CHALCEDON Report

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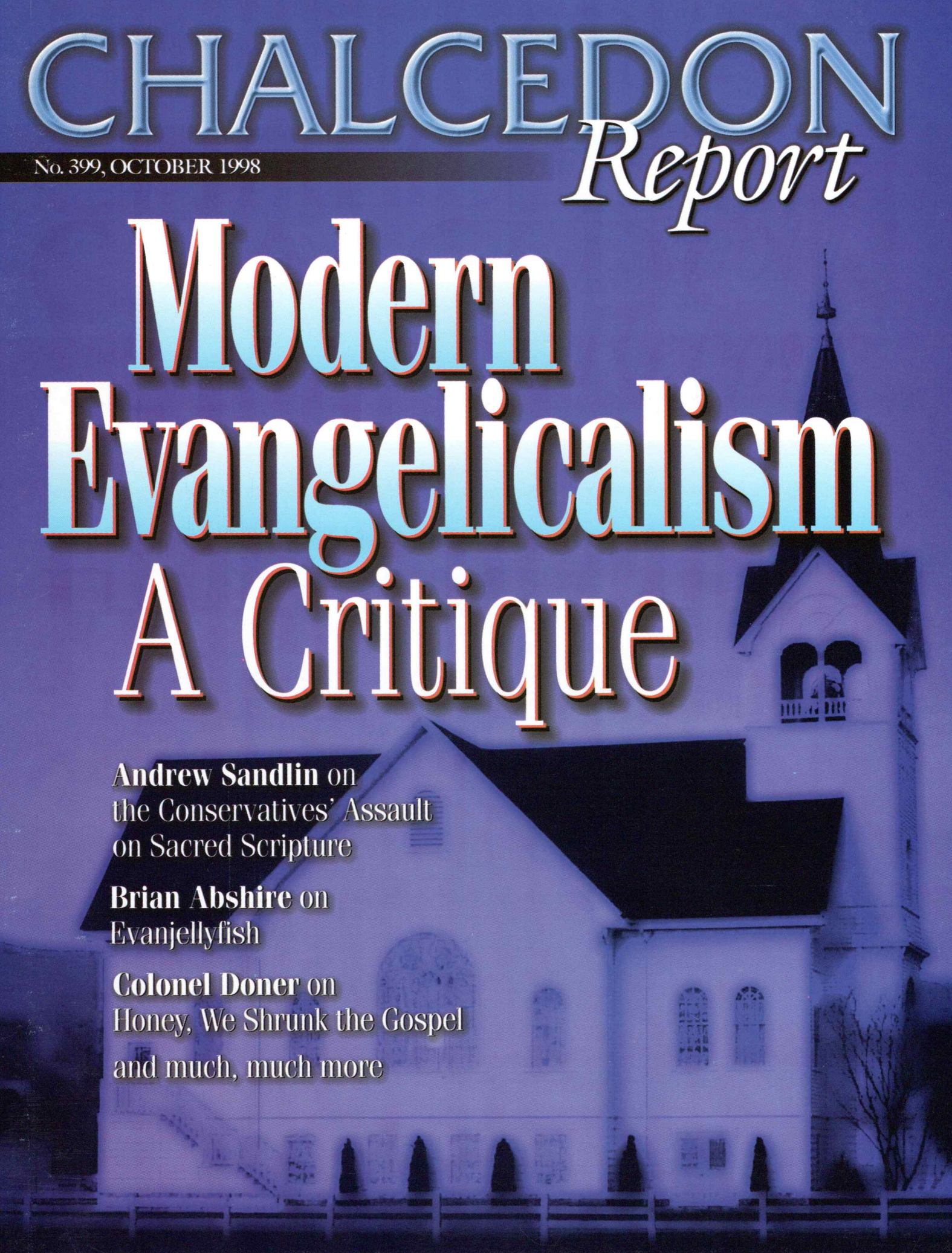
Modern Evangelicalism A Critique



Andrew Sandlin on the Conservatives' Assault on Sacred Scripture

Brian Abshire on Evanjellyfish

Colonel Doner on Honey, We Shrunk the Gospel

and much, much more

Chalcedon Vision Statement

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHALCEDON *Report*

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

Contents:

Chalcedon Scholars:

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

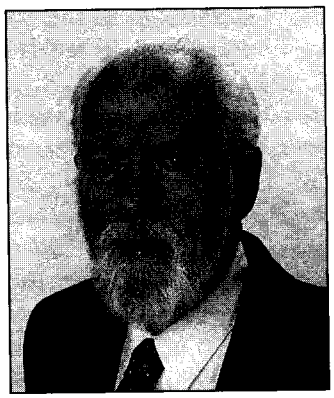
Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon.

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

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

Evangelicalism

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



Evangelicalism is a beautiful word that has come into a little disrepute because of its misuse in recent years. Early in the 20th century, a movement arose calling itself fundamentalism. Very early, the Arminian wing gained control, stressed certain views strongly, and became known as the "fighting fundamentalists." While not Reformed, they were zealous and effective, much hated for their successes. After World War II, great segments of this movement drifted into compromises, especially on inerrancy, and called themselves evangelicals. They waged war on fundamentalism, and also often on Cornelius Van Til and his presuppositionalism. The notable institution for evangelicals is Fuller Seminary, at war against Biblical inerrancy, and the Rev. Billy Graham, with his congenial spirit of compromise.

The heart of this new evangelicalism can be seen in the Fuller Seminary position on the Bible. Professor Donald A. Hagner, in *Theology News & Notes*, June, 1998, held that "it is hard to imagine anything more debilitating to the work of a Biblical scholar than *a priori* insistence on inerrancy" (p. 7). This new evangelicalism sees its future better based on the critical premise of modernism than on the historic foundations of the Christian Faith. It sees orthodoxy as imposing alien, non-scholarly premises on Christian scholarship whereas the premises of modernism are supposedly scientific and valid. It will not admit that all starting points are *a priori* acts of faith, and that no scholarship is possible without them. The question is rather this: Do we begin with God or man, with the word according to God or the word according to man? The new evangelicalism begins with man, not with God.

In so doing, it ignores man's fallen state. Certainly Dr. Hagner never mentions nor considers it. Yet the Biblical Faith requires it. Is man a fallen sinner or a capable scholar and judge over God and his word? Dr. Hagner sees no question of competency, but the Bible presupposes it.

The new evangelicalism is at odds with the Reformation and often in open sympathy with St. Thomas Aquinas and his rationalism. This should not surprise us. Rationalism is too much a part of evangelicalism. Dr. Hagner is concerned with "the credibility of the evangelical perspective in the larger intellectual world" (p. 8). But is it our calling to please that "large intellectual world" or our Almighty God and Redeemer?

As a young man, I recall being told of an aging modernist scholar who in his younger days had held he was as good a fundamentalist as any! Claims are cheap; affirmations must be yea, yea—not a vague, compromising word. In due time, these new "evangelicals" will discard the term as having served its purpose.

It is our duty to uphold the Faith, not the popular, nor the noted. The days of these compromisers are numbered because God is God. One report lists only eleven Christian colleges, universities, or seminaries as still maintaining inerrancy. So much the worse for the rest of them. Christendom has more than once seen the faithful almost disappear, but the true Faith survives and revives. Will you?

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The Conservatives' Assault on Sacred Scripture

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

The Holy Scriptures claim to be a sacred book, written by God (*2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21*). Orthodox Christians throughout history have taken Scripture to be just what it claims to be—the very written word of God.[1] The words were mediated through men, but they are the very words of God. The Holy Scriptures are therefore a *sacred* text, the words and message of God. Until the last 200 years or so, all who confessed Christianity confessed with equal unanimity and intensity that the Holy Bible is the sacred word of God. Since then, an at first subtle, and later pronounced, change has jeopardized the Christian view of Sacred Scripture. As a result of the European Enlightenment[2] and later, Romanticism,[3] among other factors, professed Christians and the church have steadily surrendered the older, orthodox view of the Holy Scriptures as a sacred text. How did this happen?

As scholars and other literati began to delve deeply into what they considered the historical background of the Bible, they saw it increasingly in terms of human origins, human composition, and human interpretation.[4] Simultaneously, modern science was flexing its muscles—guided by the presupposition that all factual knowledge was gained by an "objective" investigation of empirical reality apart from any supernaturalist (*i.e.*, Christian) assumptions (though at first its supporters were not usually professedly anti-Christian).[5] Even orthodox churchmen, eager to maintain credibility in the eyes of a trendy scientism, willingly applied to the Bible the same assumptions and methodology that were being applied to other ancient texts and to the visible world in general—investigation guided by "neutral," "objective" reason.[6] This decision introduced a lethal injection into the collective body of the church, *for to treat the Holy Scriptures as any other book is to abandon them as a sacred text.* The obsession with its historical development steadily eroded the sense of the sacredness of Scripture.

The older, orthodox view honored the Scriptures as the supernaturally inspired revelation from God. My own parents, deeply devout, maintained this reverence. For example, I was taught never to stack any other books or items on top of the Bible since this action symbolically dishonored God and his word. Today such an idea, even among conservatives, would be considered superstitious. Yet intent orthodox Christians greatly prefer this "superstition" to the ravages which the Bible has suffered at the hands of modern "enlightened" criticism.

Enlightenment philosophers, narcissistic romantics, and modern skeptics and liberals have not been alone in assaulting Holy Scripture as a sacred text.

Self-professed "conservatives" have likewise traveled extensively down the road of modernity and its dilution of the *sacredness* of Holy Scripture. In fact, we have every reason to conclude on the basis of the evidence that modern conservative views of Scripture are simply liberal, skeptical views not yet fully developed. If orthodox Christians wish to preserve for themselves and their posterity a view of the Bible as Sacred Scripture, *they will therefore find it necessary to break decisively with the modern conservative (and not merely liberal) idea of the Bible.* What are the ways in which conservatives have assaulted Sacred Scripture and which orthodox Christians must therefore avoid?

The Unity of Sacred Scripture

Most modern conservatives assert with the greatest vehemence their dedication to the full authority of the Bible, believing it "from cover to cover"; yet both their actual beliefs and practices belie this claim. The most notable example of glaring inconsistency (and often hypocrisy) is in the treatment of the Holy Scriptures as a "bipartite" book,[7] the limitation of its authority to the "New Testament," and often not even all of the revelation within that section of the Bible. By contrast, the orthodox, while seeing a *formal* distinction between the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures, have generally recognized the *unity* of Biblical revelation. For this reason, the patristic fathers, initially in reaction against the heretic Marcion, saw the Hebrew Scriptures as a Christian book[8] and affirmed the full authority of Old Testament moral law. Typical is the statement of Leo I, which distinguishes the "ceremonial" aspect of the law from the "moral" aspect, supporting the retention of the latter:

> For all things that, according to the law, were prior, whether circumcision of the flesh, or the multitude of sacrificial victims, or the observance of the Sabbath, testified to Christ and foretold Christ's grace. And He is the end of the law, not by annulling but by fulfilling what is signified. For although He is the Author both of the old ways and the new, still, He changed the sacraments of the prefigured promises, because He fulfilled the

> promises and put an end to announcements by His coming as the Announced. But in the area of moral precepts, no decrees of the earlier Testament are rejected; rather, in the Gospel teaching many of them are augmented, so that the things which give salvation might be more perfect and more lucid than those which promise a Savior.[9]

The regulations that prefigured Christ were fulfilled in him and thus suspended, but the moral precepts of the law remain in force. While there were variations in this commitment and irregularities of belief and practice, the early church Fathers ordinarily recognized the Bible as a unitary revelation.

Despite a frequent waywardness in its *material* understanding of the Bible, the medieval church retained the patristic church's formal view of the unity of the Scriptures.[10] Likewise, the Reformed wing of the Protestant Reformation carried on this unified view of the Bible. In particular, the Reformed doctrine of the covenant presented in a systematic fashion unprecedented in the church the unity of God's purposes in history as revealed in the Bible.[11]

Unfortunately, the Lutheran wing of the Reformation introduced into the Scriptures a deep discontinuity by creating a simplistic antithesis between law and gospel. Luther and many of his followers were entirely correct in refuting the error of much of late medievalism which had polluted the gospel by introducing the concept of works-righteousness and "condign merit" into God's plan of salvation. Luther rediscovered the Biblical emphasis on justification as a wholly *judicial* act by which sinners are declared righteous on account of Christ's law-keeping righteousness appropriated by faith alone.[12] Unfortunately, Luther—and especially the Lutherans[13]—were so obsessed with combating the errors of medieval Roman soteriology that they reintroduced errors of patristic Marcionite bibliology—the supposed inferiority and obsolescence of the Old Testament, and particularly the Mosaic law, and the alleged "newness" and relevance of the revelation of the Greek Scriptures. Luther himself states flatly:

> Here the law of Moses has its place. It is no longer binding on us because it was given only to the people of Israel.... I say this on account of the enthusiasts. For you see and hear how they read Moses, extol him, and bring up the way he ruled the people with commandments. They try to be clever, and think they know something more than is presented in the gospel; so they minimize faith, contrive something new, and boastfully claim that it comes from the Old Testament....
>
> But we will not have this sort of thing. We would rather not preach again for the rest of our lives than to let Moses return and to let Christ be torn out of our hearts. We will not have Moses as ruler or lawgiver any longer.... [E]ven the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us [Gentiles].... We will regard Moses as a teacher, but we will not regard him as our lawgiver—unless he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law.[14]

Though Luther and Lutheranism did (quite inconsistently) retain the Ten Commandments, their "dispensationalizing" presaged J. N. D. Darby's great nineteenth-century assault on Biblical authority[15] imported into the church during this century in the form of the Scofield Reference Bible. Its impact on conservative Christians (particularly Protestants) has been enormous. Thus, while the nineteenth-century liberals were bombarding the authority of Sacred Scripture by higher criticism, conservatives, loathing the liberal attack on Sacred Scripture, mounted their own attack in the form of Darbyist dispensationalism.

Today even the most ardent conservatives (even the Reformed) do not take the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures seriously as an authoritative revelation,[16] and they often label the requirement for adherence to Biblical law "legalism." Thus, the notion of Marcion, vanquished in the patristic church, has found a new hearing among modern conservatives who claim to believe the Bible "from cover to cover."

Because modern conservatives have given up the Hebrew Scriptures as a revelational authority, a number among their troop have had few compunctions about giving up the Greek Scriptures also—the Bible itself is no longer a concrete, objective authority, at least not in practice.

While 150 years ago, it was whom some consider the first Protestant liberal, Frederick Schleiermacher, who identified true Christian religion as sentiment and "feeling,"[17] today it is the conservatives who see Christianity in terms of "private words from the Lord," personal "prophecies," and narcissistic "Holy Spirit leading."[18] Intense study of the totality of the Sacred Scriptures is considered fruitless, boring, and deadening, the effect of "dead orthodoxy." Conservatives are lured away from the Scriptures by a "theology of the Spirit," that is abandoning—under the guise of being faithful to the Spirit—the Book the Holy Spirit inspired. The authority of the Scripture has thus become merely a slogan to many modern conservatives, and not a bedrock conviction.

The Infallibility of Sacred Scripture

Just as orthodox Christians have always held that the unified message of Sacred Scripture is fully authoritative, so they have held that this divine message is infallible.[19] This is natural, since Sacred Scripture is the message from God and the God whom Sacred Scripture reveals can speak in no way other than infallibly.[20] The conviction here is necessarily circular. We affirm the infallibility of the Bible because it claims its own infallibility, and we know that the Bible speaks infallibly when it teaches its own infallibility because God himself is its Author. Even

to many professing Christians, this view is hopelessly circular and destructive of a sound apologetics (defense of the Faith).[21] They have never been able to answer effectively, however, why the infallibility of the word of the God whom Scripture presents would need to be validated by some other authority. Indeed, if it were necessary for the infallibility (or for that matter, any other property) of Scripture to be validated by another source of authority, then the Scriptures and the God whom they present *would be something other than they actually do present.* In other words, as Van Til observes, the message which God presents can be presented in no other way than "authoritarian."[22] The word which this God speaks must then and necessarily be infallible.

The conservatives, though, are not uniformly convinced of the infallibility of Scripture. Certain of the "evangelicals," for instance, embrace "limited inerrancy"[23] (logically the equivalent of dry water or partial virginity). Some hold that all of the Bible is not God's revelation, and that those parts that are not his revelation are not infallible.[24] Still others (like the "evangelical Barthians") posit that divine revelation cannot be equated with the words of Holy Scripture and that it cannot be said therefore that those words, strictly speaking, are infallible.[25] Finally, some evangelical theologians, like Fuller seminary professor Donald Hagner, hold that belief in Biblical infallibility is an impediment to Biblical scholarship.[26] All of these defections from Biblical infallibility are concessions to some form of the modern spirit which sees the orthodox doctrine of Sacred Scripture as a vestige of an outmoded expression of Christianity. But to deny the doctrine of infallibility is to deny Sacred Scripture. For the God whom Scripture discloses can reveal himself in no other way than infallibly.

