

# CHALCEDON

## *Report*

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# God

## The Sovereignty of

**R. J. Rushdoony** on The Sovereignty of God

**P. Andrew Sandlin** on The Sovereignty of God in Apologetics &  
Why We Cannot Be Evangelicals

**Mark R. Rushdoony** on The Sovereignty of God in Salvation

**Monte E. Wilson** on Evangelism by Clowns

**Susan Burns** on Abusing the Argument Against Abusive Husbands

**Steve M. Schlissel** on How History Refutes Regulativism

... and more



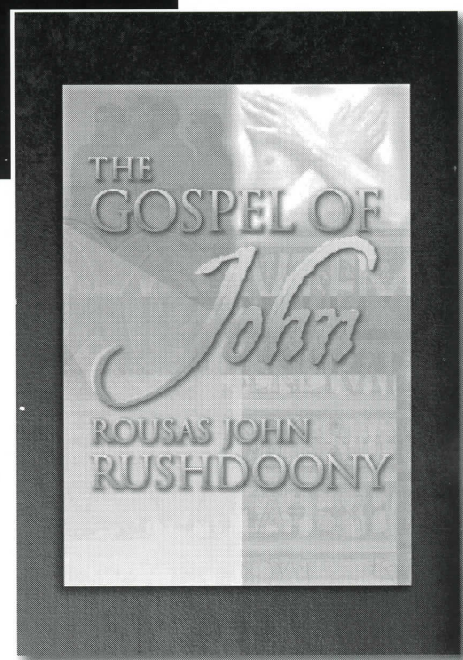
# A New Commentary

## The Gospel Of John

by Rousas John Rushdoony

The goal of fallen man is self-deification, to be as God (Gen. 3:5), whereas the goal of redeemed man is to be God's covenant man. Christ's perfect humanity is our standard, not His deity. We cannot have Christ as our God if we will not have Him as our true man, as our federal head. In the first Adam, we are born into sin and death; in the last Adam, we are born into justice or righteousness and life. Jesus is the true bread of life, come down from heaven. His flesh, His true humanity, is our bread of life; this He gives for the life of the world. We are in Him no longer the sinful and death-bound sons of fallen Adam, but the just and life-bound people of the last Adam. Christ gives us His flesh, His glorious humanity, so that we are remade into people of righteousness and eternal life. To feed on Christ is to know Him as the true man and our only hope for life. We become members of Him and serve His purpose, to bring every area of life and thought into captivity to Him.

In this commentary, renowned theologian Rousas John Rushdoony maps out the Gospel of John starting from the obvious parallel to the book of Genesis ("In the beginning was the Word") and takes the reader through to the glorious conclusion of Christ's death and resurrection.



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# Chalcedon *Report*

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

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### Chalcedon Staff:

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

Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon.

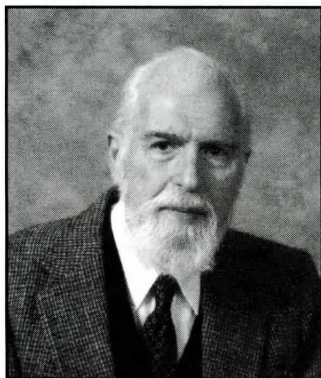
Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin is executive vice president of Chalcedon and editor of the *Chalcedon Report* and Chalcedon's other publications. He has written hundreds of scholarly and popular articles and several monographs.

Susan Burns is Chalcedon's executive assistant and managing editor of the *Chalcedon Report* and Chalcedon's other publications.



# The Sovereignty of God

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony



**T**he very word *God* implies and requires *sovereignty*. This is why the word *gods* implies a contradiction: because the so-called *gods* imply by that title *sovereignty*, which they do not possess, they can

only be seen as partially gods, *i.e.*, one god controlled sea voyages; another, sexual matters; still another, warfare; and so on and on. Polytheism has many partially ruling spirits, but no God.

The word *God* implies ultimacy and the power to create, as Scripture often declares: "Of old thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands" (*Ps. 102:25*). Jesus Christ, as God incarnate, tells His people, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (*Mt. 25:34*). Because God is the only Maker of heaven and earth (*Gen. 1:1*), it follows that His Word alone can govern all things in every sphere. Because He alone has made us and can save us, His Word alone can govern us. Because He alone is God, His law alone can truly rule us.

Today, however, a church deep into heresy sees Christ as our Savior from sin, but not as our Lord and lawgiver. This is to deny Christ's deity and sovereignty. We have forgotten that, in the early

church, to be a Christian was, among other things, to be under a higher Lord and a higher law.

Today, however, I hear preachers deny the sovereignty of God and who see this as an alien doctrine. In effect, they affirm that other powers rule creation, and Jesus has jurisdiction over a corner of it. This is heresy, not Christianity. When terms such as lord, lordship, sovereignty, dominion, and the like are absent from preaching, so too is the Christ of the Bible, however much named.

The sovereignty of God means that the holy Trinity and the infallible Word govern us in every sphere of life. *Salvation* is not God's only sphere of operation.

When Christians think in terms of God's sovereignty and rule by His law-word, they acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ.

In some circles, the word *sovereignty* is tabu, which in effect means that Christ is also. He is only present where He is truly known as Himself, not as a sentimentalized creature of the church's imagination.

In Matthew 25:31ff., we are told of Christ's coming in His glory to judge all nations. We are then told of those who have professed to know Him reacting with horror at being called the *cursed* ones because of only a verbal profession of allegiance instead of strong obedience to His total Word. The King's word applies in every sphere of life and thought. He will hold us to it. God is our sovereign because He alone is God.

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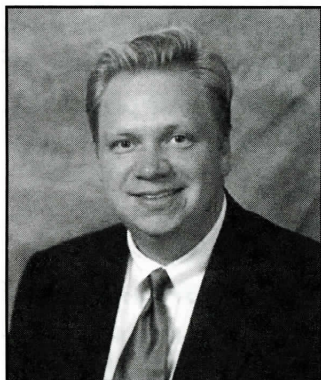
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# The Sovereignty of God in Apologetics

By Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin



**T**he task of apologetics is the *defense* of Christianity. It is the communication of good reasons for the hope that lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15). All apologetic strategies can eventually be re-

duced to two methodologies: classical apologetics and presuppositional apologetics. Classical apologetics is described that way because it has held sway during much of the history of the church. It started with the Greek apologists in the patristic church who developed rational answers to the classical pagans' (and unbelieving Jews') objections to Christianity.

## Classical Apologetics

There are several prime variations of classical apologetics, but this method can be understood in a single brief sentence: *It is possible to validate Christianity (at least with a high degree of probability) without presupposing Christianity.* In philosophical terms, classical apologetics is *foundationalist*, rather than *contextualist*. Foundationalism is a view of knowledge positing that we begin from a certain basic, epistemologically unjustified axiom, and then gather knowledge on the basis of it. By contrast, contextualism holds that knowledge is a set of coherent beliefs. In order to gain knowledge, you need to "get inside" this "system." Classical apologists believe that you can start from a certain independent axiom — independent, that is, of the Christian "system" — and then work your way outward to at least a highly probable validation of Christianity.

For instance, a classical apologist may say, "You do not need to accept the God of the Bible and its Christian system in order to believe that

the historical *record* of the Bible is largely true. There were many witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, and it is hard to believe that all of them — including some unbelievers and skeptics — were in cahoots to perpetrate a fraud. Therefore, it is highly probable that Jesus rose from the dead; and if He arose from the dead, He is most likely Who He claimed to be — the Son of God." This is one of the main *historical* arguments that classical apologists use.

Then there are *experientialist* arguments. The chief one is how Christianity has changed peoples' lives: "The great transformations of human characters throughout history; all of those martyrs willing to sacrifice their very lives for Jesus Christ; the joy, peace, and bliss of Christian experience — all these validate the Bible and Christianity."

Then, of course, there are *empirical* arguments. It is held that scientific evidence has great probative value. The two main variations of this argument are cosmological and archeological. The cosmological argument (and I am not referring to the specific "cosmological argument" for the existence of God) suggests that the very existence of the world and its evident design and nature verify the truth of the Bible and Christianity. Archeological arguments suggest that evidence like the physical remains from Noah's ark and from ancient cities mentioned in the Bible validate the truth of Christianity.

All variations of classical apologetics assert that one can be convinced of the truth of Christianity by some factor or factors *independent* of Christianity as a "system."

## Presuppositional Apologetics

Presuppositional apologetics, by contrast, is distinctly contextualist. You can never validate the system until you "get into" the "system." There is no axiom independent of that system by which you can "argue up" to Christianity.



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This in no way implies there is not evidence for Christianity. Presuppositional apologists do not, for example, argue that the accounts of witnesses to Jesus' resurrection are unimportant, or that attestation for Christianity's having changed individual lives is wanting, or that empirical data supporting the truth of the Bible and of Christianity is unimportant. Presuppositionalists simply argue that all of these must be understood *within* a Christian context. This is really just another way of saying that presuppositionalists believe that apologetics is fundamentally an *ethical* issue.

Those who do not accept Christianity — unbelievers, in other words — are not dissuaded from their unbelief by historical, experiential, or empirical evidence. They have their own context — an unbelieving context — within which to interpret this evidence. In the words of supreme presuppositional apologist, Cornelius Van Til, there are no “brute facts.” “Facts” do not speak for themselves. Facts speak within a particular context. Within a skeptical, unbelieving context, for example, wide historical attestation of Christ's bodily resurrection can be easily explained without recourse to the infallibility of the Bible or the truth of Christianity. After all, the skeptics may claim, all sorts of strange things happen in the universe: “Perhaps Jesus Christ *did* rise from the dead. What does that prove?” Or, “We don't deny that people who accept Christianity enjoy changed lives. This is simply a new religious self-awareness. The same thing is true of many Buddhists, Muslims, and New Age practitioners.” Or even, “Of course, we accept as readily as you classical apologists that there was a Noah's ark, which corresponds to what the book of Genesis teaches. But this doesn't mean that the Bible is the ‘inspired Word of God’ or that Christianity is true. It only proves that Genesis gives a reasonably accurate account of a large boat that finally came to rest in what is today Turkey.”

Presuppositionalists know that men reject Christianity not for intellectual reasons, but for *ethical* reasons. Unbelievers will always be able to discount any evidence Christians may offer,

since they can interpret that evidence within their own Christ-rejecting system.

This is to say that, ultimately, there are no *true* “foundationalists.” All men are “contextualists,” or presuppositionalists. Unbelievers interpret life in terms of their own covenant-breaking presuppositions. Christians interpret life in terms of their own covenant-keeping presuppositions. The variation is not in the “facts.” The variation is in man's ethical nature.

## The Presuppositional Argument

What then is the actual *argument* of presuppositional apologetics? If it refuses to appeal to some *independent* source of validation, how can it argue at all? The answer to that question is as profound as it is simple. — Presuppositional apologists do not contend that history and experience and archeology and physics and biology demonstrate that Christianity is “probably” true. *Presuppositional apologists argue that unless one affirms Christianity, he can affirm nothing at all.* Presuppositional apologetics is the ultimate *reductio ad absurdum* — it reduces all other perspectives to absurdity by demonstrating that *by their very nature* they are untenable. You have to presuppose the God of the Bible in order to know or presuppose anything at all.

