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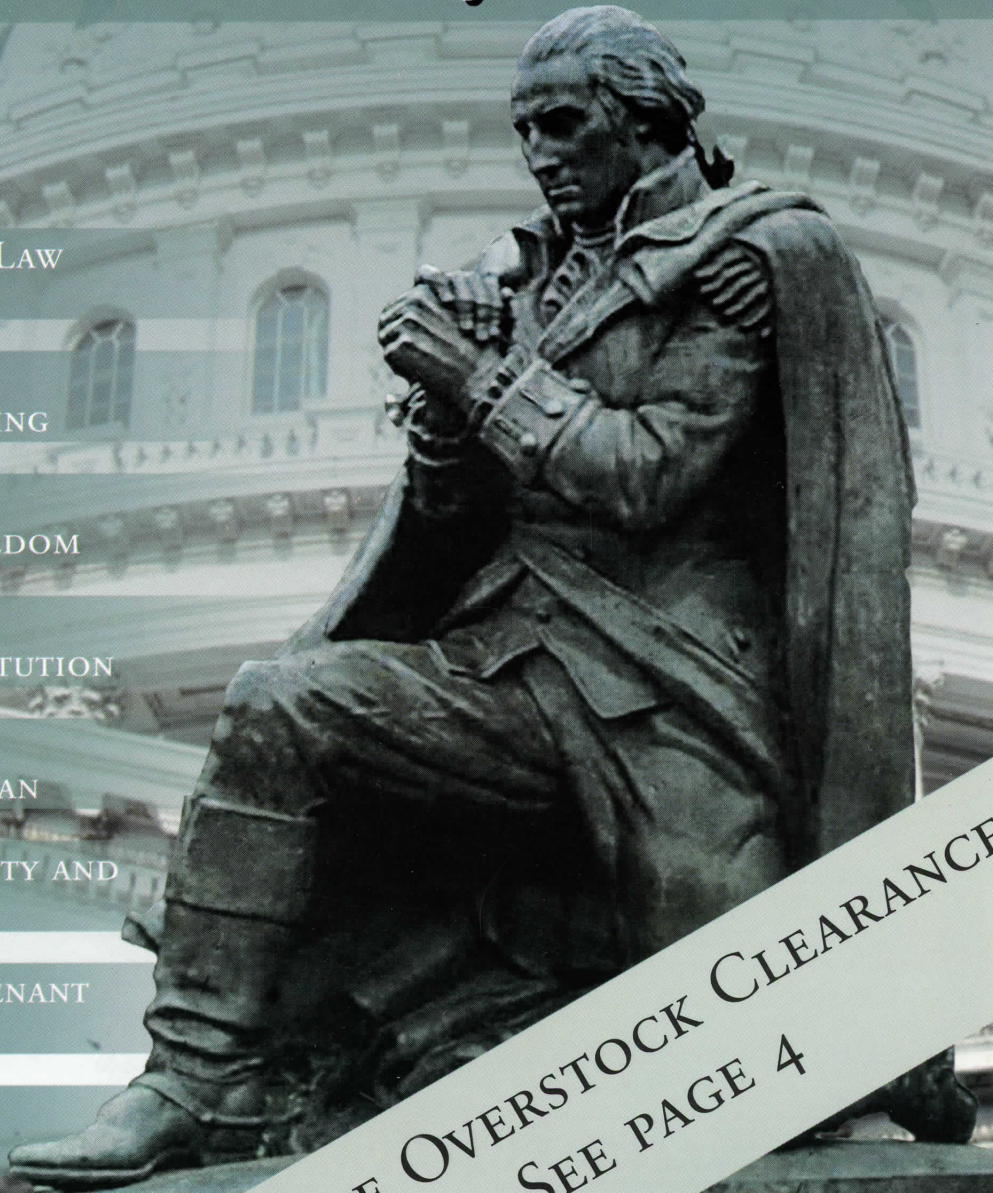
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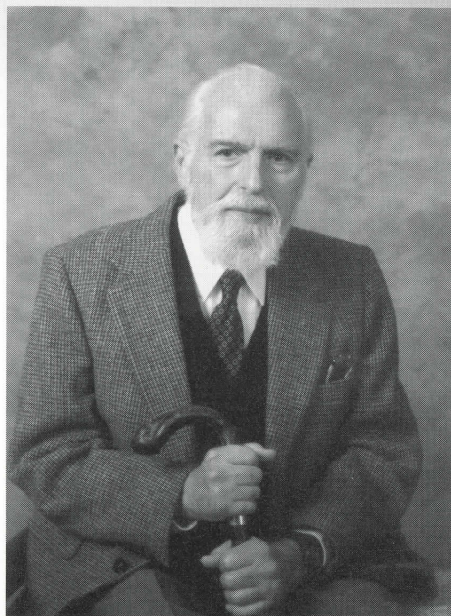
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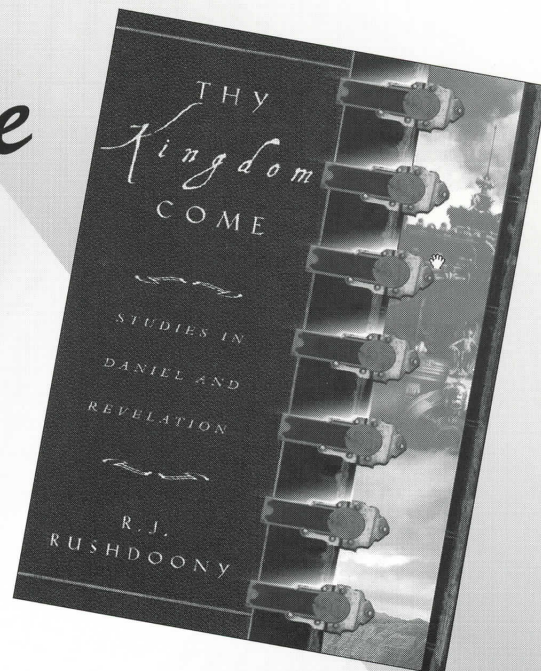
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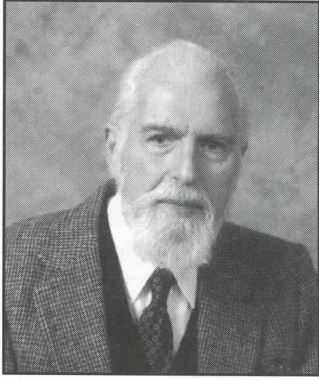
Rev. R. J. Rushdoony (1916-2001) was the founder of Chalcedon and a leading theologian, church/state expert, and author of numerous works on the application of Biblical Law to society.

Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony is president of Chalcedon and Ross House Books.

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.

Rebecca Rouse is Chalcedon's Circulation and Data Manager.
Contact her at (209) 736-4365 ext. 10 or chaloffi@goldrush.com



Sphere Law

By Rev. R. J. Rushdoony
(Condensed from *This Independent Republic*¹)

The idea of sphere law is basic to Christian orthodoxy and to an understanding of Western history. The concept is also termed sphere sovereignty, not an altogether accurate designation, since sovereignty is not ascribed to the spheres but to God and His law. Moreover, the term sphere sovereignty is a modern one, owing its central philosophical formulation to Abraham Kuyper and its great development to Herman Dooyeweerd.² The historical and theological origins, however, are much older and are of vast significance to our history.

In ancient history, the Tower of Babel stands as the best witness to man's virtually universal faith.³ The unity of life was asserted, the unity of god or gods and man, of divine and human, so that man's total life, religious and political, was under the power of this unified divine-human order, against which there was no appeal.

The sole exception to this was ancient Israel when faithful to the Lord. The priestly and kingly offices were strictly separated, although without separating religious responsibilities from the king. In apostasy, the state sought this union of powers in pagan cults. This unity, however, was forbidden to the human order; only in the Messiah were the priestly and royal offices, common to pagan monarchs, to be united. The development of Judaism,

however, represented the apotheosis of this unity, so that, as Christ, representing the incarnation and transcendental focus of this unity, came onto the scene, He clashed at once with a hierarchy which saw the challenge of His presence. The hope of the Jews had become a world order governed by themselves as God's chosen people, with the Messiah, where accepted by a particular party within the state, seen as subservient to this hope.

The coming of Christ was thus a challenge to the truly totalitarian world of antiquity. The Caesars recognized the challenge and fought it savagely and bitterly, and lost.⁴ With Athanasius and Augustine, the faith triumphed that there can be *no confusion* between the human and the divine orders.

The history of the Christian era has been largely the struggle in some sense to reestablish the divine and unitary state, the Tower of Babel bond of heaven and earth, as against the Christian sundering of that bond. In the West, the Holy Roman Empire quickly developed the same claim to represent total order, and its *one-power* theory led it to claim "apostolic" rights over the church. Against this, in terms of the Christian faith, there was the bulwark of Augustinian and Gelasian affirmations of the *two-power* theory, *i.e.*, church and state, both under God. Later,

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however, Pope Innocent III abandoned this concept in favor of the *one-power* idea, the church as the divine-human bond of heaven and earth, *the* kingdom of God on earth, though various factors within the church paved the way for the development of sphere law and the integrity of creaturely activity.

The Reformation, while challenging the one-power concept of Innocentine faith, and of the state, was also a continuation of the new sense of priesthood being developed by the Tertiaries. Significantly, also, Augustine was a major influence on both Luther and Calvin. With respect to sphere law, Calvin at three major points fashioned the doctrines of a new world order:

1. Calvinism denied that the kingdom of God is to be equated with the church. Instead, wherever God reigns, there is the kingdom — and God should reign everywhere. Hence, man can serve God everywhere, and the kingdom of God includes every area of life, and every institution which obeys His commandments.

2. Calvinism, both in terms of this concept of the kingdom and in terms especially of justification by faith, which relates man directly to God, asserted the priesthood of all believers. Thus, man is as fully a priest of God at his business desk and cobbler's bench, when he faithfully obeys God, as is any ordained man in the pulpit. He has direct access to God, and serves God everywhere. Hence, the glory of the closed church meant for Protestantism that the institution and building were there for worship, but not needed for access constantly to God, Who heard men everywhere. Every *sphere* of life is an area of priesthood and a place of nearness to God. Similarly, man under God is king or vicegerent of creation, called to exercise dominion over creation by godly exploitation, exploration, knowledge, and activity. Again, he is a prophet, called upon to interpret creation in terms of the Word of God.

3. This led to a third factor, not immediately recognized but steadily asserting itself. In view of this doctrine of the spheres, and the kingdom, *neither church nor state* has any right to rule over the spheres, since each is directly under God and equally in the kingdom. It is Christ Who is the mediator, and the only mediator, and no institution, order, or person can interfere between God and man. *Interventionism* is a pretension to deity, a claim to powers of mediation and to divine government, and hence is inadmissible.

