

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

## Thriving in Babylon

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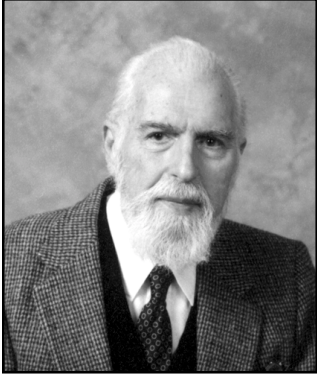
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# Faith and the Family

By R. J. Rushdoony

(Presented at the California Home Schooler Association meeting in Anaheim, CA in 1997)

**I**n antiquity, the family often had a major religious function, although of a false variety. Ancestor worship was common in many cultures and still survives in this century. The Biblical emphasis was covenantal: the family under God and His law by His sovereign grace.

In the Old Testament, we see that fathers had a priestly role, the duty to guide the family in worship, and in the sacrament of communion, the Passover. A son would ask, "What is the meaning of this that we do?" And the father as priest would then explain the meaning of the Passover and of God's salvation (*Ex. 13:14 ff.*). This, the central act of worship, was very strictly tied to the family. In the early church, while the Christian Passover was celebrated by the church, a chorus of boys would still ask the question, "What is the meaning of what we do?" In both the Hebrew family and the early church, the boys who asked the question were very young, perhaps about six years of age. But from their early years, they were expected to understand the meaning of salvation. In Scotland, after the Reformation, a central duty of church elders after a time came to be the visitation of all families in the congregation to question the children on their memorization and understanding of the Westminster Catechism. The family was the teacher, and the church verified the character of the teaching. The duty of the family was to *teach* the children the Faith. It was also the duty of the family to *educate* the children. Even as late as the establishment of the United States, a high percentage of the Founding Fathers were home schooled. Thus basic education in both the Bible and literacy and general learning were the routine duty of the family.

In Genesis 2:24 we are told that Adam and Eve were made "one flesh" by their union. This is plainly stated as a glorious religious fact. At the same time, from Abraham through Paul, we see that there must be a common faith: we are not to be unequally yoked to an unbeliever because

marriage is a religious covenant. Both the physical and religious union are celebrated as godly facts. In the New Testament, the metaphor of marriage is applied to Christ and His church. While both sexuality and worship can be defiled, as created and intended by God, their purposes are glorious.

Thus the family comes into its own in every sphere as it serves God and lives by faith. *Faith* is our right relationship to God, and it is His gift to us. Faith is *not* simply believing, because the very devils in hell believe and tremble (*Jas. 2:19*). Faith is, according to Ephesians 2:8, "the gift of God." It is not our act of believing, "lest any man should boast," (*Eph. 2:9*), but a supernatural grace.

Thus, although the Christian family is a biological unit, it is, because it is redeemed by God's grace, more than a natural fact. It is a fact of grace.

## Socialization

Man's life is both *personal* and *social*, and, very clearly, life is most personal and social in the family. We are never more fully and obviously personal in all our being than in the family, and nowhere else is our sense of community, our socialization, greater. State school critics of home schooling insist that the home schooled miss out on socialization. This is an especially absurd claim because socialization in any healthy sense is best learned in the family. Moreover, when the family is the faith center, the personal and the social aspects of life are learned under grace.

One of the curses of school life in the years since the secular revolution has been the rise of gangs. Earlier in the century, if two boys disagreed and fought, other boys formed a circle around them and broke up the fight if one of the two fought unfairly. Now a disagreement can lead to a gang assault on one boy.

Gang activity is socialization, non-Christian socialization, and the major form of such activity in many areas. There is nothing good as such in

socialization: it can be either good or bad, and in a non-Christian context, is normally bad. Its most common expressions in many non-Christian circles are gang activities and lawless sexuality. Non-Christian socialization leads to immorality and the depersonalization of life. We need to make clear to these humanistic champions of socializing the child that their method is precisely the problem we want to avoid.

At present, many churches are in crisis because too many members' children are in state schools and their characters have been shaped by Christ's enemies. Humanistic education denies that there is truth; it denies God. As one writer has stated it, citing Naum Gabo, "There is no such thing as absolute truth or falsity.... Anything and everything can be both."<sup>1</sup> What is also being said is that there is no absolute meaning, if any meaning at all.

## Grow or Die

Neither time nor man stand still. Our faith either grows or dies. We should not be surprised when artist Jean Dubuffet said, "I believe very much in the values of savagery; I mean, instinct, passion, mood, violence, madness."<sup>2</sup> We see all around us a polarization taking place, and, as unbelief deepens, so too does faith. Erich Kahler spoke some years ago of "the outspoken attempt to *produce incoherence*,... a veritable cult of incoherence of sheer senselessness and aimlessness."<sup>3</sup>

As against this, Christian faith is becoming more consistently Biblical, more coherent, and more directed. Whereas a generation ago, children

simply grew up biologically without too much direction, more and more Christian families are providing a strong focus and objective. Their children are remarkable in their faith and goals.