Does this mean that unbelievers can know nothing? Of course not, but in order to know, they must *borrow* from the system of Christian truth. To put it another way, they can know nothing *if they remain consistent with their own unbelieving presuppositions*. They must, as Van Til says, act like the little girl who must sit on her Daddy's lap in order to slap him in the face. They must affirm God in order to deny Him.

## Uncompromising Apologetics

Finally, presuppositional apologetics is the only valid apologetic method, because it refuses to compromise the sovereignty of God. Classical apologetics grants great autonomy to sinful man. It implies to the unbeliever, “You are quite free to stand as judge, prosecutor, and jury over God and over the Bible. If you hear all of the evidence and it meets your Christ-denying, covenant-break-



ing, rebellious standard, you are free to accept it. Of course, if it does not meet your standard, you are free to reject it.” This is not merely silly; it is blasphemous. Men do not judge God and His Word; God and His Word judge men. Men do not know in order to believe; they believe in order to know. When we do God’s will, then we learn of His doctrine (*Jn. 7:17*). When the Holy

Spirit regenerates sinners, their eyes are open and they can then grasp the truth of the Bible and of Christianity. Until then, they are dead in trespasses and in sin, and their minds and understanding are darkened (*Eph. 2:1-7*).

Presuppositional apologetics *alone* upholds the standard of God’s sovereignty in the preaching of the gospel.

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## Book Notes

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By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony

Over the years, with a rare exception or two, the books I have cited in this column are all ones I believe you will find worth reading. This is not true of Michael Drosnin’s *The Bible Code* (New York, 1997). I regard it as morally lower than pornography. Stay away from false evangelicals who gush over it. The author’s thesis is that computers have unlocked a code long hidden in the Hebrew text of the Bible and can now “predict” the future. The only future events he sees predicted thus far in his study is the possible assassination of Netanyahu, and an earthquake in Los Angeles (which geologists have also predicted).

Drosnin does not believe in God, and he does not see the “predictions” in the code as predestined, only likely or possible. Then who makes these “predictions”? The Bible as the Word of God is set aside for a possible “predictor” or “predictors” who play a guessing game. The God of the Bible speaks plainly to all. This Bible code is for computer men!

Now over the centuries, many have “decoded” the Bible (also Shakespeare) to say all kinds of remarkable things. One scientist of a century ago saw in the Great Pyramid a series of amazing “prophecies” fulfilled up to his time, but his pyramid code had nothing to say about World Wars I and II, nor anything else of this century.

If one believes in this code, one cannot believe that the God of Scripture is who He says He is. He is reduced, if real, to an elitist, esoteric, occultist force. Those who believe in Drosnin’s thesis are people to avoid because they lack common sense and do not belong in the church community.

*If one believes in this code,  
one cannot believe that the  
God of Scripture is who  
He says He is.*

A purported key to decoding is beyond my ken, and I am reasonably intelligent. You will either reject this book or take it on faith, and there are better things to believe in. Stay away from those who accept this book as valid.

John Weaver’s *The Biblical Truth About God’s Righteous Vengeance* (order from John Weaver, P. O. Box 394, Fitzgerald, GA 31750) is a brief (149pp) and superb study of God’s justice as it relates to us, to our salvation, to the doctrine of the kinsman-redeemer, and more. Few have written more powerfully and succinctly on the subject. Sadly, thinking of this caliber is lacking in our major pulpits and our Christian educational institutions. Be sure to read this.



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# Why We Cannot Be Evangelicals

*By Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin*

**T**he Protestant Reformation recovered the gospel of God's free grace that had been obscured in the medieval church by a moralism that dismissed man's deep depravity, by a sacerdotalism that interposed a religious caste between men and God, and by an ecclesiasticism that erased the Creator-creature distinction — the church itself became the new Incarnation. At the heart of the reform was a renewed emphasis on the Biblical-Pauline-Augustinian gospel: salvation solely by the grace of God on the grounds of Christ's atoning work, appropriated by faith alone. The Reformers and their churches were proud to be known as "evangelical," since they saw themselves as preaching the pure evangel, the gospel message. This is the Biblical evangelicalism.

But what passes for evangelicalism today is at most points far removed from the evangelicalism of the Reformation, as it is more generally removed from Biblical teaching at other points. When friends ask whether I am an evangelical, I am quick to say, "No." Because they often identify "evangelical" with "Bible-believing" and "gospel-preaching," I take time to explain that it is precisely because evangelicalism does *not* believe the Bible properly or preach the gospel faithfully that I do not consider myself an evangelical and cannot be a member of an evangelical church (this is largely true of modern fundamentalism, simply a more restrictive and provincial version of evangelicalism). What are perhaps the three chief distinctives of evangelicalism stand in sharp contrast to a Biblical, Reformational belief and practice of Christianity.

## A Subjective, Not Objective, Gospel

While modern evangelicals profess a firm belief in the Bible, at the center of their religion is not their view of the Bible, but their view of the gospel. Evangelicalism prides itself on the centrality of the gospel and of salvation. It is just here, however, that evangelicalism is perhaps the most polluted. In fact, ironically enough, the evangelical view of the gospel is much closer to that of medieval Rome than it is to

the Biblical gospel of the Reformation. The Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic response to the Reformation, held that salvation is a cooperative endeavor between God and man. God sets the process in motion (at baptism), but man helps the process along. According to Rome, man's free will plays a big part in his salvation. The Reformers correctly recognized that this destroyed the gospel of the grace of God. It opened the way for man to assert his own contribution, goodness, and righteousness. For evangelicals, this is almost uniformly their own "decision." At this point, they are at one with Rome.

Evangelicals are advocates of "decisional regeneration." Evangelicalism is essentially born-againism — the institutionalization of the conversion experience. The important thing about salvation is man's *experience*, his feelings *about* being saved. A heavy dose of this experientialism was introduced into the church in eighteenth-century Wesleyanism, and it has been a mark of evangelicalism ever since. Wesley's experience was that he was "strangely warmed" when he heard the gospel, and this experience became a centerpiece of his theology. (To be fair, Luther's soteriology too was somewhat autobiographical, but it led him back in the direction of a salvation solely by the work of God.)

For Calvin, by contrast, our salvation rests in the objective work of Christ's atonement. Men are not saved by what they experience; they are saved by what Christ *accomplished*. In His great redemptive work on the cross and in His resurrection, Christ secured the salvation of His people, fulfilling the claims of the law in judicially substituting for the sins of unbelievers. When the gospel is preached, it efficaciously and irresistibly draws those whom God chooses. Christ their Redeemer conquers them. They are brought to their knees in humble submission and can do nothing other than exercise faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. This experience, though essential, is a *result* of Christ's objective atonement and the Holy Spirit's application of the gospel.

For evangelicals this is too sophisticated and too



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“intellectual.” The really central fact of salvation is that God has forgiven their sins, accepted them into His family, made them happy, and prepared them a home in heaven. For evangelicals, the gospel centers on the will and pleasure of man; for Reformationists, the gospel centers on the will and pleasure of God.

Because to be an evangelical means to embrace just *their* man-centered form of gospel, we cannot be evangelical.

### **New Testament, Not Biblical, Religion**

The Reformed wing of the Reformation expressed the unity of God’s covenant in both Old and New Testaments. The evangelicals stress the disunity of those covenants — for evangelicals, the goal of the Faith is to reproduce “New Testament Christianity.” Evangelicals believe in a one-quarter Bible; Reformed Christians believe in a whole Bible. Evangelicals routinely dismiss the authority of the Old Testament. The Old Testament law, they assert, is part of the “old” covenant, and it was only for ancient Israel in any case; today we listen only to the words of Jesus, John, Paul, and so forth. Evangelicals are among the loudest in insisting on “believing the Bible from cover to cover,” but they do not believe that three quarters of what appears between the covers has any relevance for today. They talk sanctimoniously about “strict Biblical inerrancy,” but this usually is simply pious gibberish because they deny that the provisions of the new covenant were operative in the Old Testament (*Gal. 4:22-31*). They don’t see much of the gospel, if any at all, in the Old Testament. And because evangelicalism centers on the gospel, this means that the Old Testament is largely irrelevant. *Functionally*, therefore, the term “Bible-believing” does not apply to most evangelicals.

### **A Narrow Gospel, Not the Full-Orbed Faith**

This leads directly to the final characteristic of evangelicalism, which Bible-believing Christians must expressly repudiate. For evangelicals, it is the evangel, the gospel (narrowly and erroneously defined, of course) that should absorb our lives. For Reformationists, it is the sovereignty of God and His absolute regal authority in the earth that is absorbing. The evangelical

gospel is not merely warped; it is narrow. The evangelical gospel is an end in itself. “Keeping souls out of hell” is what life on earth is all about. For Reformationists, life on earth is about absolute submission to Christ the kingly Redeemer and diligent work to extend that kingship in the earth. Evangelism is an essential *means* to that end, but not the end itself. To assert that evangelism is an end in itself is to espouse a warped, man-centered theology. The end is God’s glory and, with reference to His plan for the earth, the gradual but relentless expansion of His kingdom (*Mt. 6:33; 13:31-34*).

Evangelicals are intensely interested in evangelism — *their* sort of evangelism. Because this evangelism is not only warped but also narrow, it does not relate to most aspects of life. Because evangelism is the center of their religion and because it does not relate to most aspects of life, the religion itself does not relate to most aspects of life. Because their religion does not relate to most aspects of life, they tend to think like worldlings and downright humanists in those areas unrelated to their narrow religion. This is why, for one thing, the evangelical apologetic method compromises the gospel, as Cornelius Van Til so potently demonstrated.

The evangelicals are willing to compromise anything — even God Himself — for the sake of their precious idol, their narrow, warped evangel. This is why a majority of them see nothing whatever wrong in sending their children to covenant-breaking government schools, adopting covenant-breaking secular psychology, teaching covenant-breaking evolutionary science, electing covenant-breaking political candidates, and endorsing covenant-breaking Bible translations. These are areas beyond the purview of their narrow gospel. Everything beyond the scope of their narrow gospel is fair game for a “neutral” (*i.e.*, covenant-breaking) perspective.

For these reasons, wherever modern evangelicalism has blossomed, it has torpedoed historic Biblical orthodoxy; eviscerated a strong, theologically anchored faith; and emasculated a robust, red-blooded, full-orbed religion. Its success has been the failure of Biblical Christianity.

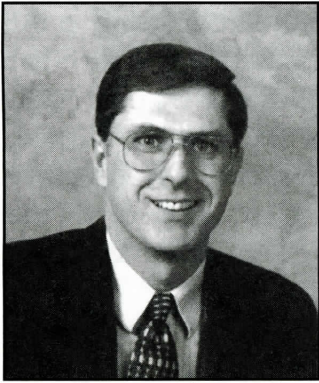
Consequently, to be an evangelical in the modern sense is to dilute and eventually destroy the Faith.