Even those conservatives who confess the strictest form of Biblical infallibility often argue for the doctrine in such a way as to actually undermine their confession.[27] The prime example is those who defend a so-called "inductive inerrancy"[28] or deductive inspiration.[29] Inductive inerrancy is the idea that we examine *all* the Scriptures to see if the case for an inerrant Scripture can really be sustained after careful scrutiny; inductive inerrantists argue that it can. Deductive inspiration is the notion that the Bible claims to speak infallibly and we should accept it as infallible so long as Christianity can be shown to maintain an internal coherence.[30] Still others hold that we accept the infallibility of the Bible after internal investigation—that is, we accept the Biblical writers as reliable historical witnesses and, since we have every reason to presume that they told the truth as God's inspired witnesses, we can believe them when they tell us that the Bible is infallible.[31] Each of these arguments for Biblical infallibility melts before the question of why we should accept the Bible as infallible in the first place. To the "inductive inerrantist" we may ask, "Why accept as accurate the statements about the Bible's infallibility at all if we do not *presuppose* that the Bible is the very living word of God?" To the "deductive inerrantist" we may inquire, "If the Bible is not *presumed* to be the word of God, what good does 'internal coherence' do? Is it not possible for the most devious forms of lies to be internally coherent?" And to the "evidential inerrantist" we query, "If we refuse to begin with the *conviction* that the Bible is the inspired word of God, why should we accept it as reliable history?" If the latter reply, "We accept the general reliability of the Bible on the same grounds as we would accept the general reliability of any other historical document," we should like to know why, if the Bible is not the infallible word of God presenting to us *just* the God that it does present, the idea of general historical reliability has any meaning at all.

The fact is, the conviction that the Bible is the word of God is a matter of faith, not of demonstration. No orthodox Christian who has been overcome by the Spirit of God and brought to the knees of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will ever be dissuaded from affirmation of the infallibility of the Bible by inductive investigations, internal coherence, or the general historical reliability of ancient texts. Nor will hard-hearted sinners be persuaded to accept Biblical infallibility by favorable arguments springing from induction, deduction, or historical investigation. *Affirmation of the doctrine of infallibility is a religious and moral issue, not an intellectual or speculative issue.* Men deny the infallibility of the Sacred Scripture for the same reason that they deny the existence of God—they have moral problems, not intellectual problems. The intellect is simply instrumental of man's moral condition. It has no independent, objective existence.

In their understandable rush to defend the doctrine of infallibility against "the baying dogs of the Enlightenment,"[32] many conservatives have surrendered the doctrine of the authority of the Scripture they claim to defend. Modern scientism, modern philosophy, modern ethics and on and on flagrantly assault the Bible with charges of internal discrepancies, scientific errors, archeological inaccuracies, moral blemishes, and so forth. They marshal these arguments not because they are intellectually honest, but because they are morally depraved. For them the word of God is not authoritative, and they resent anyone else's holding it as authoritative. Conservatives too frequently capitulate to this arrangement by presuming that there really are some neutral, objective grounds on which to discuss the infallibility of the Bible. This is simply a mirage in the parched desert of modern autonomous scholarship. The Bible is infallible not because we can *prove* it is infallible; it is infallible because it is the inspired word of God who can speak no other way than infallibly. Seemingly well-meaning conservatives, therefore, by their apologetic method, give God-hating critics of the infallibly of the Bible the fully misguided impression that their minds are justified in investigating the infallibility of Scripture. This is to deny the authority of the One whom Sacred Scripture reveals.[33]

Conservatives, consequently, lose on both counts. The conservatives who surrender the doctrine of Biblical infallibility under the pressures of modernity thereby subvert the Faith, and the conservatives who defend the infallibility of Scripture by granting autonomous God-haters the privilege of investigating the infallibility of the Scripture on so-called neutral grounds undermine the authority of Scripture to demand submission before the very Voice of God. In these ways, conservatives assault the infallibility of Sacred Scripture.

The Preservation of Sacred Scripture

Most everywhere today, one hears leading conservatives who mistakenly think that they are defending the orthodox tradition by vocally trumpeting the "inerrancy of the Bible in the original autographs." Frankly, this is a dangerous position that surrenders the authority of Sacred Scripture, and swerves sharply from the hoary tradition of Christian orthodoxy. While some conservatives increasingly have made their peace with the liberals' practice of "higher criticism" (investigation into the historical and exclusively human composition of the Bible),[34] other conservatives who correctly oppose the practice of higher criticism and recognize the extent to which it undercuts the authority of Sacred Scripture nonetheless consider lower criticism a "safe"—and essential—field for conservatives. There is an ideology and program governing this conviction. Lower criticism is the attempt to recover the original wording of any document—particularly ancient documents. It scrutinizes surviving transcriptions of those documents and their citations in other documents, intending thereby to determine exactly what the original reading is. Conservatives, however, are not interested in recovering the original Biblical text for its own sake, and in this program there is no relation whatsoever to orthodox Christianity. The latter survived very well for roughly seventeen centuries without this program.[35] Rather, it was necessary to resort to lower criticism when the doctrine of infallibility was attacked by liberals who claim to have discovered errors in extant (presently existing) texts.[36] The typical conservative response was to claim that the Bible "as originally given" was infallible, and that if we could just recover *that* Bible, we could actually demonstrate the infallibility of Sacred Scripture. This has been the program of most conservative textual scholars ever since. Ultimately, they can defend their peculiar doctrine of Biblical infallibility only by producing the original autographs. In fact, they seem more confident that they can eventually recover the exact wording of the original autographs than they are that the present original-language texts will suffice as the infallible word of God.

By contrast, the older view—and particularly the orthodox Reformed view—is that the locus of Sacred Scripture is the original-language texts preserved by and presently at use in the church, not the long-lost autographs to which no one has access. The great Genevan Calvinist Francis Turretin noted: "By the original texts, we do not mean the autographs written by the hand of Moses, of the prophets and the apostles, which certainly do not now exist. We mean their apographs [extant copies] which are so called because they set forth to us the word of God in the very words of those who wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit."[37] He rightly recognized that the retreat to the original autographs plays into the hands of those Roman Catholics who wanted the Magisterium to establish the meaning of Holy Scripture.[38] In this sense he was quite prophetic, but simply mistaken about who the true Magisterium really would become—today it is the coterie of textual scholars, many of them unbelieving, who have become recognized sources of authority on what actually constitutes the wording of the Bible. Until the last 200 years, most of Christendom recognized Sacred Scripture as the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible in constant usage in the church for 1700 to 1800 years; even the Roman notion of the virtual infallibility of the Latin Vulgate testified to the belief, however misguided, in the preservation of the Sacred Scriptures. As Mahaffey recognizes:

> Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was little debate on the issue of textual transmission and the Greek text that formed the canon. From the fourth century the Church had been settled on the authentic text of the New Testament.[39]

This is the doctrine of the "providential (supernatural) preservation" of Sacred Scripture in the church. And the fact is, we can have no doctrine of Sacred Scripture apart from the doctrine of providential preservation.

One factor in the security of knowing that Scripture is indeed a sacred, God-given text is the faith that the church has access to its very words. This is sometimes known as the doctrine of "verbal inspiration"—the teaching that God inspired the very words of Scripture (*Mt. 4:4*). But if we cannot say with certainty that the people of God possess today the infallible word of God in the words of Scripture and, rather, claim that infallibility can be predicated only of the original autographs, we have in essence gutted the doctrine of verbal inspiration. To the consistently orthodox, consequently, it is preferable to deal with the difficulties of textual variants in a single textual tradition than to surrender the doctrine of verbal inspiration by denying providential preservation.

Modern conservatives counter this argument, which they consider "obscurantist," in several ways. For one thing, they hold that we *do* possess the preserved word of God, but not in a single set of manuscripts; rather, all the words of God are to be found in the multiplicity of the manuscripts, some of which were not discovered until the nineteenth century.[40] The conflict is to be resolved by techniques which attempt to recover the original text,

rather than by recourse to the texts used for centuries in the church. Already in the seventeenth century, Reformed theologians like John Owen presciently recognized this way of thinking for what it is—an assault on the verbal inspiration of the Bible:

> The sum of what I am pleading for, as to the particular head to be vindicated, is, That as the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were immediately and entirely given out by God himself, his mind being in them represented unto us without the least interveniency of such mediums and ways as were capable of giving change or alteration to the least iota or syllable; so, by his good and merciful providential dispensation, in his love to his word and church, his whole word, as first given out by him, is preserved unto us entire in the original languages; where, shining in its own beauty and lustre (as also in all translations, so far as they faithfully represent the originals), it manifests and evidences unto the consciences of men, without other foreign help or assistance, its divine original and authority....[41]

> It can, then, with no colour of probability be asserted (which yet I find some learned men too free in granting), namely, that there hath the same fate attended the Scripture in its transcription as hath done other books. Let me say without offence, this imagination, asserted on deliberation, seems to me to border on atheism....[42]

That is to say, if we deny that God has supernaturally attended the transmission of the text of Sacred Scripture and instead treat its transmission as though it suffered the fate of any other book, we betray an atheistic approach to the word of God. Yet this is precisely how most modern conservatives treat the Bible. In their bibliology, they are *practical atheists.*

Conservatives will argue that all of this discussion over textual criticism is really pointless because "no significant doctrine is affected" by the variant readings—that is, how the manuscripts differ among themselves.[43] It is strange that conservatives do not recognize the danger that lower text criticism poses to orthodox Christianity, because liberals certainly do.[44] For one thing, if we cannot be certain of the integrity of the text of Scripture, the doctrine of verbal inspiration loses all relevance. It is odd that the very conservatives most passionately committed to the verbal inspiration of the Bible are equally committed to a proposition about the locus of the infallible text that renders their advocacy of verbal inspiration virtually meaningless.[45]

In addition, it is not correct to assert that no major doctrine is affected by textual criticism. Bart Ehrman observes, for instance, that both devotees and detractors of what became orthodox Christology employed textual variants as weapons in their theological controversy.[46] It is simply wishful thinking to assume that textual criticism affects no major doctrine of the Bible, and that its products could only confirm and never undermine orthodox doctrine.

The only "textual criticism" by which the orthodox church survived quite well for centuries is the recognition of orthodox teaching by constant usage of the text in the church. The covenant people of God are called to oversee the transmission of Scripture (*Rom. 3:2*), and their usage and transmission of the text, under the providential guidance of the Holy Spirit, preserves the correct text from generation to generation.[47] For this reason, the Reformation churches predicated infallibility not of the long-lost original autographs, but the *apographs*, the original-language texts in use by the orthodox church for 1600 years of her existence.[48] To predicate infallibility only of the autographs is to deny Biblical infallibility, since these writings have perished. In short, the doctrine of Biblical infallibility requires an infallible Bible, not an infallible non-existent Bible. This—and no other—preserves the historical orthodox position of Sacred Scripture.

The conservatives' surrender of the doctrine of providential preservation and, therefore, of Biblical infallibility, assists in the monstrous multiplicity of English translations which further erodes Christians' confidence in verbal inspiration. The point, of course, is not that native translations take precedence over the original-language texts preserved in the church, but that increasingly wide variation in the wording even of English translations undercuts the Christian's confidence in the Bible as an unchanging, verbal revelation. It also leads to the logic that, if there are so many possibly legitimate variations in English translations, perhaps that is because there are so many legitimate variations in the original-language texts underlying them. What then is the written word of God?

Sophisticated conservatives scoff at this argument as "obscurantist," "unenlightened, " and "unscholarly." They are under the pernicious delusion that it is possible to maintain a doctrine of Sacred Scripture without a doctrine of providential preservation which nonetheless retains a faithful affirmation of verbal inspiration. Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of this argument is that they really are convinced that they are defending the integrity of Holy Scripture when, in actuality, their denial of the providential preservation of Scripture undermines the doctrines of verbal inspiration and Biblical infallibility. In the adoption of lower criticism as a "safe" field, conservatives have once again belied their ringing public endorsement of Sacred Scripture.

Conclusion

In the doctrines of the authority, infallibility, and preservation of Sacred Scripture, conservatives, by and large, have caved in to the pressures of the modern world. The contemporary world is hostile to Sacred Scripture as an authoritative, infallible, preserved revelation designed to govern man in every aspect of his life. Conservatives

are under the delusion that only by accepting the canons of modern standards of scholarship and intellectual investigation can they maintain a credible doctrine of Sacred Scripture. Just the opposite is true. Note the liberal James Barr's perceptive indictment of these compromising conservatives:

> In general, far from the conservative case making an impact on scholarship, the world of scholarship has no respect for the dogmatic and supernaturalistic kind of conservative apologetic and rightly ignores it. As for scholarship working with the maximal-conservative type of argument, scholarship accepts it and admires it in proportion as it *fails* to be partisanly conservative; that is, it may be accepted and admired, but only in such measure as it does *not* do what conservative apologists insist that it must do and has done. In so far as it is seen as committed to a purely conservative line, it is discounted and unrespected. Thus the deservedly high reputation of some conservative scholarship rests to a large extent on the degree to which it *fails* to be conservative in the sense that the conservative evangelical public desiderate.[49]

In plainer terms, conservative scholarship will be accepted as scholarly among modern scholars only if and when it surrenders its orthodox distinctives. The doctrine of Sacred Scripture will never stand in any community of faith for which the standard of the modern ethos is normative. Because modern conservatives do not understand that it is not possible to maintain a doctrine of Sacred Scripture on modern premises, they incrementally surrender the doctrine of Sacred Scripture and, thereby, the Christian Faith itself.

The hope for orthodox Christianity is a *genuinely* post-modern restoration of the cultivation of Scripture as truly *Sacred* Scripture. Anything less is not Scripture—and subverts the Faith.

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BIBLICAL STUDY

Honor *vs.* Envy

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. (*1 Timothy 6:1-2*)

Accepting a hierarchy of authority is difficult for the Western mind. We tend to believe in upward mobility so much we are repelled at the idea of accepting any non-autonomous status. To this democratic egalitarianism has been added the more sinister effects of Marxism. Marx saw inherent conflict of interest and the victimization of the proletariat by the bourgeois. Those who follow the thinking of Marx see contempt for their superiors as natural and just. Dissatisfaction and envy then dominate their relationship with superiors.

What Paul said to Timothy is especially pertinent to the employer-employee relationship because Paul spoke regarding a situation far more onerous to the modern mind—the master-bondservant relationship. Paul commands servants "under the yoke" to "count their own masters worthy of all honor." He requires voluntary submission. He does not discuss the justice of their servitude, only their *de facto* status.

When Paul says they must "count," he is saying how they must consider; he is commanding that they think in a certain way. Too many have taken ideas of civil liberty into the church. When presented with what Scripture says on a particular point they all too often reply with "But I think . . ." or "I don't see why. . . ." Every sinner wants not only to be king of the hill; he wants to "be as gods" (*Gen.3:5*) determining good and evil for himself. Paul says what a godly man is to think.

Servants are commanded to count their masters "worthy." This brings into view their obligation. They must not only think good thoughts about their masters; they must consider them deserving "of honor," which goes beyond outward obedience and involves a diligence in their faithfulness. To honor someone is to respect his position in God's providence. For a bondservant to respect a master in thought and in service would be a difficult thing, but an employee should have much less difficulty. He is not in a position of injustice but one of voluntary contract. If he feels any injustice as a free man he has recourse to resolve the matter without seething over his pretended victimization.

It is not always easy to honor those in authority, but lawlessness and anarchism have absolutely no justification in Scripture. God's providence has placed all of us in our

respective positions. We must first recognize that providence and acknowledge that God's plan for us must supersede our own. Our egos must at times be suppressed if the Son of God humbled himself in submission to the Father's will. Paul apologized for unknowingly speaking harshly to the high priest. When Paul referred to himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ," he did convey his authority but only by subordinating it to that of the Messiah. We must know our position. We cannot give due service and honor unless we believe it is our responsibility and we desire to do it faithfully. Our nation was once known for its Puritan work ethic; we can only return to such a work ethic by seeing work as a means of serving God in our calling.

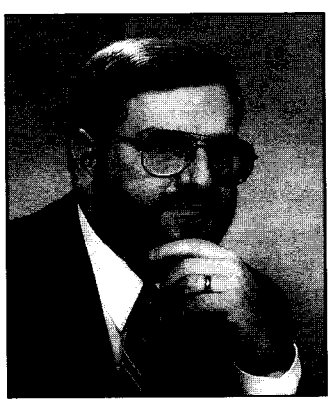
Paul urges good attitudes and work ethics "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." It may have been that the converted slaves of unbelievers were under the mistaken impression that liberty in Jesus Christ might mean liberty from servitude. If all men in Christ are brothers and all are equal before the throne of the Father, one might assume no man may be superior to another. This would have been a natural, if flawed, error to those oppressed by the harshness of servitude. Men want to expect their own betterment. But Calvin said, "We are always more ingenious than we should be when it comes to seeking our own advantage." Paul's warning was given so that the name of God and the Christian Faith not be blasphemed or spoken evil of. This was probably a reference to accusations of sedition. The gospel message is not one of rebellion, but of restoration. It is not one of revolution, but of regeneration. Sedition was a charge used against both Christ and Paul. It is a serious threat to a culture and is one true patriots and Christians should avoid.

If Christians should obey unbelieving masters they most certainly should obey those who are of the Faith. The belief that you can do anything can help you accomplish great things, but it can also lead to great dissatisfaction with your current state. Yet dissatisfaction without the moral and legal pursuit of something better leads to discontent, bitterness, and revolutionary anarchy. We can be assured that we are equals with the highest men of our or any age in what matters most—we are adopted as the children of God and are joint heirs with Christ. This should cause us to bear our earthly calling with patience and humility.

COUNTER-CULTURAL CHRISTIANITY

Confessions of a Recovering Evanjellyfish

By Anonymous



Hello, my name is Brian and I am an Evanjellyfish. Yes, that's right, though I have been Reformed now for 15 years, I still have to live life one day at a time lest I fall back into my gutless, spineless and amorphous old ways. My story is not all that unusual; like most new Christians I started out on the simple stuff, Chick tracts, Moody Press, the Four Spiritual Laws, you know the sort of thing. After a while, I wasn't getting the same buzz, so I started doing Scofield's notes on a regular basis. Then, before I knew it, I was mainlining Hal Lindsey. I finally realized I had hit rock bottom when I OD'd one weekend in an orgy of Salem Kirban 666 novels. At that point, I knew I had to get clean and thus began my recovery. But even today I have to make sure that I keep the newspaper far away from the book of Revelation.

