


# CHALCEDON *Report*

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## THE NEW GNOSTICISM



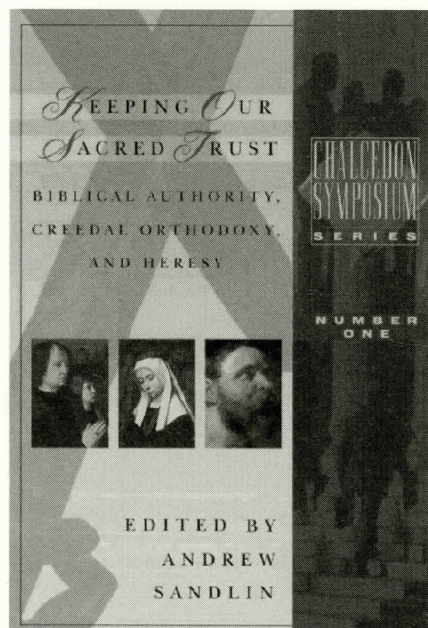
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# CHALCEDON *Report*

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

## THE NEW GNOSTICISM

### Contents:

<b>PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD</b> .....	2
<i>Gnosticism</i> by Rev. R. J. Rushdoony	
<b>EDITORIAL</b> .....	4
<i>The Church Gnostic</i> by Rev. Andrew Sandlin	
<i>Modern Psychology: The Visible Church Versus the Secret Church</i> by E. Michael Jones .....	
	10
<i>The Gnosticism of Modern Evangelicalism</i> by Colonel V. Doner .....	
	14
<i>Immanent Danger</i> by A. B. Dayman .....	
	18

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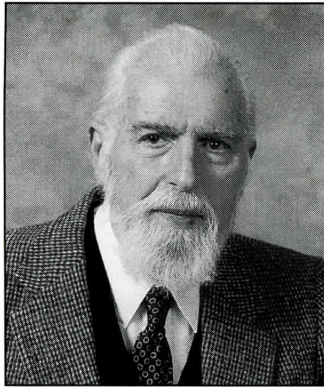


# Gnosticism

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

Chalcedon Position Paper No. 74

(Reprinted from *Roots of Reconstruction*, 1991)



One of the most common of ancient heresies was Gnosticism, which is still very much with us. Gnosticism held that salvation is from the material or physical world, from flesh, and it comes through knowledge. Evil thus was not in man's heart but in some aspect of his world: the flesh, the environment,

for many today in technology, and so on. Gnosticism was a development of Greek thought, plus Far Eastern influences, which infiltrated Jewish and Christian thought. Many post-Christian Jewish writings, both mystical and apocalyptic, were influenced by Gnosticism, as was the later classis of gnostic thought, the Kabala. In Christendom, the gnostic influences continued for centuries and then began to diverge. At first, gnostics like Jacob Boehme, Swedenborg, and William Blake had a Christian veneer, but subsequently gnostic thinkers broke with Christianity. In the realms of art and philosophy, the gnostics have been many. They include J. W. F. Hegel, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Nerval, Rilke, Yeats, Mozart, and others, according to Benjamin Walker in his *Gnosticism, Its History and Influence* (186, 983).

Gnosticism was "antagonistic to the Old Testament and all that it stood for" (Walker, 7). This is a fact of central importance. Over the centuries, virtually all heresies have been hostile to the Old Testament, or have decreed that it is now an ended dispensation, or in one way or another have downgraded it in part or in whole. This has meant antinomianism, a hostility to Biblical law, and hence a vague and sometimes ascetic morality. Downgrading the Old Testament is a way of rewriting the New, because the meaning of the New is destroyed if the Old Testament is set aside in any fashion. As a result, the "New Testament Christianity" of such heretics winds up being no Christianity at all.

Any tampering with the full force of the Bible, either the Old or the New Testaments, in effect is intended to silence God, to diminish His spoken Word. It should not surprise us that the ancient gnostics held that silence best expresses God because He is a hidden deity (*deus absconditus*) who is unknown and unknowable. Moreover,

He is impassible, incapable of emotion, feeling, or passion. (This is, of course, all alien to the God of Scripture.) In fact, many gnostics held that being or existence could not be ascribed to God, who is also beyond good and evil as well as existence. The modern gnostic, Paul Tillich, held that neither being nor non-being could be ascribed to God. To all gnostics, Biblical law was and is anathema, for to hold that God requires righteousness or justice of us is to entangle God in time and history.

Because the gnostics held that God is beyond good and evil, and beyond being, they could not identify God with any one form, *i.e.*, either good or evil, or male or female. Hence, in their writings God had to be inclusive of both male and female, father and mother, while transcending both. The gnostic overtones in feminism are many.

Gnosticism did not hold Adam accountable for the Fall. It was something done to Adam. Modern thought, which looks to heredity, environment, the id and ego, or some like "cause" for human failure and sin is alive with Gnosticism. (For many gnostics, the Fall was into matter. Severus, a disciple of Marcion, held that man is divine from the navel up, and the devil's creature from the navel down.) Man's being for gnostics was tripartite: body, mind, and soul.

Gnosticism has always flourished in secret societies and lodges, most of which are full of gnostic symbols, rites, and doctrines. It has also espoused secret believing, *i.e.*, making no necessary actions in conformity to one's faith. As a result, gnostics in the church saw no harm in compromising with state demands by Rome for registration and certification of all churches. For them, the Faith was purely a spiritual matter, and compromise and apostasy were routine practices with them. None felt any moral hesitation in submitting to controls and avoiding persecution. One gnostic woman "saint," a hermit who had been a prostitute, decided to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; she paid her way by plying her old trade as a prostitute; since her faith was a "spiritual" one, what she did with her body was immaterial. Male gnostics sometimes resorted to castration to humble the flesh. Many gnostics were strongly ascetic; others went into libertinism to show their contempt for the flesh, often committing flagrant adulteries and other lawless acts to show their contempt for the flesh and the sins thereof.

In all these and a variety of other rites and acts, many of which are fanatically ascetic or sexual, the emphasis was on what man does, not what Christ has done. This should not surprise us. Its name comes from *gnosis*, the Greek



word for knowledge. Salvation comes, not from God's grace, but from man's knowing; it is thus man's doing, not God's. Gnosticism was thus a form of humanism within the church. The first statement in the *Humanist Manifesto I*, 1933, reads, "Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created." While gnostics talked about their God (a non-being), and "emanations" from Him, their cosmos was essentially a dualistic, evolving, cyclical realm which was self-existing; a non-being God cannot create. Hence their hatred of the Old Testament. Man in his cosmos of spirit and matter has an untangling job which is primarily intellectual and then by action. This action is non-moral. There is no sin in apostasy, compromise, adultery, or any other act, *provided* man moves with the knowledge that only our spiritual life matters. Moral passion is as wrong as immoral passion for Gnosticism. We must separate ourselves from all such concerns and concentrate on spiritual knowledge.

Gnostic influence spread into a variety of areas. In Hinduism, the *Bhagavad-Gita* shows gnostic thought, as does Mahayana Buddhism, and Sufism in Islam, the Hermetics, the Neoplatonists, Manicheans, Cathars, Paulicians, Messalians, the Athingani non-touching sect, the Bogomils, Albigenians, Troubadours, Goliards, and others. It has never lacked defenders, as witness G. Kruger in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Faiths which exalt elitist man are usually very popular. Of course, theosophy and like beliefs are current manifestations of Gnosticism on one level of society.

As we have seen, the gnostic emphasis is on what man does, not on Christ's work. As a result, Gnosticism is a humanistic religion. But this is not all. The doctrine of God in gnostic religions and philosophies in effect eliminates God. The consequences of this are far-reaching.

Many groups which are not gnostic in intent have still been influenced by Gnosticism, in their view of God's law, the Old Testament, man's part in salvation, and much, much more. All this leads to a loss of God's immediacy. When I read the law of God, I hear God speak: He makes clear that my whole life, my mental and physical existence, is circumscribed and governed by His law. I cannot act nor think except within the boundaries of His law without incurring His personal wrath and judgment. At the same time, I am totally surrounded by His grace, love, and providential care. Because I take God's Word very seriously and literally, I realize that God is closer to me than I am to myself, and He loves me better than I can ever love myself.