Medieval feudalism, whatever its weaknesses, still had the Christian virtue of asserting against total government the *limitation of powers* and the responsible, contractual or feudal nature of power. It was thus a forerunner of true federalism. To this inheritance was added the Protestant concept. The independence of the spheres was an interdependence in life and activity but

an independence in terms of human authority. It meant for society a necessary division of powers in institutional and sphere activity: in civil government (as developed in the United States, executive, legislative, and judicial branches, all under a constitution which presupposes a higher law), in the church (minister, session or board, members, church synods and conferences, creeds, Bible), in education (the development in the United States of trustees, a new concept and derived from church lay rule), and in other realms a like division. Man, being a sinner, needs checks and balances. Man, being in the kingdom and a priest, serves God everywhere. Every area has its own law-sphere, and every area its own powers as well as God-imposed restraints on its powers. The unity of these activities and spheres is not in any one of them, in man, or in the whole, but is transcendental; it is in God only. Man experiences the spheres as unity, but he sins if he seeks to unify them under his government. Thus, no institution or sphere, nor man himself, individually or collectively, can claim to be the source or the mediator of unity and authority. Totalitarianism, civil or ecclesiastical, claims institutional divinity and authority.

The sources of American liberty are deeply rooted in this faith and cannot long survive apart from it. The U. S. Constitution had a severe conception of the limitation of powers, and most present federal activity is in violation of the express power doctrine of the Constitution. Instead of being rootless, American history is deeply rooted and hence hostile to the empty forms of traditionalism. Its emphasis on localism and development within context are aspects of this respect for sphere law, or, from a theological point of view, for the priesthood of all believers.

¹ Condensed from chapter 11, "Sphere Laws" in R. J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1964). Ross House Books will be republishing this book in 2001.

² For this development, see Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961); Evan Runner in *Christian Perspectives 1961* (Hamilton, Ontario: Guardian Publishing Co., 1961), 188; Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953-1958), 4v.

³ See Eric Burroughs, "Some Cosmological Patterns in Babylonian Religion," in S. H. Hooke, ed., *The Labyrinth, Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (London: SPCK, 1935), 43-70; and Andre Parrot, *The Tower of Babel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955).

⁴ Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955).

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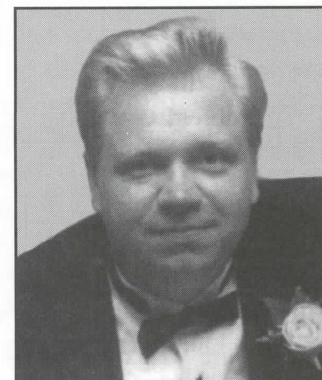
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Ecclesiastical Longsuffering

By Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin



The requirement of longsuffering and patience with our brothers and sisters in the Lord is a clear teaching of the Word of God (*Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; 1 Tim. 6:11*), and it has distinct implications for the local (and wider) church. One of the great temptations of godly (and for that matter, carnal) believers is to abandon the local church in the first instance of disagreement or at the first sign of trouble. If, for example, the church leadership makes a decision a member disagrees with, he is poised for a mad dash out the back door. Similarly, if he gets into a fervent disagreement with a fellow member, he is inclined to transfer his membership (until, of course, he confronts similar problems in the new congregation).

This is not the Biblical pattern of addressing sins and difficulties within the church. In the Old Testament era, Israel, God's covenant people, frequently and drastically apostatized. Nonetheless, not once did God's prophets whom He raised up to decry this apostasy recommend that the remnant or few faithful believers abandon the community of Israel and its rites: sacrifices, feasts, festivals, and so forth. God once threatened to wipe out the entire Jewish race because of their idolatry, but Moses interceded and God withheld His judgment (*Dt. 9:12-20*). He was willing to destroy His entire covenant people because of their egregious sin, and He would have been perfectly justified in doing so; but He was not willing for the faithful in the covenant community to abandon that community.

Likewise, in the New Testament, God did not endorse a general ecclesiastical separatism — a commitment to jettison the church at the first signal of difficulties. Jesus Christ Himself ministered freely in the (generally apostate) Jewish synagogue, though He and His followers were subsequently cast out because of His forthright, authoritative teaching (*Jn. 9*). Christianity began in the Jewish synagogue; and these synagogues became the forerunners of the Gentile New Testament churches, when Jesus and His disciples were “excommunicated” from the

apostate Jewish synagogues. This forced ecclesiastical “separatism” the Bible applauds!

Separation from Sin, Not the Church

When Paul drafted his epistles to a number of the Gentile congregations, he was often obliged to employ stern reprimands because of sin within the church. The Corinthian church tolerated a base form of immorality. The church at Colosse was embracing a kind of Gnostic mysticism. The churches in Galatia were plagued with a style of legalism which threatened to destroy the Old Testament teaching of justification by faith in Christ. Paul was not hesitant to use strong language in rebuking these grievous sins. Note well, however, that *not once did he counsel faithful believers in the midst to separate from these churches*. His view of separation was for the church to separate from sin, not for the faithful to separate from the church. This is equally true of John's message to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Ecclesiastical sanctification, not separation, is the program.

Valid Separatism

Yet it is equally true that Scripture demands separation from sin and from certain sinners. In Titus we read, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject” (*Tit. 3:10*). There comes a time when we cannot remain in individual communion with even professed believers (*1 Cor. 5:11*), and we surely cannot maintain ecclesiastical fellowship with dominant, blatant unbelief (*2 Cor. 6:14-18*). We should infer from this that where formal, *core* orthodox belief is present in the covenant community, there is a legitimate, but perhaps profoundly erroneous, church. Ancient Israel was God's covenant community, because His presence and ordinances were there in spite of the severe sin of the majority of its members. The same is true of churches in the New Testament era. When a church formally abandons the core of Christian orthodoxy (summarized quite well in the early ecumenical

creeds), it has not become an egregiously sinful church; it has become no church at all. Since Christians are to be members of the church, to be members of a community of individuals that does not constitute a church will not suffice. In that case, we have separation not from a church, but from a non-church. This fact applies just as much to independent churches as it does to denominational churches. A church can be immature, weak, misguided, and mistaken and still be a true church. It is no longer a church when it formally abandons what Christianity is all about — the orthodox Trinity; Jesus Christ as the divine-human, eternal, Son of God; His sacrificial death on the cross; His victorious, bodily resurrection; His bodily second coming; the authority of the Bible; and so on.

When we labor together with our brethren in imperfect situations, we are imitating our Lord and Savior, Who labors with and suffers long with and forgives even the most sanctified of His own people (*Col. 3:13*). Strife, disagreement, criticism, “hurt feelings,” and so on are truly sinful, but they are a realistic picture of even the best of churches. Whenever I hear a Christian say, “Our church doesn’t have a problem in the world,” I know that person is either seriously deceived, or that his church is a dead church. Real churches are composed of real Christians, and real

When we labor together with our brethren in imperfect situations, we are imitating our Lord and Savior, Who labors with and suffers long with and forgives even the most sanctified of His own people (Col. 3:13).

Christians sin. The church’s calling is to deal with that sin in a firm and admonitory, but loving and patient, manner (*Gal. 6:1*). It must not leap to excommunication as a deft ecclesiastical tool, but neither must it avoid excommunication as a last, painful action toward the unrepentant, with the constant prayer and hope that he will be restored (*2 Cor. 2:1-8*).

Valid Separateness

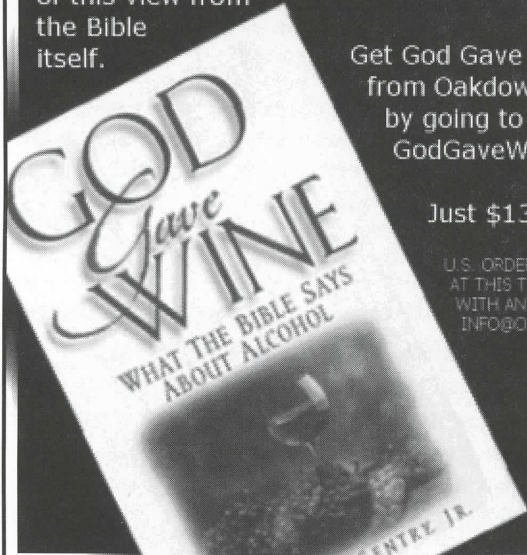
Sometimes, it is convenient and necessary to start new churches from existing churches. For example, issues of geography must be taken into account. As an increasing number of church members must drive long distances to local church meetings, it may be wise to start a new congregation. Sometimes cultural differences justify different congregations. This was the case in the New Testament era, when Jewish Christian congregations labored alongside Gentile Christian congregations, with neither being superior to the other (*Acts 15*). These churches disagreed on relatively secondary and minor issues, but equally affirmed the core elements of the Christian Faith. These differences today may justify separate churches, yet these churches should work together harmoniously to advance Christ’s kingdom in the earth. In this case, organizational separateness need not imply schism or divisiveness. Individual Christians should covenant themselves with orthodox congregations, and labor in that congregation to bring glory to God.

In the Bible, church communion is the rule and separation is the exception. We would do well to remember — and act on — this vital fact.

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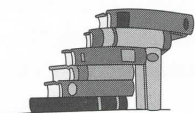
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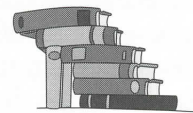
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Books and Things No. 9



By Rev. P. Andrew Sandlin

1 I was pleased when I heard that Chalcedon friends Dennis and Joel Miller (father and son) were starting a new publishing company (Oakdown, www.oakdown.com; P. O. Box 910, Lincoln, CA 95648). I was especially delighted when Joel told me that the first title to be released was an updated edition of Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.'s work defending moderate alcohol consumption. The first work, *The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages*, published by Baker in 1986, I read soon after its release. I was impressed with the book then, and I am even more impressed with this expanded version. Not merely Gentry's cogent argument, but also the book's typeface, cover, and general appearance, contribute to this excellent work. While I don't want to offend my dear brothers who hold the anti-alcohol position, I sincerely cannot conceive of a credible refutation to Gentry's well-honed exegetical argument. The updated version is titled *God Gave Wine* and costs \$13.95 plus \$3.00 shipping, and is available at the address I gave above.

2 In my opinion, the best editorial site on the web is LewRockwell.com. Lew is a gifted thinker and writer, carrying on the tradition of the libertarian Austrian school of economics (Ludwig von Mises being the fountainhead), and his website routinely carries some of the best editorial comment on current issues. It is a pro-liberty, pro-free market, and anti-war site; and it is generous in its posting of articles from an orthodox Christian perspective. Christian writers (aside from Lew himself) include Joel Miller, Gary North, and this writer.

3 I have mentioned before the conservative-libertarian sociologist, Robert Nisbet. His book, *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies [1953], 1990) is probably his seminal work. Nisbet's extensive writings are dominated by the theme of human community — that men are not islands but create societies and cultures in which to relate to one another. *The Quest for Community* contains three parts: "Community and the Problem of Order," "The State and Community," and "Community and the Problem of Freedom." This work contains not merely brilliant sociological observations; its religious and psychological comments are often outstanding as well. He observes, for example, in Protestantism the tendency to oppose any externalization of religion and often thereby to create a radical individualization that destroys true human community (pp. 82-85). In his chapter, "The Problem of Liberalism," he asserts that men's presuppositions often arise from the community of which they are a part, and not from an individualistic employment of

reason. This leads him to assert, naturally, the vital importance of communities, not ideas as such, in forming peoples' beliefs and practices (pp. 196-197). The great thesis of this book, however, is that individual freedom, far from being the effect of emancipation from state power, is, in fact, the precondition of that power. Tyrannical states do not war against the individual; they war against those non-coercive, intermediate institutions which claim the individual's allegiance: the family, the church, the school, business, and so on. In fact, as Nisbet observes, the *only* freedom tyrannical societies permit is individual freedom (p. 185). They desire an individual wedded exclusively to the state, and offer him a certain limited sphere of "freedom." It is not individual freedom that these tyrannies oppose, but competitors to their authority that they find unacceptable. This book is filled with profound insights. Get it and read it.