College Catastrophes

My recovery was actually helped in an odd sort of way by attending an accredited Evanjellyfish college. Oh sure, they hated fundamentalists and they laughed at my prophecy charts, but for all their academic respectability, they were still Evanjellyfish, just a different sort. Where the Fundies tried to escape from the world, the broad Evanjellyfish I met in college wanted to accommodate themselves to it. No humanist idea was too outrageous to be accepted as long as the professor opened the class in prayer and baptized his heresies with an occasional Bible verse. Like all Evanjellyfish, no one, professor or student alike, had the guts to stand up and defend a Biblical view of history, art, science, etc. Instead, we were treated to the warmed-over dregs of humanist nonsense from the past decade, touted as the cutting edge in Christian scholarship. But this, in God's grace, proved to be the means of my recovery. As I looked at the gutless wonders that Christians had become, their flirtation with apostasy, their irrelevance to anyone and anything outside their own personal peace and prosperity, I longed for something different.

For example: Ron Sider was the most popular author

on campus, avidly read and embraced as the definition of true Christian discipleship. But it was obvious to me that this turkey was just another socialist wolf from the Sixties, tempering his liberation theology with a thin veneer of Evanjellyfish respectability. I knew he was wrong but at the time didn't have the Scriptures to refute him. Thus, in God's providence, I was set up perfectly for David Chilton's book *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators* when it finally found its way into my hands. Oh, I rejected the predestination and postmillennialism at first, but I was hooked now on something much more powerful than the retreatist rapture nonsense I had once been addicted to. Here was a book that had BIBLICAL answers. And here, *finally*, was a form of Christianity that had some backbone!

But that was later. In the meantime, God used the Evanjellyfish college I attended to make me grow a spine despite myself. It was either fight for the Faith, or succumb to religious irrelevance. One of my first classes was in speech communication in which the professor ridiculed my statement in class that the Bible is the final authority in matters of faith and practice. Being 24 years old, married and paying for my own college education out of money I had earned and saved during six years of active duty military service, I was not about to be cowed by some hippie reject who was not all that older than me, simply because he had a degree from a liberal seminary (needing a haircut was the least of his problems). I was PAYING for this expensive education; and instead of backing down as my ALL classmates did, I stood toe to toe with him and asked, "Look, if you don't accept this school's doctrinal position on the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture, what are you doing teaching here?" He couldn't answer, of course. But he could give me a "C+" in speech, a heavy blow for a man destined to make his living preaching the Word. Of course, it didn't help that I once snorted with disgust and walked out of his class when he required his students to give each other sensual "back" rubs to foster intimacy through tactile "communication." But I will give him credit for this: he taught me not to suffer fools gladly. And I began with him.

When my fellow students laughed at me in psychology classes for daring to even mention the name "Jay Adams," I searched the Scriptures and asked pointed questions about how God's view of the human condition matched up with the humanist nonsense of Freud, Skinner and Rogers. When my theology professors waxed eloquent on the great contributions of Karl Barth, I asked why we should adopt his existential nonsense in place of historic Biblical orthodoxy. When my church history class required textbooks that called those who retain orthodox theology an intellectual rearguard action that could not possibly hold the allegiance of modern men, I demanded to know why we were forced to read such tripe (causing one older professor to literally have an apoplectic fit in class).

My recovery began, you see, not just when I went cold-turkey off dispensationalism, but also as I became aware that the broad Evanjellyfish world view was nothing more than humanist offal. Broad Evanjellyfish Christianity forced me back to the Scriptures; and my real education came at night, when I compared the puerile mush I was fed in class every day to the real red meat of the word of God. And because the school depended on the donations of parents who really did believe the historic Christian Faith, the professors had to put up with my daily barrage of questions concerning how what we were being taught squared with the Bible. They didn't like it, but they were backed into a corner.

Seminary Recovery

But it was seminary where my recovery was finally completed. The Broad Evanjellyfish institution I first attended, though it still retained an orthodox confession, was well down the road to apostasy. Again, the battle began with my very first class. The syllabus for the introductory course on the New Testament stated that our goal was to learn how to use redaction and form criticism so that we would be able to discern the authentic words of Christ from the inauthentic ones. I raised my hand and asked if I could get advanced standing because I had a red-letter edition of the Bible. The professor said that I didn't have the right attitude. I replied that he didn't have the right theology. He said I should take another class because I was destined not to succeed in this one. I agreed, clapping my shoes together as I walked out the door to shake the dust off my feet. You see, though not yet Reformed, I had started developing a little backbone. I didn't yet know what God wanted me to be, but I *did* know that it wasn't supposed to look like those wimpy, acculturated, accommodated, girly-men who were my professors.

Another class that same semester was taught by a professor who had authored a recent article in the *Journal of Evangelical Theology* defending the Deutero-Pauline hypothesis and pseudopigraphic authorship (that the Apostle Paul did not necessarily write all the letters ascribed to him). I read the article one day while killing some time in the library, waiting for my wife to get off work. At a meeting of the entire first-year class with the dean to discuss the seminary's approach to theological education (a number of people had been complaining in private about the apostasy of some of the professors and eventually the rumors of student discontent had reached the administration), we were asked if there were any questions. Nobody said a word. Finally, I raised my hand and said I was concerned about an apparent discrepancy between the school's official doctrinal stance and what was actually believed by the faculty and taught in the classroom. The dean, a personal friend, challenged me saying, "Brian, there is NO discrepancy. You have not been here long enough even to SEE such a discrepancy."

I then quoted from the article written by the professor denying essentially both the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures. The entire meeting immediately broke up

in howls of outrage that a first-year student had the audacity to attack the professional reputation of a respected professor with impeccable academic credentials from such prestigious institutions as Harvard Divinity School and Union Seminary.

Later on that week, another professor, one who had not been at the meeting and whom I had never before met, stopped me in the halls: "I just wanted to tell you, DON'T ever take one of my classes. You'll never pass." The seminary's registrar then verbally assaulted me when I went in to sign up for the next quarter's classes, insisting that someone had put me up to destroying this professor's reputation because, obviously, first-year students never read theological journals and therefore I must have a hidden agenda. I responded that simply by looking at where the man had received his graduate degrees should be enough to tell anyone with half a brain that he was a theological liberal. The female registrar literally squealed in outrage that I should darken a man's reputation simply because of the schools he attended. I responded, "If you lay down with dogs, don't be surprised if you get up with fleas." I left her purple faced and grasping for breath (I don't think I gave her a heart attack, but one can always hope).

Evanjellyfish may have no backbone, but they do have a sting. I went from graduating with a 3.8 GPA in college while doing a double major, completing my entire degree in two years, to a 2.0 GPA my first semester in seminary. It seems the hundred-yard walk from the college campus to the seminary buildings had a serious effect on basic academic skills. Or maybe there was another dynamic at work?

Oh, I could go on. I could talk about the marriage and family counseling course that required us to read lesbian pornography (so that we could understand "women's" issues). I could mention the Old Testament professor who left after being rebuked for requiring his classes to actually READ the Old Testament instead of just studying the documentary hypothesis (*i.e.*, that the Torah was actually a series of myths and legends edited by at least four different scribes). I could talk about the preaching classes where we were forbidden ever to tell anyone to ever do anything in a sermon (such as not get an abortion), because if we spoke the commandments of God, it might make people feel guilty. I could discuss with some "enthusiasm" the Christian ethics class that taught each man to do whatever was right in his own eyes. I could mention the nasty notes from fellow students in my mail-box who demanded that I stop asking the professor such hard questions or the even nastier unsigned notes that warned me to leave seminary before my professional career was ended before it began.

This is Evanjellyfish education at both the undergraduate and graduate level. It is a form of godliness but denies the power thereof. These people are humanist slaves, intimidated by the dream of academic acceptability and willing to sell their Christian heritage for the crumbs that fall from the God-haters' table.

My Completed Recovery

But as a result, my recovery was complete. When first brought to faith in Christ, Jesus changed my life. His word purified my soul, awakened my conscience, illumined my mind, gave me hope in darkness and commanded that I submit every area of life to him. And if the Evanjellyfish I met were less than what Jesus said they were to be, at least I knew that there was a rock on which my Faith was built, a rock that could not be moved by the passing whims of foolish men. Because God gave me a love for the Scriptures, the apostasy of modern Evanjellyfish academics simply drove me back to try and understand God's own revelation of himself. I became Reformed, not because I read a good book here and there, or because I followed the teachings of a great preacher or sat under the ministry of a godly pastor. I became Reformed because I loved God's word and the Reformed Faith was the only system that was consistent with that word.

The Real Road to Recovery

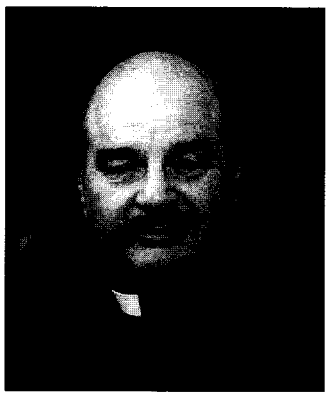
The road to recovery from Broad Evanjellyfish Christianity does not begin by learning how to be nasty, critical, cynical or obnoxious. It simply requires loving the Scriptures, submitting to their authority and then standing up for them when they are under attack. I praise God for the tiny handful of professors who taught orthodoxy in these unorthodox institutions, even if the best of them did not have the guts to expose the corruption. I weep for the handful of godly students who stuck it out year after year, getting their degrees, managing to retain some semblance of their Faith, even though as a consequence their life and ministry were blunted. But I really have to wonder about the parents who sacrificed so much to send their children to such schools. What were they thinking? Didn't they know what was going on? Didn't they care?

Evanjellyfish Christianity is a disease, some think an incurable one. But my Lord raises the dead and heals the sick and breathes new life into even the most wicked hearts. What he did for me, he can and will one day do for our Evanjellyfish brothers and sisters hooked on pietism. However, before you can recover, you have got to admit you have a problem. Before you can grow a backbone, you have to admit that you don't have one. And it is the law of God that will give spineless Evanjellyfish Christians that backbone. It is my sincerest prayer that God will soon grant grace to all those brothers still caught in the sickness of modern, American, Evanjellyfish "Christianity."

The Magic Words of Antinomians

By Rev. Ellsworth McIntyre

Pagan Christians



When I was a high school teacher in Savannah, Georgia, I discovered that all of my students felt that universal college education should be free, that so everyone could be equal. They reasoned that education would make them one of the idle rich.

Our society has been infected with pagan illusion. For example, why is it necessary that everyone attend college? Twenty years ago, as part of my graduate study, I took an education course entitled, "The History of the Community College Movement." My class was surprised to learn that many of the students taking welding and industrial arts courses at community colleges already had four-year college diplomas and some even had master's degrees. Our instructor pointed out that it was not uncommon for taxi drivers in Los Angeles to have doctorates in humanities or education. The dream of living by "wits" for these taxi drivers had died on the altar of reality.

Recently, President Clinton offered computers to Africans who had no electricity or telephone service. Clinton was just repeating the widespread foolishness that a new information age is delivering humanity from the need to labor. While it is true that tools like tractors and computers multiply our productivity, it is drivel to say the need to labor has passed. College graduates starting over to learn a trade at a community college have found that something more than magic words is needed to produce bread.

Bad Theology Has Horrible Consequences

The roots of this superstition are fed from a source that may surprise you. Where do Christians get the notion that we can speak magic words and create reality?

Let's stand outside almost every church in America. Clipboards in hand with our tape recorders ready, let's do some research:

Q: "Excuse me, Sir! Are you going to heaven when you die?"

A: "Oh yes, I am born again."

Q: "Really, what makes you so sure you are born again?"

A: "Well, you see, I asked Jesus into my heart and the Bible says, 'Whosoever will call on Him shall have everlasting life' (*Rom. 10:13*). I know I am going to heaven, because I said the words of the Sinner's Prayer."

Q: "In other words, you spoke your way into heaven by the power of your words?

A: "Well, yes . . . er . . . not exactly, I just believed or trusted the Bible. That's all that's required. 'Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God' (*Rom. 10:17*)."

Q: "I see, then, good works have no role in your salvation."

A: "That's right."

Q: "Then a drunkard or a thief doesn't have to reform in order to go to heaven."

A: "A drunk if he is saved will certainly get and stay sober and a thief will no longer steal but labor with his hands" (*1 Cor. 4:12*).

Q: "What good works have occurred in your life, sir?"

A: "Well, I wasn't a drunk or a thief."

Q: "Then you have no change in your life. Is that right?"

A: "I really don't see the point in this interrogation. You must be one of those Calvinists who believes every Christian must have a testimony backed up by a changed life. You believe in a works plan of salvation. You are a heretic! Good Bye!"

The point is not that all members of evangelical churches are superstitious pagans trying to presume their way into heaven without the evidence of a changed life to back up their hopes. I am certain that many evangelicals are genuinely saved, but I am also certain that many Christians have been robbed in their spiritual growth, set up for tribulation, beaten by bad health, poverty, and premature death. Bad theology has horrible consequences. The gospel of Christ changes us from covenant-breakers to covenant-keepers. Good works follow the good gospel; bad works follow the false gospel.

Murder Thy Neighbor

If we believe that we can save ourselves by a work that any man can do, such as praying the "magic words," we live in a world of illusion that is hell on earth. If we believe and persuade others that only gross sinners like

drunkards and thieves must demonstrate that the Lord is setting them free from sin, we are claiming or witnessing to a salvation that does not exist. The genuine salvation, that is not of works but of the Savior, will change our lives into a life like the Lord's. Progressively, we will see areas of our lives improving in terms of keeping the Ten Commandments (the covenant). If we cannot point to victory over sin in our lives, we are walking downward to hell.

The Bible warns of such, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (*Mt. 7:20*). We must judge ourselves before the great and totally true Witness which reveals by our works whom we are really trusting for salvation. For too many, it will be the disappointing dream of the creative power of their own words. The church member who witnesses to the impulse of self-devised devotion will take his seat in hell with all pagans who search for escape in magic words. Those who measure themselves by the law-word of God will take their seat in heaven.

Man cannot speak words and be saved. The Savior must answer the Sinner's Prayer. Only Jesus saves. Man cannot produce bread except by labor. Man cannot get good health, long life, or any good thing for that matter but by means of the covenant of Christ. To believe otherwise is to fall into pagan theology masquerading as Christianity. Has the Lord answered your child's prayer? It is not necessary to wait until death to find out if your child is saved. Examine your child. Is he growing in the power to obey authority (see *Ex. 20:12*)? Is he growing more truthful, industrious, and chaste? There is a way that seems right, but it's pagan magic, not the gospel. Don't stand on the throat of your child by allowing him to claim the love of God without a testimony measured by the Bible. "By this we know that we love . . . when we love God, and keep his commandments" (*1 Jn. 5:2*).

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

Evangelical Political Compromise

By Rev. William Einwechter

The Nature of Political Compromise

We have been told that politics by its very nature requires compromise. If those on the opposite sides of a political issue are to avoid endless stalemate, make headway in drafting necessary legislation, and generally get on with the business of governing the nation, it seems as though compromise is not only useful, but essential to the political process. J. I. Packer says, "Give-and-take is the heart of political compromise, as compromise is the heart of politics in a democracy."[1] Since evangelicals have been very diligent in seeking political compromises with those on the other side, one might think that we ought to praise evangelicals for their prowess in the art of political compromise and for the good that this has brought to our society. Praise would be due if compromise in politics is always a virtue. However, Clarence Carson gives a penetrating analysis of how political compromise often works:

> Politics, we are told by what is now the "conventional wisdom" of political science, is the art of compromise. This is a most plausible idea. If men differ from one another about what to do, how are these differences to be resolved? The most obvious alternatives are compromise or a resort to force. Surely it would not be good for people to resort continually to armed combat to settle their differences. It would appear, then, that compromise is the great imperative—even virtue—of statecraft.
>
> But this doctrine of compromise is more complex than the above reasoning would suggest. Compromise suggests that both sides yield ground, that they "split the difference," as it were. In fact, however, this has seldom been the case in political matters. Let us take an example. Suppose that the country is divided into two parties over an issue—the tariff, say. One party favors free trade, and the other wants a protective tariff. The protectionists introduce a bill into Congress which provides for protective duties on certain imports. A "compromise" is worked out between the free traders and protectionists. It would involve lower rates than those originally proposed, and perhaps fewer items on the protected list. This would appear to meet the qualifications for a "compromise," but it is far from a splitting of the differences. The party of free trade has agreed not only to a quantitative compromise, *but it has yielded up its principle as well.* The protectionist party has begun *the establishment of its principle* and has, presumably, yielded ground temporarily on the amount and degree of the tariff.
>
> In brief, compromise can be made to work entirely to the advantage of one side. It is my contention that it has usually done so in the United States in the twentieth century.[2]

As Carson points out, political compromise is rarely an even split, but usually involves the surrender of principle by at least one side in the debate. It is our contention that the compromises of evangelicals in the political sphere have consistently been the surrender of Christian principles. In so doing, evangelicals have actually helped the enemies of Christ establish their ungodly principles in society. The political compromises of evangelicals, therefore, do not deserve praise, but, rather, condemnation; for their compromises have worked to undermine the kingdom of God and have contributed substantially to the ongoing advance of the kingdom of darkness in the politics of our nation.

The Nature of Evangelical Political Compromise

The particular instances of evangelical political compromise can be summed up and explained by their surrender of two essential Biblical doctrines in the political sphere: 1) the Lordship of Jesus Christ—the doctrine of Christ's mediatorial reign over all things in heaven and earth; and, 2) the authority of Biblical law. This compromise of Biblical truth did not take place overnight. Evangelicals today are living out the compromised political philosophy of previous generations of Christians who, for the sake of pluralism discarded the authority of Christ in the political sphere, and traded Biblical law for natural law.[3] The fundamental political viewpoint of modern evangelicals is based on the surrender of God's authority (*i.e.*, the authority of his Son and the authority of his law-word) over the sphere of politics. Of course, if you were to read or hear what contemporary evangelicals are saying in regard to politics, you would be confronted with many appeals to "Biblical justice" and statements about the lordship of Christ in politics. But in spite of honoring Christ and the Bible with their lips, their political philosophy and practice are often far from both Christ and the Bible.