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# The Will of God, or the Will of Man?

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony



I received most of my education at Arminian, free will schools. I am grateful for the impact they had on me, and for the genuine, loving Christian spirit of those under whom I sat. While I now (as then) dis-

agree strongly with their theology, I do not thereby question their sincerity and devotion. Few men are entirely consistent in their thinking. Fewer still are able to see the implication of that thinking. Someday, at the foot of the throne, we shall all be consistent and comprehending. Until then, we must challenge one another, especially those we think are persuaded by terrible error.

One area in which the modern church needs to be challenged is in the area of its soteriology (doctrine of salvation). Liberalism or modernism can be easily recognized because it denies the supernatural origins of the Faith. It is a naturalistic philosophy that rejects the transcendence of God and Jesus Christ and places confidence in human goodness and its progressive movements. It is a humanistic faith which sees the individual and society as the foci of organized religion. "The liberal view of God and man depends upon the liberal view of authority in religion" (Cornelius Van Til, *The Case for Calvinism*, 1968, xii). This "liberal point of view of authority in religion" is centered on a very human Jesus Christ, who is stripped of the miraculous and, at the whim of non-believing "scholars," even of His own words in the gospels. The "historical Christ" is custom-fabricated into a mouthpiece of the naturalistic faith of modernism. He becomes the symbol of their ideology, rather than the Savior of their souls.

The twentieth-century church was powerless to stop the growth of modernism because of its

previous adoption of Arminianism, which elevates the will and reason of man to "call the justice of God to the bar of reason; they dare confidently wade in the deep ocean of divine mysteries..." (Christopher Ness, *An Antidote Against Arminianism* [1700], Still Waters Revival Books, 1988, 1). If the will and reason of man can decide the merits of the Word of God (which is all a redemptive history) and freely choose between Christ and rebellion based on the workings of that will and reasoning, then what can preclude man's will and reason from deciding the merits and freely choosing the validity of the Scriptures or their present applicability? Arminians did not necessarily go this far, though many of their churches took the ball of free will and ran with it headlong toward modernism. Hence the fundamentalists found it necessary to appropriately emphasize the cardinal doctrines of the Faith. They thus avoided naturalism and its implicit humanism in favor of Christ's deity, emphasis on Christ's redemptive work, and the infallibility of Scripture. But the stand of the fundamentalists was a finger in the dike they had helped breach by their incorrect adherence to free will as a Scriptural doctrine. The modernists extended free will and reason while the fundamentalists restricted it to human redemption. Strangely enough, in taking their stand against liberalism, the fundamentalists stood for God's sovereignty in the revelation and preservation of His Word but not in man's salvation.

## History of the Conflict

Arminianism and Calvinism began long before their namesakes in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The issues were even old when Pelagius and Augustine clashed in the fifth century. Pelagius, borrowing from paganism, claimed man had no sin nature and hence had a will that was perfectly free to obey God's law and believe. Augustine answered that original sin



had so corrupted man's nature that he is unable to respond to God's law or gospel. Grace is necessary to those predestined by God's election in order for man to exercise faith, which, said Augustine, comes from God's grace, not man's will. (This is a crucial point. The most transparently inaccurate criticism of Calvinism is the charge that it denies the role of man's will in faith. It does not deny man's will any more than Arminianism denies God's will. The question that each system answers in a different way is "Whose will is determinative in salvation — God's or man's?") Pelagianism was thoroughly discredited as pagan heresy by Augustine's influence.

A new teaching soon tried to take the middle ground between Pelagius and Augustine. Cassian promoted a system that has come to be called Semi-Pelagianism. It conceded that original sin corrupted man but claimed that a universal grace was available to all which made their exercise of free will possible. Even in this, they gave primacy to the will rather than to grace. They asserted that "it is mine to be willing to believe, and it is the part of God's grace to assist" (Steele and Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 1976, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 20).

The Reformation rejected both Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism. God's sovereignty, man's total depravity and inability, and unconditional election were held to not only by Calvin, but also by Luther, Zwingli, Bullinger, and Bucer, though Melancthon later adopted Semi-Pelagianism. The Reformation's soteriology was not just about justification by faith without works; it shared the Biblical view of Augustine regarding man's inability and God's grace. Hence Calvinism is often accurately called Reformed theology.

Semi-Pelagianism was revived by James Arminius. In 1610, one year after his death, his followers published a remonstrance (protest) to the State of Holland. It contained five points and demanded that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism be changed to conform to this "Arminian" thinking. The Synod of Dort of 1618 rejected the Arminian theology and demand. It decided to respond to each of the five tenets of Arminianism with five corresponding

points, which are known to us as the "five points of Calvinism." They are 1) total depravity, 2) unconditional election, 3) particular or limited atonement, 4) irresistible grace, and 5) perseverance or eternal security of the saints.

## The Great Contrast

The differences between Calvinism and Arminianism are fundamental because they differ on the nature of God and man. Calvinism preaches a God Who Himself saves sinners while they are dead in their sins; Arminianism preaches a God Who makes salvation possible. Calvinism teaches that God's election, redemption, and calling are all to the same persons; Arminianism must distinguish God's election as referring to those who respond, His redemption as referring to all mankind, and His calling as referring to all who hear the gospel. Calvinism teaches that God's election, redemption, and calling save men who are given the gift of faith to express the determinative regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Arminianism teaches that God's work prepares the path for the determinative will of the individual. Calvinism sees faith as a gift; Arminianism sees it as an aspect of man's free and conscious will. Calvinism holds that God's grace alone saves man; Arminianism holds that God's grace put the mechanism (Christ's atonement) in place for salvation. To the Arminian, God in eternity awaits the outcome of the sovereign will of the sinner. To the Calvinist, God decrees, redeems, proclaims, calls, justifies, sanctifies, preserves, and defends His own; man is passive except when God stirs him to respond by His Spirit.

Arminian faith is centered on man; hence Arminian religion is centered on man. The gospel is the sum of the church's work, then. It is no accident that dispensationalism and its effective dismissal of the bulk of Scripture gained rapid acceptance in Arminian churches. If man's decision was paramount, there had to be an endless obsession with preaching to the "will" rather than preaching of the Word. Christian action was reduced to preaching the gospel of free will. Holiness and righteousness were reduced to the subjectivity of pietism, whereby, once again, the



will and reason of man (though ostensibly led by the Holy Spirit) chose its own path of duty to God. Will and reason, first enthroned on the Arminian path to justification, still ruled the Arminian's sanctification. Subjective piety tends to rule in Arminian churches unless a charismatic or dictatorial leader supplies artificial authority.

Because man's will is elevated by Arminianism, Scripture (what remains after the ravages of dispensationalism) is depreciated. "Thus saith the Lord" is arrogantly answered with "But I think...." The "fundamentals" of the Faith are in constant retreat before the onslaught of man's demand for increased autonomy for his will and reason. The naturalism of modernism keeps rearing its head and sincere Arminians do not understand why. The church's battles become defensive even within its own doors. Outside it is seen as irrelevant. It produces no great social manifestations of Christian thought or activity. Without a theocentric perspective, progress and victory seem hopeless. It sees itself reduced to social irrelevancy and tends to choose defeatist eschatology to justify this. The soteriology that begins with man's free will becomes bogged down

in endless appeals to man's free will. It sees no place for other Christian activity and awaits its rescue and reward in eternity. A Reformed soteriology that begins with the sovereign decree of God gives the redeemed man perspective, purpose, direction, and an authority under which he can work for his God and Savior. The preaching of the gospel (of grace, not free will, as they are different gospels) is an integral part of his work, but not its sum total.

Fortunately, not all Arminians are entirely consistent, though the effects of their theology are plainly evident in modern Christianity, and their outworkings that I have touched on are apparent. The abandonment of the Reformation's full soteriology has crippled the modern Arminian church and left it vulnerable to modernism, subjective pietism and defeatist eschatology. Even its admirable stand for justification by faith has been compromised by its equating faith with free will. The majority of Western churches and individuals that sincerely profess faith in Christ's atonement are Arminian. This, by God's grace, must change if they, too, are to avoid a slide into modernism and subjectivism.

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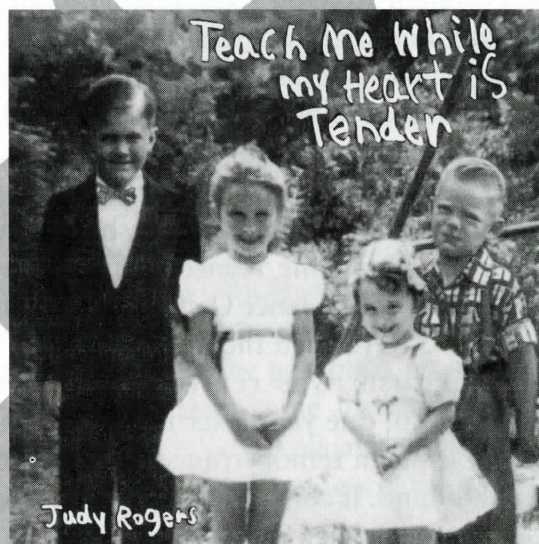
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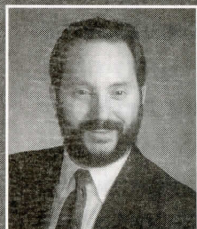
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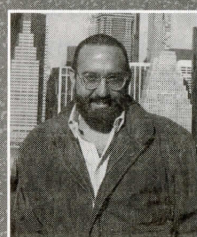
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## Time/Place:

**Sacramento:** Friday, August 18  
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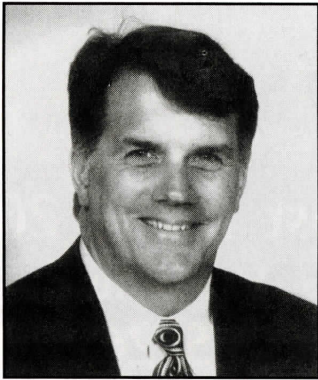
**Southern California:** Friday, August 25 from 7:00 p.m.  
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# Here Come the Clowns

*By Rev. Monte E. Wilson III*



**I**n trying to explain how the world viewed the church, Soren Kierkegaard told the following story. A travelling circus had set up just outside a village in Denmark. Somehow a fire was started that was spreading so fast

that the circus people needed help in putting out the blaze. The manager sent a man to the nearby village to summon the people for help. When the man arrived, he pleaded with the people to come and help control the fire or it would burn down both the village and the circus. The problem was that the man was dressed as a clown: make-up, big nose, long shoes, the works. The villagers thought that he was part of an act to arouse attention and attract customers. Being amused, they clapped for his stellar performance. The clown wept and tried even harder to explain the precariousness of their condition. Again, the villagers thought the clown's performance was even better the second time around and gave him a standing ovation. The fire destroyed both the village and the circus.