In fact, my relationship to myself must be at all times a mediated one: I can live my life only through Christ, my Mediator, and in terms of His enscriptured Word. I can have no direct or one-on-one relationship with anyone, only and always one under God in Christ and through Him. My wife, Dorothy, once told someone very close to her, who was trying to use and exploit that closeness, "You are trying to have a one-on-one relationship with me, but that's impossible. I can only have a relationship that is mediated by Christ and His Word." This explains the

nature of modern art: it seeks a direct and autonomous experience between the artist and the person. This experience is unmediated and unique; it is not a shared experience, nor is there a common meaning in the work of art for one and all. Immediacy is totally humanistic and autonomous.

For example, the Bible tells us that man is made in God's image, in knowledge, righteousness, holiness, and dominion (*Gen. 1:26-27; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24*). There is thus a law against any worship of a man-made image as representation of or a substitute for God (*Ex. 20:4-6*). Only God can set forth His meaning. Modern art rejects this. So John Berger said, in *Ways of Seeing*, "all images are man-made" (9; 1972). The older art still saw the world as God-created not man-made. But all that is now ended, these men hold. "The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place there is a language of images" (33). These images are "valueless, free" (32), meaning free from God and His realm of law. In terms of the canons of modern art in every sphere, a man cannot be an orthodox Christian and still an artist.

Whether in the world of art, the sexual sphere, or any other realm, modern man wants total immediacy. One writer, himself a part of this world of art, satirized the drive towards immediacy by saying that motion pictures, having attained speech ("talkies") would go on someday to develop "feelies."

Humanist immediacy, the gnostic goal, has replaced the Biblical immediacy of God and the mediated relationship of man with all creation, including other people. One result of this change is that men find the Bible's account of God's immediacy embarrassing. The God of Scripture is too close, too blunt, and too ever-present to suit modern man. One reason why the Holy Spirit is so neglected or wrongly viewed by many is because in the Spirit the immediacy of God is inescapable. In Psalm 139:7-13, David says: "Whither shalt I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even here shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee. For Thou has possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb." David praises God for what modern gnostic man rejects.

But men cannot escape the immediacy of God. They will know Him either in grace, or in judgment.

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# The Church Gnostic

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



Gnosticism was one of the earliest heresies of the church. It came in different forms and manifested itself in different strands. However, almost all of its forms were characterized by certain common features.

First, the gnostics held to a *radical dualism*: the material world is inferior and was created by an

inferior being. Thus, the material creation is considered evil. The non-physical world, the heavenly world, is a sphere of God and of divinity. Salvation from the inferior, material world is gained by *knowledge*: the initiated know great spiritual secrets hidden from the common people, and this secures for them the path of escape from an inferior, corporeal, earthly existence: "Thus awakened, the pneumatics [the "spiritual"] escape from their fleshly bodies of death and traverse the planetary spheres of hostile demons and are reunited with the deity."<sup>1</sup>

The two main characteristics of Gnosticism are thus a radical dualism between the material and non-material worlds, and the notion that salvation is by knowledge. Both of these characteristics imply a fervent hostility to history, the sphere of the concrete, material world. Our concern here is not so much with the errors of Gnosticism within the church, but with a broad gnostic approach to the church. To be understood, it must be set in contrast to the Biblical view of the church.

## The Visible Covenant Community

In the Bible, the church is the visible covenant community. It begins in the Old Testament in concrete, historical circumstances. We are probably safe to say, in fact, that it begins in the Garden of Eden. It is clearly manifested with the Abrahamic covenant and Old Testament Israel. Israel's existence was grounded in great divine historic events—the Creation, the calling of Abraham, the Exodus, the great wonders in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, and so forth. Central to Israel's existence was the great redemptive event of the Passover, an annual festival. The divine revelation in terms of which Israel lived was the Torah, the law, communicated from God to Moses, the main points being inscribed on the tables given on Mt. Sinai. Circumcision was a powerfully and painfully physical rite of entrance to the covenant. *The entire religion was anchored in God's*

*great acts in history—actual, concrete, historical circumstances. Religion was imbedded in history.*

## The Centrality of History

One reason the gnostics were so hostile to the Old Testament was precisely because it was such a historically anchored religion. The goal of Gnosticism is *emancipation from history*. The church and religion of the Old Testament are intensely historical, and they cannot be understood apart from the realm of history. But what is true of the covenantal church of the Old Testament is equally true of the covenantal church of the New Testament. The inescapably historical rites and ceremonies of the Old Testament were shadows and types that pointed to their fulfillment in Christ. The church in the New Testament—Universal Judaism, in Steve Schlissel's terms—was anchored in the historical events of the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and session of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity is a profoundly *historical* religion.

Unfortunately, the gnostic spirit was already assaulting the early church, for St. John warns that those who deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh are anti-Christians (2 Jn. 7). This must seem strange to many moderns. They are concerned to defend only the deity of Christ, not His humanity; but both of these Christological facts were at the forefront of people's thinking in the first century. Gnosticism was too much a danger for Christians to neglect a vigilance in defending Christ's humanity.

The issue here is simple—if Jesus were not human, He could not save. The humanity of Christ and His great redemptive work in history were central to the New Testament era of the church. Christians united on the first day of the week, not to share secret, esoteric knowledge by which they could be saved and to work toward an escape to the heavens, but to celebrate their crucified and risen Lord by Whom *alone* they were saved, and by Whom they could act on the present world. They broke bread on almost every occasion, celebrating Christ's death by symbolically consuming His very flesh and blood. Similarly, in baptism they recognized the reality of cleansing from sin, a sign and seal of the benefits of salvation. The early preachers declared the great acts of the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of the Old Testament. For them, the church and Faith were immediate historical realities, in contact with the church of the last two millennia. The gnostics could never be a part of *this* sort of church, because they were hostile to all things physical and historical, to the common Faith of the saints in history; and the church was, if anything, a physical and



historical phenomena, the common experience of the people of God.

### Today's Gnostic View of the Church

The main difference between today's gnostics and those of 2,000 years ago is that, *then*, most of them were outside the church, while today most of them are *inside* the church. Or perhaps, most of them are outside the church and have *redefined* the church in such a way that it virtually becomes meaningless. Part of this problem derives from a misunderstanding and misapplication of the so-called "invisible church."

The early Reformers stressed the notion of the invisible church to disprove the Roman Catholic idea that the true church is identified with the church at Rome. The Reformers countered that God alone knows who is truly regenerate, and that the true church consists of all those dead and alive who are united to Christ. While we would never want to lose this dimension of the church, the notion of an "invisible church" can be quite harmful. As John Murray has noted, there is no clear Biblical warrant for this idea, that is, of the church itself being called "invisible."<sup>2</sup> The church certainly has an invisible dimension; but in the Bible, there is no such thing as the invisible church. If we believe that there is an invisible church, in fact, we may feel comfortable in presuming that no manifestation of the church in history is worthy of our commitment and support. We may think that we are "at one" with all of the "true saints" in the earth, and need not be identified with a visible covenant community, filled as it is with sinful "saints" and even more sinful "sinners." We think that the church is we and all the other truly faithful. "The true church is me and all who agree with me."

The Bible knows nothing of this sort of "church." The Bible knows only of churches where God's people gather together for prayer, hymns, edification, sacraments, charity, preaching, and so forth. The Biblical church is not some sort of Platonic ideal. It is not a perfectionist paradise. No doubt you have heard implicit ecclesiastical perfectionists declare that they could not be a member of any known church because no church is sufficiently "pure." The best answer to this is, "Well if you do find a pure church, please don't join it, because you'll spoil everything." The fact is, those who argue thus for the "pure" church are gnostic to the core. One day the Lord will present to Himself a glorious church without spot and wrinkle (*Eph. 5:27*), but this is a distinctly future phenomenon. The church may be *judicially* pure, but she is by no means *experientially* pure.

This makes for a very *untidy* church. It is a church with problems. Whenever I hear a minister say his church has no problems, I know that either he is a liar or that his church is comatose. Churches that are *alive* have children being baptized into them, and they have proselytes joining. These new members—not to mention the "veterans"—confront battles and struggles with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. They are members of the church not because they are pure, but because they are *impure*;

they need (*all* of us need) the ministry of the church. A main role of the elders and members is to assist the saints in the church, to edify them, that is, build them up in the Faith. Thus there is not and can never be *the* "pure" church, an ecclesiastical utopia. The pristinely pure church is not a church at all.