Democratic Pluralism

Pluralism, in the epistemological sense of the term, "maintains that there is no single meaning or truth; meaning varies as the consequences vary for the individual, and truth is the expedient way of thinking."[4] All evangelicals would take strong issue with epistemological pluralism and affirm that truth is based on God and his revelation. However, when it comes to the theory of political pluralism, evangelicals are fully supportive. Political pluralism "is a concept that describes the heterogeneity of groups that share power in public policy making. The theory of democratic pluralism asserts that the public interest emerges from the democratic competition of diverse and changing elite groups, none of which are able to become dominant."[5]

The political compromises of evangelicals have contributed substantially to the ongoing advance of the kingdom of darkness in the politics of our nation.

Evangelicals are champions of this democratic pluralism. J. I. Packer argues that pluralistic representative democracy is "fitter and wiser" than any other form of civil government. He says that Christians ought to recommend democracy because it is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people and best expresses the God-given dignity of every individual because it allows full participation in the political process for all. Packer believes that democracies like the U. S. that are philosophically and religiously pluralist are healthy because societal balance comes out of political conflict as compromise is reached by the various parties in the debate.[6] Kantzer explains that democratic pluralism is a vital part of the American tradition and evangelicals strongly support that tradition:

> Strong evangelical affirmation of democracy and especially of the American principle of separation of church and state ought not to be surprising. The original framers of our Constitution in 1787 went out of their way to insure that our government would not be a Christian government, and not even a religious government. This is in spite of the fact that, almost without exception, the framers of the American Constitution considered themselves religious persons. The vast majority identified themselves as Christian.... From its very inception, therefore, the United States has been a pluralistic democracy committed to the separation of church and state.... [T]he basic reason for the strong evangelical commitment to separation is rooted in Biblical teaching about the role of civil government....[7]

For evangelicals, the *ideal* political economy in this fallen world is that which allows all views, religious or secular, theistic or atheistic, Christian or anti-Christian, an equal voice in the political debate and equal access to the political process and political offices of the nation. They abhor the thought of any one group's seeking to dominate politics, particularly the thought of Christians striving for dominion in the politics of the nation.

What evangelicals want is "a place at the table" so that they can provide the all-important religious perspective to the process of democracy; a place at the table, nothing more, nothing less. Ralph Reed states this succinctly:

> If we are to reaffirm the role of religion in public life, we must also encourage those with strong spiritual values to re-enter politics after too many years of self-imposed retreat. Religious believers must become full citizens, with a place at the table we call democracy.... Their participation is not a threat to democracy but is essential to it.[8]

Evangelical commitment to democratic pluralism also means that they believe that the state must be religiously neutral, *i.e.*, should not favor, protect, or promote any one religion over another. Kantzer believes that the founding fathers "went out of their way to insure that our government would not be a Christian government, and not even a religious government,"[9] and he and other evangelicals are committed to keeping it that way. Monsma advocates what he calls the "politics of justice" because it is both liberating and pluralistic. For Monsma, true liberty requires the state to be religiously neutral and to enforce a pluralistic order that allows for "mosques as well as churches, nudist camps as well as Bible camps, hateful, racist literature as well as the writings of a C. S. Lewis or a Martin Luther King, Jr."[10]

Complete religious liberty for all sects, isms, and religions must be the creed of the state. Of course, if the state is to uphold religious pluralism, then the state itself must be officially neutral in regard to religion. How else can the state avoid giving special status to any one religion? Thus, the evangelical, in being true to his pluralistic creed for civil society, rejects all attempts to establish Christianity as the religion of the state—no religious test for political office, no national covenant with God, and no official recognition of the Bible as the law-book of the nation.

Natural Law

Evangelicals are passionate defenders of democratic pluralism because it allows equal access for all views in the public policy debates of the democratic process, but reject epistemological pluralism because it says there is no

ultimate standard of truth or justice. How do they reconcile the acceptance of one and the rejection of the other? It seems that an acceptance of democratic pluralism would naturally entail the acceptance of epistemological pluralism as well. The evangelical answer to this seeming contradiction is natural law: natural law provides the social glue that enables a pluralistic society to unite in pursuit of the common good; natural law provides pluralism with a transcendent standard of right and wrong, and of civil justice.[11] Geisler states:

> A society cannot function without some kind of common moral code that binds people together in a social unit—a kind of moral cohesive. Without this ethical cohesive, there would be no unity in a society. But it is obvious that not every society accepts a divine law, such as the Bible or the Koran. This being the case there is evident need for some kind of naturally available moral code to bind people together.[12]

For Geisler and his fellow evangelicals, natural law is the common moral code. Following Aquinas, Geisler defines natural law as "the rational creature's participation in the eternal law," and the "eternal law is the divine reason by which God governs the universe."[13] Evangelicals make a distinction between Biblical law which is only for the church and natural law which is for all men. Therefore, according to evangelicals, it is wrong for Christians to espouse the standards of Biblical law for civil society—society's only standard of moral principles is natural law, and these principles are discerned through man's reason. As Packer says, "The Christian citizen must accept that in politics no black-and-white answers are available, but God wills simply that all be led by the highest ideals and the ripest wisdom that they can discover."[14] In other words, "Christians, put your Bibles away when you enter into the political realm."

The Antidote to Evangelical Political Compromise

In their advocacy of democratic pluralism and natural law, evangelicals have deeply compromised the Christian message in the political sphere. Instead of the lordship of Christ in the politics of the nation, they preach the virtues of democratic pluralism, which is nothing less than the virtue of a religiously neutral state[15] that grants every false religion and cult, and every anti-Christian philosophy, full participation in the political process.[16] Instead of the authority of Biblical law to determine justice in civil affairs, they proclaim the authority of human reason to discern eternally valid principles of justice. There is nothing explicitly Christian about their fundamental political philosophy at all; it is the surrender of Biblical truth and God's covenant in history for a mess of pluralistic pottage. The fruit of the evangelical compromise[17] has been bitter—a nation that was founded in the seventeenth century by God-fearing men and women (*e. g.*, the Puritans in New England) who were intent on establishing a civil covenant with God to honor him and be governed by his Bible-revealed laws is now a nation at war with God and his word, rapidly descending into moral and social chaos. The antidote to the evangelical political compromise is repentance and a return to the Biblical truth of the lordship of Jesus Christ over all nations—his mediatorial reign,[18] and the authority of Biblical law—theonomy.[19]

Instead of democratic pluralism and natural law, Christians must advocate the crown rights of Jesus Christ in the political sphere.[20] By virtue of his death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God the Father, Jesus Christ is now Lord of all in heaven and earth (*Ps. 110:1-2; Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 2:33-36; Phil. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 12:5*). The risen Christ has been granted dominion over all the nations; they are his inheritance, and he has been commissioned by his Father to bring these rebellious nations into submission to his reign (*Ps. 2:4-9*). He is King of kings and Lord of lords (*Rev. 17:14; 19:16*), the Prince of the kings of the earth (*Rev. 1:5*), and all kings and rulers are commanded to bow before him and confess him as their Sovereign and serve him and promote his kingdom in their capacity as civil rulers (*Ps. 2:10-12; Phil. 2:9-11*). As Sovereign, his law-word must be the basis for civil law (*Mt. 5:17-19; 28:20*).

The political implications of Christ's current mediatorial reign are enormous. William Symington summarizes these:

1. It is the duty of nations and their rulers to have respect to the glory of Christ in all their institutions and transactions.
2. It is the duty of nations, as subjects of Christ, to take his law as their rule.
3. It is a duty which nations owe to Messiah the Prince, to have respect to the moral and religious qualifications in those whom they appoint over them.
4. The nations ought to have respect to Christ, in their subjection to those who rule over them.
5. Nations, as the moral subjects of Messiah the Prince, are under obligation to recognize his rightful authority over them by swearing allegiance to him.
6. It is the duty of nations, as such, to have respect to [the Christian] religion.[21]

All nations belong to Christ and he is the only rightful Sovereign of every nation. Therefore, Christians should labor for an explicitly Christian civil government that stands in covenant with God through Christ.[22] Christians must bring the politics of their nation under the dominion of Christ, the Lord. The evangelical political compromise of democratic pluralism and natural law is a repudiation of the Biblical doctrines of Christ's present reign over the nations and of the authority of the word of Christ; it is an offense to King Jesus.

[1] J. I. Packer, "How to Recognize a Christian Citizen," Christianity Today Institute, in *Christianity Today*, vol. 29, no. 7 (April 19, 1985), 7.

[2] Clarence B. Carson, *The Fateful Turn: From Individualism to Collectivism 1880-1960* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY, 1963), 148-149, emphasis added.

[3] For a summary of the history of this compromise see John A. Fielding III, "The Emperor's New Clothes: The Failure of Retreatist Strategies," in *Explicitly Christian Politics*, ed. William O. Einwechter (Pittsburgh, 1997), 17-46. For a more extended treatment see Gary North, *Political Polytheism* (Tyler, TX, 1989).

[4] Donald Gotterbarn, *The 1995 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia.*

[5] *ibid.*

[6] Packer, *op cit.*, 6-7.

[7] Kenneth Kantzer, "Summing Up: An Evangelical View of Church and State," Christianity Today Institute in *Christianity Today*, *idem.*, 28-29.

[8] Ralph Reed, "Religion and Democracy," *Imprimis*, vol. 25, no. 4 (April 1996), 6.

[9] Kantzer, *loc. cit.*

[10] Stephen Monsma, "The Moral Limits of Government," in *Piety and Politics*, eds., Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie (Washington, D. C., 1987), 227.

[11] The evangelical answer of natural law does not solve the logical contradiction of accepting democratic pluralism while rejecting epistemological pluralism. Epistemology is foundational to practice. The acceptance of the political system of democratic pluralism will eventually lead to the acceptance of epistemological pluralism. This is exactly what is happening in the United States today; and evangelicals, in spite of their natural law doctrine, are helping to speed the process. The tragedy of evangelicalism is that, though it wants to retain a place for God's authority in politics through natural law, it is actually surrendering God's authority and any concept of higher law for political theory, and aiding in the triumph of complete relativism in politics by support of democratic pluralism.

[12] Norman Geisler, "Human Life," in *In Search of a National Morality*, ed., William Bently Ball (Grand Rapids, 1992), 117.

[13] *ibid.*, 116.

[14] Packer, *op. cit.*, 7.

[15] But there is no neutrality. Civil government is either for Christ or against Christ; it either gathers for Christ and his kingdom in the civil sphere or scatters abroad (*Mt. 12:30*).

[16] In Biblical law, all who resided within the boundaries of Israel were to be given equal protection and justice, including foreigners and those who did not confess faith in the God of Israel (*Dt. 1:16-17; 24:17-18*). However, only the people in covenant with God were able to participate in the political processes of the nation (*Ex. 18:21-22; Dt. 1:13; Dt. 17:15*). Therefore, Christians must not be content with a place at the table, but remember that Christ owns the table and invites only those who acknowledge him as Lord to sit at the table; all others are usurpers.

[17] A compromise that stretches back to the latter part of the eighteenth century and extends down to today.

[18] For the most comprehensive treatment of this important doctrine, see William Symington, *Messiah the Prince* (Edmonton, 1990 [1884]).

[19] See R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1973); Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 1977), and *By This Standard* (Tyler, TX, 1985).

[20] See Andrew Sandlin, "The Crown Rights of Jesus Christ: The Comprehensive Character of the Faith," in *Explicitly Christian Politics*, 47-59.

[21] Symington, *op. cit.*, 231, 234, 241, 249, 256, 262.

[22] This labor is part of the church's duty to bring all men and nations under the authority of Christ and his word as commanded in the Great Commission. An explicitly Christian civil order is founded on the regeneration of the populace, strong Christian families, and strong Christian churches; it is not based on a few seizing power and imposing a Christian order on the masses by means of the civil sword.

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

Attention Covenant Youth!

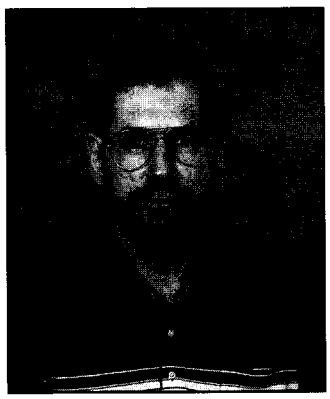
We intend to begin a new feature in the *Chalcedon Report.* Every month we would like to publish a brief article by young Christians (no older than 20) either home schooled or in a Christian day school. The article should be 500-1500 words and be on a topic in line with Chalcedon's Vision Statement.

Chalcedon will pay $50.00 for any article published.

Please send submissions to Susan Burns c/o Chalcedon,
P. O. Box 369,
Vallecito, CA 95251.
E-mail address sburns@goldrush.com.

Evangelicalism, False and True

By Joseph P. Braswell



A popular theological method of the Middle Ages was that which was associated with Peter Abelard: *sic et non* (yes and no). If I may be indulged a bit, I would make use of this "both/and" approach to state my equivocating attitude toward modern evangelicalism. On one hand, I wish to assert that I have no problem whatsoever with evangelicalism. I certainly do not believe it to be deficient, degenerate, or dilute—a debased and substandard form of Christianity. Indeed, I would insist that I myself am an evangelical and am *proud* to be so identified. On the other hand, however, I do have serious problems with many who have arrogated this label to themselves and to their doctrines and practices: those who have come in popular parlance to be called "evangelical" by an all-too-common misapplication of this term to those who are not true evangelicals. Sadly, meaning is use, and, according to the common consensus of contemporary linguistic usage, "evangelical" is used to refer to various beliefs and practices that in my estimation are deficient, degenerate, and dilute. Thus, in one sense of the term, I can be referred to as an evangelical, while, according to quite another (and perhaps that which has now become the primary) sense of the term, I am opposed to that which would be called evangelicalism. Which is true—whether that I ought to be identified as an evangelical or whether I should be described as opposed to evangelicalism—depends on what we mean by the term or how we are employing it.

The problem here is that *historically* the word had an *intension* (or sense) based on its etymological origins. When some arrogated the term to themselves, "evangelical" came to be understood by *extension* (or reference) to denote those self-styled evangelicals. X calls himself an evangelical. If one wants to know what an evangelical is, simply look at X as an example of an evangelical. Evangelicals are those who are like X, and, by describing certain characteristics of X, one describes what an evangelical is. In other words, locate those who are called evangelicals, describe the characteristics of their beliefs and practices, and therefore denote those beliefs and practices as *evangelical.* Over time, therefore, the characteristics of those persons, beliefs, and practices become the intension or connotation—the accepted definition or meaning—of the term.

The Definition of "Evangelical"

From a strictly etymological perspective, "evangelical" denotes someone or something for whom or which the *evangel* serves in some manner as such a significant and distinguishing characteristic that it can be referred to as an identifying mark, making "evangelical" an adequately descriptive label for purposes of identification. Something or someone can be labeled as *evangelical* because the evangel is so prominent and notable a feature of the person or thing (including ideas) as to stand out sufficiently as a means of characterization that allows us a means of classification and differentiation (comparison and contrast). Accordingly, to be an evangelical is to be identified with the gospel (the *evangel*), and that identification should be to us a most-coveted and highly-prized badge of honor and distinction: glorying in the Cross and bearing the testimony of Jesus Christ. I would be most proud to be considered an evangelical in this sense, for that would indicate that I have let my light shine before men.

If we continue to restrict ourselves to etymology, in order for a person, group, movement, or theology to qualify as evangelical in designation, the gospel must in some sense be basic, central, and constitutive—especially characteristic of his or its emphases. The gospel must be to him or it that which is of paramount importance and of primary concern, and this emphasis must be clearly and unmistakably expressed. To be truly evangelical is to be gospel-defined (or gospel-identified), gospel-concerned, gospel-oriented, gospel-driven. Certainly, this emphasis on the gospel could conceivably lapse into a reductionism (nothing but the gospel), or the gospel could be understood very narrowly, but such an interpretation of evangelicalism is far from necessary from the etymological derivation. The emphasis on the gospel need only be a stress on its necessity (it is *sine qua non* for authentic Christianity), *not* on its presumed *sufficiency* (as though it were held to be all that matters). An evangelical need only assert that the *evangel* is to be at the heart and soul of genuine Christianity, and all else in some sense flows from it or is understood in terms of it, as vitally related to it. He need only maintain that the gospel sheds light on the entire "package" of Christian faith and life; it is our existential starting point and foundation, because it is constitutive of Christian self-understanding and self-definition, of any genuine sense of Christian identity. He therefore would insist that all other doctrines need to be brought into relation to the gospel as implicitly contained in it, that other affirmations of *the Faith* simply explicate gospel faith in its confession, explanation, expression, and application.[1]

Such evangelicalism is clearly expressed in the material

principles of the Protestant Reformation, and the Reformation of the sixteenth-century is truly an evangelical movement in the best sense of the term. *Sola Gratia*, *sola fide*, and *solus Christus* are affirmations of the gospel. Luther held that the gospel (justification by faith) was that article on which the church stands or falls, and in his reforming efforts he judged everything by "what preaches Christ." Hardly intended in a narrow or reductionist fashion, these Reformational principles simply followed in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, who determined among the Corinthians not to know anything but Christ crucified and insisted that our faith is in vain if Christ has not been raised in accordance with the received gospel. Whatever doctrine we might glean from Paul's epistle to the Romans (which is so rich in doctrinal content that it has often been viewed as a compendium of theology) is but the explication of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, through which the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. According to the evangelical understanding of the confessional and dogmatic-theological task, we enter into the field of Christian theology in all its breath and comprehensiveness through a deeper and fuller understanding of the meaning of the gospel, and evangelical theological study is faith—*gospel faith*—seeking understanding.