In considering the subject of evangelism, the church must face the fact that all too often its face is not a reflection of the Triune God, but of a clown. Worse, we are seen as one of those clowns that perform so horridly that we do not elicit laughter and applause but a painful grimace and a quick grab for the TV remote. When the average unbelieving American thinks of evangelical Christianity, I wonder how many of them think of fat hicks, purpled-hair chicks and that guy with the funny hair knocking people down at the altar? Not exactly images that elicit serious reflection, are they?

Other people see religion as merely customs and traditions. The church is a harmless club that

“probably helps people”... somewhat like a placebo. Is this a case of unbelievers seeing only what they wish to see, or is it a form of Christianity that traded in its stumbling blocks for pomp and circumstance?

How many are reticent even to admit that they are Christians, not because they are ashamed of the gospel, but because they fear being lumped in with the passing parade of weirdoes and whackos? My hand is raised. When I do share the gospel, I have found that quite often my initial apologetic does not involve concepts of Truth, God, Sin and the like, but a litany of explanations: This, That, and The Other is NOT Christianity.

The troubling fact is that we have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to share His good news with the world around us. Evangelism is not a take-it-or-leave-it proposition: it is a mandate, a command. As we go about our day-to-day lives, we are to be ready to take advantage of appropriate opportunities to speak of the Truth of Jesus Christ. Think about it: even if the unbeliever refuses Christ's offer of salvation, you will at the very least have an opportunity to disabuse him of his TV induced illusions of what Christianity is and does!

As I travel around the U. S., I find that serious believers are struggling with the act of evangelism. They will argue against abortion, explain why their presidential candidate is the best choice, present their case for the superiority of home schooling children, but they cannot seem to tell others of Jesus Christ and His salvation. Why? Because they do not wish to be identified with modern evangelical weirdness. But as much as I empathize with this sentiment, isn't it the truth that their being “pro-life” is seen as a Neanderthal-like denial of a woman's rights? That their candidate has some strange ideas? That home schooling parents are often some of the weirdest people in society today? Yet, we still take our stand on these ideas.



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We cannot sit around and wait for history to present us with an opportune time for the gospel. There has never been such a time. Go back and read what happened to the people who first received the gospel. In spite of the persecution, in spite of heretics, they insisted upon sharing the Faith. And God blessed their obedience.

So as to provoke our thinking regarding evangelism, I offer the following ideas. I suggest we reflect on these points and pray about what we should do to become a more effective witness for Jesus Christ in the coming millennium.

### **1. Your first responsibility is to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt. 6:33).**

Who is Christ? What is Christianity? What exactly is the gospel of the kingdom? Furthermore, who is Christ *to you*? What is Christianity *to you*? How does the kingdom work *in your life*? Having the correct message is critical. However, the *messenger* is also critical. A Christian “testimony” is an assertion of having *experienced* the Truth and Love of Christ. We are not merely passing out truth-claims. We are saying, “This is the Biblical gospel *and* this is how it has seized my life, my family, my vocation, etc.”

Furthermore, it is not simply propositions about Jesus Christ that are to be presented, but the God-man Jesus Christ Himself Who is to be presented. This is not simply a matter of semantics. All too often we sound as if we are asking an individual to *accept certain facts* rather than *to yield to this Person* who is (partially, yet salvifically) understood *via* these Biblical assertions concerning who He is. When our witness gravitates to doctrine in such a way as to overshadow the Person, Jesus Christ, I believe our witness loses much of its spiritual dynamic. I think it was Peter Kreeft who said that Jesus Christ came to His people with a marriage proposal, not a syllogism. Let us not forget this.

### **2. We are not witnessing to “humanity” or to a “public.” There are no such things. There are only individual persons.**

The person with whom you share the gospel is a unique, never-to-be-repeated creation of God. This is especially pertinent for ministers. When we speak to a public or to humanity or to a congregation we are, in people’s minds, speaking to an “it,” or to “them,” but not to “me.” The only way to reach into people’s hearts is to engage them as individuals, with their individual fears, concerns, and needs — all of which Jesus Christ speaks to in the Scriptures.

This individual to whom we speak has given us an opportunity to share our faith and its relevance to both their present and their future (eternity). Maybe it is a marital difficulty or a moral dilemma that has motivated them to speak with us. If we speak to them with the mindset of all-people-are-this-way (a dehumanizing generalization) then we will fail to speak to them as the unique creation of God that they actually are. The result of such an approach is that the gospel is not heard as something for them as an individual but for people in general. Since they do not see themselves as people-in-general, this message is not for them.

When we treat individuals and their needs as generalizations, then we come across as insensitive and even arrogant. Humanity does not repent and give its life to Jesus Christ — individuals do. Who is this person to whom I am speaking? What are their specific questions, fears, concerns, sins, hopes, and dreams? How does the message of the gospel apply to this individual’s life?

### **3. Purely rational arguments for the Faith are not always successful, largely because most people have not rejected the gospel because of rational reasons.**

In Pascal’s *Pensees*, he writes:

Order. *Men despise religion. They hate it and are afraid it may be true. The cure for this is first [1] to show that religion is not contrary to reason, but worthy of reverence and respect.*

*Next [2] make it attractive, make good men wish it were true, and then [3] show that it is true.*

*Worthy of reverence because it really understands human nature.*



*Attractive because it promises true good.*

People do not reject Christianity because they do not believe it is true, writes Pascal. No, people reject Christianity because they fear it is true and hate it. The problem is not intellectual but *attitudinal* and *volitional*. Consequently, Pascal writes that, while we should utilize reasoning, we must also reveal the gospel's attractiveness by showing how it alone understands human nature and promises the true good. To fear and hate the gospel is to fear and hate what is best for every human.

Most people I know who do witness spend all their time and effort focusing on the intellectual (rational reasons for yielding to the Truth of the Bible) and ignoring the psychological (only Christianity truly understands human nature and promises true good). We will far more effective if we take Pascal's advice.

#### **4. It is not enough for the church — for individual believers — to take off the clown's mask. We must be authentic humans who are followers of Christ.**

Seeker-sensitive churches changed clothes long ago. They now dress like stockbrokers and talk like Garrison Keillor of NPR's *Prairie Home Companion*. While this can be far more effective in the arena of evangelism than what we see and hear on TBN, it still may fail to present the truth of Christianity and Christians. For in the process of changing clothes, we often change the gospel so as to rid it of its stumbling blocks. Furthermore — and more importantly — what people need to hear and see in us is our humanity. It is not enough to merely look like humans who live in the twenty-first century; we must actually reveal our humanity. We are not clowns, angels, or Stoics: we are humans who are working out our salvation.

Paul said that Christ was glorified in our weakness. Contrarily, how often do we think and act as if He will only be glorified in our strength and perfection? The unbeliever needs to know of our struggles, our questions, our doubts, and our failures (when appropriate). Christians get the flu. Christians have business failures. Christians

have marital difficulties and their children do not always grow up to be valiant men and women of God. Christians say dumb things. Christians struggle with their faith in God and in His ways. Let's stop acting and start being honest about who-what-and-where we are.

Christianity is not magic. Christianity waves no wand over a person's life exempting him of all difficulties. Christians experience self-doubt, temptations, and wrestle with how to live their faith on a consistent basis. While we certainly should not boast of sin or make light of it, unbelievers need to know that we experience difficulties. Why? Because unbelievers know better! To act as if we were angels rather than humans tells other people that we are either delusional or hypocritical: neither of which is all that great of an advertisement for the Faith. Sharing our humanness with others creates a bridge across which we can maintain honest dialogue: a prerequisite for serving those who are pursuing the truth. Furthermore, by our honesty, we prepare them for the real battles that all Christians will wage until they go to heaven.



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



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- Ability to teach and preach - Seminary training not required
- Pastoring abilities and willing to counsel (limited)

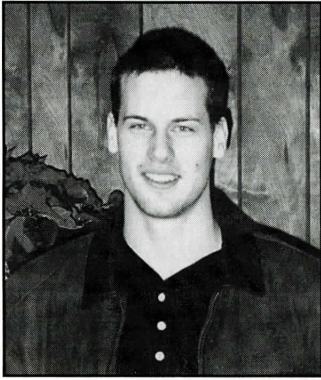
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# Fighting for Nothing: A Review of *Fight Club*

By Jeremy Swanson



What if there was no God, or, at best, He hated us? What if values were indeed relative due to either fate or truth? What would our options be? Allan Bloom in his book *The Closing of the American*

*Mind* mentions two paths taken by those who pay homage to value relativism: Either it can be “a great release from the perpetual tyranny of good and evil” and allow us to “have one peaceful, happy world,” or it can prompt a fanatical devotion to one’s self-created values that exalts dying for these values as “the noblest of acts.” In the movie *Fight Club*, we are presented with both of these options stemming from value relativism. In the final analysis, they are both found wanting.

At the beginning, we are presented with the emptiness of materialism. Edward Norton plays a young, clean-cut, nameless, conventional employee of a major car company whose job is to determine if there should be vehicle recalls for faulty or dangerous parts. When he is not busy calculating if the potential lawsuits will cost more than a vehicle recall, he describes the “new pornography,” that is, the agonizing over “what kind of dining set defines me as a person.” He narrates his “need” for the latest refrigerator, wall hanging, or dust-ruffled bedspread as superimposed price tags jump out of the aforesaid objects. All of his musings are presented in a monotonous, introspective, comically wry manner, seemingly indicative of his inability to become truly excited about such soulless, inanimate garbage. This materialistic, shallow, basely capitalistic existence which neglects the spirit or anything like the spirit renders him unable to sleep for months at a time. When a doctor makes light of his narcoleptic condition and facetiously

tells him to go see those who are “really in pain” (men at a testicular cancer support group), he goes. He goes and becomes addicted to support groups and attends every kind of meeting for terminally ill people imaginable. These support groups provide an out from his mundane, materialistic life. They become his “opiate,” his religious experience. They affect him emotionally, cathartically dispelling his insomnia. In his words, he “dies and is born again every night.” While he discovers “freedom” in these meetings, his world also becomes smaller, since part of the therapy dealing with the pain of bowel cancer or tuberculosis involves descending into one’s cave, into one’s pain (defined by the group’s meditation leader as an “empowering ball of light”). The therapy and the support groups show him the true futility and hopelessness of life (he defines freedom as “losing all hope”), and they also become tools to escape reality.