### The Churches of the Biblical Era

Nor may we look back to the churches in the Bible as the Great Golden Ecclesiastical Age. What of the church at Corinth, with such doctrinal division, personal immaturity, and rampant permission of immorality? What of the church of Laodicea, that was so "lukewarm" that God was prepared to vomit the church out of His mouth? What of the church of Thyatira which permitted a false prophetess within the church "to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication" (*Rev. 2:20*)? And pray tell, what about the churches in Galatia, on the verge of succumbing to the heresy of justification by works? Who can say that these were experientially pure churches? Yet, they were true churches, over which our Lord (and His apostles) lovingly travailed. The idea of the "pure" church is a gnostic abstraction.

In early Christianity, in fact, perhaps the greatest break with the surrounding Hellenic culture was the church itself. It was a concrete, historical phenomenon; it was a visible covenant community with which all true Christians were identified. Later, of course, Rome (as well as some Protestants) perverted the doctrine of the church and turned the church into a divine incarnation, God walking the earth in the form of the church.<sup>3</sup> This led to all sorts of tyrannies. We must not, however, allow this heresy to blind our eyes to the reality of the church as God's visible covenant community. To modern gnostics, though, because the church is not perfect and because it is bound to history, it is not worthy of their attention. As Philip Lee notes, "What the gnostic spirit cannot tolerate is the notion that a historically bound, tangible *organization* like the *church* could in any sense be entrusted with ultimate *truth*."<sup>4</sup> There is often even a sense that any connection with historic Christianity is suspect. A prime example is the Disciples of Christ denomination. Of the origins of this denomination, Nathan Hatch observes:

By their appeal to "Bible government," the Christians [Disciples of Christ] removed the issue of power and authority from any concrete application. They opposed all ecclesiastical names not found in the New Testament, advocated the right of the individual unilaterally to withdraw from church membership, and refused to adhere to creeds as tests of fellowship, to undergo theological examinations, or to offer a confession of faith upon joining a church. In short, no human organization could exist that did not spring from the uncoerced will of the individual.<sup>5</sup>

There is no sense here of the corporate (covenantal) nature of the Faith and church. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes. There is no real obligation



in history—obligation to our brothers and sisters and to the Faith itself. The church becomes an abstraction.

Of course, when we use the term *church* in this context, we do not imply a single sector of the church, like the Roman Catholic, or a single denomination, like the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, or even a single local church to the exclusion of all others. We are talking about visible covenant communities in concrete locations meeting under Christ's authority and derivative authority of the elders. This is the church, and it is a historical reality. No single local church or presbytery or denomination monopolizes the church. The church as the visible covenant community is an actual concrete reality wherever the Word of God is truly preached, the sacraments duly administered, the historic Faith carefully maintained.

### De-Gnosticizing the Church

If we are to degnosticize the church and restore the Biblical conception of the church, we must, first, see the church as an actual, visible covenant community. It is one of the chief places where God's covenant work is actualized. An indispensable aspect of the church is its local, concrete assembly—the visible covenant community under the loving authority of elders. This is a leading agency of God's dealings; it is the place where His covenant is (or should be) honored. This is not a denomination, but a local church. Denominations are not the church, and there is no such identification in the Bible. The church is the visible covenant community, united under Christ's name. This is the church, an actual, visible, local reality.

We must never, of course, see the church as an institutional monopoly over which bureaucrats preside. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus, in speaking of the church's authority, states, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This reminds us that the simplest believers, the smallest number in unity, are granted authority by God. It is true that this text can be misused by ecclesiastical anarchists. But this was not in view in Biblical times. Everybody knew in Biblical times that union with the church was a given. In fact, were you not identified with the church, you were not the recipient of divine revelation, because the church is where that revelation was deposited (*Rom. 3:2; Rev. 1:11*). But within this church, the authority of individual believers was not discounted. There was no democracy, but neither was there an aristocracy or monarchy—except, of course, the monarchy with Christ as Head. Elders were called to rule the flock, but in the spirit of a servant (*Lk. 22:24–26*), and remembering that every Christian is a priest to God (*Rev. 1:6*). Even two or three gathering together may act on God's authority (*Mt. 18:19, 20*). Members are called to submit to elders (*Heb. 13:7, 17*), but elders are called to recognize the regal authority and calling of the humblest saints in the church.

### Covenanting With the Church

Second, we must bind ourselves to this community. We

must not withdraw from the church (*Heb. 10:25–26*), assuming that we are safely tucked into the Platonic, "invisible church." We must covenant with this community. If there is no sound *ekklesia* in a geographical area, one of the first things Christians should do is start one. Every Christian should be a part of the visible covenant community, and this means uniting with (or instituting) a local church.

### The Imperfections of the Church

Third, we must accept the visible covenant community with all of its weaknesses and imperfections. The church is comprised of people, of sinners (whether saved or lost) who are continually in need of the grace of God. If we feel that we are too good to unite with such a community, what we are really saying is that we are good for nothing but to go to heaven—and perhaps not even heaven! In other words, the imperfections of the church are no excuse for bypassing the church.

### The Sacraments

Fourth, we must revive a stress on the sacraments as signs and seals of the covenant of grace. Mark this down: a church that dismisses or devalues the sacraments is a church on the way to Gnosticism. The sacraments are *visible* signs and seals of God's salvific work, and they are not less spiritual because they are visible. They are essential to the church.

### Meeting Actual Needs

Fifth, elders must recognize that church members have real needs that must be met—these are not only theological and intellectual needs, nor merely emotional needs, but physical needs as well. The diaconate is an essential feature of the church, and any church that does not care for the poor, weak, and oppressed within its number is treading the gnostic path. The Faith is for all of life, and the church is for all of life.

### Conclusion

Only when we see the church as an objective historical reality and live in terms of that reality can we prevent the dangerous gnostic heresy that threatens the true church.

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<sup>1</sup> J. D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, 1974, 1978), 417.

<sup>2</sup> John Murray, "The Church: Its Definition in Terms of 'Visible' and 'Invisible' Invalid," *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh, 1976), 1:234.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Dawson, *The Formation of Christendom* (New York, 1967), 287.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York, 1987), 206.

<sup>5</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People," in ed., D. G. Hart, *Reckoning With the Past* (Grand Rapids, 1995), 167.

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*Rev. Andrew Sandlin is executive director of Chalcedon and editor-in-chief of the Chalcedon Report and The Journal of Christian Reconstruction.*



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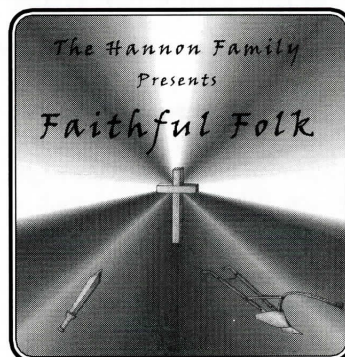
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## Chalcedon Vision Statement

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 practices. 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 civilizations.

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 the 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' 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, schools, 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 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.



# What Does the Bible Say About Gun Control?

By Larry Pratt

The underlying argument for gun control seems to be that the availability of firearms causes crime. By extension, the availability of any weapon would also have to be viewed as a cause of crime. What does the Bible say about such a notion?

## Weapons Control in the Old Testament

We read about the first murder in human history in the fourth chapter of Genesis.

Cain decided to kill his brother instead of getting right with God. We're not told if Cain used a rock or a club or any other instrument, because that is not what was important. The evil in Cain's heart was the cause of the murder, not the availability of the murder weapon.

God's response was not to ban rocks or anything else, but to banish the murderer. Later, in Genesis 9, God instituted capital punishment with no mention of banning weapons.

## Weapons Control in the New Testament

Many Christians may try to argue that God's view on this subject changed in the New Testament. These people often point to Jesus' rebuke of Peter for cutting off the ear of a soldier.

While Jesus did tell Peter to put his sword in its place, he clearly did not say to get rid of it forever.

That would have contradicted what Jesus had said only hours before, when He told His disciples "... but now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a sack;

and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Luke 22:36).

## Weapons Control as a curse

Examples abound in the Bible of the people of God suffering under God's curse because of their disobedience and unfaithfulness.

In one the apostasies of Israel recorded in the book Judges, we read that "They chose new gods; then there was war in the gates; not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel" (Judges 5:8).

Under king Saul, Israel was oppressed by the Philistines and put into bondage. The oppression was so great that "Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout the all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, 'Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears.' ... So it came about on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul..."