The New Evangelicalism

Such is my etymologically derived understanding of what it means to be evangelical, and it is in this sense that I consider myself (and exhort all of us) to be evangelical. Yet, it is the sad fact that evangelical ascription has been co-opted, that it is now applied (*misapplied*) to denote the "born-againism" of those semi-Pelagian adherents to synergistic, decisional regeneration and the pietistic and emotionalistic tradition of revivalism and its invitation system. I have problems with evangelicalism so conceived and do not wish to be identified as an evangelical in this sense. My differences with such evangelicalism are evangelical differences—differences determined by the gospel itself.

Reformation Monergism

Luther recovered the gospel, and thereby instituted a truly evangelical revival, when he broke free from the Medieval-Scholastic Nature/Grace metaphysical scheme. In his significant breakthrough insight, faith was no longer understood by him as a natural preparation for grace, as the fulfillment of a *condition* for receiving supernatural grace by the performance of something that was within man's natural capacity to do. The soteriological scheme of Scholastic theology was synergistic, because Pelagian: God responded to man; man cooperated with God according to his native ability. Against this Pelagian synergism, Luther insisted on total inability: the utter incapacitation and absolute impotence of the natural man in abject bondage to sin. Faith therefore could not be a condition for grace, for it could not be exercised out of inherently human resources as a natural act performed of sinful man's own initiative for the purpose of man's fitting and preparing himself to be a suitable candidate for receiving grace. Faith itself could only be the result of a prevening supernatural act; it was a free gift of divine grace, resulting entirely from God's unconditioned, monergistic action. Justification thus was not obtained *because of* faith, merely *through* faith—a faith wrought in us. Rather than a cooperation of Nature and Grace (the synergism of mutual effort by both God and man), God acts unilaterally and exclusively, taking the sole initiative in a free act of sovereign grace—grace that is altogether prior to, and productive of, justifying faith. The *sola fide* arises out of, and is nothing other than, *sola gratia*.

The Re-emergence of Synergism

Sadly, among the heirs of the Reformation it did not take long for divine monergism to be lost again. Melanchthon, Luther's humanist protégé, made *rapprochement* with the free-will position that had been earlier advanced by his fellow-humanist, Erasmus (a position decisively repudiated by Luther in his *On the Bondage of the Will*), and accordingly attempted to reintroduce synergism into Lutheran soteriology, creating the controversy between the Philippists and the Flacians (or Gnesio-Lutherans) in Lutheranism. However, the great controversy (one with more widespread and enduring consequences that extend into—and flourish in—our own time) was in the Reformed churches, involving Jacob Arminius and the Remonstrant movement. The Remonstrants—perhaps better known as Arminians—were decidedly semi-Pelagian in their view of faith. In their theology the *sola fide* was coordinated with God's grace as the human fulfillment of a condition for the actualization of a saving possibility (a *mere* possibility) that God universally offers. Such a faith-contribution is itself a principle standing ultimately independent of God's action of grace; it owes exclusively to man's natural endowment with a free will and thus arises out of an inherent capacity of the natural man. Because election is God's response to foreseen faith, faith becomes to some extent the cause or basis of salvation, and we again have justification because of—conditioned on—faith, with Grace merely perfecting Nature. Arminianism thus reintroduced the dialectics of Nature and Grace by setting faith over against grace as an independent, autonomous principle.

The New Subjectivism

Obviously, because faith was no longer dependent on grace (but grace was instead made dependent on faith), faith had to be understood once again as a virtue in man that pleased God and to which God responded favorably. Thus, because salvation depended on both Christ *and* faith, confidence was placed first in one's own faith, rather than in Christ. The focus accordingly shifted from a theocentric to an anthropocentric perspective, one concerned with the essential quality of the faith-act (a concern with its

intensity, its strength, its passion). In a move toward subjectivism, faith turned in on itself self-consciously in self-absorption and self-concern—self-righteousness. The power of faith as such—the way in which it was experienced and expressed—became a major emphasis, as attention was directed to the question of the sufficiency of the faith-virtuousness one had relative to the condition necessary for genuine conversion. Faith came to be understood as a subjective experience that one had to prepare oneself for (*i.e.*, get "psyched up" for) by the proper, psychological manipulation of the emotions, for it was passion that moved one to choose to believe, and faith was purely a volitional act of self-determination. Given this opinion, the move from Arminianism, through Methodism, to *revivalism* was quite inevitable.

In this subjectivistic climate the glorious experience of being "born again" eclipsed the concern with being objectively right with God. As the emphasis on experience displaced justification, a gateway was opened to introduce into the heretofore "right-wing" of Protestantism (among the stepchildren of the Reformed) an essentially Anabaptist or enthusiastic mood, giving birth to perfectionism and the holiness movement, as well as to Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement. Even in its more moderate forms, modern evangelicalism gives evidence of owing a significant debt to "higher" or "deeper life" and second-blessing teachings that have origins in this revival of "left-wing" emphases of spiritual narcissism in which even the worship of God (which ought to be done solely to his glory) is gauged by what we get out of it, and the presentation of doctrine and life is concerned more with appeal than with *truth*.

New Evangelical Apologetics

This anthropocentric concern with a mass-appealing marketing strategy carries over into evangelical apologetics. In order to evoke the faith of the natural man we must appeal to him in terms of his own tastes, sense of justice and fairness, and canons of rationality. The natural man must be massaged; he must be shown respect and deference. We must tell him that he is basically good, appealing to how sincere he is as a seeker of truth and how wise and open-minded he is in considering Christianity as an option. We must show him how becoming Christian will benefit him pragmatically (*e.g.*, boosting his self-esteem, providing "fire insurance"). We must appeal to him in his presumed autonomy and provide him with reasons that he finds acceptable. Because Nature/Grace has been revived, it is to natural reason that we appeal, allowing the natural man, on the basis of his own principles, to be the judge. As such, there is no place allowed for the radical antithesis between the so-called wisdom of this world and the wisdom of God that Paul places at the very heart of the gospel.[2]

New Evangelical Worldliness

Because this emphasis on antithesis is lost, evangelicalism, for all its concern with pietistic otherworldliness that owes to its obsession with glorious conversion-experiences, has tended to be quite *worldly*. There is no radical repentance, for there is no root-and-branch repudiation of autonomy (Nature). Nature simply needs supplementation: the addition of a second story of Grace that is confined to a narrowly-conceived sphere of personal (read: private) devotion and to churchly activities in which evangelicals can retreat from the world to "get high" in the Spirit. Cloistered in the realm of Grace, they long for their coming escape from the world into heaven, viewing the gospel as the salvation of their ethereal souls that is concerned with the "sweet bye and bye" of the otherworldly hereafter. Upon going back into the world of everyday life, though excited about their future prospects, they largely conform to an unreformed, unreconstructed world and live an essentially unreformed and unreconstructed, *natural* life that more-or-less accepts *what is* as the norm. Their form of world-denial (retreat from history) leads to a *laissez faire* acceptance of—a passive resignation toward—the world as it is, including the spirit of the age.[3] They make common cause with unbelievers because, though they are forgiven their sins and have a dimension of experience denied to the unbelievers, they perceive there to be no substantial difference between themselves and the unbelievers in most areas of life and no word of God to the sphere of Nature shared in common by believer and unbeliever. In the affairs of the realm of Nature, Christianity is largely irrelevant, and the dialectic of escapist separation and conformity takes the place of the Biblical calling of distinction (applying the antithesis) and transformation (dominion faith).

Real Evangelicalism

The Biblical gospel—the *articulus stantis* of authentic evangelicalism—is the gospel of the Kingdom, proclaiming that our God reigns and that the appropriate response to his Kingly reign is repentance and submission to his righteousness. It calls us to confess Jesus as our Lord. He is to be acknowledged as Lord in every area of our lives *without exception*; his lordship is total and all-encompassing. While we believe in our hearts, the implications of this faith—its fruit and consequences—are to flow out of our hearts to impact and determine every endeavor and relationship, registering itself in all the contexts of our existence and in our every activity, for out of the heart flow the issues of life. Christ's redemptive blessings flow "as far as the curse is found" (and we believe in *total* depravity!); wherever sin abounded, God's grace superabounds to establish the reign of life and righteousness. That grace constitutes us holy instruments of God's righteousness (his righting action) in the world unto the triumph of grace over sin across the full spectrum of human affairs, making our bodies (our interface with the world, our means of externalizing our faith in works) living acts of worship in offering the world back to God and unto his glory by whatsoever we do. By the gospel we are renewed in the

image of God and must take up the dominion charge given to the images of God, bringing to bear the lordship of Christ on every point at which our lives make contact with the world as we work out our salvation and serve as instruments of the extension of the Abrahamic Blessing in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Reclaiming True Evangelicalism

This is evangelical faith; anything else is a counterfeit based on "another gospel." We are the *true* evangelicals, and we should reclaim this term from those who have usurped it. The true evangelical is not ashamed of the gospel; without compromise or accommodation, he embraces its offense, neither adding to nor subtracting from it but, setting it forth in purity and fullness, he boldly announces: "Here I stand." Let us therefore not follow after a multitude to do evil, tacitly consenting to the prevalent corruption of a venerable term. Let us instead challenge the *so-called* (the spurious) evangelicals, judging them in terms of the *evangel* and calling for an authentic evangelical recovery and evangelical revival.

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[1] As Paul makes clear in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-36, *the gospel* (cf. *v. 24*) is "the whole counsel of God" (*v. 27*) and everything that is profitable (*v. 20*). To proclaim the whole counsel of God is to proclaim repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, to proclaim the redemptive-historical mystery that is now eschatologically revealed in its fullness in "the gospel of the grace of God" in Christ Jesus. Far from a narrowly-conceived message, this is the announcement of *the Kingdom of God* (*v. 25*): the goal and summation of Biblical theology or the whole history of revelation. To be evangelical is thus to proclaim the fullness of the gospel as the whole counsel of God, withholding "nothing profitable" and setting forth "all things" (*v. 35*). However, it is also to understand that the whole counsel of God is not to be conceived abstractly, as a timeless set of philosophical propositions (a rationalistic or idealist system of abstract truths); it is rather an explication of God's action in Jesus Christ for the redemptive restoration of his creation and the establishment of his Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." It is the Biblical philosophy of history, the entire content of the history of revelation, the story of the coming of the Kingdom. It is a world-view set forth in a story: a narrative that, covering the themes of creation, fall, and redemption, tells us of God's *covenant* (including therefore the *God* who covenants, his relation to us as our Creator, the accomplishment of his covenant-establishment in history, his promises and demands, our covenantal calling and duties, the future order of his covenanted Kingdom, etc.). This comprehensive gospel organizes all the data of revelation and gives to repentance and faith *qua* gospel-response a truly comprehensive character as nothing short of a radically revolutionary, foundation-shaking, *transforming vision* of altogether *Copernican* proportions—an entirely new way of seeing and relating to the totality of life. See further the excellent treatment of this subject in Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "The Whole Counsel of God," in John H. White, ed., *The Book of Books: Essays on the Scriptures in Honor of Johannes G. Vos* (n. p.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978), 19-28.

[2] See Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor. 2:6-16," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (1995), 103-24.

[3] Outside the walls of the church, this is most evident in the acceptance by the majority of evangelicals of public education—*i.e.*, sending one's child to the statist school system, a supposedly secular arena of learning that concentrates on common knowledge. Inside the walls, the world has crept into the church in the name of ostensibly neutral, *scientific* research-findings, such as the use of humanistic psychology in pastoral counseling and the Madison Avenue techniques of the church-growth movement. One might also note the populist democratization of church governance in American evangelicalism as also evincing capitulation to the spirit of the age.

Joseph Braswell has done undergraduate and graduate work in philosophy at the University of South Florida, but his real interest is in theology and Biblical studies. He has published several articles in various journals (including the Westminster Theological Journal, *the* Journal of Christian Reconstruction, *and the* Chalcedon Report*). He currently resides in Palatka, Florida and is engaged in research and writing. He can be reached at 1520 Prospect St., Palatka, FL 32177-5935.*

Narcissism Goes to Church: Encountering Evangelical Worship

By Monte Wilson

Have you attended any modern evangelical worship services lately? (Question: Is "Evangelical Worship" an oxymoron?) No? Well, let's walk through one, shall we?

"Good Morning!" bellows the greeter, Mr. Rapport. "Why don't we stand and greet one another?" While everyone nervously pretends to happily welcome those around him with body language that says, "I can't believe he made us do this," Mr. Rapport will walk up and down the aisle shaking hands with the members, kissing babies and, in essence, acting as if he were running for office. (Maybe he is.)

What is this? It is the evidence of the modern proof of God's presence: Warmth and Fuzziness. The service must have the correct ambiance. People must feel wanted, even needed—or they will go elsewhere. Not long ago, the normal service would begin with Bible reading and prayer, declaring the congregation's allegiance and submission to Christ. Today, our allegiance is to user-friendliness.

Some churches will open with a cheery choir special or a hap-hap-happy song sung by the musicians. After all, happiness must mark the service. "We are a happy people. We have something to offer you. We are exciting and positive—and you *too* can be like us if you join our church!" Compare this with the ancient liturgies that began with, "O God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us miserable sinners." Whoa! That won't do. What a downer. This certainly won't work in a church that wishes to make everyone feel good about himself.

Now the music leader steps to the microphone to lead the "worship." He is a combination of Pavarotti (albeit without the training), Dick Clark and Liberace. He stands, sometimes with other singers, at the center of the stage. The sound booth has been instructed to make certain that his voice is always louder than all others combined. He cajoles, he exhorts, he waves his arms, he explains the depth of meaning in the lyrics of each song, he cheerleads, he cries—all on cue. We then sing songs like "Glo-ho-ho-ry-he-he" or some other such ditty that is equally as intellectually and theologically vacuous. By the way, are the people a little dull this morning? No problem. Change keys on each verse, increase the volume and dump all songs in minor keys. What matters is that everyone has a great, happy, ego-renewing experience.

To insure that everyone is engaged, he will choose songs that match the musical tastes of the congregation. (The demands of Scripture are secondary: preferences and tastes of the people are primary.) Who cares that the church sang majestic hymns and chanted the Psalms for century after century, these are now too complicated, too content laden. What we demand are songs that excite, move and gratify without over-taxing the mind or soul.

It is now time for The Reverend Doctor Raconteur. First, he will tell a story. Now this yarn need not have anything to do with the message, but it *must* assure everyone that he is a) glad they are there; b) capable of wowing them; c) a real master of the pulpit; and d) just plain folk, like all of them. If he fails to accomplish one of these objectives, he is in trouble. If he fails in two, his job is in jeopardy.

It doesn't matter how well educated in theology the minister is because he will rarely deal in theology: the real need is psychology and entertainment. The man must *move* the audience. He must make them feel loved, needed, wanted, appreciated, cared for and special—reeeeal special—all in one message. Content is secondary, if it is relevant at all. What matters is that the minister is personable and able to make every individual present feel like he is talking just to him.

It is not just the people's ego being stroked here, but the minister's as well. He moves, he cries, he laughs and he woos. The spotlight is his. He is on center stage and loving it. Men revere him, women adore him and children laugh at his jokes: all stand in awe of his skills. What a life! Except, that is, when there is no response from the people. He stands at the back door and receives only the most mundane of compliments. No one is saved. No one spoke to him of his brilliant performance. No one fell down at the altar. Nothing visible, nothing audible, nothing happened, period. And what of his ego, now? It is dashed. He is a failure. No one appreciates him. No one knows his toil, his anguish—his insecurity and the ravenous hunger of his ego for approbation.

Where to Go for Real Worship

Where does the serious believer go to worship? Where do Christians go who do not want a circus but the sacraments? Where does a hungry seeker go to be fed with doctrine deeper than messages that can be boiled down to, "Don't worry, be happy"? Where are the Houses of Prayer?

I was taught that, "You get what you fish for." We fished

for people who wanted to be entertained. Now, if we pull the plug on the spotlights, they will go elsewhere. We built our services around the tastes of our members and, thereby, told them that their ego's where The Standard for evaluating the worship service is. What happens when we stand and quote Rushdoony, "Worship is not a matter of taste but of obedience"? What will happen is that we will gain the favor of God and all those who fear him. Those serious about their life in Christ will find their way to our worship services; those who prefer smoke and mirrors will go elsewhere. If space permitted we could take a similar walk through the last years' counseling sessions. Here we see a parade of whiners, victims and self-indulgent, self-proclaimed prophets coming to the pastoral staff to let them know of all that is wrong with the church, the officers, the music, the teaching, their spouses, their lives, etc. All of this can be summed up in one brief sentence: "My needs are not being met." Are some of these needs legitimate? Of course they are. But more often than not the needs all center on the gratification of the ego, not the strengthening of faith.

Hear the mantas of modern evangelicals:

- I feel, therefore, I am.
- I do not feel God; therefore, something or someone is wrong.
- I feel God; therefore, whatever is being said and done must be The Truth.
- I feel good; therefore, I am good.
- I feel needy and my needs are demands on your abilities and possessions.

Is it any wonder that the average Christian is led around by his experiences and feelings rather than by God? The modern church—the place where he was to encounter God and learn of his ways—has told the Christian through symbols, teachings and structures that his needs and feelings are paramount!

Why are ministers shocked when members come in and say that their discontent with their spouse is grounds for divorce? After all, this same pastor told them that they could ignore covenants with past churches if their "felt-needs" were not being met. Why are we surprised when our members convert to Roman Catholicism where they feel-at-home-in-Rome or attend Laughing Revivals because they feel-the-Spirit? Haven't we told them that the gratification of their feelings is of highest import to God? Isn't it amazing how ministers who pandered to experience and emotions all of the sudden want to talk about truth-claims when one of their members decides he can have more intense experiences at another church!