4 You may have already heard of Stéphane Courtois' (editor) massive work, *The Black Book of Communism* (Harvard University Press, 1999). This is the book which, more than any other, documents the horror, hatred, murder, torture, genocide, repression, and terror perpetuated by Communist regimes in the twentieth century. With access to the latest documentation available since the fall of Communism in most of the world, the writers set forth in searing detail the dehumanizing evils in Communist regimes from the Soviet Union to China, from Cambodia to Latin America.

5 Thomas Oden's *Agenda for Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979) sets forth an orthodox theological program by a former liberal who has dramatically seen the error of his former ways. There is both an incisiveness and warmth in this work that other orthodox writers need to emulate. I agree with Oden in seeing the orthodoxy of "classical Christianity" as the environment in which to write sound theology. His three-volume trilogy of systematic theology (*The Living God*, *The Word of Life*, and *Life in the Spirit*, all three republished by Prince Press) are anchored in the broad, orthodox Christian tradition and take the authority of the Bible and of orthodoxy quite seriously.

6 H. Henry Meeter's *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism* (there are, I believe, a number of editions) is an excellent work setting forth the notion of God's sovereignty in all of life as a central principle of the Reformed Faith. For Meeter, this means that Calvinism is a system of thought, or a "world- and life-view." The book is almost exclusively about this life-view, and, while I disagree strongly with certain of its conclusions,

it does present an outstanding view of Calvinism and the latter's conception of Scripture, theology, common grace, culture, politics, the state, and so on.

7A great Reformed theologian in the past century was Herman N. Ridderbos. His *When the Time Had Fully Come: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada: Paideia Press [1957], 1982) is just one example of his many fine works. I disagree vigorously with certain aspects of his so-called "redemptive-historical" approach to the Scriptures; but his rigorous, perceptive theological insights cannot be denied. In the work under consideration, I especially enjoyed his chapters on "The Redemptive-Historical Character of Paul's Preaching," "The Law of God in Paul's Doctrine of Salvation," and "History of Redemption and the Scriptures in the New Testament." In the chapter on Paul's use of the law, Ridderbos recognizes that the apostle does not pit the Old Testament law against the New Testament gospel, but only the misuse and misinterpretation of the Old Testament law against the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like Geerhardus Vos and Richard Gaffin, Ridderbos believes that the Pauline epistles are largely a systematic interpretation of the historical revelation of the Gospels. In other words, Pauline writings are not only inspired Scriptures; they are, in addition, inspired systematic theology (p. 49). There is much to learn from this profound Dutch scholar.

8Thomas Sowell's *A Personal Odyssey* (New York: The Free Press, 2000) is not an autobiography as such but a collection of personal vignettes that serve as a lens through which to interpret his life's experiences. Sowell, the leading conservative-libertarian economist, recounts his humble beginnings in the South in a broken family, his elementary and secondary school years in New York City, his tour with the Marines, and his subsequent academic career — including a number of years teaching college. Sowell is an excellent example of a man committed to "old-fashioned" humanistic values. A main theme of the book is how he (and he alone) worked hard for his personal accomplishment, and how he is responsible for his success. (I relish Monte Wilson's description of the moralistic humanist: "A person pulling himself down to hell by his own bootstraps.") Like many other conservatives, as Sowell observes, he was essentially a Leftist (even a Marxist) in his youth, but the constraints of reality (not God, of course!) turned him around. The book is valuable in its verification of the hypocrisies and stupidities of the secular academic Left when it comes to economics, race, politics, and many other issues. Unfortunately, as Sowell's work unwittingly discloses, the secular academic Right is ultimately no better. Many students, though, can learn a basic fact from Sowell's experience: hard work usually trumps brilliance. Sowell was almost forced to leave Harvard because the academic program was too rigorous for him. He did not rely on his

inherent brilliance alone, but "made his brains sweat" and soon was able to master the academic work at increasingly difficult levels. He graduated *magna cum laude*. Unfortunately, as in all else, he does not give God the credit for his success.

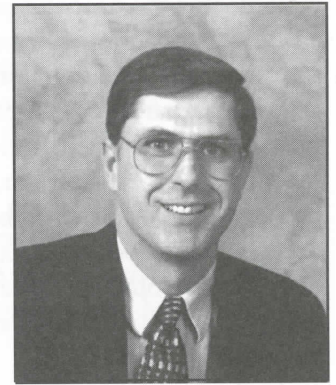
9Gustaf Aulén's *Christus Victor* (London: SPCK, 1931) is a little theological classic explaining and defending the view of Christ's atonement which dominated the Western church for about its first thousand years. It is the view that Christ obtained salvation for His people by trampling down the devil, evil principalities and powers, and the present world system and sin itself. It is to be distinguished from the view systematized by Anselm and transferred to the later Protestant Reformers, the satisfaction or judicial theory of the atonement, the basic outlines of which began with the Latin view of purgatory. The fact is, both "theories" of the atonement are manifestly Biblical. We cannot limit Christ's work to a narrow, humanly constructed "theory." Christ surely was a substitute and sacrifice for our sins; He bore the legal penalty for our law-breaking (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). In addition, however, Colossians 2:14-16 makes quite clear that Christ's death was also a victory. He spoiled principalities and powers and captured His elect by means of His death. The *Christus Victor* theme emphasizes Christ as a *ransom* paid to free His people from their sins. Though there certainly is some misguided theological speculation that goes along with this theory, its basics are grounded in Biblical fact, and it coincides well with postmillennial theology.

10Canon Press (P. O. Box 8741, Moscow, ID, 83843, www.canonpress.org) is publishing many fine works, a number of which deal effectively with how to start and maintain a godly Christian family. Here I'll mention the title *The End of All Things: A Defense of the Future*, by C. Jonathin Seraiah. This is (to my knowledge) the first book-length refutation of "consistent preterism," the view that all Biblical prophecies (including the Second Advent and the final resurrection) had been fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Seraiah terms this heresy "pantelism" (from the Greek, meaning, "all is completed"), and his book evinces the exegetical and historical bankruptcy of this view. Please contact Canon Press and get a catalog of all their books.

11One of the great Calvinistic ministries stressing genuine, Biblical reformation and revival is John Armstrong's Reformation and Revival Ministries (P. O. Box 88216, Carol Stream, IL 60188, 1-888-276-1044). In a day of both spurious revival as well as opposition to the very idea of revival, this ministry stands squarely for the sovereignty of God, the authority of the (whole) Bible, the centrality of Christ, salvation by grace through faith, and the profound work of the Holy Spirit. Please get on their mailing list.

Covenantal Faith and Freedom

By Rev. Mark R. Rushdoony



Fanciful picture of early Americans as “rugged individualists” is too common in conservative circles. Ostensibly this characterization points out the incompatibility of the early American character with modern socialized thinking. Instead, it makes early Americans the forerunners of modern socialized man. The incompatibility of early American thought to socialism is not to be found in its individualistic nature, but in its Christian covenantal thinking.

Rugged individualistic explorers, trappers, and even hermits certainly existed. Many, no doubt, were brave men of high character, but they were not characteristic of American colonization, western migrations, or society in general. The history of the United States was more characterized by family and group dynamics. With the exception of the various gold rushes, movement and social organization was by family units. Very difficult migrations were made by families with aged grandparents, young children, and expectant mothers. This was not a work of individuals or individualists; this was a work of families who gave themselves over to years of hard work and deprivation in order to capitalize succeeding generations. They were more group oriented than the most idealistic Marxist.

If a society is seen as composed of atomistic units of one, then it exists primarily for those individuals. Society and laws will be for the benefit of the individual. Authority and responsibility are exchanged directly between the individual and the state. The atomistic individual has no intervening authority between himself and the state; he becomes a statist man. This is why totalitarian regimes seek to destroy all forms of authority, loyalty, and association not controlled by the state. The individual is easy prey for the state.

Early Americans were covenantal, both theologically and sociologically. Their Christian faith, their medieval past, and economic necessity had emphasized the importance of groups and local, limited authority. The covenantal nature of family and

church life is easily identifiable, but association in terms of nationality, class, trades, charity work, civic endeavors, and political ideology or partisanship were common. Even the families who migrated west typically did so in groups which voted leaders and rules in place before their journey began. In a mining camp near this writer's home, a long, deep cut was made through solid rock by a self-organized group of miners so that a swampy area could be drained and mined. Similar groups of miners would meet early on to determine local mining laws where no real authority existed. These still form the basis of U. S. mining law. Few places exhibited the lawlessness our Western mythology has come to fictionalize and then romanticize as typical. Most towns saw law and order established very quickly by the residents themselves. The Reformed faith made the covenantal view of human responsibility paramount in church and family. This quickly and easily transferred to other areas. Responsible men tend to have large-scale goals and see organization and voluntary association, not individualism, as means to an end.

The claims of the state, usually in the person of the king or later by legislative bodies, first faced opposition from Calvinists. The crown feared John Knox and yielded to the Calvinists in Parliament in the English Civil War, though not without a fight. It was because of their strong views of their responsibilities before God in various aspects of life that they believed in a multiplicity of spheres of authority and law. Because of their belief in the sovereignty of God, they believed neither church, state, nor autonomous man ought to control all aspects of life. Unity of authority was transcendent in God; human covenants could serve the kingdom of God best by separate spheres of authority.

The multiplicity of spheres of authority could allow for free association based on conscience. In addition, it meant that cooperation between spheres, even church and state, was possible if both had a common or mutual goal. Christianity (but not the institutional

church) was the unifying factor of these spheres of authority. In fact, without a religious or philosophical unity, law spheres and all individuals work at contrary purposes. Anarchy, or at least selfishness, will then prevail. It is the usurpation of one sphere that is then most to be feared; strength, or power, within proper bounds, is not. The church tried to usurp authority to itself early on; today the secular state is increasingly the problem. Statism is a lawless and dysfunctional societal system; it is never a responsible answer to societal lawlessness.

To the Christian, life and liberty are always under law. The Christian should therefore not fear laws in support of Christian social goals because they interfere with personal freedom. True freedom is not licentious. Godly laws are not a threat to the godly. The issue is not whether such laws interfere with personal choice, but whether they are a legitimate reach of civil authority or they interfere with the legitimate authority of another sphere, such as family or church.

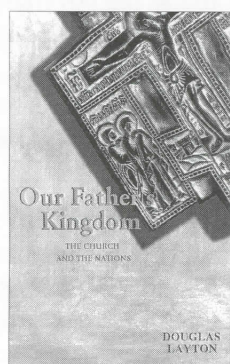
The Puritan goal of a holy commonwealth was of godly civil government and a free and pure church.¹ It was not intended that it be a theocracy, but rather a Christian civil order. Church and state were seen as united in a common faith, without being legally or structurally bound. It is not too different from when various Christian charitable groups or foreign missions

work together on particular projects for a united purpose. Cooperation does not imply subservience or organizational control of one group over another. In fact, often a special group or board is set up to specifically direct the area of cooperation. Again, a multiplicity of law or authority spheres prevents any one from trying to create a false and oppressive unity.