His existential pietism does not last. His world of escapism crumbles when he meets Marla, a woman who has no diseases, but attends the support groups (even the testicular cancer support group) in order to be with people who “really listen instead of just waiting to speak.” Her lie exposes his lie, and he cannot achieve his necessary emotional catharsis. His work schedule also becomes more chaotic, and the return of his insomnia, combined with flights through every single North American time zone causes him to be in a continual state of altered consciousness. He begins wishing for his planes to crash, just so he can escape the toil of a meaningless, “single serving” society. On a particular flight, he meets Tyler Durden (played by Brad Pitt), who really is a psychological manifestation of his fanatically nihilistic self (as opposed to his easy-going nihilistic self who defines himself through the latest Stairmaster or designer couch or refrigerator). He becomes neurotic, living out alternate personalities, that is, who he is and who he wants



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to be, as a very real lastman and as a theoretical Nietzschean *ubermensche*. When his apartment blows up (actually when he — his fanatically nihilistic self — blows up his apartment using homemade explosives), he calls Tyler Durden, meets him at a bar and discusses the pathetically non-excellent lifestyle led by most people in modern liberal democracies. The fanatically nihilistic element of his personality manifests itself more and more as an “actual” person distinct from who he thinks he is. Tyler rebels against being “perfect” or “complete” in the crass, economic sense, and instead promotes “letting the chips fall where they may,” and “evolving.” Society’s “self-improvement” is “masturbation,” but “self-destruction” is really where it is at, according to Tyler. He rejects “the basic assumption of civilization” or “the need for material possessions” as a standard by which to judge ourselves.

After his anti-consumerist statements in the bar, our narrator and his more extreme self engage in the very first “Fight Club.” Tyler asks the narrator to hit him, which the narrator finds incredible and at first refuses to do, but eventually complies. They revel in the pain. It is an act of self-discovery, as opposed to the dull, satiating shopping mall lifestyle. Pain is good, because, in Tyler’s words “without pain, without sacrifice, we would have nothing.” Tyler and the narrator decide to fight again, and are soon joined by other curious, needy men. Fight Club grows and acts as the vehicle through which men rediscover what is “high” in their natures, that is, in the Nietzschean sense, the “war and courage which have accomplished more great things than love of one’s neighbor.” In subsequent meetings, Tyler laments the existence of “an entire generation pumping gas and waiting tables...wasted.” He laments that there is “no great war, no great depression.” Instead, “our war is a spiritual war, our depression is our lives.” In a true *ubermenschean* sense, Tyler promotes the fanaticism of dedicated nihilism, the kind of fanaticism that instills values with meaning (since they have no meaning in themselves), the kind of fanaticism that says “it is the good war that hallows any cause.”

As the Fight Club following grows among men like a spiritual revival (despite the first and second rules of Fight Club being that you do not talk about Fight Club), Tyler’s war spills out into the streets as he assigns “homework” for the Fight Club members. This “homework” includes intentionally picking fights with strangers and losing, blowing up computer stores, vandalizing public statues, and kidnapping people. Eventually, it evolves into “Project Mayhem,” that is, a war against the corporate consumerist lifestyle. Tyler even trains an army of nihilistic zealots, impervious to the threats of the civil magistrate, the law, or any other “enemy.” He indoctrinates them with the harsh truth that they are all “part of the same compost heap,” just “monkeys being shot into space.” They are not “beautiful individual snowflakes,” but they are “not their khakis” either. Dying while carrying out a mission for Project Mayhem is reason to endow a nameless, valueless fanatic with both name and value. Tyler shows the narrator that nearly dying in a meaningless car wreck is “a near life experience.”

Eventually, the narrator’s easy-going nihilism of peace and “respect” for everyone reasserts itself. He cannot deal with the death of a member of Project Mayhem (a member who was also a part of the testicular cancer support group that the narrator attended in the beginning of the movie). He also has qualms about Tyler’s plan to blow up several square blocks of the city in the name of chaos. In the end, the narrator confronts his hardcore nihilistic self, accepts that he is responsible for what has happened, and realizes that Tyler is merely a manifestation of a darker part of his mind. (During the whole movie, Tyler is seen by us and the narrator as a totally different, distinct person from the narrator.)

During the grand finale, in order to free himself from his fanatical phantom, the narrator sticks a gun in mouth and blows off part of his face. While this act liberates him from the bondage to this part of himself, it is too late to prevent the destruction of several skyscrapers. As he and Marla watch the majestic buildings brilliantly crumble, he says to her “you met me at a very



strange time in my life.” What is more strange is the ambiguous message of this movie: The mediocrity and empty materialism of happy, peace-loving value relativism is nauseating; but for some reason the alternative, fanatical value is slightly more unbearable. If there is no God, then why is the second alternative not more (instead of less) appealing? Why do we recoil so dramatically from the following Nietzschean admonitions?

“And whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness; but this is creative.”

“Man must become better and more evil”...“The greatest evil is necessary for the overman’s best.”

If these fanatically dedicated nihilistic passions grow in our society, those who blindly esteem

the value of tolerance will be required to provide a more substantial defense of their dogma of relativism. Perhaps they should consider the horrifying possibility that such a defense does not exist. Perhaps they should consider the ramifications of the incredible closedness of their “open” system.



*Jeremy Swanson is a home schooled student who recently graduated with a B.S. in Political Science from Hillsdale College. He hopes to continue his studies at the graduate level in political philosophy or international politics. He is a member of Sunnyside Orthodox Christian Reformed Church. He can be reached at FinalNihil@email.com.*

## *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 Christian 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.



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# What Do You Do When You're Abused by Your Husband?

*By Robert B. Needham*

*Reviewed by Susan Burns*

I have no toleration for people who abuse others. I have friends who have suffered terribly at the hands of others' physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. One friend is currently spending thousands of dollars on dental work to repair problems that are the direct result of beatings she endured years ago. I have seen women being treated shamefully by their supposedly Christian husbands in public places. I have wondered what their lives were like when they went home and the door was closed to the outside world. And I have become angry when this occurs and the men who also witness this behavior do not go to the man and tell him that his wickedness must stop.

There is a need for clear, Biblical thought about this serious problem. The Word of God needs to be applied to this issue. One man who attempts to deal with the abuse issue is Robert B. Needham, a pastor in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) in California. More than one person has told me that Needham's counsel has saved thousands of marriages. That is remarkable. I cannot say if his one-on-one counsel is Biblical because I have never been in a counseling situation with him. However, the purpose of this review is to objectively assess the counsel presented in his pamphlet, "What Do You Do When You're Abused by Your Husband?" and to determine if it is based on sound Biblical truth. To the extent that his counsel is Biblical, readers of the pamphlet should be blessed and God honored. If there are areas outside Biblical perimeters, I pray the author will prayerfully seek to bring his work into conformity with Biblical truth for the glory of the King he serves.

The first problem I noticed came from the author's (mis)use of Scripture references. He com-

ments, "Abusive behavior always comes from an undisciplined soul." He then cites Proverbs 15:32, 16:32, and 25:28. While these passages speak of an undisciplined soul, they do not refer to abusive behavior; and their use as proof texts for that subject appears unfounded to me. The same is true with Scripture references used to back up this statement, "Abusive behavior always includes the failure to recognize one's responsibility for disciplined, careful and righteous speech under all circumstances." This may seem a small complaint, but I am uncomfortable when the proof texts do not prove the statements they are alleged to support.

Throughout the pamphlet, Needham indicates that abuse, if not corrected, will most likely escalate, even to the point of the abuser's murdering or maiming the wife and children (Needham does not address the issue of wives' abuse of husbands, an acute but largely ignored sin). The intent behind each of these statements seems to be to urge women to get help before it is too late for them. The conclusion seems to be that *all* cases of abuse will necessarily worsen to the point of physical violence unless measures are taken. This is an illogical assumption. Good writers learn quickly to avoid the use of hyperbolic language: never say never, always, etc. Not only is the use of such language illogical; I believe it can be particularly detrimental in a counseling context. I am concerned that making these statements to a woman who is emotionally upset and angry with her husband could fan her distress into a full-fledged hysteria. Years ago when I sought help for a troubled marriage, each time I used "always" or "never," my godly counselor immediately stopped me and said things like, "Now, Susan, are you certain he does it *always*"; or "Su-



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san, are you sure he has *never* done this?” I had to back down from those statements. I can only imagine what a woman who is unhappy with her husband would do if her counselor used always/never language!

Furthermore, Needham uses a very broad definition of abuse. According to his definition, I think every person who was ever created would have to say that he is not only a victim of abuse, but an abuser himself! Is it responsible to say, given this broad definition, that every instance of abuse could, in fact, result in murder and maiming?

Needham presents a checklist of characteristics that he believes are common to abusers and states: “[B]ut if more than a few [of the characteristics] apply in your case, clearly you may conclude that your husband is abusive and that you need help if your marriage is to survive and grow” (4). He lists thirty-three characteristics of abuse; some are of physical abuse (shoving, bullying, rough handling, slapping, hitting, grabbing body parts, etc.). But the author’s elements of emotional abuse far outnumber the elements of physical abuse. “Emotional abuse” is a subjective term that often leaves specifications of abuse up to the “victim” who can say, “I feel emotionally abused when you do this.” I will give but one example from Needham’s list: “Does he [the husband] consistently disregard or discredit your views, feelings, interests and preferences?” If a husband watches a ballgame and eats pizza when the wife wants him to go shopping with her and take her to a nice restaurant, is this emotional abuse? This can become very significant, because emotional abuse can, according to the pamphlet, eventually lead to physical abuse and murder and, thus, could be a legitimate ground for separation.

Having established his definition, he urges women to seek help. This help is for women who are physically abused *and/or* emotionally abused. He insists:

“Do not, repeat, do NOT make the fatal error of telling your concerns to a family member or close and sympathetic friend, church officer, or

even your pastor, unless he has been specifically trained to counsel biblically. Well meaning [sic] friends and counselors often lead women to either under react, overreact, or improperly react to an abusive situation” (18).

I do understand some of the rationale behind this advice. However, our question must be, is it Biblical? I believe it is not. If a wife followed this counsel, she would distance herself from her God-given family and friends who support her. They, as well as her pastor and elders, should know what is going on. In particular, the pastor and elders are required to know. I understand Needham’s concern that these folks may not be able to help or counsel her — especially if the family are not believers. I have seen cases where this has, in fact, occurred. However, if they are believers, they can help by prayer if nothing else. Further, because family and friends often know both parties, their cautioning the wife that she may be overreacting could be very appropriate, advice a trained counselor may not be knowledgeable enough of her situation to offer. In addition, family and friends and others close to the wife may have some additional good advice to give. To call talking to family, friends, and church leadership a fatal error is nonsense. Remember that the author has given this restriction to the woman whether her husband is physically abusing her or if he is just being churlish towards her!

Second, Needham says, “If correcting the problem means a period of physical separation until the husband has not only admitted his sin, but received real help in overcoming it, that is a small price to pay for the long term [sic] restoration of the marriage, and possibly the salvation of his soul” (20).

Everyone would agree that if a woman’s life and the lives of her children are threatened, she must leave until the immediate danger is over. But separation should be a last-ditch move in a marriage. The God-ordained roles of husband and wife must be retained until “death do us part.” If there are problems in the marriage, the best way for them to be worked out is together



in the family setting with pastoral and counseling oversight, to be sure. But to separate husband from wife is to establish a scenario where neither party learns to work together Biblically as husband and wife; it undermines the marriage itself. Apparently, according to Needham's scenario, separately the husband and wife learn their marriage skills and come back together once those skills have been learned. My contention is that only within the context of the marriage can they learn those skills. You don't learn to live together by living apart.