The Quest for Experience

What is going on in Church-O-Rama? Quite simply, it is the exaltation of emotional gratification outside any theological parameters. This shapes our liturgies, dictates the style and content of our message, directs our counseling strategies, produces deformed theologies and severely damages souls and institutions wherever it prevails.

Modern American Christianity is filled with the spirit of narcissism. We are in love with ourselves and evaluate churches, ministers and truth-claims based upon how they make us feel about ourselves. If the church makes me feel wanted, it is a good church. If the minister makes me feel good about myself, he is a terrific guy. If the proffered truth supports my self-esteem, it is, thereby, verified.

Whence does this error spring? What is its source? One source is the belief that salvation is solely due to an experience of conversion, rather than to what happened on the Cross of Christ. Most Christians today define their salvation exclusively in terms of what happened to them subjectively, having no notion whatsoever of the objective basis for their salvation. This in turn focuses all of their attention on anxiously caring for that experience.

I suggest that another source is the common modern presupposition that *experience is the foundation for belief.* This cannot be so, however, because experiences do not happen in vacuums. People experience something or someone. The question, then, becomes, "What or Who has been experienced?" The "What" or "Who" must be interpreted. And simply because the Who or What was encountered in a religious setting does not mean that the encounter was sent by God.

One of the attractions for basing beliefs and theologies on experience is that it gives various religious groups a common starting point for ecumenical dialogue: "We have all experienced Jesus (or Truth or the transcendent God), have we not?" But this begs the question: who is going to verify exactly Who was experienced and by what standard shall they make their evaluations? How shall we ascertain if we have experienced God or Truth—or have only been experiencing *ourselves*?

To those who say that experience is The Standard for evaluating truth, goodness, beauty, etc., Luther had an interesting question. On Good Friday, when the disciples stood before the Cross, where was God? Was he not absent? For years they had experienced him on a daily basis; now he was demonstrably absent. Jesus himself cries out that God had forsaken him. Now, what do we believe? Well, as Luther pointed out, we had better believe the theology of the Bible.

When we allow experience or feelings to guide our faith we will end up in a ditch. Our feelings will tell us that God is absent while, all the time, he was right there "present in a hidden manner." What we need, then, is a theology with which to interpret our experiences.

Ignoring the Quest

There is another problem to which we in the Reformed camp do not always give sufficient thought. Some of these experience-based people are truly hungry for more of God in their lives. They may be misguided, they may fall prey to psychological manipulation, they may fall into grievous errors, but their sense of neediness for God is legitimate. Whereas many modern evangelical churches try to satiate this thirst with MTV Christianity, there is—or at least

was—in many of these folks a desire to fill the soul with God's presence.

In what I believe is an overreaction to the lust for experiences in Church-O-Rama, some Christians and churches have denied any and all pursuits of experiencing God and his Truth. All that matters to these folks is the cognitive apprehension of doctrine. But the fact is that Biblical truth is to transform the individual. This means by necessity that we must "experience" the Truth of God.

Quite often in the Reformed world there is a lack of any appeal whatsoever to the imagination or the emotions, as if humans were only a "brain." This was one of the reasons why Anglican churches suffered such loss during the Great Awakening. Wesley and Whitefield were speaking to men and women who were semi-illiterate. However, while they may not have been able to read, these people could *feel* their need for God and forgiveness. Lecturing these people with theological treatises would not work: they needed to be *touched* where they *sensed* their (legitimate) need for God. This is not to suggest doctrine should have been secondary or that everything these evangelists did was right. It is to assert that some of their success was because they presented the truth in such a way as to truly communicate to the needs and hunger of the people.

Augustine pointed out that we were made in the image of God. We have, therefore, a capacity to fellowship with God. After the Fall, however, we insisted on trying to fill this need with creation and created things rather than with the Creator. But as Augustine noted, we can fill the void of God *only* with God. "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

People long for God: they intellectually and psychologically crave his presence. However, as Augustine wrote, they are constantly trying to fill this need with experiences that will not satiate their desire. Sadly, the church all too often notes the need of the people, takes a survey of what it is they are using to try and fill this void, and then baptizes the chosen avenues with proof texts and Christian jargon. To compound the problem, those churches that react to such an approach often craft their message and worship in utter disregard of the human need to experience God. So, in one church people's emotions and emotional needs are pandered to, while in the other they are ignored. In one church the spirit of narcissism reigns, in the other the human spirit's capacity for and need of God is, for all intents and purposes, ignored.

People "need" a worship service that says, God Is Here. Here God is worshipped, revered, met. This is not entertainment. This is not a lecture hall, and we are not the audience: God is the audience and we are the performers. We recognize God's demand to be glorified and the human need to be filled with his presence. Prepare to meet God.

The poet Annie Dillard captures this spirit when she writes:

> On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea of what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. (*Teaching A Stone To Talk: Expeditions and Encounters*, p. 40)

Do you think Dillard extreme? Consider: Moses sees God, kicks off his shoes and starts stammering about how God should send Aaron and not him. Isaiah sees God, crawls under a church pew and begins blabbering about needing his foul mouth washed out. Jeremiah hears God and tells the Almighty that he is just a kid and not up for the rough-and-tumble world of a prophet. Paul saw God's presence and is knocked off of his donkey, blinded by the light of glory. While in the spirit on the Lord's Day, John spends a lot of time on his face. These are not pretty pictures. People "see" God and they are struck with terror. "Holy God, plus sinful me, equals dead meat."

When I contemplate gathering to worship the Triune God in the presence of angels, arch-angels and the Cloud of Witnesses—which is exactly what we do when we "gather as the church"—I am struck with the sinful and irreverent nonsense of much of what goes on in our worship services. I am not only speaking of people falling down laughing or of rock bands screaming; I am also thinking of the bored familiarity with which many approach worship. Both services fail to glorify God and invite his presence. Consequently, both services fail to meet the real needs of God's people.

While the primary purpose of worship is to glorify God, we must not discount how worship shapes and molds people for life. "Worship" that panders to narcissism leaves people void of true devotion and of the will to obey. "Worship" that is cold and heartless is a breeding ground for rationalism, leaving people empty of true spiritual power. Both are incapable of meeting the quest for more intimate fellowship with God or for being filled with his presence.

Feelings and experiences are not foundations for beliefs. However, as Jonathan Edwards wrote,

> That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes, raising us but a little above indifference. God, in his word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, *fervent in spirit*, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion: (*Rom. 12:11; Deut. 10:12; 6:4, 5*) ....
>
> As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection [feelings/experiences], so there is no true religion where there is no *religious affections*. As on one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an *affected fervent* heart; or where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in the heart: so, on the other hand, where there is a kind of light

> without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart. (*On Religious Affections*, Section 2:1; Section 3:1)

I understand and agree with those who ridicule and rebuke the extremes of emotionalism and the theologies that spawned those extremes. However, the solution to the problem of the narcissistic quest for self-gratification in religious experiences is not in denying the soul's legitimate need and desire to encounter God. On the contrary, the solution is in recognizing that such an encounter is possible only where God in all of his glory is exalted and worshipped. This God—the Triune, sovereign God who requires nothing less than worship that engages the whole person—where ever he is proclaimed and honored, will fill the void within true seekers.

Sooner or later, those who have been attending Church-O-Rama who are truly seeking God will discover that what they have been fed is cotton candy for the soul and that all they have to show for years of eating such things is a heart and head filled with cavities. When they show up, do not merely introduce them to correct theology: lead them to an encounter with the Sovereign Lord.

Dr. Monte Wilson is a noted Reformed speaker and writer. He can be contacted at 770-740-1401, montethird@aol.com, or P.O. Box 22, Alpharetta, GA 30239. He is available for preaching, lectures and conferences.

God Does Indeed Work in Wondrous Ways!

By Haig and Vula Rushdoony

Once four years ago, *Chalcedon Report* readers were first introduced to the work of "The Macedonian Outreach." In that article we reported basically the ministry's work in its first 14 months of existence. For readers who missed that article, we will give a short synopsis of our modest beginnings.

In early 1992, we asked the Lord to use us in whatever way he wished. We had both retired, though we had returned to work on a part-time basis. He answered our prayers in ways we had never anticipated. That summer, we found ourselves on a mission to Bulgaria with a Greek evangelist and his wife, participating in services, and witnessing scores of people being touched by God and giving their lives to Christ. We worshiped with Bulgarians, Armenians and Gypsies. One service was led by a Turkish pastor who was raised as a Muslim. We praised God that a Turk, a Greek (Vula) and an Armenian (Haig) could peacefully and joyously worship the same Lord together. It was a moving experience. We attended an outdoor service on a football (soccer) field in a remote Gypsy village, where our presence was announced by word of mouth. The Gypsies kept coming and coming by the hundreds, until there were approximately 1500 in the stands chanting "Salva na Boga" over and over again. This means "Praise the Lord." Upon our return home, "The Macedonian Outreach" became a reality and each newsletter since then closes with PRAISE THE LORD.

The title of our organization and the emphasis came from Acts 16. Thus, our purpose was to glorify God in the Balkans in three practical ways: (1) spiritually, by supporting indigenous priests, preachers and missionaries who serve the Lord and by supplying Bibles and Christian literature to adults and children, as we saw the need, and as God opened doors for us; (2) medically, by bringing patients, especially with heart problems, who could not be adequately treated in their countries, to the United States for treatment and possible surgery and to supply medication and vitamins whenever possible; and (3) physically, by meeting the everyday needs of the Balkan people, young and aged, with food staples, clothing, shoes, bedding, and financial assistance for heating their homes or for emergency needs. This three-fold purpose expanded from Bulgaria in 1992 to Albania and Yugoslavia in 1993 and subsequently to Greece, Romania, Croatia, Bosnia and FYROM (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia).

Macedonian display at a local church Mission's Faire

Until March of 1997 we either went on these missions alone or with Greek Christians. Last March, Linda Applegate, our secretary, accompanied Vula to Northern Greece and into Central Bulgaria to meet the needs of a starving people. Over 5000 people were fed during the

Our youngest (nine months old) heart patient

severe winter of 1997. In August two other Americans, Clifford and Mary Erickson, accompanied us to distribute food among refugee Armenian, Greek and Russian immigrants from the former Soviet Union who were mostly living in unheated former Greek army barracks in northern Greece. The following month Martha Settlemyre, a former business colleague of Vula's, accompanied us into the Gypsy villages where we distributed clothing and financial assistance through four pastors. Later that month Vula and Haig entered FYROM successfully for the first time. A young Macedonian girl served as our translator and her friend's father drove us into the highlands where we had never been . . . to meet and help pastors and Gypsies there. Both girls are exchange students in the United States. We brought them both to our home for a short visit during this spring and Easter recess from school.

Since the report about our activities through 1993, more Bibles have been distributed throughout Bulgaria by the Macedonian Outreach than by any other organization. Last fall, the gentleman to whom we gave our first Bible in 1992 reported that now he is a Christian. He was raised as a godless communist. Last summer, we began distributing *en masse* Armenian, Greek and Russian Bibles among the refugee families in Greece. Although our primary purpose is to undergird the ministry in these lands, whenever we have gone on an evangelistic mission many, many souls have surrendered their lives to Christ. We have supported in the short existence of The Outreach, thanks to funds donated by readers like yourselves, and as God opened door after door, 20 indigenous Christian leaders throughout the Balkans. For example, in Bulgaria we have assisted with the establishment of small Christian libraries, Christian seminars, the construction of new churches, the support of vibrant children's ministry in 50 Gypsy villages and have also assisted Bulgarian, Turkish and Armenian churches.

Medically, medicine and vitamins are an ongoing endeavor and medical care in the Balkan countries is ongoing as needed and as we are able. Sixteen youngsters from ages nine months to nineteen years have been brought to the States for medical care. All have returned home and are doing well. We have helped two adults and have referred two others for appropriate assistance in the Balkan region. We are in the beginning stages, with two sister Christian organizations, exploring the possibility of medical equipment for a pediatric cardiology unit of a Balkan hospital so that the young, critical heart patients can be treated in their own country.

We try to meet everyday needs in a variety of ways. Over 50,000 pounds of clothing and food have been shipped or taken there since we began. Sometimes, we need to provide money to buy food or to heat their dwellings. The needs are endless.

As you read this article, we will have returned from the Balkans with another American Christian couple, Zeus and Charlotte Ebio, and their young daughter, Chattelle, and Greek Christians after feeding approximately 2500 immigrants in Northern Greece and distributing a Bible to each family who desired one. This is how the Lord leads us. But these acts of God's love and mercy are not demonstrated only by the few names alluded to above, but by scores of volunteers (we are all volunteers). On a given day at home, two to six people may drop in to help Vula pack clothes or food. Four men assist Haig in shipping them. Some of the work is organized more formally. Besides an Advisory Board to give guidance, we have special committees. The Intercessory Prayer Committee prays for specific needs and guidance. The Medical Advisory Committee has specialists who review certain cases as to whether treatment in the States or surgery may be feasible. The Resources Committee searches for grants, vitamins, clothes, shoes, socks, medication, or finances to bring medical cases to the States. The Sew and Reap Committee members take donated new materials and sew jumpers, shorts and pants that are sent with turtleneck shirts for children. The newest project is to prepare comforters and knit sweaters and booties . . . all of which are sent or taken to the Balkans. Finally, The Desk Top Publishing Committee is responsible for the master list of names, labels, home page, and reproduction of our newsletter. We mentioned the refugees in Northern Greece. Many of the children have lost their parents and they along with the remaining members of their families, are destitute. The Outreach supports 13 orphan children on a monthly basis and sends funds to Greece for 200 Christmas presents for the refugee/orphan children each year. What does God have in store for us now? Only he knows. We keep our hearts and wills open to his guidance and direction. We continue to cherish and rely on the prayers and financial undergirding of our supporters and those of you who help "the least of these . . . for as you have done it unto (them) . . . you have done it unto me," our Lord Jesus reminds us. Yes, he truly does work in wondrous ways!

The Macedonian Outreach
A Ministry of Chalcedon, Inc.
P. O. Box 398
Danville, CA
94526-0398 U.S.A.
Our E-mail address is:
macedonian.outreach@juno.com

"Honey, We Shrunk the Gospel"

By Colonel V. Doner

(Excerpts from a chapter in progress from Doner's upcoming book, *The Late Great Evangelical Church*)

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. (*Ps. 103:19*)

... thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. (*Ps. 145:13*)

... that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself... (*2 Cor. 5:19*)

Since many cults boldly proclaim their "belief in the Bible" (the more heretical the doctrine, the more vehement it seems is their proclamation of fealty) from the Gnostics to the Arians, from the Moonies to the Mormons, the fundamental question is, **"What *is* the Biblical message?" This question is the essence of the "Great Divide" that now threatens the future of Evangelicalism as a cohesive, and orthodox, movement.** Is the Gospel of Christ essentially an individualized (privatized) invitation to focus inward and concentrate on ascending a spiritual ladder to "Christian perfection" as measured by "spiritual feelings" (subjective emotionalism) and the containment (or concealment) of visible moral vices? Is the Biblical message limited to "focusing on the family"? Or is the Gospel good news for all God's creation, calling men to assess their holiness by their obedience to God's Great Commission (*Mt. 28:20; 1 Jn. 2:4*), their commitment to love others through caring service (*Lk. 10:25-37; Mt. 22:36-40; 1 Jn. 4:20-21*); stewarding all of God's good creation (*Mt. 5:13-16, 23:23; Job 29; Gen. 1:28, 9:1-3; Ps. 8:6-8; Is. 1:17; Mic. 6:8*) otherwise utilizing our resources to expand his Kingdom (*Mt. 25:14-30, 28:18-20; Jn. 13:35, 15:8* and *16*) and bringing all things in obedience to Christ, since *all* belong to him? Do we still stand with the Reformers' Protestant orthodoxy?

In historic Protestant understanding, the world, which was seen to be created as "very good" by God, is still beautiful even after the Fall. Even in its bondage to decay, pollution, and depravity, the world continues to be the object of God's love, concern, providence, and *even redemption.*

Or have we accepted the Gnostic, Neo-Platonic "world-denying" dualist version proffered by revivalistic dispensationalism and rapture-obsessed TV evangelists (and authors)—that the physical world and all it contains is evil and therefore must be abandoned to its inevitable destruction (misreading the vital Biblical distinction that it is the *world system, i.e.*, humanism, that is ungodly and must be overcome)?

The answer that each of us gives to this crucial question will dictate our level of commitment to transforming our world. With this in mind we will now begin to understand why it's virtually impossible to mobilize more than a fraction of the Evangelical church for service or stewardship. **The modern evangelical majority report has clearly embraced a Gospel of abandonment,** as opposed to historic Protestant doctrine that teaches Christ came to save his glorious creation, the world (*Jn 1:12, 3:16, 4:14; 1 Jn. 2:2*). The word "world" is translated from the Greek *kosmos, meaning not just individuals, but all of God's creation, which will be reconciled to him* (*2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:20; Rev. 11:15*). As Andrew Walker says, "Christ was for them (the Reformers) a cosmic redeemer, the one through whom all things are returned to the Father."

Conversely, today the average Christian's understanding of God's redemptive plan demonstrates a tragically *reductionist* understanding of Christ's death and resurrection in terms of both his present Lordship (*Ps. 113:19, 145:13; Mt. 28:18*) and the purpose for which he was crucified, the redemption of *the world*, not just a few individuals (*Col. 1:19; Jn. 3:16*). As Henry Van Til notes:

> To confess Christ as Savior from sin, but to deny his relevance and power in the realm of culture, is a denial of his Kingship over the believer and the whole world.