Today, the same goals of the Philistines are being carried out by oppressors who would ban firearm manufacturers from the land. Yesterday's sword is today's handgun, rifle, or shotgun. The sword control of the Philistines is today's gun control of governments that do not trust the people with guns.

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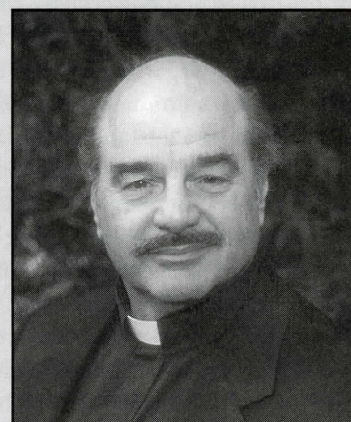
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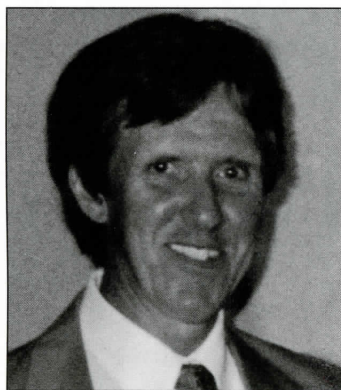
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# Modern Psychology: The Visible Church Versus the Secret Church

By E. Michael Jones

## Rationalized Immunity



In August of 1909, Sigmund Freud embarked upon a fateful journey. He along with his psychoanalytic heir apparent, Carl Gustav Jung, had been invited by G. Stanley Hall, the father of American psychology, to give a series of lectures at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Hall was

a man who thought nature was more important than nurture, and, as a result, ended up being the occasion for Margaret Mead's famous book to the contrary, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. The voyage had an inauspicious beginning. Jung got drunk and started talking in a confused way about the prehistoric bog corpses which he mixed up with the mummies in the lead cellars of Bremen, the city from which they were departing by ship to America. Freud felt that the talk of mummies was a veiled attack on fathers in general and him and his authority in particular and in the middle of their conversation Freud "suddenly fainted."

Things only got worse. Freud and Jung agreed to analyze each other's dreams during the voyage; but when Jung confronted Freud about a dream involving his wife and sister-in-law, Freud shut down the analysis, claiming that he could go no further. "I cannot risk my authority," is how Freud framed the issue. Which is exactly how Jung saw it as well. Freud's authority involved keeping something secret, and that secret involved his relationship with his sister-in-law, Minna Bernays. If the true nature of that relationship came out, Freud would lose his authority—presumably over Jung, of course—but one gets the impression that the issue is bigger than that and that Freud was worried about losing it over the rest of his followers and over his nascent following throughout the world as well.

Jung, of course, knew something that Freud didn't know. On his first trip to Vienna to meet Freud in person, he claimed that Minna Bernays confided that she had been having an affair with Freud. Biographers like Peter Gay found the claim implausible, but the very fact that Jung was pressing the issue on the sea voyage to America argues in favor of believing that it happened. Jung, of

course, brought his own sexual baggage to the meeting. He had been having an affair with a patient by the name of Sabina Spielrein and had gone to Freud for what amounted to absolution, an act which confers power on the absolver. If Freud were involved in the same sort of illicit sexual activity as Jung, the act of absolution might seem more than a little bit hypocritical, and this probably fueled Jung's resentment toward his mentor and his determination to find out whether, in fact, Freud was involved in the same sort of thing. A candid admission of guilt might have cleared the air, but it might also have taken the wind out the sails of the psychoanalytical movement. Whether it would or wouldn't have is beside the point now. Freud clearly felt that he could not take the chance, that the risk was too great, that Jung was onto something, and that, if he admitted the affair, Jung and not he would have had the upper hand in the relationship.

The relationship collapsed anyway. Jung later said that Freud lost his authority by not confessing. "Freud," he said, "was placing personal authority above truth." The truth, in other words, were it known, would destroy whatever authority Freud had. The simplest explanation of Freud's reticence, the one I pursued in my book, *Degenerate Moderns*, is what Freud called the Oedipus complex, the fact that "all men" desire sexual relations with their mothers or sisters, and it is really nothing but the projection of Freud's guilt away from his affair with Minna. Instead of admitting that he had done something wrong, Freud engaged in a massive instance of rationalization. He subordinated the truth to his desires. If his followers were to uncover the details of his transgression, they would hold the key which explained his theory in terms of his behavior. As a result, the theory would lose its power to explain the psyche and Freud would lose his authority along with his failed theory.

## Lucrative Psychoanalytical Absolution

All of that is true as far as it goes, but as much as it explains the personal sources of the Oedipus complex, it barely begins to explain the political ramifications of that idea. Both Freud and Jung could read the signs of the times. Both were aware that they had discovered in psychotherapy not so much a medicine for healing people as much as a tool for manipulating them. Psychotherapy was a way of managing guilt, as Jung understood first hand; and both Freud and Jung knew that wealthy patients were, in the name of psychotherapy, willing to pay large sums of money to be absolved of guilt while, at



the same time, allowed to hold onto the vices which caused the guilt in the first place. Both Freud and Jung understood how powerful and how profitable this new discovery could be, and the break between them is best understood in this light. It wasn't over ideas, but over control of a movement, over the control of rich patients and their financial resources, that Jung broke with Freud. Jung knew where the source of Freud's power lay, and he wanted that source in his own right and not as somebody's Gentile heir apparent.

About the same time that Freud first received his invitation to speak at Clark University, Jung received a visit from a wealthy American patient by the name of Medill McCormick, scion of the wealthy Chicago family who owned *The Chicago Tribune* and International Harvester.

"Fate," Jung wrote, "which evidently loves crazy games, had just at this time deposited on my doorstep a well-known American (friend of Roosevelt and Taft, proprietor of several big newspapers, etc.) as a patient. Naturally he has the same conflicts I have just overcome, so I could be of great help to him, which is gratifying in more respects than one. It was like balm on my aching wound. This case has interested me so passionately in the last fortnight that I have forgotten my other duties" (Noll, 91).

McCormick was suffering from alcoholism and depression, and Jung, bolstered by Freud's absolution of his affair with Sabina Spielrein, decided that he had the cure. Jung prescribed polygamy. "He rather recommended," McCormick wrote later, "a little flirting and told me to bear in mind that it might be advisable for me to have mistresses—that I was a very dangerous and savage man, that I must not forget my heredity and my infantile influences and lose my soul—if women would save it" (Noll, 91). Noll explains Jung's infatuation with polygamy as part self-exculpation of his own behavior, but also as stemming from his increasing interest in "Aryan" mysticism, an infatuation which grew in direct proportion to his alienation from the Jew Freud and what he perceived as the "Jewish" psychoanalysis of the Freudian school.

The Aryan/Jewish conflict, much like the mystical/atheist polarity of an earlier age, was at root a pretext for a struggle which was over control of a new psychic technology and the financial benefits that went with that control. Freud had discovered a way of controlling people by alternately manipulating guilt and the passion that caused the guilt; and Jung, after experiencing first of all how powerful it was first hand, and then discovering in Freud's biography the source of that power, wanted to control it himself. He first treated Medill McCormick in Zurich in late 1908, then again in March of 1909, and then again, this time in America, in September of 1909 on the same trip with Freud to Clark University.

## The Predatory Nature of Psychoanalysis

Jung had just made contact with one of the wealthiest

families in America and was rubbing his hands in anticipation of the rewards which might accrue from that contact. After the break with Freud, Jung was beating the master at his own game. Freud, as Swales documents, was obsessed with money throughout his career. In a letter to Fliess in 1899, he wrote, "My mood also depends very much on my earnings. Money is laughing gas for me." Freud's best explanation of his relationship to his patients came in the form of a cartoon which appeared in the *Fliegende Blaetter*, a popular humor magazine of the time, in which a lion looks at his watch and mutters, "Twelve o'clock and no Negroes." Freud was the lion and in his letters to Fliess thereafter he referred to his patients as "Negroes," which is to say, something to eat. Freud had already established the predatory nature of psychoanalysis in his relationship with Jung. Patients were to be people either of wealth or influence. The latter instance applied to Jung, the Aryan heir apparent who would ensure that psychoanalysis would become something other than a simply Jewish affair.