Nor does the Bible support Needham's counsel. The only reference to a type of separation is in 1 Corinthians 7:5: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." I am not saying, nor does the Bible teach, that a woman has an obligation to stay with her husband when she has *legitimate* concerns for her safety and that of her children. The Bible requires self-defense. Civil action can and should be taken when necessary. However, is it wise or Biblical to allow separation in cases for something as subjective and disputable as emotional abuse?

Having given the wife the freedom to separate from her husband, Needham tells her that she is the least objective person to determine the husband's sincerity and repentance! He urges her to continue her separation "until a third party (*i.e.*, a competent pastoral counselor), is truly satisfied that your husband has humbly accepted the counseling, has clearly acknowledged his sins, has plainly expressed repentance, has humbly sought forgiveness and has demonstrated the fruits of true repentance for a reasonable period of time" (21).

Not only does this advice remove the husband from his lawful headship position; it replaces him with someone else. This is the person the husband must convince of his repentance. The counselor becomes a *de facto* head of the relationship — head over the wife and the husband! Further,

if the husband has truly repented, he is left bereft of means to bless his wife with the fruits of that repentance — his changed behavior. The only way you can really practice and refine your skills as a husband or wife is to work on them with the spouse God has ordained. Instead of teaching the husband how to be a better husband to his wife within their marriage context, Needham's counsel removes husband and wife from their lawful positions and replaces the husband with the "Biblical counselor"; to top it off, the husband cannot resume his role as lawful head until the counselor says so!

*The only way you can really practice and refine your skills as a husband or wife is to work on them with the spouse God has ordained.*

There are two examples in the Scripture that would serve unhappy wives well as they consider "emotional" abuse. The example of Abigail with Nabal is pertinent, as is Sarah, when Abraham gave her into the arms of other men to protect his own hide. By today's feminist standards, both women would have been justified in leaving their husbands. Both stayed and submitted to their husbands in very hard circumstances. It couldn't have been easy for either woman. But they chose the path of godly obedience and God blessed them for that obedience.

One friend who has read Needham's pamphlet has said that it is basically a manual on how to build a case against your husband and then how to leave him. I concur with her thoughts, as do several other women who have read the pamphlet. Although the pamphlet makes some good points and offers some insight, in essence the advice given is not Biblical and, in my opinion, can do more harm than good to marriages that are already strained.

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*Susan Burns is Chalcedon's executive assistant and managing editor of the Chalcedon Report and Chalcedon's other publications. You can contact her at [sburns@goldrush.com](mailto:sburns@goldrush.com).*



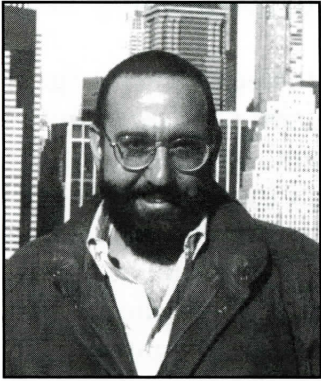
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# All I Really Need to Know about Worship

...I Don't Learn from the Regulative Principle (Part XI)

By Rev. Steve M. Schlissel

## When History Won't Do, Re-do



**S**peaking of history, let's move on to it. For the regulativist has imposed his RPW assumption not only on the Bible's history, not only on the Westminster Assembly's actual teaching, not only

on the Second Commandment, but he's also sought to impose it on Continental Reformed churches. We now hear the rather audacious assertion that no one can honestly call himself "Reformed" unless he subscribes to the RPW. With the stroke of a pen, a vast segment of the Reformed world is simply removed from the roster. It seems that some regulativists not only cannot abide Scripture's testimony against their tradition; they feel compelled to revise history too.

Now before we proceed with a discussion of this point, let us reiterate that we do not wish to dispute that this or that Reformer, or even a majority, may have personally adhered to the RPW like wet on water. (We do not regard as blasphemy the proposition that Calvin or others were wrong on points.) So let us grant for the sake of argument that the hymn-writing Calvin was really a regulativist. Fine. What we do dispute is the assumption that all ministers and churches in the Reformed tradition have regarded the RPW as an essential component of our Reformed confession.

For we have recently heard the charge that a minister who signs a subscription to the Three Forms of Unity (the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt) cannot retain his integrity as an oath-keeper if he rejects the Regulative Principle of Worship. Such a charge — that one cannot *legitimately* claim to be Reformed unless one holds to the

RPW — viewed against Continental (and other) Reformed history, leaves one breathless. We are led to wonder if the advocates of the RPW can honor any limits in controlling their urge to assume what they ought to prove.

In an effort to keep this brief (Heidelberg #96 has already been discussed), I will hunt and peck for evidence to demonstrate that the above allegation is not merely untrue, it is unbecoming. Let's begin with the man who supervised the writing of the Heidelberg Catechism. Frederick III was "...to the end of his life, the great supporter by both troops and money of the Reformed church in both France and the Netherlands."<sup>1</sup> But was he a regulativist?

Not according to the yardstick employed by some sons of Westminster. Rev. Robert Davis, a Reformed (RCUS) minister, has shown that "when Frederick III came to power the need for a German Reformed Hymnal was a high priority after the Catechism and Directory of Worship was printed in 1563. Work on the hymnal was begun in 1565 and by 1567 the first Palatinate hymnal was in circulation....The musical section of the hymnal is separated into three divisions: Psalter, Canticles, and Hymns. This German Reformed Hymnal had 44 Psalms *and* 66 Hymns. The sources for the canticle and hymnal sections are as follows: 21 are from Martin Luther, 21 are from other Lutheran authors, 11 stem from Reformed circles, 6 from the Bohemian Brethren, 3 from Bonn, 2 are pre-reformation and 2 unique to the Palatinate itself."

So much for exclusive Psalmody being a condition of Reformed-ness. As van Popta has written, "A careful reading of [the] data demonstrates that throughout history the Reformed Churches had a thread that allowed for hymns. One might dispute the validity of hymn singing, but one cannot dispute that the Reformed churches have sung hymns in church for centuries."



## Oh, Henry!

But there is much more. The Second Helvetic Confession “was adopted, or at least highly approved, by nearly all the Reformed Churches on the Continent and in England and Scotland.”<sup>2</sup> Its author, the esteemed Henry Bullinger, exerted “a commanding influence throughout the Reformed Church,” second only to Calvin. He was “in friendly correspondence with Calvin, Bucer, Melancton, Laski, Beza, Cranmer, Hooper, Lady Jane Grey, and the leading Protestant divines and dignitaries of England.”

“As to theological merit, [the Second Helvetic] occupies the first rank among the Reformed Confessions.”

Have you ever read it? It’s marvelous! Here is an excerpt from Chapter XXIV. Reading it will make it plain that the Reformers were by no means of one mind concerning “special days” and, hence, they were not of one mind concerning the RPW. Thus it is spurious to make the RPW a determinative factor in deciding who may be called Reformed. Listen to how balanced the Reformed faith is:

*If in Christian liberty the churches religiously celebrate the memory of the Lord’s nativity, circumcision, passion, resurrection, and of his ascension into heaven, and the sending of the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, we approve of it highly. But we do not approve of feasts instituted for men and for saints. Holy days have to do with the first Table of the Law and belong to God alone. Finally, holy days which have been instituted for the saints and which we have abolished, have much that is absurd and useless, and are not to be tolerated. In the meantime, we confess that the remembrance of saints, at a suitable time and place, is to be profitably commended to the people in sermons, and the holy examples of the saints set forth to be imitated by all.*

No man in his right mind could have written this while believing, “If it is not commanded, it is forbidden.” Yet, next to the Heidelberg, the Helvetic “is the most widely adopted, and hence the most authoritative of all the Continental Re-

formed symbols” (Schaff; italics added). It is most interesting that the religious celebration of Christmas, etc., is justified with an appeal to the First Table, home of the Second Commandment! Moreover, the church is seen as exercising its “Christian liberty” in choosing to celebrate such events, whereas regulativists claim *they* are guarding Christian liberty by *forbidding* such celebrations. Hmmm.

Bullinger picks up the theme of liberty again in Chapter XXVII: *If different rites are found in churches, no one should think for this reason the churches disagree.* Socrates (not the Greek philosopher; the church historian, surnamed Scholasticus, 380-405) says: “It would be impossible to put together in writing all the rites of churches throughout cities and countries. No religion observes the same rites, even though it embraces the same doctrine concerning them. For those who are of the same faith disagree among themselves about rites” (Hist. ecclesiast. V.22, 30, 62). This much says Socrates. And we, today, having in our churches different rites in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper and in some other things, nevertheless do not disagree in doctrine and faith; nor is the unity and fellowship of our churches thereby rent asunder. For the churches have always used their liberty in such rites, as being things indifferent. We also do the same thing today.

Well, not all of us. Please pay careful attention. Chris Coldwell brings to our attention a very different spirit which emerged 80 years later and continues to today. “The appendix to the [Westminster] Directory [of Publick Worship] is entitled, ‘An Appendix, Touching Days and Places for Publick Worship.’ The key clause of interest to this study is, ‘Festival days, vulgarly [commonly] called Holy-days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be continued.’ The Directory is explicitly against the observance of set ‘holy days,’ and in light of the wide adoption of the document noted above, it is clear that this rejection was endorsed by the governments and churches of England and Scotland.”

It seems fair to conclude that some sons of Westminster began to use the RPW like a blan-



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ket. They smothered the spirit of liberty which had characterized the earlier Reformed faith, the very liberty articulated by Bullinger and widely embraced in subscription to “the most authoritative of the Continental Reformed” creeds. Their blanket — woven from unproved assumptions — is now routinely tossed by regulativists upon everything that stands against their theory, from the Bible to history. It’s time to pull the covers.

Rev. John Barach (United Reformed Churches of North America) is among several of my friends who has called my attention to significant insights from church historian, Hughes Oliphant Old. The following is especially pertinent, demonstrating as it does that the RPW was by no means uniformly held by Reformers:

*We take it as a basic principle of our inquiry, then, that it is to Scripture, first of all, that we must go when we would try to find an answer to our questions about the meaning of worship. That our worship should be according to Scripture is obviously one of the principles that we have inherited from the Protestant Reformation. Early in the Reformation it was expressed by Martin Bucer in his Grund und Ursach. It was developed with particular clarity by John Oecolampadius, who distinguished the principle from a naive biblicism. There had been those who felt that worship was biblical as long as nothing was done that was expressly forbidden in Scripture. On the other hand, there were those who insisted that for worship to be biblical, only that could be done which was commanded in Scripture. As Oecolampadius saw it, neither of these approaches is satisfactory. He developed the principle that our worship should be “according to Scripture.” To be sure, we do not find a ready-made liturgy in the Bible, but we do find many teachings about worship. In the sacred pages we find all kinds of examples of worship that was genuine, true, and spiritual. We discover general principles for doing things “decently and in order” that we should follow in our worship. That our worship should be according to Scripture is a sound principle.<sup>3</sup>*

So much for the notion that the Informed Principle of Worship is a novelty emanating from some Jewish fiction writer in Brooklyn. This is an approach that goes right back to the center of the Reformation, and I mean the *center*: It rejects both extremes.

