Seminary of Philadelphia. The young man was fresh and eager, but no fit candidate for ministry in a Reformed church. He was completely unable to articulate anything about the apologetic of Cornelius Van Til. When asked about the Antithesis, he answered, "I've heard of it, but I don't know what it is." Various other responses indicated an abysmal lack of Reformed knowledge. He had graduated with a better than "B" average.

Such stories could be multiplied, and that not surprisingly. After all, we live in an age when even "conservative" Presbyterian denominations look more closely at the results of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory than at the candidate's knowledge of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

We also live in a time wherein Presbyterians, including elders, send their children to public schools without raising a single congregational objection.

The routine admission of incompetent ministers and the routine acceptance of public school education of covenant children are closely related matters. Let me explain what I mean by appealing (surprise!) to the Jewish model.

In the (orthodox) Jewish community, all children, but especially the boys, are to receive a rigorous Jewish education. That means that by the time schooling is completed, Jewish boys and girls are thoroughly conversant with the history, customs and practices of the Jewish people. In *yeshiva*, the students learn Hebrew (plus the language of their nation of residence), Jewish history, Jewish thought and practice, and, oh yeah, "academics." What they learn in school is the "Biblical," talmudical, and

historical background to what they see lived all around them in their Jewish home and community.

One of the consequences of this is that the "laity" are a highly educated bunch, covenantally considered. Any Jewish male is expected to be competent to lead a Jewish service. My father, for example, though not ordained, has led services many times in various synagogues. This is no eyebrow-raiser where I come from. On the contrary: it is normal. Among certain Presbyterians, of course, it would induce heart failure.

The distinctions belonging to a rabbi include (it is hoped) a more thorough knowledge of the why's/wherefore's/how-to's. (Rabbis, incidentally, may belong to a particular synagogue, but they are more commonly looked upon as belonging to the community.)

A rabbi, unlike modern Protestant ministers, has to earn his stripes daily, *i.e.*, he has and gains status because his wisdom is constantly put to the test. He is daily called upon to provide answers to the questions of a people who already know all the basic answers.

If you want qualified ministers, the best thing you can do is to have zero-tolerance for public school education.

Compare this to what we see in many Christian circles. Education is often viewed pragmatically (will it help Johnny get a job?) as opposed to covenantally (will it contribute to Johnny's ability to take his place as a righteous man among the covenant people of God?). By regarding a Christian education as a mere option or personal preference, rather than a covenant requirement, we ensure that the theological perspicuity of our collective children will be (relatively) low.

Pastors are those who have been sent to seminaries to (it is hoped) learn what, in the main, should already have been common knowledge among the people of God. They

then emerge from seminary, are rubber-stamped at an examination, and are placed in pulpits where they labor to bring the people up to a speed that, all things being equal, should have been attained by a normal, 13-year-old covenant child who had been catechized.

I'll skip a few steps, but what we end up with is a relatively ignorant Christian community being led by men who have learned not much more than a specialized vocabulary, along with corporate "church growth" skills, but, alas, men who may or may not be particularly gifted. The essential thing in most churches today is that they have finished seminary. Somehow, magical priestly powers are thought to be conferred upon those who have proven that their backsides can endure three years of lectures.

A vicious pattern is thus born. Ignorant people demand a magical ministry, young ministers are sent, with or without zeal, to minister to an ignorant people who believe that these men have "the answers," and their answers, in an antinomian culture, need not have any conformity to life as we know it. They may sound impressive, but they often know nothing. The real pity is, they can get away with it!

Further, ministers stay at charges a short time then move on to build careers (instead of ministries). And meanwhile, the people continue to park their children with one foot in church and the other in TV/public school/the world. Result? The water level of true knowledge among the people of God remains very low, or gets lower.

The answer to this state of affairs, it seems to me, lies in recognizing a few facts: An ignorant people insures a caste system in which ministers will be seen, not as gifted and knowledgeable, called servants, but as priests whose time at the magic kingdom (in Orlando, or Philadelphia, or St. Louis, or wherever), has somehow conferred upon them a magical kingdom status. That this serves neither congregant nor preacher should be evident. That it is killing the covenant community seems to be of precious little concern to most, however.

We need to see very clearly that the question of the training of clergy can be constructively addressed only in an environment wherein the people themselves are not only regarded as prophets, priests and kings, but trained to be such. If all God's people are informed, the level of education/competence required of their leaders will be very high. If the people of God remain a lawless, ignorant bunch, they certainly don't need a highly trained clergy.

As the level of covenant knowledge among God's people rises, it may indeed turn out that intensive, seminary-like training, even away from the local church, is justified. But such an institution could only survive with a proven product, that is, if its graduates show—in real life—that their time away has resulted in their "getting the goods." Otherwise, the people would not hire them.

As long as the covenant people send their children to public schools, as long as the "religion" is treated as an "addon" to real life, we will have a seminary system very much like we have now, or worse, wherein the goal is not faithfulness, but "success."

The bottom line: the solution to the seminary problem for the clergy begins at the door of first grade for all the covenant members. So long as we wink at people sending their covenant offspring to pagan schools, our seminaries cannot be expected to do anything except turn out pragmatists—career boys instead of ministers—for that is what the people will demand, and deserve.

An ignorant people insures a caste system in which ministers will be seen, not as gifted and knowledgeable, called servants, but as priests whose time at the magic kingdom (in Orlando, or Philadelphia, or St. Louis, or wherever), has somehow conferred upon them a magical kingdom status.

An intermediate solution is to praise and encourage churches that rigorously train all their members in the language, faith and ways of the covenant, and to plant churches which expect the next generation to be schooled in Christ, not Moloch. In the meantime, churches desiring to be faithful should explore alternate methods of ministerial preparation in the knowledge that it is the result, not the process, that is the key. Such thinking may also lead to the discovery of processes which tend to ensure a better result.

Given the seminary system as we see it today, on-site training of future ministers at rigorously orthodox, covenant-keeping churches may prove to be the best method, at least for a while to come.

An ignorant laity will get pragmatic or abusive ministers every time. Count on it. An educated laity would not tolerate such mediocrity. So if you want qualified ministers, the best thing you can do is to have zero-tolerance for public school education.

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

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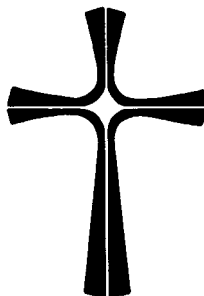
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