Jung learned his lesson well—too well, in fact—and the struggle between the two men was the struggle for who would control this emerging technology of psychic control. Jung could apply the exculpation Freud had wrought on him to the wealthy young American and bring this man under his control by simultaneously manipulating his vices and absolving him of the guilt which flowed from those actions, just as Freud had done with him. The conflict may have been inevitable, but the immediate context is also relevant. The rise of Jung's quarrel with Freud corresponded with Jung's introduction to wealthy American patients. The struggle wasn't primarily over ideas but rather over influence. *Who would get to eat the "Negroes"?* By the time the break between Freud and Jung was complete in 1913, it looked as if Jung were winning. After making contact with the McCormicks, one of the wealthiest families in America, Jung made contact with the Rockefellers, the wealthiest family in America, when Edith Rockefeller McCormick, Medill's sister-in-law, showed up in Zurich for treatment for depression. When word got out that Jung had received a grant in 1916 amounting to \$2 million in current funds, Freud was both envious and bitter. The Aryans were triumphing over the Jews once again.

In order to soften the blow that Jung's defection inflicted on the psychoanalytic movement, the "Jewish" faction of the psychoanalytic movement came up with the idea of forming a secret society around Freud. Its purpose was to maintain orthodoxy, to ensure that the movement would continue after Freud was gone and, in Ernest Jones' words, "to monitor Jung." Jung was no stranger to secret societies himself. His grandfather was both a Freemason and an Illuminatus, which is to say a member of the society founded by Adam Weishaupt in 1776 to take over the German Masonic lodges. Goethe was also an Illuminatus, although he may have been a double agent whose main reason for being a member was to keep the



Prince of Weimar informed of its activities. Weishaupt was a student of the Jesuits who ended up hating them. His ambivalence toward the Society of Jesus can be seen in the organization he formed, which took things like examination of conscience and sacramental confession and ripped them out of the Christian matrix which gave them meaning and kept them under control. The Illuminist adept would confess his sins to his controller, but instead of being told to go and sin no more, the Illuminist controllers would use this information as a way of controlling those underneath them in the hierarchy of that secret organization. There was no seal of the confessional among the Illuminati and Jung, who would tell his followers that he was alternately Goethe's illegitimate heir or his reincarnation, eventually turned Illuminism into psychoanalysis, which was a "scientific" version of what got practiced in the secret society of the Illuminati. Jung would find out his patients' weaknesses and then give them permission to indulge in their vices as way of controlling them for his financial benefit.

### **Gnosticism: The Heart of Illuminism**

Jung, of course, practiced what he preached. He spent his life indulging in the same sexual passions he encouraged in his "patients." And if Illuminism was the secret system of control at the heart of psychoanalysis, Gnosticism was the belief system at the heart of Illuminism. The same spark, known as the soul, which had been previously imprisoned in matter, was now the self imprisoned by the sexual prohibitions of a culture which had been created by "hyloi," the wooden bourgeoisie types who knew nothing of the inner life of the "pneumatikoi," those in possession of the spirit.

Five years after Jung treated Medill McCormick, his sister-in-law, Edith Rockefeller McCormick, showed up in Zurich to be treated for a depression stemming from the death of her daughter Editha. Over the course of the next 10 years, Jung corrupted Edith with a steady diet of astrology and spiritualism, turning her into an agoraphobic woman who never left her hotel room. All of this was done in the name of, first, therapy and then training, after Jung convinced Edith to become a therapist in the Jungian mold. Eventually her withdrawal from the world brought about her divorce from her husband and her death in poverty in a hotel in Chicago, but not before Jung exploited his doctor/patient relationship with her by persuading her to give Jung's organization the equivalent of \$2 million.

With the break with Jung and the formation of his secret society, Freud not only brought about a permanent schism at the heart of the psychoanalytic movement, he also, in terms of financial influence, seemed to come out on the losing side, for psychiatry was now split between Aryan and Jewish practitioners; and all of the wealthy patients, especially those coming from America, were "Aryans," specifically wealthy Protestants whose grasp on Christian principle was becoming looser year by year. By granting Medill McCormick permission to gratify his

passions, Jung gained a foothold with one of the wealthiest families in America. He was now parlaying that into contact with the wealthiest family in America.

### **The "Invisible" Church**

Eventually both McCormick and his soon-to-be ex-wife Edith would be ensnared by Jung's re-vitalization of Gnosticism, which he portrayed as the true religion of the Aryans. Soon McCormick was talking about Jung's psychoanalytic club in Zurich as the "Visible Church," a reference to Arthur Edward Waite's 1909 book *The Hidden Church of the Holy Grail*. Waite, according to Noll, claims that there has been an underground mystical tradition, pre-Christian in origin, that has emerged in a disguised form in Hellenistic mystery cults, Gnosticism, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, alchemy, and particularly in the many legends of the Holy Grail. He refers to formal religious doctrines and institutions throughout history as the "Visible Church," which shows its face to the world. The Visible Church, however, is a mask for what Waite calls the "Hidden Church of Sacramental Mystery" or, more commonly, "The Secret Church." In his last chapter, Waite revealed the existence of this underground spiritual tradition throughout history. The Secret Church "is behind the Visible Church," and has always been kept alive by a chosen few. Its existence has been hidden by rumors and "many literatures," which are "veils" (Noll, *Aryan Christ*, 230).

The notion of two churches may explain the affinity which the religious have with Jung's thought. In a sexually licentious age, the religious who are troubled by their sexual desires and their incompatibility with the religious state seemed to find in Jung's resurrection of gnostic religion a way to have their cake and eat it too. In *Hollywood Priest*, his memoir of his years as a TV producer and Paulist Priest, Rev. Ellwood "Bud" Kieser describes meeting a nun he identifies only as "Genevieve" at the Immaculate Heart Nuns' retreat house in Santa Barbara, California in 1964. During the fall of 1965, Kieser was in Rome covering the end of the Vatican Council. When he returned at the end of the year, he realized that he had fallen deeply in love with Sister "Genevieve," who announced when they met again at the retreat house that she was going to begin psychotherapy. Kieser was taken aback by the announcement, but claims that he "admired her courage in facing the situation and trying to do something about it." Kieser never gets around to explaining just what "the situation" was or why it required treatment in 1966, but a large part of the reason was the encounter groups the nuns were involved in. According to the tenets of encounter psychology, you had to be crazy to repress your libido. Since all nuns repressed their libidos, they were all *ipso facto* crazy and therefore candidates for therapy, although only the bravest had the guts to descend into their unconscious to prove the point.

Not surprisingly, Genevieve found therapy painful. As a result, she turned to Father Kieser for guidance, wondering if she should continue because she was not sure she could trust her therapist. Kieser, who had read a



book the therapist had written, assured her that she could trust Harry, the pseudonym Kieser applied to the therapist. It was advice that Kieser would live to regret. To begin with, the prime result of Genevieve's therapy was convincing her that her decision to enter the convent had been based on "repression rather than the sublimation of her sexual drives." And now, in the midst of the sexual revolution of the 60s, when Genevieve was in her late thirties, "those mechanisms of repression seemed to be coming apart" (160).

Just why those mechanisms were "coming apart" becomes apparent when Kieser describes the type of therapy to which Sister Genevieve was being subjected:

Very early in her therapy, her therapist—let's call him Harry—had suggested a degree of sex play to help her with her repressions. Almost all therapists would today consider this a serious breach of professional ethics. But in the 1960s such procedures were not uncommon. She went along. When she told me, I was furious. She decided to stop. But she was vulnerable. So was he. Once started this kind of thing is difficult to keep in check. It became a problem that plagued her therapy.

By the summer of 1967, the problem became so serious that Harry arranged another therapist for "Genevieve." But by the fall, they started seeing each other outside therapy, and the sexual relationship only intensified, something which "Genevieve" shared with Father Kieser, who was now consumed with both "pure masculine jealousy" and justifiable indignation at a flagrant abuse of the doctor-patient relationship.

Not surprisingly, this sort of therapy combined with encounter groups organized by humanist or third-force psychologist Carl Rogers led, within a matter of three years, to the complete destruction of the IHN order of nuns. In retrospect, it is clear that they were subjected to an alien ideology masquerading as therapy; but the reason that ideology proved so seductive is that it derived from two different forms of Illuminism, one derived from Carl Jung and the other from Carl Rogers and the tradition of religious pietism. Both were forms of gnostic religion, as is pietism, which saw at its heart certain "peak experiences" upon which all other religious sentiment was based. Those peak experiences signified membership in the elect circles of the "pneumatikoi," a membership which allowed them to discard everything in the Christian Faith which did not correspond to their experiences. At around the same time that the IHN order fell apart, Harry the therapist and Genevieve the ex-nun got married, after Harry's divorce came through. At around the same time, after his stay at Esalen and Rogers' Center for the Person in La Jolla, Father Kieser decided to undergo therapy at the hands of a therapist whose "general orientation was existential and Jungian, both of which I found simpatico" (187). Father Kieser's therapist made no attempt to interpret what "I was seeing through the prism of his own set of dogmatic categories (as far as

I know he had none). Nor did he ever suggest a course of action beyond the process of therapy itself. His job was to help me to discover the truth. It was my job, with the freedom the newly discovered truth gave me, to make the decisions" (189).