Modern evangelicalism, dominated by dispensationalism's rejection of Christ's present sovereignty, has essentially invalidated Christ's world-changing and "other-directed Gospel" of redeeming the nations. If the word of God is to teach fallen man about his true nature, relationship and duty to God; if "the promise of the Gospel" is to restore all those whom God wills to their role as a "kingdom of priests," obediently fulfilling the Bible's mandate to transform culture as they are transformed ("Christ saves creation initially by restoring the cultural agent [man as a new creation in Christ] to a new obedience," Van Til notes that to affirm anything less is to replace Christ's world-redeeming message with "another Gospel," an anti-Christ, Gnostic Gospel.

Consequently, what we are left with is an emasculated church, a spiritually impotent shell (whitewashed tomb) limited primarily to "personal holiness." As historian Richard Tarnas poignantly summarizes, the perfidious result is our "shrinking" God's world-redeeming imperative:

> It thus might appear to be the great paradox of Christianity's history that a message whose original substance—the proclamation of the divine rebirth of the cosmos, the turning point of the aeons through the human incarnation of the Logos—had unprecedentedly elevated the significance of human life, human history, and human freedom eventually served to enforce a somewhat *antithetical conception.*

How the Gospel Got Neutered

Historian Ronald Knox correctly dates the beginning of Evangelical reductionism close to the Pietism of Wesley's Methodists who gradually displaced Whitefield's and Edwards' Calvinism in America by the end of the eighteenth century: "Their message was simple insofar as they left nine tenths of Christian doctrine out of consideration, and concentrated on the remaining tenth—soteriology" (*i.e.*, how to "get saved and go to heaven").

The story of how the Gospel was reduced to its current unrecognizable state is of course much more complex than any snapshots of Evangelical history might suggest. While this topic is worthy of an entire volume, we can briefly identify some of the more prominent factors that contributed to the dilution of a full-orbed Christian world-view, over the last two centuries.

The campaign to spiritualize Christ's redeeming message (*i.e.*, that his redemption is limited only to the "spiritual" realm) began as early as the *second century* with dualistic Gnosticism combining with Neo-Platonism. This spawned a multitude of Christian mystical schools which eventually pollinated various strains of Pietism, the direct antecedent of modern Evangelicalism. Once again, Tarnas provides us with a sobering insight on the nefarious forces that first set us on the reductionist road:

> The early Judeo Christian belief in redemption of the whole man *and the natural world* shifted in emphasis, especially under the influence of the *Neo-Platonic* Christian theologians, to belief in a *purely spiritual redemption permeating European pietism* which eschewed the Reformation's emphasis on reforming culture *to perfecting one's own spiritual status.*"

The centerpiece of this Gnostic strategy—indeed, the metaphysical underpinnings for its dualism—was its unrelenting antipathy toward the Old Testament, in particular, God's law. To a lesser degree this antinomian spirit was eventually picked up by the "radical wing" of the Reformation, the Anabaptists, and was passed on to their Pietist heirs. Much like many of today's Evangelicals, they eschewed the Old Testament for the New, even while Calvin and the Reformers insisted on the continuity of *both* Testaments and invested a good deal of time teaching their congregations how to apply the Old Testament to daily life.

A latter-day consequence of this Biblical dualism is that many Evangelicals influenced by the "restoration" or "primitivist" movement ("restoring" the church to its early first-century purity) curiously expend little or no effort studying the Old Testament—which, of course, was the only "Scripture" the early church possessed! When Paul said that all Scripture is for our edification, he was obviously talking about the Old Testament, and not his or his contemporaries' letters. These were not even confirmed as part of the canon of Scripture until the church councils of the late fourth century. This fact is lost on most evangelicals, who seem to think that church history began with the founding of their local church (or, if they're really thoughtful, their denomination), and treat the Bible as if it had magically materialized in one neat package, complete with Scofield's notes, and contemporaneous with the twelve apostles.

Ten Commandments or a Few Pleasant Suggestions?

Modern Evangelicalism's ambivalence (if not outright hostility) toward the bulk of God's word was exponentially increased by its adoption of John Nelson Darby's unique method of interpreting Scripture. Darby set about dividing the Bible into seven "dispensations," only one of which he considered for "these last days." Darby, a British citizen, developed his theories in the mid-nineteenth century after being exposed to a 1830 "end-time vision" from a twenty-one year old Scottish girl by the name of Margaret McDonald. A Christian for less than a year when she apparently gave utterance to her paradigm-shattering prophecy, she already was well known for her exercise of certain "charismatic gifts." Young Margaret's "vision" birthed such terms as the "rapture" and, more specifically, a "pre-tribulation rapture." In this scenario both the world and the majority of the "institutional church" go to hell, but a small remnant of True Believers are "raptured out" before things get too messy. The eschatological implications of this twenty-one year old's ecstatic utterances were fleshed out by Edwin Irving, editor of a British "end times" journal *The Morning Watch*, and later refined by Mr. Darby. In addition to a newly discovered "rapture" (not to be confused with Christ's victorious Second Coming), Darby's novel dispensational scheme taught, amongst other heresies, that the entire Old Testament and much of the New—including the entirety of Christ's teachings on justice, mercy, stewardship and service (as recorded in the Gospels) were written only to the Jews—and thus could be safely glossed over by modern Christians!

Many other dispensationalist teachers went even further, declaring *all* the Gospels as well as a portion of Acts to be off limits as normative for today's Christians.

One of the primary influences on today's Evangelical theology, Lewis Sperry Chafer (the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, the bulwark of American dispensationalism), believed that only the books of John, Acts, and Paul's epistles were specifically addressed to Christians! It is Chafer, mentor to the bulk of fundamentalist pastors for several generations, who unapologetically eviscerated the Bible as an integrated vehicle to expand God's Kingdom, and who single-handedly reduced God's Ten Commandments to the "Ten Suggestions" with his heretical assertion (by Lewis Sperry Chafer) that "these actual written commandments, either of Moses or the kingdom, *are not the rule of the believer's life under grace*, anymore than these systems are the basis for his salvation." In other words, Christians need not concern themselves with obeying or applying the Ten Commandments or the commands of Christ (*i.e.*, kingdom Law).

This shocking, Gnostic-like assault on the whole Gospel of Christ underscores one of the most notable ironies of church history: Our fundamentalist forefathers fought vigorously for the inerrancy of the Bible, then, under the spell of Darby, Scofield and Chafer, went on to invalidate at least two thirds (depending on which dispensationalist you talk with) of the Bible's sixty-six books—serving the same ends as their sworn enemies, the liberal proponents of "higher criticism" who were systematically weakening the Bible's authority. *Now that we've established that it's really the Word of God, we can with impunity decide what is relevant and what is not*—this seemed to be the unspoken principle. Indeed, not much has changed in our own day, as a 1990s Gallup poll commissioned by *Christianity Today* discovered that more Evangelicals believed in the inerrancy of the Bible than actually read their Bibles!

Returning to our historical perspective, while European Protestantism was being subverted by Neo-Platonic pietism, the Puritans were diligently applying a full-orbed Christian world-view to all of life, determined to transform their new wilderness homeland into a new Zion. The triumph of undiluted Christianity reached its zenith with Jonathan Edwards, one of the leaders of the First Great Awakening (which began in the 1720s) and who was universally recognized as the greatest theologian produced in the Western Hemisphere. Yet within the space of two generations, Edward's own minister-grandson, Timothy Dwight, a leader of the Second Great Awakening (circa 1775-1825), would deny some of the foundational tenets his grandfather espoused. Within a few decades the fruit of the "Second Awakening" radically shifted the face of American Christendom. Author Ann Douglass notes:

> The difference between the Protestants of 1800 and their descendants of 1875 and after are greater than their similarities. The everyday Protestant of 1800 subscribed to a rather complicated and rigidly defined body of dogma (*i.e.*, Calvinist theology) and by 1875 American Protestants were much more likely to define their faith in terms of family, morals, civic responsibility, and above all, in terms of the social functions of church going.... [C]hurches over the same period shifted their emphasis from a primary concern with the doctrinal beliefs of their *members to a preoccupation with numbers.*"

John Seel, writing in *The Evangelical Forfeit*, pinpoints the half century spanning from 1800-1850 as the critical juncture when Evangelicals chose to concentrate on "numbers" versus the truth. Seel quotes an observer who lived through and appreciated the magnitude of paradigm shift that was taking place: ". . . no other four decades, or forty decades either, in the history of Christian thought had seen so many and such momentous changes in fundamental religious attitudes."

Phillip Lee concurs that within this relatively short time frame historic Protestantism was abandoned:

> Something drastic, however, happened to Calvinism in North America. By the middle of the nineteenth century it became apparent that a form of Christianity quite different from any known on the Continent or in the British Isles had not only asserted itself but had become the typical religion of North America.

Douglass and Seel provide us with a theological "smoking gun," the vital piece of evidence that will explain a primary motive for watering down the Biblical message. It's all in the "numbers." It appears that the dynamics underlying our current church growth movement did not, after all, originate with Robert Schuller's drive-in-movie-theater church in my home town of Garden Grove, California. Pandering to the lowest common denominator of the religious marketplace, striving to make God acceptable to sinners rather than vice-versa, is not a uniquely modern tactic, although as theologian David Wells observes, its results remain consistent over time: "Evangelicalism has increasingly found that the cost of modern relevance has been its own theological evisceration."

Why Protestantism Declined

To understand why the seemingly vital and orthodox church of the early to mid-1800s (*and* its descendants down through our current era) felt the need to dilute historic Christian doctrine in order to attract (or keep) members, we need to consider the incredibly complex interplay of a number of very profound factors. Most fundamental are the usually unremarked differences between the "First Awakening," which preceded the War of Independence by several generations, and the "Second Awakening," which began in the context of a chaotic revolutionary period (c. 1775) in which traditional authority structures, political *and* ecclesiastical, were overthrown. The "Second Awakening" continued for half a century, long enough to allow Charles Finney to complete the overthrow of Puritan-Calvinist dogma and adapt the radical, man-centered approach of the Second Awakening into a movement that would span

the entirety of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In other words, when we look for clues as to what transpired between 1800 and 1875, the "Second Awakening" and Finney's Revivalism are prime suspects.

The difference between the pre- and post-Revolutionary spiritual awakenings that swept the American nation are as stark as night and day. The former, led by such men like Calvinist Jonathan Edwards, was centered on a Sovereign God and the Holy Spirit, who called forth repentance and a new life. The latter, led by men like Edwards' grandson, who formulated a "practical Calvinism," was amenable to the man-centered and subjectivist *Zeitgeist* that the revolution and Neo-Pietism had co-authored. As Evangelical historian George Marsden notes: "[The Second Awakening] introduced into an essentially Calvinist context a new style of emotional intensity . . . inspired by German and Methodist Pietism." In [subsequent chapters], beginning with the Revolutionary context which birthed the Second Awakening, we will briefly review a few of the most critical elements which have conspired to short-change the historic mission of Christ's church.

For more information about Colonel Doner's upcoming book, *The Late Great Evangelical Church*, please write: Colonel V. Doner, Post Office Box 6677, Auburn, California 95604-6677.

Colonal Doner is currently working on two new books and serves as president of "The Samaritan Group," an international consulting company specializing in organizational, media and fund-raising strategies. He resides in Auburn, California with his wife, Miriam, and their son, Brant.

Urban Nations Update: Van Til Meets Ziggy

By Gerald Wisz

Urban Nations employs a methodology consistent with the apologetic of Cornelius Van Til. In a nutshell, our mindset is: The Bible can defend itself; just don't get in its way. The following report from Urban Nations missionary Gerry Wisz illustrates the soundness and power of this methodology.—Steve M. Schlissel

I teach a small class of ethnic Poles on Saturday mornings in a virtual Polish city in northern Brooklyn. There are three students right now, and one of them attends sporadically. The fellow at whose apartment we hold the class, Zbigniew ("Ziggy"), at first made his place available because he needed enough English to pass a basic oral test required for citizenship. I fully expected him to cancel soon after he obtained it, since of the three students he'd been the most hostile to the Gospel whenever we talked about it after the lessons were done.

But Ziggy wanted to keep meeting, and before long he began to instigate discussion about the Bible. At first he was very belligerent. He claimed it was a collection of mythological documents, the invention of Masons, and even if it contained some truth, it had been so twisted over the centuries that we couldn't be sure what we were reading. I calmly answered each of Ziggy's objections with the external evidences I could remember, but ultimately I told him that *God had to open his eyes for him to understand the truth.*

Over the weeks, Ziggy gradually stopped objecting and started searching a Polish Bible for himself. He would have verses prepared for me when I arrived: he'd lay them out and proceed to tell me what he thought they mean. He was off by a mile in most cases, of course, but it provided a wonderful opportunity to instruct Ziggy, Alexandra, and his roommate, Jarek, from the Scriptures. They're each attentive, but Ziggy especially appears to be moved lately, at times even near breaking down emotionally. At this point, Ziggy, without saying so, *treats the Bible as though it is the word of God.* Its authority isn't questioned anymore. He now wants to know what it means.

I called him one night asking him if he intended to go to church on Easter. Poignantly, he said he wanted to go but didn't know where. The Romish Church wasn't an option, he said. The other option, a Pentecostal fellowship, has people falling over backwards–not for him either, he said. Messiah's Congregation is on the other side of Brooklyn and Ziggy doesn't drive. The G-train ride would likely take a couple of hours one way on a Sunday. And besides, he doesn't understand very much English (and Rev. Schlissel doesn't know enough Polish to polish, despite the fact that his paternal grandparents emigrated from Poland.) I proposed we start a church in Ziggy's apartment. Ziggy is mulling it over.

I'm watching this guy change right before my eyes, and it is exciting! Please pray that we can arrange for an opportunity to begin worship—either at Ziggy's place or somewhere else, and that the other students, like Ziggy, would be warmly opened to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conspiracies

By R. J. Rushdoony

Perhaps throughout all of history there have been large numbers of people dedicated to the faith that history is dominated by secret conspiracies and groups. It is not that I doubt the existence of many such groups but that I question their relevance. Man's basic problem is not a group of insiders but himself and his revolt against God and God's law. Every attempt to localize the problem into some class, race, or other conspiracy confuses the issue. Man is the problem: he is a sinner in revolt against God and God's law. He knows in his heart the consequences of breaking it, but break it he does, and then he blames someone or something else for the results. He sees himself as the victim of a conspiracy, and he blames often some group, class, race, or interest as the source of all his problems.

Now evil groups are real and plentiful enough, but there is more to the story than that. For example, recently a black woman judge was up for nomination to the federal bench. Testimony showed that in one case she had wept after a jury found guilty a defendant who had raped a 10-year-old child, saying "It's not that I think the rape did not occur. But five years is a lot of time," referring to the prison term (*World,* March 28, 1998, p. 9). Under fire, this judge withdrew her name from the nomination process.

Her character was known before her nomination by the President. Was her nomination a conspiracy, or was it a sin? True, behind her nomination were racial motives (she was black), feminist hopes, and more, but basic to it all was a lack of moral standards, a contempt for God's law.

Any revolt against God's law is a sin and a form of rebellion against the king of creation and his kingdom. We trivialize sin and therefore life when we fail to see the true dimension of law-breaking, a war against God.

We also trivialize God when we fail to see that all sin is a form of war against God. Because we do not want God to rule over us, we find every reason to limit the responsibility for the world's fallen estate. If we can limit it to a class, race, or faction, we have placed ourselves in the camp of the saints merely by re-classification. It is an interesting fact that in a war internal mental problems, suicides, and ills decrease because we localize sin and the world's evils in a foreign enemy.

By denying that all men are sinners without exception, save Jesus Christ, and that all men equally need his redemption, we falsify the human problem. We can localize sin in a conspiracy rather than the whole human race. We then wage war against a group rather than seeking to become a new creation in Jesus Christ. We try to end the problem by redefinition.

Random Notes, 83

By R. J. Rushdoony

1. I realize how much times have changed when a well-read 17 year old young man called attention to a phrase in an essay he was reading. It spoke of "Jim Crow laws." "What were they?" he asked. History moves more rapidly than we often recognize.

2. Stanford University is now seen as a place for rich students. It was not always so but was actually created to be a university for poorer students. The change to a high-tuition school for the elite was made by a poor student who became wealthy and important, Herbert Hoover. By a grim irony, Hoover, who founded there a great library, had to himself leave as the place became too leftist and hostile! When I was a boy, many people distrusted Hoover as a turncoat.

3. *The American Spectator,* August, 1998, pp. 28ff., has a long article on "Whose Problem is 2000?" This article is about the computer collapse predicted for A.D. 2000. The author is semi-dismissive of Gary North's work here, but in reality his predictions are as grim and grimmer and give us a perspective that begins with the failure of the federal government to act sensibly.

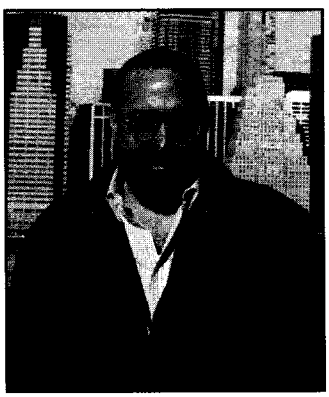
4. Localizing sin in a class, group, or people leads to Phariseeism. It becomes not a problem of Christ vs. fallen humanity, but us against the evil world. Moreover, too often false views of the world's problems have us study evil as an outside or alien problem, us against them. Our Lord warns against the study of "the depths of Satan," or "the deep things of Satan" (*Rev. 2:24*), so the study of conspiracies is off limits for Christians. The law-word of God, the Bible, not Satanic conspiracies, must be our study. We win by God's grace, not by the knowledge of evil. Too many who call themselves Christians can tell you more about conspiracies than about the word of God; this is evil.

We need to have a Biblical perspective on good and evil lest we too become evil ourselves.