It is an indisputable fact of history: the churches which have employed the Three Forms of Unity as summary statements of their Biblical convictions have *not* heard them say what regulativists force them to say. The books in which the Three Forms of Unity were bound were *Psalter-Hymnals*. The Church Order to which subscribers were bound included the *requirement* that “Worship services shall be held in observance of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, and Pentecost, and ordinarily on Old and New Year’s Day....” The men who adopted these Confessional statements *and* the church order were not schizophrenic, and neither are their sons. They knew very well that there are no commands to worship on the days indicated. Nor is there a command to worship twice on the Lord’s Day. Yet they felt, and continue to feel, no contradiction between these practices and sincere subscription to the Three Forms.

### When the Whip Comes Down

The problem is not a Reformed one. To be perfectly frank, it is a Presbyterian one. Not all Presbyterians are guilty, to be sure, just as not all Reformed are innocent. But the RPW is held as a given far more commonly among Presbyterians. And it is often joined to the conviction that all the wide world must be compelled to conform to this odd and extra-Biblical principle. It stands against Christian liberty just as other oddities of a like fundamentalism do: no long hair for men, no short hair for women, no pants for women, no kilts for men, no smoking, no drinking, no movies, and so on. I’ve already written that there are many good reasons that will lead sincere worshippers toward a worship style that very much resembles regulative worship. But these reasons must be advanced along a path paved with wisdom. Wisdom has fallen on hard times. Like Dylan said, “We live in a political world.



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Wisdom is thrown into jail. It rots in a cell, discarded as hell, leavin' no one to pick up the trail." We should be able to commend Reformed worship to people without relying upon unproved assumptions, legalisms, and impositions. A colleague in Virginia characterized the RPW as "Presbytyranny." Too often this is true. For regulativists sometimes blithely eschew the sound reasoning that might persuade people of whatever wisdom there may be in the practices or convictions they advocate. Instead they try to impose them upon God's people.

Some have objected to this characterization. One friend from the OPC has recorded, "I am constrained to point out that this is a serious misrepresentation! I do not know, and I have not even heard, of anyone who has ever been 'forced' to accept the RPW." Allow me to enlighten my brother. Space limits me to two examples.<sup>4</sup> We could start a "Recovering Regulativists Anonymous" movement.

*Dear Rev. Schlissel, I am writing to tell you how much I have been blessed and helped by your series on worship. Three years ago our new, struggling, [denomination-named-here] church plant was literally torn in two by the first pastor we called. A few months into the call it became evident that he was a minimalist. He became very contentious over things such as offertory music and preludes as we gathered for worship. Finally he revealed that he was an exclusive Psalmist. That was pretty unheard of "around these parts." Needless-to-say, we got a crash course in "Reformed" worship. He became an authority on the evil motives of anyone's worship that did not agree with his. It was a horrible ordeal that scattered the small flock we had labored for 2 years to gather.*

Notwithstanding the dreadful introduction the above-quoted correspondent had to RPW-style worship, this child of God could still write to me: "In spite of that experience I am very convicted that I need to learn to sing the Psalms. Which Psalter would you recommend for a neophyte like myself? Are there any good tapes to

help one learn to sing the Psalms?" This person became "convicted" of the need to sing Psalms from hearing a series on the Informed Principle of Worship.

In another incident, in another state, a "recovering regulativist" could write to a colleague:

*Dear Pastor, Thank you for forwarding the email on the RPW. It is more familiar than you know. We were just talking about this last night. The three of us and one of [Name's] friends were singing some chorus songs and reflected on it afterwards. We found that there was still a feeling of guilt; a sense that we could not sing some of these songs from the heart or with a pure conscience. Things such as private and public worship regulations were swimming around in our heads. Old sermons preached on the importance of exclusive psalmody in the worship service popped back into our memory. One of us said "[unnamed pastor] was so intelligent I couldn't even question him." We couldn't even question his conclusions. He used Scripture like the good exegete that he was! It was so difficult to fight back even though deep down I knew there was something wrong.*

*Good friends around me began to embrace this doctrine; they were dropping like flies. I also had my moment of embrace but I soon saw the fruit of this doctrine. My questions and rebuttals would be thrust back into my face with the arrogant comments, "Don't you see?! You are in direct rebellion against the teaching of the Bible." This was a painful arrow that was thrust through my chest into the fabric of my being. The worst part of it was that this arrow was shot at me from someone on the same side of the battlefield as me, a friend. I was then shot through the back with an arrow named heretic and left for dead.*

*It still affects us today even after we left that church. The archers behind the arrows have been forgiven and we strive for relative peace, but our hearts have been bruised and our worship has become sour. [Name, Name]*



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*and I have difficulty gathering as believers to sing praise songs to God in fear of His displeasure. We are in a period of recovery now, and we must seek the Lord for our repair. Despite all of this, glory to God for His continual loving kindness. He sheds His mercy upon us always through these difficult times. Glory to God in the highest for His hand of salvation has rescued us from death and given us life. We now forge forward with scars that will remind us of the past; but our future is bright as we wait upon the Lord and His coming glory.*

### **Honey, I Shrunk the Covenant**

There is a very big difference between the regulativists and the Continental Reformed in their respective approaches to many things, worship being just one. It is the covenantal character of the Continental Reformed that Presbyterians have sometimes been unable to understand and rarely have been able to emulate. (Speaking as a re-engrafted son, it's hard enough keeping it alive among ourselves!) This difference in "approach" is discovered in the character of the Westminster Shorter Catechism compared to the Heidelberg. We might put it this way: In the Shorter Catechism we hear someone tell us what a Christian ought to believe. In the Heidelberg we hear the Christian who believes it. In the Shorter, the Word comes from outside. In the Heidelberg, it only comes to us *after* it has been absorbed by a transformed child of God. As such, our catechism is militantly *anti-abstractionist* whereas the Westminster Standards, for all their magnificence, have come to us in a form which allows, invites, or even encourages abstractionist theology.

This is a difference of note (and I'll expound on it in the future if you ask me to). It helps explain why it is difficult for a Regulated Presbyterian to *hear* what is being said on this issue. It helps explain why our Confessions (particularly our catechism), while expressing the same truths as Westminster, express them in such a vitally different *manner*.

The Regulative Principle of Worship — and I refer to it here as it is understood and pressed by

its "strict" adherents — is expressive of what might be a fundamentally different way of looking at the law, the Bible, the Confessions and, in a very real way, expressive of a different way of looking at God. When the RPW (in the strict sense) becomes a core holding, a different character comes to inhabit the church. And that character is not compatible with the rich covenantal legacy as it has come down to us and as is presently enjoyed in some of our Reformed churches.

I may be wrong in this view, but I am not alone in it. One correspondent from the Protestant Reformed Churches wrote to me: "Your observation about the Continental vs. Presbyterian view of things struck a deep chord in me. I have recently come to the conviction that there is a barrier between the two views. The Presbyterians view things more in a legalistic construct, whereas the Continental (Reformed) have greater liberty: not contrary to the law, but within the framework of the law. I think what you said about 'covenant' is absolutely right, except I think when a Presbyterian thinks of that word he thinks about contracts with stipulations, etc. I do not believe that the Westminster Assembly represents the 'high water mark' of the Reformed Faith."

Neither do I.

Let me review what I've tried to prove: 1) The regulativists never establish from Scripture — because they cannot — that their principle is taught therein. Instead, they assume it and bring it to the Bible. 2) They've been so busy assuming the RPW that they failed to detect the IPW stealthily alive and *there* in the Westminster Standards. 3) Regulativists refuse to deal fairly with the Second Commandment. The only reason they find it there is because they put it there. God certainly didn't. 4) Some regulativists go so far as to seek to impose their principle on the entire Reformed world, denying the name "Reformed" to anyone who dissents from their unbiblical view. This is assumption run amok. And it's got to stop.

Some have tried to stop the controversy by redefinition. While we much appreciate the spirit of a peacemaker, peace cannot be found if the truth is veneered. By asserting that "all Protes-



tants are regulativists,” those attempting to be consistent regulativists rightly get their ire fired up. Any truly staunch regulativist knows what his principle is and he wants to press it to the bone. He doesn’t take kindly to people claiming his initials while functionally denying what those letters have stood for. Dylan again: “Let us not talk falsely now, the hour is getting late.” The Reformed churches have *never* had one mind on this matter.

But as we pursue a common mind, let us not fall into the trap of Reformed primitivism, an affliction wherein the Reformation period — or a slice of it — is made the best, the last, the only word in what God wills for His church. 1563 was not the best, nor was 1618-19, nor 1645. The best is yet to come.

One of the great regulativists has written that it is obvious “that the visible unity of the Apostolic Church was not grounded in uniformity in organization, forms of worship, or even details of faith.”<sup>5</sup> We all have much to learn, we all have a long way to go. Let’s continue to discuss these issues vigorously, lovingly, and *honestly*.

P.S. Further explanation, examples and illustrations of specifics of the Informed Principle of Worship will appear in *Messiah’s Mandate*, sent to supporters of Messiah’s Ministries. If you are not a supporter, there’s time to repent. To be added to the Mandate mailing list send your donation to Messiah’s, 1405 Avenue Z, Box 110, Brooklyn, NY 11235. You may donate by credit card: call 1-800-288-6202. Be sure to mention

that you want the final installment of the RPW series. That and subsequent issues will be mailed to you.



<sup>1</sup> *The Wycliffe Biographical Dictionary of the Church* by Elgin S. Moyer.

<sup>2</sup> Quotes in this and the next paragraph are from Schaff’s *The Creeds of Christendom*.

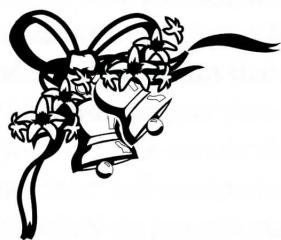
<sup>3</sup> Hughes Oliphant Old, *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology* (Grand Rapids, 1992), 10. Old adds, “For a detailed study of how Oecolampadius developed the principle of ‘reformed according to Scripture,’ see my study, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 119ff.”

<sup>4</sup> Regulativists don’t seek to impose their will on God’s beloved people? Then what is it called when they tell them that God *hates* their worship (which conforms not to their RPW), when they tell people that God *abominates* their remembrance of Christ’s birth in corporate worship on a designated day, that our covenant God is so *offended* by the singing of “man-made” hymns such as “Abide With Me” that He regards it as being on the same moral level as child sacrifice?

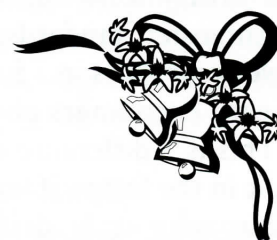
<sup>5</sup> B. B. Warfield in *True Church Unity: What It Is*. Reprinted as a booklet and available from Messiah’s Ministries.