Like Father Kieser, the overwhelming majority of IHN nuns never knew what hit them. They lost a cultural war that they didn't even know was being waged against them. In adopting the Illuminist techniques of Gnosticism, packaged as psychotherapy, they adopted the religion of Gnosticism as well, and in adopting the sexual practices of Gnosticism, they were led step by unwitting step out of the Visible Church and into the secret church they never knew existed.

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*E. Michael Jones is the editor of Culture Wars Magazine and the author of ten books, including most recently Libido Dominandi: Sexual Liberation and Political Control (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1999).*

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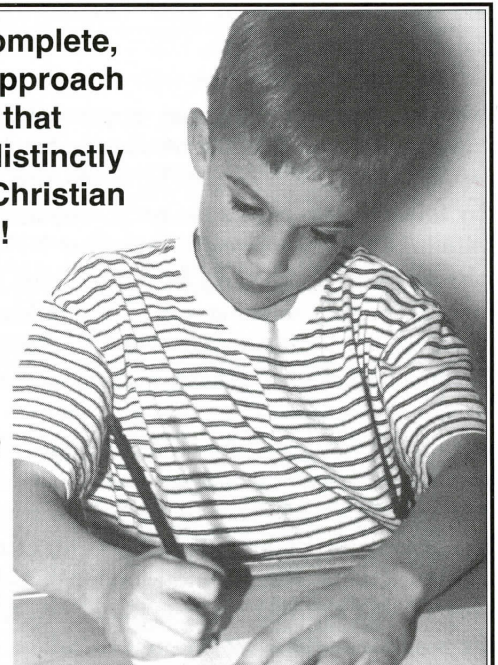
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# The Gnosticism of Modern Evangelicalism

By Colonel V. Doner

## The Historic Roots of the Gnostic Virus



Gnosticism was birthed as a pseudo-Christian heresy in the mid-first century by Simon Magus, a Samaritan sorcerer ("magus" means magician) of astonishing ability (*Ac. 8:4-24*). Appropriately, the church fathers referred to him as the progenitor of all heresies. This turned out to be an amazingly

accurate prophecy. Accompanied by his consort Helen and thirty or so disciples, he captivated crowds with special revelations, esoteric insight, and "signs and wonders." So impressive was his reputation as a miracle worker and teacher that the Romans erected a statue in his honor, dedicating it: "To Simon, the Holy God." Indeed, most of his fellow countrymen regarded him as "their first God and worshipped him as such" (Arland Hultgren, *The Earliest Christian Heretics*, 17).

The early church fathers were strongly impressed that demonic empowerment was responsible for Simon's unusual abilities. No doubt due to his blasphemous prediction that, like Christ, he would rise on the third day following his burial, the early church saw Magus as fulfilling Christ's warning in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves" and in Matthew 24:24, "there shall arise many *false Christs* and false prophets." Eventually, Simon's followers became known as gnostics because of the "special knowledge" (*gnosis* in Greek) that was supposedly imparted to them through Christ and His apostles (of whom Simon, of course, claimed to be the foremost). Acts 8:13 records his "conversion experience" and baptism by Philip (about A. D. 40) after which "he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" (*Ac. 8:13*). Blazing the trail for millions of gnostics to follow through the ages, after making a "decision for Christ" and cloaking himself in the robe of brotherhood, this wolf in sheep's clothing immediately began the process of syncretizing the teaching of Greek mystics and pagan philosophers (mostly Plato) with his unique revelations. He attempted to blend this mixture with the teachings of the apostles, whom he doggedly pursued from one village to another as darkness follows light. Unlike today's evangelical

gnostics, he was soundly condemned by the true church (*Ac. 8:18-23*):

The ancient defenders of the Christian faith regarded [Simon Magus] as the heresiarch par excellence, the incarnation of evil, who in his own way succeeded in spreading the discord of heresy....

Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, 147

Why was Simon considered *the* primary enemy of the Faith, indeed, as the very incarnation of evil, more even than Caesar? Why were the apostles so vehement in their condemnation of his many followers who so earnestly claimed to be fellow "Christians" (*1 Tim. 1:3-4, 4:1-7, 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Jude 1:4-19; 2 Pet. 2; 1 Jn. 1:3-10, 2:4-11, 2:18-29, 3:7-10; 4:1-6, 5:1-12; Rom. 1:21ff.; 2 Jn. 7-11; 1 Cor. 14:37*)? Incidentally, in addition to these Scriptures, a number of Bible scholars suspect that the "servants of Satan" for whom the apostles reserved their fiercest condemnation were not just "Judiazers," but *gnostic* Judiazers. This theory fits well with Paul's clear attack on the loose morality found in Corinth which was clearly not a trait of a legalistic Jewish party, but which was easily attributable to the gnostics, notorious for flip-flopping between rigorous asceticism and outrageous libertinism.

A primary reason the apostles and, later, the church fathers singled out gnostics as "public enemy number one" (above even their pagan persecutors) is precisely because gnostics considered themselves, and represented themselves to be, brothers in Christ (albeit with abilities of superior revelation and a "higher knowledge"). The early church, struggling to establish its doctrinal boundaries, regarded gnostics as more dangerous than their Roman persecutors who targeted the physical body, but left the church's body of orthodoxy alone. In contrast, heretics professed beliefs that attempted to render crucial doctrines impotent. The New Testament authors (especially Peter, Timothy, Paul, and Phillip) fought gnostics as though they were heretics and schismatics and recognized their considerable abilities to detract from the gospel and redirect its focus (to say nothing of destroying the unity of the church):

The most dangerous gnostics were those who had, intellectually, thought their way quite inside Christianity, and then produced a variation which wrecked the system.... Paul fought hard against gnosticism, recognizing that it might cannibalize Christianity and destroy it.

Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 7



Paul realized that any restatement of key doctrines by gnostics would eventually direct the faithful away from *the outward, world-redeeming, servant-steward mission* of the church—a mission they held as a sacred trust—and direct them inward toward themselves—self-knowledge (*gnosis*) and spiritual perfection, just like many modern pietists, who stress personal religious experience over the objective realities of the Christian Faith.

Validating the apostles' concern, the gnostics were (and their modern heirs are no less artful) masters at restating or recontextualizing the gospel. As *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* notes: "Gnostics were perceived as *leading Christians astray* by manipulation of words and the twisting of Scriptural meanings" (444). Historian Richard Tarnas observes that gnostics were "especially abhorrent to church authorities, because they controverted matters so close to the heart of Christianity" and he cites Gnosticism's "indifference to the world" (another pietist distinctive) as a major concern to the early guardians of Christ's world-changing message (*Passion of the Western Mind*, 183). After all, if Christ had not commissioned the church with power and authority to disciple (and thus redeem nations—Matthew 28), *what was Christianity really all about? How would it be differentiated from Gnosticism's dualistic preoccupation with an individualized salvation—which was disconnected from the rest of God's creation? A salvation committed to a strictly inward, privatistic piety driven by spiritual perfectionism, directed by a subjective "inner light" and culminating in an escape from the world they so disdained?* The NIV Topical Study Bible, in commenting on the "preponderance of many antichrists" in 1 John 2:18, informs us that the term antichrist "referred to any person who opposes Christ or who dispossess Christ" (1405). In other words, to offer a "reversal" of Christ's gospel or to substitute another (dispossessing) message for Christ's is to be antichrist. We need to keep this distinction in mind as we examine how this theme unfolds in our present-day churches and how, once again, the ancient enemy has twisted Scripture to redefine the historic Christian mission. As Philip Lee poignantly observes, "Suddenly, we find ourselves not with a slightly altered Gospel but with an anti-Gospel" (Phillip Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics*, 28).