The objection can be made that such a multiplicity of law spheres is complex, and that a supreme structural sovereignty simplifies the lines of authority and responsibility. John Adams saw this line of reasoning in French Revolutionary thought and responded that the simplest of all governments would be a despotism. Our lives and responsibilities are complex. We rightly get frustrated when a single responsibility demands too much of our time and energy. Statism demands all of our allegiance and leaves us without recourse. The atomistic individual is easy pickings for the state; in a multiplicity of authorities and responsibilities there is a degree of shelter from the claims of any one.

The Puritans were right. We are a covenant people. This covenant perspective cannot exist for long without a covenant faith, however. The personalization of the Faith in its reduction to an *individualistic* emotional experience so weakened Christianity that it made the secularization of the covenant inevitable. It was secularized by, among other factors, Unitarianism, public education, manifest destiny, and America's increasing imperialism in the twentieth century. Religion was marginalized and America's mission or calling was increasingly politicized, with Washington, D. C., the unifying sphere. We cannot find real freedom in political solutions. To recapture a plurality of freedoms we must recover a multiplicity of spheres of authority and corresponding spheres of responsibility.

¹See R. J. Rushdoony *This Independent Republic* (Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1964). See chapter 8, "The Holy Commonwealth." This book will be reprinted by Ross House Books later this year.



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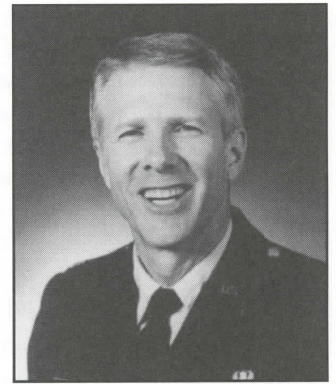
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Christianity in the Constitution

By John Eidsmoe



During the twentieth century, various secular writers have asserted that the Framers of the U.S. Constitution were secular-minded men whose goal was to shake off the superstitions of the past (*i.e.*, Christianity) and initiate a new godless era for mankind. A few Christian writers have bought this argument, some because they too believe government should be secular, others because they believe the Framers should have gone further in establishing an overtly Christian republic.

How, then, should we evaluate the Constitution today? Is it a secular document, a Christian document, or a hybrid document? My answer is: The U.S. Constitution reflects the temper of the time in which it was written, a time in which Christianity was the dominant religion and philosophy, but also a time in which some strains of Enlightenment philosophy existed in America as well.

A Christian Constitution?

But first let us consider, what is the defining feature that makes a constitution Christian? Consider two possibilities. (1) A constitution could begin "In the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen," and expressly declare, "This is a Christian nation," and from there on consist of political principles that are utterly indifferent to or even hostile to Christian values. Or, (2) a constitution might contain no express affirmation of Christianity, but nevertheless consist of political principles that are consistent with Christian values. Which of these would be the "Christian" constitution? I would argue that the Christian values which underlie a constitution are more important than an express affirmation of Christianity in determining whether the Constitution is Christian in character.

Those who claim ours is a "godless Constitution" ignore the last sentence of Article VII, the Attestation Clause:

Done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and

Eighty seven and of the Independence of the United States of America the Twelfth In Witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names....

Some try to dismiss the Attestation Clause as a meaningless formality. But just as a last will and testament is invalid without the attestation, so the Attestation Clause and the signatures which follow give the Constitution its legal validity. And the clause is important for two other reasons:

(1) Unlike the leaders of the French Revolution who repudiated Christianity and the Gregorian calendar and established a new calendar that began with their Revolution, the Framers of our Constitution had no hesitation about recognizing the birth of Jesus Christ as the central event of human history. Significantly, England had adopted the Gregorian calendar only a quarter of century earlier.

(2) By their reference to the twelfth year of independence, the Framers incorporated by reference the Declaration of Independence and its ideals: Government based on the laws of nature and of nature's God, equality based on our having been created by God, unalienable God-given rights, and government by the consent of the governed. The Declaration and the Constitution must be read together to grasp their meaning. The Declaration established the nation; the Constitution established the government. The Declaration set forth the nation's ideals or founding principles; the Constitution provided a practical mechanism by which those ideals can be realized and preserved in a society of imperfect people.

Natural law and natural rights were a cornerstone of the Framers' thought. Practically every American of that time, from the strictest Puritan to the most radical Deist, believed that God had ordained natural laws and natural rights. Alexander Hamilton expressed the views of the emerging nation when he wrote in 1775:

The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are

written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power. ... Good and wise men, in all ages...have supposed that the Deity, from the relations we stand in to Himself, and to each other, has constituted an eternal and immutable law, which is indispensably obligatory upon all mankind, prior to any human institutions whatsoever.¹

This higher law of God both empowered government and limited government. God ordained human government and gave it authority to rule, but that government may not act contrary to God's laws or in violation of the rights God has given to man. When the Framers referred to "Offences against the Law of Nations" in Article I, Section 8, Clause 10, they understood the term as used by Christian writers such as Vitoria, Suarez, Grotius, Vattel, and Pufendorf, as part of the higher law of God.

Two more factors contributed to the Framers' view of limited government. The first was their respective states' role in the new federal union. Each had been sent to the Convention by his respective state, and those states were wary about ceding their powers to a central government.

Human Nature

The second was their view of human nature. Probably the most common reason constitutions and political systems fail to work in practice is that they are based on a faulty view of the nature of man. Marxist ideology holds that human nature is perfectible through a dictatorship of the proletariat as it follows the revolution and prepares people for the classless, stateless society, and the socialist workers' paradise — and when human nature proves intransigent, as it always does, the dictatorship of the proletariat invariably turns into a reign of terror.

John Adams declared that human nature had not changed "since the Garden of Eden," and consequently, "no such passion as a love of democracy, stronger than self-love, or superior to the love of private interest, ever did, or ever can prevail in the minds of the citizens in general," for "no love of equality, at least since Adam's fall, ever existed in human nature."² And later, surveying the wreckage of the French Revolution, he wrote to Jefferson:

Let me ask you very seriously, my friend, where are now in 1813 the perfection and perfectibility in human nature? Where is now the progress of the human mind? Where is the amelioration of society? Where the augmentation of human comforts? Where the diminution of human pains and miseries?³

James Madison, who had studied for the ministry at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) and stayed after graduation to study Hebrew under Rev. Witherspoon, summarized the political implications of one's view of human nature in *The Federalist No. 51*:

The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place. It may be a reflection on human nature that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of the government. But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself.

This view of human nature, based both on a Biblical view of sin and their own realistic observations, had two implications: (1) It meant that people cannot be trusted to live in a state of anarchy; government must have sufficient authority to preserve law and order. (2) Those in authority have the same sinful nature as everyone else and, therefore, they cannot be trusted with too much power.

The question facing the Convention delegates, then, was this: How do we give government enough power to govern effectively, but at the same time restrain that power so government does not become tyrannical and oppressive? The answer, embodied in the Constitution of the United States, was to limit and diffuse power, or, as Madison said in *Federalist No. 51*, "Let ambition check ambition."

Formula for Freedom

One might summarize this as The Framers' Five-Fold Formula for Freedom:

(1) Give the federal government only limited, delegated powers. As the 10th Amendment makes clear, the federal government has only those powers which the people or the states through the Constitution have delegated to it; all powers not delegated to the federal government are reserved to the states or to the people.

(2) Separate the powers of government vertically among the federal, state, and local governments, and horizontally among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

(3) Enable the various levels and branches of government to check and balance each other. Each level or branch, jealously guarding its own powers, checks the powers of the others, and thus preserves

the liberties of the people by keeping the other levels and branches within their appointed limits.

(4) Protect individual rights from abuse or usurpation, even if those abuses or usurpations are supported by a majority of the people. The Framers feared democracy as mob rule and the tyranny of the majority over the minority. They established instead a constitutional republic in which the majority generally governs but the minority has rights that even the majority may not take away.

(5) Responsibility through religion. The Framers knew that a free society was possible only if the people possess a civic virtue that enables them to exercise self-discipline, obey the laws even when the policeman isn't watching, and place the interest of their family, their community, and their country above their own. If people can't control themselves, government must control them. But man doesn't have that kind of civic virtue within himself. Therefore, that kind of virtue must be supplied, and the only source from whence it could come was religion, a term which the Framers generally used interchangeably with Christianity. As George Washington said in his Farewell Address:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. ...[R]eason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality may prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

This does not mean they favored a national church. Much like the ancient Hebrews, who placed priesthood or religious authority in the tribe of Levi and the kingship or civil authority in the tribe of Judah, the Framers favored a separation of church and state in the proper sense of the word. But they favored an *institutional* separation. They never intended to separate government from God's authority or to separate law and policy from Biblical values.

All of these concepts make good sense, but are they *Christian*? Certainly many of them may be found in non-Christian value systems, but that is not where the Framers found them. The Framers were mostly professing Christians: 28 of the 55 Convention delegates were Episcopalian; 8 were Presbyterian; 7 were Congregationalist; 2 were Reformed; 2 were Lutheran; 2 were Methodist; and 2 were Catholic. At least 51 of the 55 were affiliated with Christian churches, and the vast majority of these came from churches of the Reformed tradition.⁴

And they looked to the Bible for their inspiration. A study of the writings of leading American political

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figures from 1760 to 1805 reveals that 34% of all quotations found in their writings come from the Bible. Of the remainder, the largest number come from Baron Charles Montesquieu (a devout Catholic), Sir William Blackstone (a devout Anglican), and John Locke (not always orthodox, but essentially in the Christian camp).⁵

No wonder, then, the constitutional republic the Framers devised so closely resembles the old Hebrew republic — a confederation of twelve tribes, each governed by judges, united under the law of God, and with no king in Israel but God Himself.

¹Alexander Hamilton, "The Farmer Refuted," 1775; quoted by Nathan Schachner, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Barnes & Co. [1946], 1961), 38, 430.

²John Adams, quoted by Gilbert Chinard, *Honest John Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co. [1933], 1961), 214-215.

³John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, July 15, 1813; quoted by Page Smith, *John Adams* (Garden City: Doubleday [1962], 1963), II: 1112.

⁴M. E. Bradford, *A Worthy Company: Brief Lives of the Framers of the United States Constitution* (Plymouth, MA: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1982), iv-v.

⁵Donald S. Lutz, "The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth Century American Political Thought," *American Political Science Review* 18 (1984), 189-97.

John Eidsmoe is Professor of Constitutional Law at the Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, Faulkner University, Montgomery, Alabama. He is also a retired Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, an Adjunct Professor at Birmingham Theological Seminary, and an ordained pastor in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. He can be contacted at (334) 270-1789 or EidsmoeJA@juno.com.