*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 25 years, Jeanne, and their five children.*



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# Chalcedon

## Itinerary 2000

July 2	Steve Schlissel at Immanuel Leidy's Church, Souderton, PA. Contact Pastor John Niederhaus, at (215) 723-8707 for more information.
July 9 and Aug. 6	P. Andrew Sandlin at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (10:00 a.m.). For more information contact Bill Garaway (831) 477-7805 or (408) 482-4314.
Aug. 18-19 and Aug. 25-26	P. Andrew Sandlin at Reformed Heritage Church, San Jose, CA (3:00 p.m.). For more information contact Gary Wagner (408) 866-5607.
Aug. 20	Chalcedon's Joint Conferences with Southern California Center for Christian Studies. For more information contact David Bahnsen at davidb@davdon-dlb.com or Susan Burns at sburns@goldrush.com. See ad in this issue of the <i>Chalcedon Report</i> .
Aug. 20	Steve Schlissel at Church of the King, Santa Cruz, CA (10:00 a.m.). For more information contact Bill Garaway at (831) 477-7805 or (408) 482-4314.
Aug. 20	Steve Schlissel at Reformed Heritage Church of San Jose, CA (3:00 p.m.). For more information contact Gary Wagner at (408) 866-5607.
Sept. 28-Oct 1	P. Andrew Sandlin at Grand Ledge Christian Center, Grand Ledge, MI. For more information contact Pastor Craig Dumont at (800) 290-5711 or 1wcog@tcimet.net.
Oct. 2-5	P. Andrew Sandlin at the Witherspoon School of Law, Luray, VA. For more information contact The Vision Forum at (800) 440-0022.

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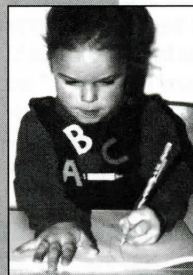
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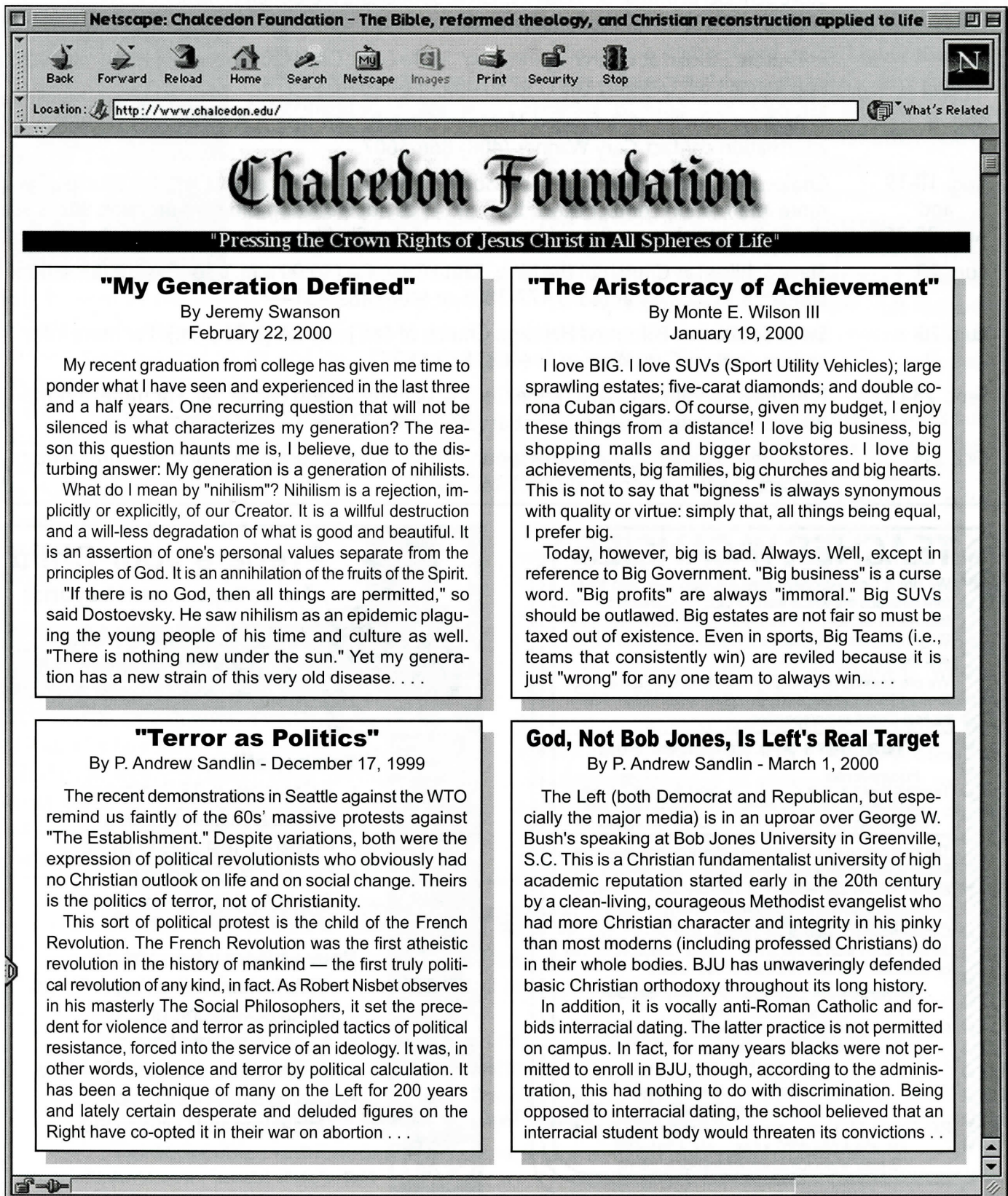
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# A TASTE OF THE CHALCEDON WEB



## **"My Generation Defined"**

By Jeremy Swanson  
February 22, 2000

My recent graduation from college has given me time to ponder what I have seen and experienced in the last three and a half years. One recurring question that will not be silenced is what characterizes my generation? The reason this question haunts me is, I believe, due to the disturbing answer: My generation is a generation of nihilists.

What do I mean by "nihilism"? Nihilism is a rejection, implicitly or explicitly, of our Creator. It is a willful destruction and a will-less degradation of what is good and beautiful. It is an assertion of one's personal values separate from the principles of God. It is an annihilation of the fruits of the Spirit.

"If there is no God, then all things are permitted," so said Dostoevsky. He saw nihilism as an epidemic plaguing the young people of his time and culture as well. "There is nothing new under the sun." Yet my generation has a new strain of this very old disease. . . .

## **"The Aristocracy of Achievement"**

By Monte E. Wilson III  
January 19, 2000

I love BIG. I love SUVs (Sport Utility Vehicles); large sprawling estates; five-carat diamonds; and double corona Cuban cigars. Of course, given my budget, I enjoy these things from a distance! I love big business, big shopping malls and bigger bookstores. I love big achievements, big families, big churches and big hearts. This is not to say that "bigness" is always synonymous with quality or virtue: simply that, all things being equal, I prefer big.

Today, however, big is bad. Always. Well, except in reference to Big Government. "Big business" is a curse word. "Big profits" are always "immoral." Big SUVs should be outlawed. Big estates are not fair so must be taxed out of existence. Even in sports, Big Teams (i.e., teams that consistently win) are reviled because it is just "wrong" for any one team to always win. . . .

## **"Terror as Politics"**

By P. Andrew Sandlin - December 17, 1999

The recent demonstrations in Seattle against the WTO remind us faintly of the 60s' massive protests against "The Establishment." Despite variations, both were the expression of political revolutionists who obviously had no Christian outlook on life and on social change. Theirs is the politics of terror, not of Christianity.

This sort of political protest is the child of the French Revolution. The French Revolution was the first atheistic revolution in the history of mankind — the first truly political revolution of any kind, in fact. As Robert Nisbet observes in his masterly *The Social Philosophers*, it set the precedent for violence and terror as principled tactics of political resistance, forced into the service of an ideology. It was, in other words, violence and terror by political calculation. It has been a technique of many on the Left for 200 years and lately certain desperate and deluded figures on the Right have co-opted it in their war on abortion. . . .

## **God, Not Bob Jones, Is Left's Real Target**

By P. Andrew Sandlin - March 1, 2000

The Left (both Democrat and Republican, but especially the major media) is in an uproar over George W. Bush's speaking at Bob Jones University in Greenville, S.C. This is a Christian fundamentalist university of high academic reputation started early in the 20th century by a clean-living, courageous Methodist evangelist who had more Christian character and integrity in his pinky than most moderns (including professed Christians) do in their whole bodies. BJU has unwaveringly defended basic Christian orthodoxy throughout its long history.

In addition, it is vocally anti-Roman Catholic and forbids interracial dating. The latter practice is not permitted on campus. In fact, for many years blacks were not permitted to enroll in BJU, though, according to the administration, this had nothing to do with discrimination. Being opposed to interracial dating, the school believed that an interracial student body would threaten its convictions. . . .



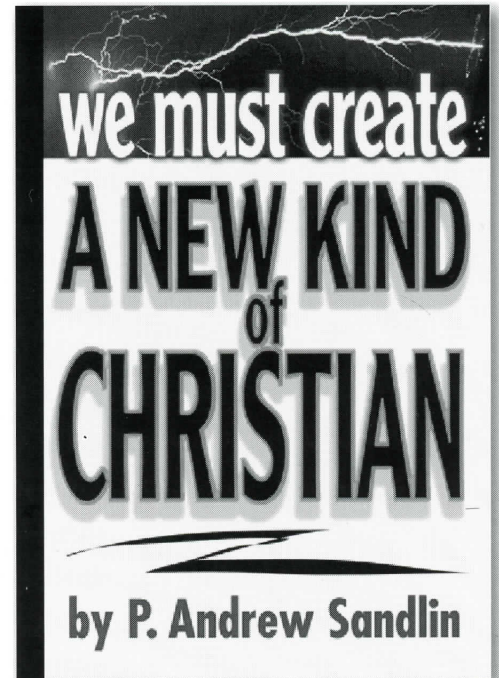
# The Current Crisis of Cultural Leadership, and Our Way Out

## We Must Create a New Kind of Christian

by P. Andrew Sandlin

There will always be an establishment. The only question is whether it will be Christian or anti-Christian. There will be either a Christian establishment with Christian cultural leaders or (as today) an anti-Christian establishment with anti-Christian cultural leaders. What there will not, and what there cannot, be is a Christian culture without a Christian establishment and Christian cultural leaders.

But Christians have been culturally disenfranchised for so long that they now see culture as an enemy. In this learned, provocative statement, P. Andrew Sandlin throws down the gauntlet to a Christian right wing whose principled opposition to cultural leadership has laid the groundwork for the very evils they so loudly decry. It is a ringing manifesto for all Christians who want to recapture today's pagan culture for Jesus Christ.



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