## Gnostic Dualism

Historians agree that *the cardinal gnostic doctrine was its unmitigated dualism* which it adapted from the Platonic schools and attempted to syncretize with Christ's teaching. Contrary to the early church's teaching that God was committed to redeeming all His creation (*cosmos*); that all things God created were good (*Gen. 1:31*); that man's job was to steward God's creation, make it productive and enjoy its fruits (*Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-3*), and to disciple (redeem) the nations (*Mt. 28:18-20*), dualism saw our present world as beyond redemption (*a la* premillennial dispensationalism) and, furthermore, viewed

the physical or "non-spiritual" as essentially evil and, therefore, not worth redeeming. In its campaign to distort the early church's preaching, Gnosticism denied both the goodness of the original creation and the efficacy of Christ's sacrificial redemption, teaching that evil, not Christ, was controlling the physical world (Satan is not only alive, but in control of planet earth!). It is here that the gnostics executed their most egregious maneuver, *taking legitimate "Christian dualism"—a good, all-powerful King redeeming His territory from a defeated and inferior evil prince—and reversing it so that the King has lost the battle for His creation and must now fall back on an emergency evacuation of His defeated forces (the Rapture).*

*Gnostic dualism is a reverse Christianity; it is a defeatist, escapist, "bad news" gospel that the early church and apostles consistently referred to as antichrist.* This dualistic worldview that God's physical creation (the world and all it contains) is evil, worthy only of destruction, and that only "spiritual" pursuits are of true value, has influenced vast sectors of nineteenth- and twentieth-century evangelicalism. To cite just one sobering example, it's instructive to note the gnostic approach to interpreting the Old Testament. Magus devoted himself to exegeting the Old Testament to prove that its God, full of wrath, violence, and vengeance could not possibly be the God of love whom Christ taught about. His denigration of both the Old Testament and its God is frighteningly similar to the way many evangelicals disregard or downgrade (or, in the case of dispensationalists, outright dismiss) the Old Testament (and its harsh God with His unreasonable laws) in favor of the New Testament (and even then, with an unbalanced hermeneutic, selectively focusing on "people-friendly" attributes of love and grace). Whatever the rationale, the unstated implication is that the Trinity of the Old Testament has somehow changed their *modus operandi*, if not their very nature, rendering the Old Testament little more than an anachronistic curiosity. (Go to the head of Simon's class.)

## Further Gnostic Distinctives

A number of gnostic distinctives increasingly form the basis for contemporary evangelicalism. These gnostic guideposts include:

- *Subjectivism and Mysticism:* The deification of one's own subjective experience as the final arbiter of spiritual truth, a modern evangelical "sacrament" which has contributed to the self-idolization and "spiritual" narcissism so rampant in our evangelical world.
- *Antinomian Individualism:* A revulsion for church authority, doctrines, and creeds and a consequent enshrinement of the "inner light" leading to hyper-individualism. Its tendency toward theological elitism is perfectly mirrored in today's "anything goes," smorgasbord style of Christianity. Take what you like, ignore church doctrine and authority, simply move on



to another "community" when your church fails to please you (or, heaven forbid, attempts to discipline you) and be sure to follow your "inner light" (most commonly referred to today as "the leading of the Spirit"). This intensely individualistic and subjective religious culture has no room for God's objective law-word, systematic theology, or the wisdom and boundaries developed by two millennia of Christian martyrdom, prayer, insight, and exegesis, as expressed in the church's historic creeds.

Gnosticism has survived to our present day by its ability to adapt, adopt, merge, or permeate and to employ whatever tack is most useful at a particular juncture. Due to its uncanny ability to "shape shift" and rapidly change tack in order to adjust itself to local church terminology and cultures, the only way for the early church to defend itself against this constantly mutating and difficult-to-identify spiritual virus was to establish clear boundaries of Christian orthodoxy (consisting of various creeds and doctrines, *i.e.*, the dogma of the universal church). *To the extent that we as Christians ignore the creeds and confessions, remain ignorant of church history and orthodox doctrine, and are oblivious to the need for church authority, we open the gates wide to Gnosticism's latest deception.* As Harold O. J. Brown notes, "It [Gnosticism] has seldom gone by that name since the early centuries, but Gnosticism has

continued to reproduce itself within Christianity and reappear from time to time in new guises" (*Heresies*, 39).

*Beginning with the fundamentalist Right in the mid-60s, Colonel Doner spent three decades in Republican and Christian politics as a professional fund-raiser, media strategist, organizational consultant, and architect of the Christian Right. In the 70s his clients spanned the range from The American Conservative Union to Ronald Reagan. In the late 70s he co-founded the first wave of Christian Right organizations: The Christian Voice Lobby, which pioneered issuing "Report Cards" on how members of Congress voted on "values" issues; the American Christian Voice Foundation, publisher of the renowned Presidential Biblical Scoreboard magazine; and American Christian Cause.*

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

*He 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. He can be reached at samaritan-group@mindspring.com.*

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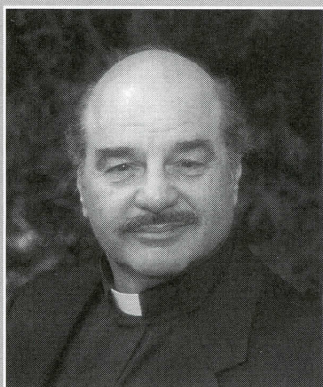
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# Immanent Danger

By A. B. Dayman



The Scriptures teach that God, Who created all things and Who is infinitely personal, is simultaneously transcendent (*Ps. 97:9; Is. 55:8-9*) and immanent (*Ps. 139:7-8; Gen. 1:26-27*). He is not to be identified with His creation, yet all creation declares His glory (*Ps. 19:1-6*). There is no great

chain of being between the devil and God, with God having being and the devil non-being.

Today immanence has become the preoccupation of almost all men, Christians included. As a matter of fact, Harold Bloom has made the undeniable assertion that the American religion, regardless of its distinctives, is Gnosticism.<sup>1</sup> While you cannot put ancient gnostics, evangelicals, liberals, and mystics into one mold, a contention can be made that Gnosticism is permeating our culture, including Christianity. The ancient gnostics so emphasized God's immanence they came to believe that God was actually part of them. The line between God and self became indistinguishable.

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the finding the Nag Hammadi Literature in 1947 has caused an increase in academic curiosity with ancient gnostic texts and their relation to the early Christian community. There are many books on the market today claiming to be "lost" Biblical texts that are really gnostic teachings. In fact, Christians have known of these texts for years, but they were excluded from the original canon of Scripture. The revival of Gnosticism today and the New Age movement actually is more the result of nineteenth-century Romanticism and revivalism than the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts. According to Richard Tarnas:

... religion itself was a central and enduring element in the Romantic spirit, whether it took the form of transcendental idealism, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, pantheism, mystery religion, nature worship, Christian mysticism, Hindu-Buddhist mysticism, Swedenborgianism, theosophy, esotericism, religious existentialism, neopaganism, shamanism, Mother Goddess worship, evolutionary human divinization, or some syncretism of these. Here "sacred" remained a viable category, whereas in science it had long disappeared. God was rediscovered in Romanticism—not the God of orthodoxy or of deism but of mysticism, pantheism, and immanent cosmic process; not the juridical

monotheistic patriarch but a divinity more ineffably mysterious, pluralistic, all-embracing, neutral or even feminine in gender; not an absentee creator but a numinous creative force within nature and within the human spirit.<sup>2</sup>

There is a gnostic influence touching all of our culture, from science to politics, from art to religion, from business to education. Its distinctives will sound very familiar to you:

## Immanence, Not Transcendence

Gnostics believed that they were God or that God was actually part of them. Their spirit was the "divine spark" that was of God. Self becomes the focus. It is interesting to see how modern psychology and its self-help pantheon follows in the shoes of C. J. Jung, a self-confessed gnostic psychologist (see the Jones article in this issue). The orthodox distinction between Creator and creature is blurred and God's holiness is thrown out the window.

## Spirit Versus Matter

Spirit is good and matter is evil. This had a great impact on early Christianity and spawned much of the ascetic movement.

Western *Christian* mysticism was a product of the monastic world and its search for *spiritual* release. As we mentioned, Christianity was early affected by the in-roads of Gnostic dualistic thinking in which a heavy emphasis was placed upon the antithesis of matter and spirit, body and soul. The Christian doctrine of salvation from sin by many became quickly transformed into the belief that this meant a deliverance from all materiality and earthly existence....<sup>3</sup>

The Fall, according to Gnosticism, was not from innocence into disobedience, but from pure spirit to physical bodies. Self, being imprisoned in this material world, is in a battle between light and darkness, spirit and matter. The modern counterpart of this is called "mind over matter." Salvation means escape from the body and the physical world. This anti-resurrection, anti-incarnation worldview breeds perfectionism, causing pride in those who see themselves as higher up on the ladder of perfection (*1 Jn. 4:1-3*).