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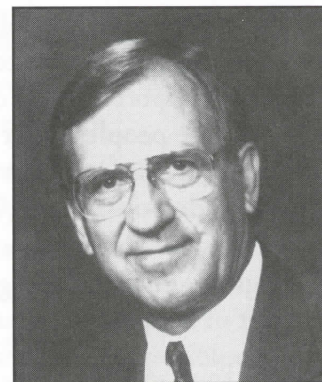
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America: A Cradle Christian

By Herbert W. Titus



In the 1950s, Seton Hall law professor John C. H. Wu wrote in his study on the common law that, while the Roman law was a death-bed convert to Christianity, the American common law was a cradle Christian. And so it was for the two nations as political entities.

The Roman Empire surrendered to the rule of Christ, only to pass soon thereafter from the center stage of world history. Centuries later, the United States of America stepped onto a far corner of that stage, birthed by the providence of Almighty God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

On July 4, 1776, by the Declaration of Independence, America's founders proclaimed to the world that, by "the laws of nature and of nature's God," the United States was entitled to equal status in the family of nations. This was an extraordinary claim, one that rooted the very legitimacy of the nation in the law of God, as revealed in nature and in the Holy Scriptures. At the same time, the claim was very strategic.

Just eleven years before, Sir William Blackstone had published the first volume of his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. In this introductory text, Blackstone maintained that the English common law had been planted in God's revealed will, initially, as manifested in the created universe, and ultimately, and more perfectly, as written in the Holy Bible.

Relying on the creation account of the book of Genesis, Blackstone contended that true law was comprised of rules imposed by the Creator upon all of His creatures, including mankind. These "laws of nature," he wrote, "were binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times; no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this...."

Little did Blackstone know that these words, just a decade later, would serve the cause of America's War for Independence. Appealing to these very laws of nature, and to God's written laws, the American charter of independence asserted that the English king and parliament had persistently violated God's

law. Thereby, America's patriots made their case for taking up arms to fight for their unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, endowed to them by God.

And by what authority did these American freedom fighters wage war for their independence? To answer this question one must go back to 1536, this time to a work penned by a Frenchman, living in Geneva, Switzerland.

Calvin's Contribution

In his great work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin, in his exegesis of Romans 13, laid the ground work, contending that, as ministers of God, civil magistrates have a duty to enforce the laws of God even against higher civil officers. From this came the Reformation doctrine of the right of the lower civil magistrate to depose a tyrannical king to restore the rule of law.

As Professor Douglas F. Kelly has documented, in his masterful work, *The Emergence of Liberty in the Modern World*, Calvin's doctrine of the lower civil magistrate was picked up by the French Huguenots and popularized in their call to political action, the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*. From there, John Knox proclaimed the doctrine in Scotland, and Samuel Rutherford in England, culminating with the 1688 Glorious Revolution and the restoration of the rule of law in England under William and Mary.

Thus, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the right of the lower civil magistrate to interpose against a lawless ruler in favor of an oppressed people emerged as one of the rights of Englishmen. Those rights, in turn, had been imported to the shores of America by the colonial charters granted to them by the king. For it was under these charters that the American colonists won the right of self-government through elected colonial assemblies from which came the lower civil magistrates who would, on July 4, 1776, in Congress assembled, call for armed action to defend American liberty.

These representatives of the people of the several colonies did not hesitate to employ this Biblical legacy in support of their cause, claiming it to be the right of "the people," after a "long train of abuses and usurpations," to "throw off" a government of "absolute despotism" and "to institute a new government" designed more effectively to secure the God-given, unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In paragraph after paragraph, the people's representatives specified the abuses and usurpations that had led them to take the drastic step of leading the people to defend their liberties by force of arms.

The Judge of Nations

Having invoked the laws of God, and having stated their case for breaking their allegiance to the mother country, America's founders submitted their cause to God, "appealing to [Him as] the Supreme Judge of the world." In so doing, they followed in the footsteps of Jephthah, the ninth judge of Israel, who called upon "the Lord Judge...[to] judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon" before he went into battle for Israel's independence (*Jud. 11:27*).

The similarity of the two appeals was not coincidental. In his influential work justifying the 1688 Glorious Revolution in England, John Locke had cited the incident of Jephthah's appeal in support of his contention that only God had authority to judge between two nations at war. Indeed, as Psalm 2 attests, the very Son of God sits at the right hand of the Father judging the nations.

But America's founding leaders knew God not only as Supreme Judge, but as "Divine Providence." As they prepared to battle the mighty British, they sought God's mercy as they risked their "lives, fortunes and sacred honor" in a battle that could not be won without God's active intervention. And just as God revealed Himself to Abraham as Jehovah-Jireh, providing a ram in the thicket to save Isaac, so God met George Washington's rag-tag army's every need, bringing the final victory over Cornwall at Yorktown, Virginia.

A century later, after conducting a comparative study of the American and French revolutions, the great Spanish statesman, Emilio Castelar, urged his fellow countrymen to follow the lead of the United States, not France, in crafting a new constitution for his beloved Spain. The French democracy, he observed, had passed quickly from the world's stage, even though it had been rooted in the reason of the Enlightenment and the works of its philosophers. By contrast, Castelar maintained, the American Republic continued to flourish, having been planted in the soil of the Biblical revelation, and the works of John Calvin.

And so it was. From the American Revolution's opening statement calling for an end to "taxation without representation," to the closing argument that King George III was a "tyrant...unfit to rule a free people," America's founding documents provide unmistakable evidence that the United States of America was founded by Christian statesman under the superintending hand of Almighty God.

But America, too, will pass from the world's stage, as have all other nations before her, unless she repents and turns back to the God of her fathers and submits once again to the "laws of nature and of nature's God."

Herbert W. Titus is a constitutional attorney and President of Forecast Foundation. He can be reached at Forecast Foundation, 2400 Carolina Road, Chesapeake, VA 23322, (757) 421-3365.



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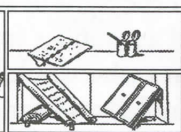
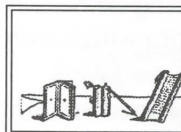
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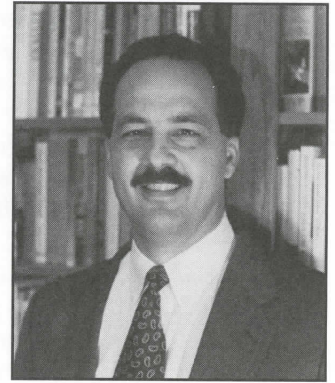
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Christianity and America: A Mixed Bag

By Gary DeMar



The Federal Constitution purports to be neutral toward religion. But neutrality toward anything is impossible. At the earliest stages of our nation's formal founding, a number of Christians noticed that a reference to God in the Preamble was absent. They saw this as an implicit departure from America's earlier Christian history:

Two small Presbyterian bodies, the Associated Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, decided to abstain from voting [to ratify the Constitution] until the Constitution was so amended as to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and the subserviency of the state to the kingdom of Christ.¹

"The people" seem to be the Federal Constitution's only sovereigns since "the people" are not bound to any authority greater than the collective whole. This is a marked change from the earlier state constitutions.

Pennsylvania: "We, the people of Pennsylvania, grateful to Almighty God for the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and humbly invoking His guidance, do ordain and establish this Constitution."

Connecticut: "The People of this State ... by the Providence of God ... hath the sole and exclusive right of governing themselves as a free, sovereign, and independent State ... and forasmuch as the free fruition of such liberties and privileges as humanity, civility, and Christianity call for us, as is due to every man in his place and proportion ... hath ever been, and will be the tranquility and stability of Churches and Commonwealth; and the denial thereof, the disturbances, if not the ruin of both."

Georgia: "We, the people of Georgia, relying upon protection and guidance of Almighty God, do ordain and establish this Constitution."

Maryland: "We, the people of the state of Maryland, grateful to Almighty God for our civil and religious liberty [declare specific rights]."

Massachusetts: "We, therefore, the people of Massachusetts, acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the goodness of the great Legislator of the universe, in affording us, in the course of His providence (an

opportunity to form a compact); ... and devoutly imploring His direction in so interesting a design, ... (establish this Constitution)."

New York: "We, the People of the State of New York, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure its blessings, do establish this Constitution."

South Carolina: "We, the people of the State of South Carolina, ... grateful for our liberties, do ordain and establish this Constitution."

No doubt "the people" established the civil government of the respective states (convened its legislatures and courts, drafted its laws, and wrote its constitution), but they did it acknowledging that God made it all possible and that they, "the people," were subjects and servants under His sovereign rule. This is a Biblical concept. The colonial Protestant view did recognize the sovereignty of God as delegated to all civil governments *through* the people.

The Ultimate Standard

The Federal Constitution requires that "Senators, Representatives.... Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution" (*Article VI, section 3*). But bound by whom? What is the ultimate standard that either they or the Constitution is to find its moral foundation? Since the constitutional covenant was made with "We the People," we must assume that "We the People" are the highest authority. In one sense they are, when the people acknowledge God as their Sovereign. But should the Constitution say more? The state constitutions certainly did:

Delaware Constitution (*The following oath of office was in force until 1792.*): "I _____ do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be given by divine inspiration."

North Carolina Constitution (until 1876): “That no person who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the Protestant religion, or the divine authority of the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office or place of trust or profit in the civil department within this State.”

Maryland: “That no religious test ought ever to be required as a qualification for any office of profit or trust in this state, other than a declaration of belief in the existence of God” (article 37).

Because a Biblical worldview was still operating in the eighteenth century, presidents and other public officials as well as witnesses at trial, out of tradition and requirement by state governments, still take the required constitutional oath with their hand on an open Bible and affirming, “So help me God.” George Washington began the tradition at the national level. Historians will point out that it was a Masonic Bible. The practice was followed, with the lone exception of Thomas Jefferson, down to George W. Bush. Former President Ronald Reagan took the oath of office on the King James Bible used by his mother opened to 2 Chronicles 7:14. George W. Bush was going to use Washington’s Masonic Bible, but poor weather conditions forced him to choose another less fragile Bible.

The Constitution does not require that an oath be taken with the Bible in hand. But the fact that the oath is still taken in this way is a reminder that the people did not fully grasp the significance of the change in their new national Constitution (this may be due to the Christian character of their state constitutions which were still intact). During the time of the Constitution’s drafting their elected officials still acknowledged (even the Deist Thomas Jefferson) that there is a greater Sovereign than “We the People,” although this was not always understood or applied in Biblical terms. It is only since our nation has become more secularized and anti-Christian that the full implications of “We the People” have come to light.

In the Bible, all oath-taking had to be done in the Lord’s name (e.g., Dt. 10:20). The United States Constitution forbids a religious oath to be taken at the federal level: “No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States” (Article VI, section 3).² This, too, was a change from the state constitutions. For example, Delaware’s constitution of 1776 prohibited the “establishment of one religious sect in this State in preference to another,” disqualified clergymen from holding civil office, maintaining a jurisdictional separation of church and state, and yet required every

public officer to take an oath professing faith in the Trinity and in the Old and New Testaments.