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

By Steve M. Schlissel

(Note: this is the third in a series of articles that began with the two-part article, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in the Old Testament.")



I know, I know. "Didn't you just get through telling us that you learned all you really need to know in the *Old* Testament? So how can you now say the same thing about the New?"

I apologize if I did not make my position clear. Perhaps this will: The New Testament *is* the Old Testament—come into its own.

Though I learn all the components of the covenant curriculum in the Old Testament, it's in the New Testament that they reach critical mass, historical realization. The Scriptures of the New Testament are most necessary.

After all, would you be content to take a highly touted mystery book and, before reading it, rip out the last chapter? Could you happily read along knowing the last chapter had been excised? "Wow, this is very interesting," you say to yourself as you read. "So many characters I am getting to know! I am getting to know Detective Moishe Epstein. I am getting to know Schlemiel the butler and Ethel the nosey neighbor, and Dr. I. Yankum the dentist; I am getting to know where they live and what they are like. I know about the players and the plot and the progress—everything I need to know." Except how it ends! You don't know how it ends. Are you satisfied with that? Hardly. Yet that is what it's like—after Messiah has come—to read the Old without the New.

The New Testament *is not to be read as a separate book, but as the final chapter of the book you've been reading.* I can now say to you, "All I really need to know I learned in the New Testament" without contradicting our last letter *because* the New Testament is the last chapter of the Old Testament.

Yes it is. And that's why its very first sentence is a crochet loop, hooking what is to follow with what is past. "This is the genealogy of Jesus Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." A seamless connection. You need Exodus to understand Leviticus and Genesis to understand Exodus. Each builds on the other. It's that way through all the Law, all the Prophets, all the Writings. Last of all comes the New Testament to tell us how everything works out, everything concerning "OT David" (the father of the kings of the Jews) and "OT Abraham" (the father of all the Jews), and all the rest. The NT is going to tell us how it all resolves, how it devolves, how it all comes together in a particular person and work in history. Luke goes back to Adam. John goes back even further. It's all wrapped up in Jesus Christ. The NT brings it all together.

The New Testament never presents itself as a contrary testament. It doesn't compete with the Old, but *completes* the Old. It supplements rather than supplants. It makes the Old obvious, not obviated. That is the way the New Testament itself insists it is to be read. "The (Old Testament) Scriptures," says our Lord, "are they which testify of me" (*Jn. 5:39*).

So, what's new in the New Testament? We can answer that in two words: Nothing and Everything. Why is nothing new? God—he doesn't change. Why is everything new? Gentiles—they're about to.

Nothing New

The New Testament does not reveal a new God, though many modern Christians, alas, seem less than convinced of that. Their errant reading of the New Testament as something other than the last chapter of the Old appears to have led them to regard the OT God as mean, hung up on law, vengeful. The NT God, in contrast, is (in their minds) nice[1] and hung up on grace. But the one Bible reveals just one true God (*Dt. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; Ja. 2:19*) in whom alone justice and mercy meet. He's the one in whom they've always met.

The New Testament does not reveal a new way to God. Since the Fall, the way to God has been, could only be, through the blood of Christ, the God-appointed substitute. The pious mind recoils at even the suggestion of another way, for that would make the death of Christ unnecessary. Such a thought is not only full of blasphemy; it is full of theological chaos.

The New Testament does not reveal a new way to please God. God's law, found throughout the Scriptures—"Old" and "New"—is the perfect disclosure of what pleases him. Even our Lord's "new command" (*Jn. 13:34*) is acknowledged by all reasonable commentators to be, in the words of Matthew Poole, "strictly no new commandment."

Indeed, no commentator is needed to know this, for John himself (*1 Jn. 2:7, 8*) tells us that the "new commandment" is "no new commandment, but an old commandment."

Truth be told, the New Testament does not even reveal a New Covenant. That is, it does not reveal anything concerning the gracious relationship between God and his people on earth that was not already enjoyed in the Old Testament.

What, after all, is *covenantally* new in the New Testament? Salvation by grace through faith? Hardly! When Paul argues that justification is had through faith and not through human merit, whom does he enlist as a witness? Peter? Lydia? Archippus? No. Abraham. See Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3. Paul quotes no words of Jesus in support of this doctrine; he doesn't need to. It was *always* true. What too many regard as the summary teaching of the New Testament exclusively, is introduced there as an "as it is written" teaching (*Rom. 1:17*). Yes, "The just shall live by faith" was only *quoted* by Paul; it was penned by Habakkuk (*2:4*). Nothing new here.

What about forgiveness of sins? Is that new to the New Testament? Don't tell that to David—at least not before you read Psalm 32. Indeed, when Paul sought testimony concerning this, the supreme covenant blessing—the forgiveness of sins—he went directly to David (*Rom. 4:7, 8*; see also David's testimony in *Ps. 51*).

Well, perhaps it was reserved to the New for sinners to have the right to be called friends of God? Oops! Don't tell that to Abraham (*2 Chr. 20:7; Jas. 2:23*)!

But surely in the New Testament men can know God better; they can be more intimate with him than in the Old? Don't let Moses hear you say that (*Ex. 33:11; Nu. 12:6-8*)!

But can't New Testament-era men have a better relationship with God than was possible in the Old? Oh? Who in your circle is closer to God than Enoch? Or Asaph? Does not the most ardent "New Testament devotion" but repeat what was before? Listen to the passion of a saint captivated by Christ: *"I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none on earth I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."*

"Well," you say, "though none of these be new with the New, yet surely this is: In the Old Testament one received the Law externally, but in the New Testament one receives the *power* to obey it." *Oy vey!* Nope. That won't work, either. Who of us obeys the Law better than Abraham (*Gen. 26:5*), or better than the Psalmist (see *Ps. 119*), or better than Zechariah and Elizabeth (*Lk. 1:6*)? No, this suggestion is as untenable as it is today common. For not only do we find myriad examples of OT saints rendering powerful obedience to the Lord in faith (see *Heb. 11*!), we also find NT-era saints falling just as far from perfection as their OT counterparts. If it's "newness" you're looking for, it will not be found along this path.

The newness will not be found in the God of the covenant, nor in the intrinsic benefits of the covenant, nor in the ethics of the covenant, nor even in the experiential "spirituality" of the covenant. *The newness is in the administration of the covenant.* The Westminster Confession is right on target when it says, "There are not two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations"[2] (VII, vi).

The New Covenant in Christ's blood is the *same* covenant enjoyed by the saints in the Old Testament. Now it is *administered* in a different manner, a manner which recognizes, honors and glories in the accomplishments of our Lord Jesus Christ in history, and which accords with God's purposes through Him.

What are those purposes which called for a new administration? In a word: Gentiles.

The Gospel Goes Global

The gospel, since the Fall, was always present in the world, but for many centuries it was, in effect, confined to the Jews. In the New Testament era, however, the gospel goes global. *That's* what's new in God's covenantal dealings. All other changes are viewed properly only when viewed in relation to—one might even say, as subordinate to—this grand change. Changes in administration, changes in worship, changes in the Spirit's work, are to be referred back to this: in the New Testament, the gospel goes global.

This is a dominant theme of the four Gospel accounts; it is the very outline of the Book of Acts. The apostolic letters are self-evidently a handbook instructing Gentiles how to be *true* Jews. (The Book of Hebrews forcefully reminds Jewish believers what a real *Jewish* Jew is.) Then the Book of Revelation reveals the epochal shift in world centers, from the Jewish Jerusalem on earth to the universally accessible New Jerusalem in heaven, a fitting place in part because it is *equidistant* to all the families of the earth. Behind and under all changes in covenant economy is this single idea: the covenant is moving out under Christ to encompass the world.

Gentiles: Godless and Hopeless

The Old Testament Scriptures, as we noted in our last article, testified that the Gentiles would be coming to God through the Messiah. Simeon showed himself "a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of truth" when he, holding the infant Jesus in his arms, called him the "light to lighten the Gentiles." Simeon had read about the calling of Abraham and he knew that from the moment our father was called out to be the fountain of a new people, God intended by this to assuage the thirst of the Gentiles. "All families on earth will be blessed through you" (*Gen. 12:3*), said the Lord. In the very act of covenanting to be the God of the Jews, God had in view his long-term plan of saving the Gentiles.[3]

In general, however, during the period from the call of Abraham to the death of Christ, relatively few Gentile individuals (and no Gentile nations to speak of) entered into the covenant. God, at the birth of the nation, did make provision for those who so desired: "An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land" (*Ex. 12:48*). The way into full covenantal participation was by circumcision.

While no doubt many availed themselves of this privilege (believing Gentiles appear throughout the pages of the OT), the Gentile nations as a whole remained "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (*Eph. 2:12*). To *Israel* belonged the adoption as sons, the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. The Gentiles, "Godless and hopeless," were out; the covenanted Jews were in.

Israel: The First Christian Nation

What many seem not to notice in Ephesians 2 is a powerful implication in Paul's argument. If Paul, in contrasting the Gentiles to the Jews, says that heretofore the Gentiles were *without Christ*, the manifest implication is that the Jews were with Christ, or, better, that *Christ was with the Jews*, even prior to his incarnation. Paul thought of OT Israel as a Christian nation. If there is any doubt of that it ought to disappear on reading 1 Corinthians 10:3, 4: Our forefathers "all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, *and that rock was Christ.*" The Bible, then, clearly teaches that *Christ* was covenantally with Israel (but not with the Gentile nations) in the Old Testament administration.

Prior to his incarnation Jesus was present to Israel in diverse and sundry ways. Throughout their history he was their Savior. He birthed them, freed them, protected them, disciplined them, blessed them, nourished them, refreshed them, taught them, and provided atonement for them. When he—the word who in the beginning was with God and who was God—became flesh and dwelt among us, he came first unto his own. Amazingly (the New Testament records) his own would not receive him! Though he longed to gather Israel's children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wing, they were not willing.

Let's Do the Twist

That is the first element of the astonishing Old Testament plot twist found in the New Testament Scriptures. The story itself, the story of the gracious God redeeming, had begun thousands of years before. The New Testament "twist" is *not* the disclosure of some new way of salvation. It is the story of how the *only* way of salvation had been rejected by the people who should have known it best! It is the story of how the people who had been accepted in the Beloved rejected the Beloved and in turn were no longer accepted.

The point cannot be made too strongly that in rejecting Jesus Christ the Jews were not rejecting, as it were, a *new* covenant, and (again) they certainly were not rejecting a new way of salvation. No, the bitter irony is that they were rejecting the very embodiment of all they *should have* known and practiced. Their rejection of Jesus was the clearest possible proof that they, in heart and fact, rejected Moses and the Prophets.

Think of it this way: Major premise: In the beginning was the Word of God. Minor premise: The Word of God (the *same* Word by which the worlds were created and Israel was redeemed; the same Word written in stone at Sinai, and on other media throughout Israel's history) became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Conclusion: To believe in Jesus Christ entirely is to believe in the Word of God entirely. Conversely, to reject Jesus Christ *is to disbelieve and reject the entire Word of God.*

You might well say, then, that the first element of the plot twist found in the New Testament is the story of the Jews' rejection of the *Old Testament*. The second element, a recurring theme to the end of the Book, is how their rejection became the occasion for the reconciliation of the whole world![4]

The Gospel in the Gospels

Matthew's Gospel, considered by many to be the most Jewish,[5] puts a teaser at the beginning by telling us that the Incarnate Word, born of the Jews and announced by angels as David's Son, was worshiped *first* by Gentiles (*Mt. 2:11*). This is as a token of what would eventually come to pass.

In chapter 10, Matthew recounts Jesus' instruction to his apostles that they "not go among the Gentiles," but "rather to the lost sheep of Israel." Yet, by the time we get to chapter 21, we find Jesus telling the Jewish nation, "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." Their rejection of him is a rejection of Abraham and Moses and David—it is a rejection of God himself. But God will not be left without a people! Christ's work will be victorious and glorious.

After his resurrection, Jesus invokes his universal authority in commanding the apostles to "go and make disciples of all nations." The nations are to be incorporated into the covenant *not by circumcision*, but by baptism in the Triune Name. This will become *the issue* in all that follows in the New Testament (as we shall presently see). Henceforth, Gentiles will fully participate in the covenant without becoming Jews. After the Jewish rejection of Jesus, Gentiles won't need to move to Israel because Israel will "move" to include them, wherever they are! *Wherever* Christ is received, *wherever* he is owned as Lord, *wherever* everything he has commanded is taught and obeyed, *there* is the Kingdom of God.

Mark's Gospel ends with a similar universal vision, Jesus commanding, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes [Jew or Gentile] and is baptized [not circumcised] will be saved."

Luke reiterates the story of the tenants who killed the heir of the vineyard. In response, "the owner of the vineyard will come and kill those tenants *and give the vineyard to others.*" Parables and explicit teachings abound in Luke, wherein our Lord makes it clear that God's covenant will never die, but covenant-breakers will. Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and associates this with the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles."[6]

Of course, at Luke's end we find some of the most explicit teaching confirming the unity of Scripture and its message. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus rebuked the dizzy disciples: "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" For the prophets spoke of Christ. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scripture concerning himself." Then, as with the other disciples, "He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." Not so they could disregard the "Old" in light of the "New," but so that they could understand that what we call the New was *in the Old all along!* Jesus explained the Old Testament Scriptures: "This is what they teach: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead.[7] But that's not all. Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

That's the teaching of the Old Testament. Now it's going to happen universally. The gospel that was enjoyed virtually exclusively by Israel will now go forth, *in suitable form*, from Israel to the world.

(Part 2 will appear in November).

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[1] For a sermon on modern "Nice-ianity," send a donation to Messiah's Ministries and request the sermon, "Your Father's Ears."

[2] The WCF uses "dispensations" in the sense of economies or administrations. The Confession has zero tolerance for "Dispensational*ism*."

[3] In bringing the Gentiles into covenant in the new economy, God has precisely the same long-term intention toward the Jews. That is Paul's crystal-clear argument in Romans 11:11ff.

[4] We must note that included in the New Testament story is clear revelation concerning the restoration and re-ingrafting of that ancient people of God. Joseph's brothers *shall* be reconciled to their Chosen Brother; though he now rules over "Egypt" (the Gentiles), Israel, too, shall behold him in truth (*Zech. 12:10*).

[5] I vote it #2 in Jewishness. It seems to me that John's Gospel enjoys the unique distinction of being simultaneously both the most universal *and* the most Jewish.

[6] It should be noted that Luke 21:24 overthrows hyper-preterism. Hyper-preterism asserts that *all* prophecies in the NT were fulfilled by or in A.D 70. Yet Jesus here says that unbelieving Israelites "will be taken as prisoners to all nations. Jerusalem will [then] be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Since the times of the Gentiles officially (as it were) *began* in 70 with the destruction of the city, the times of the Gentiles could not also have then been fulfilled. Hyper-preterists are forced to say that the times of the Gentiles *ended* in 70, whereas our Lord says that's when they began. And Paul, presumably referring to this same "times of the Gentiles," links its conclusion with the future softening of Israel and their re-ingrafting (*Rom. 11:25-32*).

[7] I regret that it is needful to stress this, but stress it I must: What Jesus says here, Paul calls "the gospel" itself in 1 Corinthians 15. The gospel, it needs to be emphasized over and over, is found in the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews says it was preached in the Old. It is *not* new to the New Testament.

Steve Schlissel has been pastor of Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He serves as the Overseer of Urban Nations (a mission to the world in a single city), and is the Director of Meantime Ministries (an outreach to women who were sexually abused as children). Steve lives with his wife of 24 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

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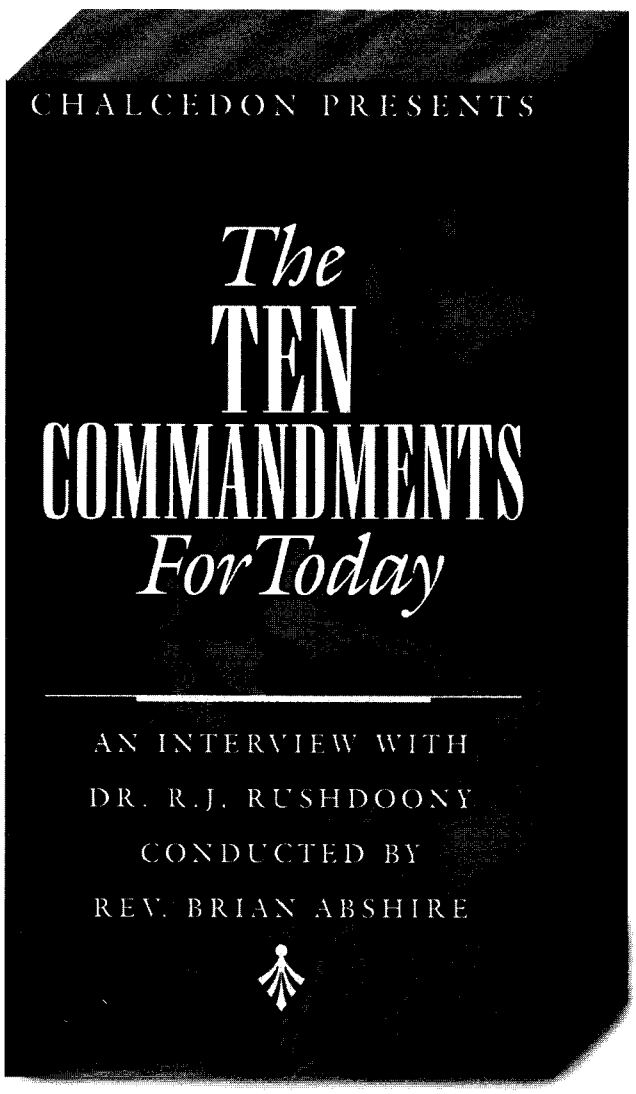

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