## Anti-institutionalism

One must be inner-directed and not subject to creeds, doctrines, rituals, sacraments, or any people or structures of authority. Experiential rather than liturgical or doctrinal forms of public worship are promoted. The leaders of the



movement were those who claimed to have secret knowledge of divine revelation. They gloried in their rebellion against traditional church teachings and structures in contrast to New Testament teaching about believers submitting themselves to church officers (*Heb. 13:7*).

### **Subjective Individualism**

"God told me!" Gnostics believed that whatever happened to them in their own private experience was the final court of appeal. The subject (the knower) had priority over the object (the known). True spirituality was inner, experiential, and mystical. This stands in stark contrast to Christianity, which looks outward to Christ and the cross. The church, the community of the redeemed, confesses its faith in what God did in history, not what happens in an individual privately. The Holy Spirit is given to the whole church to unite it with Christ.

### **Anti-patriarchal Feminism**

"Ancient gnosticism loathed the patriarchal and authoritarian qualities of official Christianity. From the gnostic point of view, the structure and discipline of the Church stifled the spirit."<sup>4</sup> Michael Horton in his provocative book, *In The Face of God*,<sup>5</sup> draws attention to the gnostic celebration of the androgynous self stating the belief that while the body may be male or female, the spirit is free. Gnostics, whether old or new, take offense at the idea that God not only became human flesh, but that He became a man.

### **Anti-sacramental**

Gnostics claim an unmediated access to God's Spirit and that they get their knowledge (*gnosis*) through secret revelation and mystical experience. The Christian sacraments use material elements such as bread and wine (eucharist), water (baptism), speech (preaching), and printed word (Scripture) as the means of grace. They are, therefore, too unspiritual to give us anything of a spiritual (anti-matter) nature. Yet these are the very things early Christians used in worship (*Ac. 2:42, 46; 20:7*). These common elements were available to all and therefore challenged the private, elite nature of Gnosticism.

### **Anti-creedal**

Gnostics claim to believe in the Bible, yet also claim they alone have the correct interpretation. The church formulated creeds to stave off the false teaching of the gnostics. These provide a plumbline by which the words of Scripture can be understood. The creeds were created by councils within the church and not by individuals. The first seven councils of the Christian church provided an effective creedal blow against heresy. The church's use of creeds represented the fact that the present generation doesn't possess the whole truth, but is determined to pass on the apostolic faith it has received. It also provides an effective guard against the potpourri spirituality of Gnosticism as seen in the New Age movement.

### **Antagonistic to the Old Testament**

Like most heresies, Gnosticism viewed the Old Testament negatively. Both Marcionism (A. D. 160) and Manichaenism (A. D. 3rd century) rejected the Old Testament, which represented God as a wrathful Judge who created matter and imprisoned souls in history. This logically implied antinomianism, a hatred of God's law. They contrasted the New Testament God (Jesus) as the God of love and grace against the Old Testament God (Jehovah) as the God of wrath, *i.e.*, grace versus law.

### **Anti-historical**

As the spirit is opposed to matter, salvation means redemption from the body. Eternity is opposed to time. Therefore history is of no concern to the gnostic. Direct, present, personal encounter with the Spirit is paramount in order to escape the reality of time. The fact that God created the world and time and pronounced it "very good" (*Gen. 1*), and then unfolded His plan of salvation through matter and history has no place in Gnosticism.

### **Anti-intellectual**

Gnosticism (Greek, meaning "knowledge"), being anti-historical and subjective, was shallow intellectually because it based its knowledge on immediate experience. It was what the Apostle Paul called "knowledge falsely called" (*1 Tim. 6:20*). It preferred "heart knowledge" over "head knowledge." Christianity affirms both by weighing everything in the light of Scripture.

### **Gnosticism Revived**

Gnosticism has always remained just below the surface throughout church history, yet its impact has been strongly felt at certain times. The humanistic Renaissance and Romanticism were revivals of Greek and gnostic influences. Romanticism remains a potent force in Western culture today and is shaping modern American Christianity, both liberal and evangelical. We can see it in the tendency toward subjectivity as opposed to relying on God's objective Word, as well as overplaying immanence and paying lip-service to God's transcendence.

The driving force of revivalism in the nineteenth century was a personal experience of being born again and "second blessing" theology which preached escape from this world in a flight into God by surrendering all. "Doctrine was considered an encumbrance, as were creeds, liturgies and sacraments, and the anti-intellectual strain reared its ugly head."<sup>6</sup> Charles Finney is the premier example of a Christian leader who promoted these teachings.

Under revivalism, preaching shifted from the objective saving work of Christ to the believer's subjective experience of God's saving work in Christ, resulting in self-improvement techniques and psychological emphases. The gospel became a secret formula (*gnosis*) for rebirth, self-realization; and direct, unmediated experiences with God.

The shared gnostic components of Romanticism and pietism produced the father of modern liberalism, Friederich



Schleiermacher, who insisted that the essence of Christianity is "the feeling of absolute dependence." Schleiermacher had great influence on Walter Rauschenbusch, the leader of the social gospel movement, and also on Adolf von Harnack, another leading liberal theologian.

Protestant liberalism gave us Norman Vincent Peale's positive thinking school which gave us the human potential movement. Like the Christian Science of Mary Baker Eddy, these involve an attempt to escape the power of nature through psychological (self-help) techniques. Mind over matter is an attempt to control one's response to the uncontrollable aspects of existence. Some would call it magic. Positive thinking substitutes faith for God. It is interesting to note that Peale has supported Billy Graham campaigns and Graham considered Peale to be a born-again Christian.

The church growth movement is another consequence of positive thinking doctrine. It is faith that makes churches grow. Possibility thinking and goal setting are prerequisites for church growth according to C. Peter Wagner and the font of the movement, Donald A. McGavran.<sup>7</sup> Finding people's needs and giving it to them, rather than serving Christ and His Kingdom, is the focus. The antithesis between the redeemed and the unredeemed has become blurred. Today we can see that there is really very little difference between evangelicals and liberal Protestants in their approach to ministry. As Lee says, "... evangelicals seem to have metamorphosed themselves into the most harmless of liberal Protestants."<sup>8</sup>

In line with the gnostic exaltation of faith is the "Word of Faith" movement. The founder of this movement was E. W. Kenyon who was plagiarized by Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and others. Kenyon was very interested in the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science.<sup>9</sup> It was Kenyon who introduced gnostic concepts of knowledge into faith theology. He distinguished between sense knowledge and revelation knowledge which in his followers became a distinction between mere written revelation and the word that truly saves, being the "Rhema" word.

The point of this essay is not to argue that respected evangelical Bible teachers are cult leaders. No doubt, many of these leaders would be the first to condemn Gnosticism as heretical. It is not intentional error that is in view here. The problem is that American Christianity is not even conscious of what is happening. Instead, it continues on as though everything is all right. Yet, the American religion, in spite of denominational distinctives, is largely Gnosticism. Experience over doctrine, the personal over the institutional, feminine over masculine,<sup>10</sup> immanence over transcendence, it doesn't matter whether you are New Age or liberal, evangelical or Pentecostal, Gnosticism is the American religion.

<sup>1</sup> Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View* (New York, 1991), 372-373.

<sup>3</sup> Michael W. Kelly, *The Impulse of Power: Formative Ideals of Western Civilization* (Minneapolis, 1998), 271. See also Kenneth Ronald Davis, *Anabaptism and Asceticism: A Study in Intellectual Origins* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania; Kitchener, Ontario, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> Philip J. Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York, Oxford, 1987), 158.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Horton, *In The Face Of God* (Dallas-London-Vancouver-Melbourne, 1996). I am indebted to Horton for drawing attention to much of what is presented here in this essay.

<sup>6</sup> Horton, 65.

<sup>7</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale, CA, 1976) and Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, 1970), both cited in Lee, 210.

<sup>8</sup> Lee, 210.

<sup>9</sup> D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York, 1977). Douglas says the defeat of Calvinism by anti-intellectual sentimentalism led to a feminized church.

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