Luther Martin of Maryland, in a lengthy letter to the Speaker of the House of Delegates of Maryland, set forth his justification in leaving the convention and in refusing to sign the Constitution:

The part of the system which provides that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States was adopted by a great majority of the Convention and without much debate; however, there were some members so unfashionable as to think that a belief in the existence of a Deity and of a state of future rewards and punishments would be some security for the good conduct of our rulers, and that, in a Christian country, it would be at least decent to hold out some distinction between the professors of Christianity and downright infidelity or paganism.³

While the Constitution does not repudiate the Christian religion formally, it does seem to imply its dismissal by not acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the ruler of all nations, and His revealed will as the supreme law of the land. There are, however, remnants of a Biblical worldview present in the Constitution’s covenant structure, governmental themes, acknowledgment of the Christian Sabbath, and dating.

Moreover, the Christian religion played a significant role in the development of the nation prior to the convention and continued thereafter:

Throughout its history our governments, national and state, have co-operated with religion and shown friendliness to it. God is invoked in the Declaration of Independence and in practically every state constitution. Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, is universally observed as a day of rest. The sessions of Congress and of the state legislatures are invariably opened with prayer, in Congress by chaplains who are employed by the Federal government. We have chaplains in our armed forces and in our penal institutions. Oaths in courts of law are administered through use of the Bible. Public officials take an oath of office ending with “so help me God.” Religious institutions are tax exempt throughout the nation. Our pledge of allegiance declares that we are a nation “under God.” Our national motto is “In God We Trust” and is inscribed on our currency and on some of our postage stamps.⁴

As has been mentioned, the U.S. Constitution recognizes Sunday as a day of rest. The executive “veto” provision parenthetically mentions Sunday: “If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been

presented to him, the Same shall be a Law in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless Congress by their Adjournment prevent its return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.” This is an implicit endorsement of a “peculiarly ... Christian institution.”⁵

The Revolutionary Faith

America’s Constitution has been able to function as a reliable governing document because a Christian worldview prevailed at the time of its drafting. There was no abandonment of Christ among the majority of the people. Compare this with the revolutionary counterpart in France. The French Revolution was bloody. “In 1792 began the massacre in which some 1,300 prisoners were killed. Before it was all over, the government and its agents killed 40,000 people, many of them peasants.”⁶ The guillotine was used to enforce “equality.” There was no such instrument in the colonies. The Declaration of Independence made it clear that equality was an endowment from the Creator.

What was the difference? France had thrown off its Christian base while the colonists were steeped in the rich Biblical heritage of the Puritans. The French revolutionaries went so far as to change the calendar, calling 1792 the “year one.” Such a spectacle sent a message to the entire nation. “The French Revolution, which felt the need of a new Year One and a new calendar,” where the seven-day week was changed to ten days, “was a revolution against history.”⁷ The French revolutionary leaders separated the nation from its *Christian* history. “They proclaimed the goddess of Reason in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris and in other churches in France.... In Paris, the goddess was personified by an actress, Demoiselle Candeille, carried shoulder-high into the cathedral by men dressed in Roman costumes.”⁸

The United States Constitution, on the other hand, did not disavow an established Christian order although it did plant the seeds for it. The United States Constitution concludes with these words: “DONE in convention by the unanimous consent of the States present, the seventeenth of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty seven and of the independence of the United States of America the twelfth.” On September 24, 1789, the same day that it approved the First Amendment, Congress called on President Washington to proclaim a national day of prayer and thanksgiving. The First Congress resolved:

That a joint committee of both Houses be directed to wait upon the President of the United States to request that he would recommend to the people of the United

States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a Constitution of government for their safety and happiness.

The same framers who seemingly left God out of the Constitution, thanked Him for “affording them an opportunity” to meet and draft the historical document.

Conclusion

As this cursory study of our nation’s history demonstrates, to borrow a title from one of R. J. Rushdoony’s first books, there is a bit of “intellectual schizophrenia” in our nation’s founding. Its early history was most certainly Christian. This is best seen in its state constitutions and early charters.⁹ The Constitution, while including remnants of our nation’s rich Christian heritage, showed early signs of secularization. Time and judicial assaults have made the cracks visible for all to see.

¹Quoted in R. Kemp Morton, *God in the Constitution* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press, 1933), 72.

²See Gary DeMar, *America’s Christian History: The Untold Story* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 2000), chap. 5.

³Morton, *God in the Constitution*, 79.

⁴Anson Phelps Stokes and Leo Pfeffer, *Church and State in the United States*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 102-03.

⁵Jasper Adams, *The Relation of Christianity to Civil Government in the United States*. A Sermon, Preached in St. Michael’s Church, Charleston, February 13, 1833, before the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of South-Carolina. 2nd ed. (Charleston, SC: A.E. Miller, 1833), 15.

⁶Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1976), 124.

⁷Pieter Geyl, *Uses and Abuses of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), 22. Quoted by Rousas J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1964), 137n.

⁸Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*, 122.

⁹Francis Newton Thorpe, *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming The United States of America*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909).

Gary DeMar is president of American Vision, the editor of the *The Biblical Worldview* magazine and the author of seventeen books on a variety of subjects, including *America’s Christian History: The Untold Story*. He can be reached at garydemar@mindspring.com. American Vision’s web page is www.americanvision.org.



The Lordship of Christ in the Gospel

By Rev. William O. Einwechter

Soteriology is that division of systematic theology that covers the Biblical teaching in regard to the salvation of men from their sin and the wrath of God. The heart of soteriology is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*1 Cor. 15:3-4*), and it is on the basis of faith in the gospel that a sinner is saved from the wrath of God. And as the gospel is the heart of soteriology, so is Christ the heart of the gospel. The gospel is about the person of Christ and the work of Christ to save His people from their sin — it was *His* substitutionary death and resurrection that brought everlasting redemption to them. Now as Christ is the Lord of all things in heaven and earth, and as He is the central figure in God's plan of redemption, it is expedient for us, if we would attain a proper understanding of the Biblical doctrine of soteriology, to approach it from the perspective of the lordship¹ of Jesus Christ.

The Lordship of Christ in Salvation

If men are to be saved from their sin, it can only be in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason for this is that men are in no condition to save themselves. The Scripture paints a dark picture of fallen man's predicament. Man is born in sin (*Psa. 51:5; Rom. 5:12*), and every aspect of his being has been corrupted by sin, rendering him helpless as to his own salvation. His mind is at enmity with God (*Col. 1:21; Rom. 8:7*), and cannot understand or receive the things of God (*1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 3:11*). His heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (*Jer. 17:9; Gen. 6:5*). His will is set to do evil, being controlled by the lusts of the flesh and a reprobate mind (*Eph. 2:2-3; Rom. 1:28*), making him a slave to sin (*Jn. 8:34*). He has no fear of God, no desire to seek God, and no faith in God (*Rom. 3:11-18*). What knowledge he does have of God he is actively suppressing (*Rom. 1:18-32*). The desperateness of man's state is evident in that he considers the gospel, his only hope of salvation, to be foolishness (*1 Cor.*

1:18). In sum, the Bible declares that the unsaved are dead in their trespasses and sins (*Eph. 2:1*), and under condemnation (*Rom. 6:33*). Salvation for such as these must originate in the will of God and be carried out by the power of God.

Most errors in regard to the doctrine of salvation have their roots in an inadequate, unbiblical view of the moral and spiritual status of fallen man. Those who believe that man is merely spiritually sick, also believe that the salvation of sinners is a joint enterprise between God and man. But those who read the Bible accurately understand that man is spiritually dead and can contribute nothing to his own salvation; consequently, they believe that salvation is solely the work of God from beginning to end. To better understand this work of God, let us relate it to Christ, the Son of God.

Those Who Are Saved Have Been Given to the Son

During His earthly ministry Jesus made a remarkable statement concerning the salvation of men. He said that the only ones who would believe in Him and be saved would be those that had been given to Him by the Father (*Jn. 6:37-40*). He also stated that "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (*Jn. 6:65; cf. 6:44*). Thus, prior to the incarnation of the Son of God the Father had determined to give a certain number of mankind to Jesus Christ. Those the Father chose for His Son will also be enabled to come to Christ in faith. Who are these individuals that are given to Christ? Simple logic and sound Biblical interpretation indicate that these are those who are called the "elect" in Scripture (*e.g., Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12*). Apart from any warrant in the actions of men, and on the basis of His own sovereign will and mercy (*Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11-22*), God chose who would be part of the blood-bought body of Christ. The Apostle Paul explains when and on what basis this election of sinners took place: "According as he hath

chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him....” (*Eph. 1:4*). The time of the divine choice was before the heavens and the earth were created, and the basis of the divine choice was the work of Christ. Election was “in him,” that is, election is not based on what the elect would do, but solely on what Christ would do for them as their covenant head and representative. To teach that election is due to some kind of foreseen merit in the sinner (such as the sinner’s faith) is to rob Christ of the glory due unto Him by making man and his work an essential (though, perhaps, not equal) element in election.

Those Who Are Saved Are Redeemed by the Son

The Son of God came to earth to do the Father’s will and secure the redemption of those whom the Father had chosen and given to Him (*Jn. 6:37-40; 17:2*). Jesus said during His earthly ministry that He had come to give His life for the sheep (those chosen to be part of the fold of God’s covenant people) and for none other (*Jn. 10:7-29*). Jesus did not come to make salvation possible, but to actually procure it for those who had been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (*Eph. 1:7*). Jesus’ death was substitutionary, that is, He died in the place of those who had been given to Him and thereby took the penalty of the broken law that was due unto them (*1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 3:13*). In taking their judgment, He in fact secured their redemption (*Col. 1:14*), their reconciliation (*Col. 1:21-22*), their justification (*Rom. 5:9*), and their forgiveness (*Eph. 1:7*). Unless they are Universalists,² those who teach that Christ died for the sins of all men do not understand the nature of substitutionary atonement, or the efficacy of Christ’s blood, which infallibly secures the redemption of all for whom it is shed.³

Those Who Are Saved Are Called by the Son

In Matthew 11:25-27, the sovereignty of God in salvation and the place of the Son of God in bringing the elect to the knowledge of the truth is revealed by Jesus. Here we are told that, according to God’s good pleasure, the truth has been hidden from some and revealed to others; and because all things have been delivered to the Son, it is the Son Who reveals the knowledge of God and His truth to those who have been selected to receive it. During His ministry we see Jesus revealing the truth to His chosen followers, while hiding it from others (*Mt. 13:11-17*). At

the end of His time on earth, He prays to the Father and says that He has “manifested thy name unto the men which thou hast given me out of the world” (*Jn. 17:5*), and that He has given them the words of God (*Jn. 17:8, 14; cf. 1 Jn. 5:20*). Then, Jesus promises His disciples that when He is gone He will send the Spirit of God to teach His people the truth (*Jn. 14:16-17; 16:7-15*). The exalted Christ is the One Who gives repentance and faith to men (*Acts 5:31, 13:48; 16:14*), and this He does through His Spirit (*2 Cor. 2:11; Rom. 8:11-16*). Faith is not, therefore, the sinner’s gift to God that enables God to save him, but it is the Son of God’s gift to His people (*Eph. 2:8*) that enables them to lay hold of the gospel and be saved by grace alone.

Those Who Are Saved Are Kept by the Son

Jesus Christ, while on earth, promised that all whom the Father has given Him will be kept by Him (*Jn. 10:28*); not even one will be lost (*Jn. 6:39; 17:12*). In His high priestly prayer, Jesus asked the Father, Who always hears the Son, to “keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me” (*Jn. 17:11*). At His ascension, Jesus was raised to the right hand of God the Father, and from there He exercises a ministry of intercession on behalf of His people. The effect of this ministry is that “he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (*Heb. 7:25*). Paul confidently sees the resurrection of Jesus as ensuring the salvation of the people of God (*Rom. 5:10*). Therefore, He can triumphantly declare that nothing can separate believers from the love of Christ (*Rom. 8:29-39*), and that Christ will surely keep those who have committed the salvation of their souls to Him (*2 Tim. 1:12*). Hence, it is contrary to Scripture and a denial of the power of Christ to preserve His people to teach that a man once saved by the grace of God can fall away and be lost. The Lord enables all true believers to continue in the faith. Any who do turn from their professed faith in Christ thereby give evidence that they were never truly converted in the first place. The true marks of conversion are an abiding faith and a life of obedience to the Word of God. Those whom the Lord justifies, He also sanctifies.

Thus, we see the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ in the salvation of His people! Those who are saved can claim no credit whatsoever, but must rest their salvation in the fact that they have been given to the Son, redeemed by the Son, called by the Son, and kept by the Son. Sovereign election, particular

redemption, invincible grace, and faithful preservation can alone account for the salvation of men who are dead in trespasses and sins — men with enslaved wills, corrupt minds, and vile affections.

The Lordship of Christ in Preaching

If the gospel reveals the lordship of Christ, then it follows that any true gospel preaching must exalt the lordship of Christ. Preaching that does not magnify Christ as Lord and call upon sinners to recognize Christ as Lord does not proclaim the gospel in its Biblical fullness.

When the Apostles preached the gospel, they did not limit themselves to the historical facts of Jesus' death and resurrection (as important as these are), but were diligent to proclaim the attributes of Jesus. In the sermons and speeches in Acts, the Apostles preached that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord seated at the right hand of God, the Holy One, the Prince of Life, the Savior, the Prophet, the Prince, the Judge, and a King. The most prominent appellation given to Christ is that He is the *Lord*. This title sums up His sovereignty and glory as the victorious Son of God Who reigns over all things in heaven and earth. In their preaching, the Apostles called upon men to "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Acts 16:31; 20:21*).

To preach that Christ died for our sins is not enough, for why should His death save us any more than another man's? It is the fact that He was the sinless Son of God that makes His death efficacious. The death of Jesus on the cross did not establish the truth of the gospel; it was the resurrection that did that because it revealed the person of Jesus and God's acceptance of His sacrificial death. Paul says Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead" (*Rom. 1:3; cf. Acts 13:33*), and that the resurrection was proof that justification had been accomplished for His people (*Rom. 4:24-25*).

Preaching the lordship of Christ in the gospel requires the declaration of the finished work of Christ. Men must be told that the work of salvation is accomplished through the will and power of God alone; that it is Christ, the Son of God, Who redeems the sinner through His vicarious death; and that it is Christ Who reveals the truth to men and gives them repentance and faith. Christ must be exalted and the sinner humbled so that he casts himself utterly on the mercy and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Finally, preaching the lordship of Christ in the gospel necessitates the calling of men to repentance.

The essence of man's sin is his claim to autonomy. Man is in rebellion to the authority of God. Consequently, the heart of true repentance is abandonment of autonomy and submission to the authority of God over every aspect of a man's life. To call men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to call them to believe that Jesus is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and to submit themselves to His authority; it is to call them to discipleship and obedience — "a calling of the total man and his total life to total service to the Lord wherever his is, and whatever his vocation."⁴

¹In speaking of the lordship of Jesus Christ, we refer to the divine sovereignty He possess by virtue of His being the Son of God, and by virtue of His obedience and subsequent exaltation as the Christ when He was crowned Lord of all.

²Universalists logically conclude that if Christ died for all men, then all men will be saved.

³A substitute is one who takes the place of another and performs the duty of another in view of the latter's absence or inability to perform it. There is, necessarily, a one-to-one correspondence between the substitute and one he is substituting for. A substitutionary atonement means that Christ died in the place of particular individuals (who viewed as a whole are called the elect) who were unable to perform the work of saving themselves, and, consequently, He indeed saved them.

⁴Rousas John Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology* (Vallecito, 1994), 530-531.

William O. Einwechter is the editor of The Christian Statesman, vice president of the National Reform Association, and vice moderator of the Association of Free Reformed Churches. He serves as a pastor at Immanuel Free Reformed Church in Ephrata, Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Linda, have been blessed with ten children. He can be contacted at weinwechter@dejazzd.com.

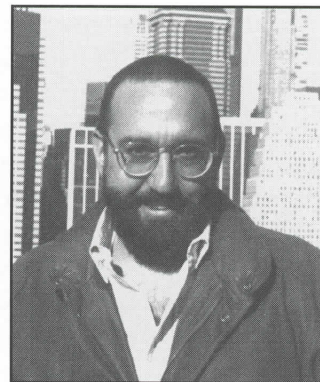


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Covenantal Catholicity

By Rev. Steve Schlissel



Our culture cannot be recaptured for Christ unless we begin with God's objectively true calling. The task of Christian ministry is to encourage, challenge, and enable the people of God to "live lives worthy of *the calling they have received*" (Eph. 4:1), not to bully and berate them. It is especially important in our day — when God is in the process of powerfully reinvigorating the Antithesis which had been taking a long, illicit nap — to learn to address as brothers those with whom we might well share a prison cell someday.

Most denominational distinctives have as much meaning in our culture as Israelite tribal descent had to the invading Assyrians. Were you from Dan or Gad or Issachar? It made no difference to the barbarous foe intent on destroying all Jacob. Today we see humanist claws scratching for blood at Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Methodist, and Baptist throats with equal ferocity. It is Christ these humanists are after, of course, however clearly or vaguely He might be revealed in these respective groups. Our posture toward the non-Reformed mustn't be to assume they are non-Christian. To Romanists we say, "You are in the covenant, but you are not faithful to its terms." To Pentecostals we say, "You are in the covenant, but you must grow in it." To Methodists we say, "You are in the covenant, not because of your will, but despite it." To Baptists we say, "You are in the covenant, and so are your children."

There is no reason we cannot be faithful to our own denominational or traditional distinctives while recognizing that God has not confined *Christianity* to our corner of the vineyard. William Jay wrote, "Who can entertain too bad an opinion of popery? Yet we find a Nicol, a Pascal, a Fenelon, in that most corrupt church. Where may not God have his hidden ones?" Charles Hodge argued forcefully (and correctly) that the Roman Catholic Church *is* a church. In this he followed Calvin: "When we categorically deny to the papists the title of *the* church, we do not for this reason impugn the exist-

ence of churches among them" (*Institutes*, IV, 2, 12). For "of old, certain peculiar prerogatives of the church remained among the Jews. In like manner, today we do not deprive the papists of those traces of the church which the Lord willed should among them survive the destruction. God had once for all made His covenant with the Jews, but it was not they who preserved the covenant; rather, leaning upon its own strength, it kept itself alive by struggling against their impiety. Therefore — such was the certainty and constancy of God's goodness — the Lord's covenant abode there. Their treachery could not obliterate his faithfulness" (IV, 2, 11).

Amen. One might have hoped that Westminster's admission that "the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error" would have led to an inheritance of hearty humility. Though blessed with a double-portion of truth, the Reformed are not God's only offspring in Christ. Our Lord told us once about an elder brother with an attitude problem. The source was ungodly pride. There is wide variation in covenantal fidelity among God's heirs, to be sure, but rather than pout that God has included others who might live below their calling, we should help them to realize its glory. It seems to me that is what our Lord was about doing in Israel. I *know* that is what Paul was doing in his letters.

Christ and Covenant

Read the New Testament again and see how it consists of a real Christ for real people in a real world. Perhaps it was the crisis of the Reformation that made inclination toward abstractionism unavoidable. "My proposition is better than yours!" Anyway, somehow Christ and covenant came to be replaced by propositions *about* Christ and covenant. The Bible, in some quarters, would be brought into the servitude of system so that, to borrow a phrase, men were thought to be justified by faith in justification by faith, rather than by faith in Jesus. There is a difference, you know.

God's expansive covenant was, in time, reduced to "Are you saved?" The spotlight was turned inward and eventually, in some quarters, 1800 years of worldwide Christian expansion came to be replaced by "my personal experience." Covenant — wherein God's grace *and* His people's responsibilities are equally objects of concern — was eclipsed by "fire insurance."

Thomas Manton spoke well when he admonished that the task of the ministry is not to fight against ghosts and opinions antiquated, but against the sins and errors of the present time. We are not living in 1645; we have crises of our own. All of Christendom has had its head placed on the chopping block. Yet, in a remarkable display of bad timing, growing like kudzu are "ministries" devoted to declaring all Catholics, or other professing Christians, not merely in error, but altogether hell-bound. In every case these quixotic "ministries" regard themselves as the knighted guardians of the gospel upon whose shoulders the very future of Christianity in this world has come to rest. Where are those little airline bags when you need them? One pathetic yellow sheet out of New England rambles *ad nauseum* that not only are all Arminians going to hell, but so are all Calvinists who dare to think that Arminians could have any share in the benefits of Messiah's death. Among their targets are the "reprobates" Whitefield, Spurgeon, and Hodge.

In another corner you'll find people using the yardstick of common grace, still others exclusive psalmody, many others — as we've been noting — subjective experience. All this, mind you, while the church is virtually under worldwide siege by humanist states. To obsess about what, at best, amounts to a leg of the faith (usually more like a hair), while the body of the faith itself is being hoisted onto the humanist's table for consumption, is like a woman fixing her lipstick while fleeing a rapist. Yet the favorite pastime of some Reformed people seems to be enforcing quality control standards for other people's navel lint. Having been taught to doubt the grace of God in their own lives, they naturally look for reasons to doubt it in others. Too many precious lives are passed imagining that living for Christ means assuming that no one else does. So much to doubt and so little time!

A Better Way

But there *really* is a better way: that of the covenant. In the covenant we can maintain all the distinctives we believe honor God's revelation and His providence, while recognizing that other communions, legitimately *Christian*, may not see things in quite the same light that we do. This is not relativism: it is maturity. The core truths expressed in our Ecumenical Creeds — one of which

(The Apostles') our Catechism calls the "summary of the undoubted Christian faith" — have come to multiform expression throughout history. Often that expression has been lacking in substance, or unhealthy, or short of fully faithful — all that without being wholly false. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" does not equal one denomination or one presbytery. Instead of despising — or ignoring — our brothers who have not come to appreciate the beauty of the Reformed faith, we should be bearing with them, reasoning with them, modeling the faith for them. The tendency to build ourselves up by putting others down is not new: see Luke 18:11. But some Reformed have elevated it to a consummate skill. Some self-appointed defenders of the faith have even surpassed the blindest Jesuits in their refusal to hear or speak anything but shibboleths.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that Christendom cannot respond to today's challenges when the gauge to measure its presence is so foggy and miscalibrated. Having been told by our ministers to be unsure of our standing, we find it quite easy to be unsure of everyone else's, especially those from other streams. To quote Jay again:

[W]e are far from undervaluing divine truth. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. But it is impossible for us to say how much ignorance, and how many mistakes may be found, even in the Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. How little did Peter know of the most important of all subjects, when our Savior pronounced him blessed: and said he was a partaker of divine illumination! We extend this even to congregations and communities. There may be individuals in them, wiser than their teachers; and no strangers to communion with the God of all grace.

Fans of the Faith

Ours is a day to fan, not quench, embers of faith in Christ, however feeble they may be. We appreciate the approach of the Rev. Dr. J. Douma who encourages people who "sigh because of their lack of love for God. They know of others who maintain a very personal bond with God, something which they miss. God is far away for them and they do not know how they can obtain and maintain a bond of love with the sovereign God." Many are the "Reformed" preachers who would place such a concern under the microscope of self-examination. But Dr. Douma wisely counsels, "Love for God has its own forms of emotionality. And for us that emotionality is not going up into the loved One because He lives in unapproachable light which we cannot penetrate. But we can and may penetrate into His works as they have occurred under the clouds, above all in the work of Jesus

Christ. Therefore God is not strange but we love Him. Whoever can sing with conviction a song of thanksgiving to God, should not worry about whether he really loves Him" (*Nederlands Dagblad*, January 9, 1999; cited in *Lux Mundi*, June, 1999).

It is something to be regarded with astonishment that the *one thing* Jesus said would mark His church — love — failed to make it as one of the three "marks" we Reformed say indicate the "true" church. Three chances to spell it right and we missed! It is high time to revisit this. The Reformed faith must be propagated. We have failed to reproduce abundantly in our generation because we have become incestuous. Far from knowing how to *win* non-Reformed, we don't even know how to *address* them! The result is seen in congregations so clean they are, well, sterile. When Jesus said that they'll know we are Christians by our love, He didn't have in mind *the doctrine of love*, but its exhibition. We'll see our faith embraced by others when we model it, when we live it with heart and hand and voice. That's what covenant is about: the *living* faith. Our faith is hearty enough for the streets. It *thrives* in the light. Too many want to confine the Reformed faith to the Museum of the Holy Proposition rather than see it lived in a breathing covenant community. Museums,

however pretty, testify only to what is past and done. But the Word of God is *alive and active*.

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 26 years, Jeanne, and their five children. He can be reached at Schlissel@aol.com



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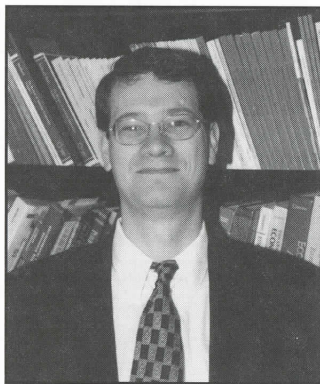
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Cultural Rebellion Against God II: Denial of Ecclesiastical and Familial Authority

Timothy D. Terrell

Cultural Rebellion against Authority

Modern culture has a warped view of authority. In some instances moderns grant nearly infinite powers to one institution (usually the state), while in other cases individual authority seems to be of paramount importance. We know that God has ordained at least three authority-holding institutions: the family, the church, and the state. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* warns against opposition to *lawful* authorities:

And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God.¹

The first article in this series (March, 2001) dealt with a small part of the problem of undue powers being granted to the state. Here we will consider our culture's rebellion against the church and the family.

Denial of the Church's Authority

Rebellion against the church takes many forms. An extremely common form of that rebellion in our modern culture is the rejection of Biblical church discipline. Most churches are so afraid of inciting rebellion that they refuse to administer discipline, and thus forsake one of the marks of the true church.

The church itself has contributed to its own impotence. Several years ago my wife and I were visiting a certain large Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) church that we knew had dropped the ball on disciplinary issues. As two teenage girls joined the church that morning, I saw part of the reason why. An elder, with the PCA's *Book of church Order* in his hand, "read" the question, "Do you submit yourselves to the government and *encouragement* of this church?" I had been in the PCA long enough to know that the word "encouragement" had been substituted for "discipline." Members of that church could easily have been unaware that discipline was part of the church's responsibility!

The church has cast off its own authority in many ways, some subtle, some not. A certain "seeker-friendly" church-chain has rejected pulpits as too imperious, and

pastors refrain from holding a Bible while preaching because it appears too authoritative.² Even in Reformed denominations, it is common for preachers to eschew clerical robes or even a coat and tie. Black robes, more common in Presbyterianism, signify authoritative teaching. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with preaching in jeans and a polo shirt, formal attire of any sort encourages respect and conveys a sense of the high office of those called to preach with authority.

Denial of the Father's Spiritual Authority

With the church willing to play down or even negate its own authority, can it be surprising that those under its teaching mimic its reluctance to lead? Husbands and fathers no longer act as masters over their own families, but allow their wives to assume the leadership functions. Fathers and mothers alike permit their children to wander aimlessly in a cultural morass.

As husbands and fathers neglect their role as spiritual heads, the church stands willing to coddle them, not exhort them to perform. Modern developments such as Sunday school classes and women's Bible studies, while not bad in themselves, have soothed the consciences of men who will not teach their families at home.

Because God works redemptively in whole families, evangelistic activities ought to be directed toward whole families, and particularly husbands and fathers.³ Evangelistic activities targeted toward children, while certainly not prohibited by Scripture, can encourage a decapitated view of the family if heads of households are not also being called to faith in Christ and obedience to God's Word. Children, evangelize your parents? If this is the primary strategy for spreading the gospel, something is wrong with our view of the family.

Husbands and fathers seeking to lead their families Biblically will face disapproval and outright attacks from all quarters. Our culture hates godly male leadership, and takes every opportunity to tear it down.

Denial of Paternal Authority in Marriage

For centuries, writers of love stories have incorporated the disapproving father into the plot as a barrier that must be overcome before the couple can be

married. In a way, this is appropriate. The father is sometimes required to protect a child from an injudicious match. Yet it seems that most love stories in this vein portray the father as a selfish, obstinate troll who lives to keep his lovesick daughter as a perpetual housemaid. Such caricatures, which flagrantly mock paternal authority in marriage, say much about our culture.

In an excellent defense of the necessity of parental consent to marriage, Francis Turretin contends against the Roman view on clandestine marriages or monastic vows. Arguing partially from the Fifth Commandment, Turretin writes that honor to parents:

*...consists principally in the obedience due to them and since it is to be rendered in all things 'in the Lord,' ... marriage cannot be excepted, which is of so great importance to settling the condition and fortune of the whole life and which, as the most difficult thing, exceeds the age, understanding, and judgment of children. How can they be said to obey them in all things, who in the most momentous case pay no regard to them?*⁴

Passages such as Exodus 22:16-17 and 34:16, Deuteronomy 7:3, Jeremiah 29:6, and I Corinthians 7:38 make little sense unless they are predicated upon a father's authority in a child's marriage. Numbers 30:4, which empowers a father to make void a daughter's vow, might apply to marriage vows as well. As Turretin puts it, "If a vow, which is a promise made to God, comes under the parental will, how much more a promise made to men?"

Questions about the conditions under which a father might "veto" a marriage are not easy to answer, but the modern culture hardly acknowledges his role. In most weddings, fathers have become an expected tuxedoed ornament, rather than performing the necessary function of transferring covenantal headship on that occasion. In many wedding ceremonies, the traditional question, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" meets with the modernized response from the front row, "Her mother and I do." One wonders what would occur if the father were to respond, "As this match goes against my better judgment, no one gives this woman in marriage."⁵

Contentions between Church and Family

If it were not enough that individuals rebel against God-ordained authority of family and church, the two institutions increasingly do not act "mutually to uphold and preserve one another" but instead rebel against God's boundaries for each.

Even in Reformed circles there is often little deference to family authority in matters regarding their children. Not too long ago, a PCA minister in Georgia, with the backing of his session, agreed to officiate in a wedding to which the Christian father of the bride strenuously objected.

Families likewise reject Biblical authority structures, sometimes rebelling against ecclesiastical authority, on other occasions surrendering family functions to the church. Some parents refuse to have their children baptized, thus cutting little ones off from the people of God.⁶ Other parents neglect family worship and the continual instructing of their children in the Christian faith, assuaging their guilt with the thought that Sunday school classes or youth groups or summer camp or short-term missions trips will satisfy those obligations.

The State against Church and Family

Contentions between family and church are harmful partly because they distract both institutions from a much more intrusive enemy — the state. This is perhaps best seen in the state's usurpation of various welfare functions from the church and the family. Ultimately, the modern state seeks to subjugate all other institutions. In a well-known current case, a Baptist church in Indianapolis asserted that it should not be made a tax collector for the state (by withholding from its staff) and found itself confronted with the threat of armed force. Families are undermined by a thousand state interventions, ranging from income, property, and inheritance taxes to truancy laws, welfare, and Social Security. Legislative and judicial attacks on biblical practices such as homeschooling, corporal punishment, and adoption further weaken the family.

The continuing assault on the family requires a concerted, Biblical response by Christians. It should include a re-evaluation of the church's approach to the family, as well as efforts to remind the civil magistrate of the Biblical limits on his jurisdiction.

¹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Ch. 22, Sec. 4.

² But see Titus 2:15.

³ See Genesis 17:7-14; Acts 2:38, 39; 11:14; 16:15; 16:31.

⁴ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1994), 108.

⁵ Furthermore, the modern response further dilutes the father's headship as his wife shares the vestigial practice of giving away the bride. Nowhere in Scripture is the mother's consent required.

⁶ See Genesis 17:14.

Timothy Terrell is an assistant professor of economics at Wofford College and a member of Woodruff Road Presbyterian church in Simpsonville, SC. Dr. Terrell can be contacted at terrelltd@wofford.edu.



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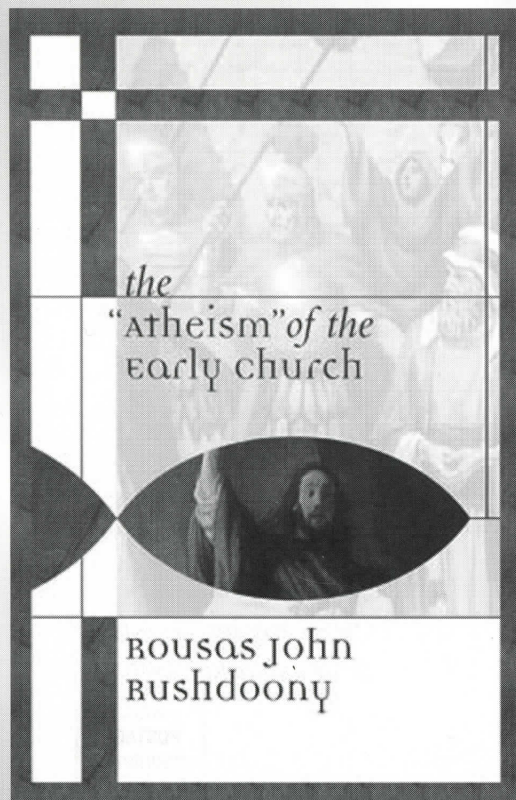
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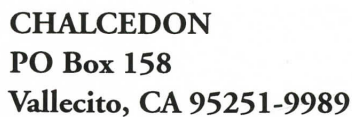
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