We are in the early stages of one of history's most dramatic struggles and shifts. At one time, the church dominated civilization, but during most of history the state has been the commanding force. Now we see a growing cynicism directed at the state. Earlier, revolutions were viewed as the corrective, but they usually produced a more evil state. Now we are seeing a double movement. On the one hand, humanism seeks a world state, a new Tower of Babel. On the other hand, the family in Christ is decentralizing society by beginning with the education of its own children. The statists see the full extent of this threat and are attempting to destroy this movement. In this battle, the family is both gaining ground and is increasingly winning. God warned Zechariah against all who despise the day of small things (*Zech. 4:10*). To do so is to despise God's work among us.

<sup>1</sup> James Johnson Sweeney, "Modern Art and Tradition," in Katherine S. Dreier, James Johnson Sweeney, Naum Gabo: *Three Lectures on Modern Art* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1949), 47.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Kuh, *Break-Up, the Core of Modern Art* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1966), 32.

<sup>3</sup> Erich Kahler, *The Disintegration of Form* (New York, NY: George Braziller, Inc., 1968), 96.

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# Prepared for Death, Ready for Life

*By Mark R. Rushdoony*

**I**f our faith is real, it dictates our understanding of more than our eternal destiny. Our faith must be the context in which we live, of our thinking, attitudes, and actions. It must give us a perspective on both life and death.

There is, in fact, a serious deficiency in the Christian who has trouble dealing with death. I speak here in terms of death as a state, not as an event. As an event, death is the most heart-rending experience we face. The loss of a loved one is indeed a traumatic event. We must find no fault with grief. But a failure to put death and its inevitability into the context of our faith reveals an immaturity of faith, because life and death, mortality and immortality, time and eternity are at the heart of our faith. A mature faith comes to terms with both the physical pain of death and the sadness of loss by its understanding of God's greater grace and promise of resurrection and life.

When Paul wrote to the Philippian church, he had languished in prison for, perhaps, five years. The Philippian church had sent Paul help on several occasions. Now, they had again sent him help, delivered by Epaphroditus. This messenger had, no doubt, told Paul of his church's concern that their co-founder, their apostle, languished in prison when they so desperately desired him to have an active ministry. Paul thus addressed the issue of his imprisonment and the physical limitations it represented. Paul assured them that the gospel was being preached *because* of his case, and was, in fact, "manifest" or *famous* in the imperial palace.

Paul's friends in Philippi, no doubt, would have liked to see the apostle traveling, preaching, and promoting

*According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*

*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*

*Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful of you.*

Philippians 1:20-24

the Faith in a manner more encouraging to the believers. Paul, however, though confident that his imprisonment had been helpful to his ministry, did not know what his own fate would be. He was determined to magnify Christ "whether it be by life, or by death." He then stated those amazing words that all Christians of all eras must understand and confess: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Not even the apostle relished dying, but he did see life as service and eternal presence with God beyond the passage death

represents.

## The Appeal of Paradise

In a very tender confession to good, supportive friends in Philippi, Paul said he was not sure which was most desirable, life or heaven. Paul, a prisoner who had suffered beatings, shipwreck, and false accusations desired to live and serve, yet he confessed a real desire "to depart, and to be with Christ: which is far better." The persecuted, weary Paul sees the appeal of paradise.

It is wrong to see life here and now as ultimate. If we see our earthly life as ultimate, we tend to make ourselves ultimate, and we fool ourselves into thinking we are indispensable. Our goals become primary and our circumstances dictate our understanding. We are then upset when death inevitably intrudes on life. When our life is ultimate, then aging and loss of what was once familiar sours us. Many literary references to time inveigh against it as an enemy. Yet Scripture speaks of youth, of life itself, as fleeting. When we see life as ultimate, we are sure to become embittered. Men without hope of eternity must

eternalize time. They have no alternative. If we do not see, like Paul, the issue as serving Christ versus seeing Christ, our alternatives are life versus death. Those without hope in death must cling to life. This must not be the Christian's perspective.

Though eternalizing time is wrong, Christians can go to the other extreme of emphasizing eternity to the point of neglecting their duties here and now. This life is not a holding pattern and God's demands do not wait until eternity. Many people avoid faithfulness, responsibility, and duty by thinking "We'll sort it all out in heaven." That is a very presumptuous attitude. When God speaks, we are not given the option of waiting until heaven to confirm our obligation. That is to presume that God owes us the reward of heaven, but that we can wait until we get there to find out what He wanted us to do here on earth.

Paul did not eternalize his earthly life, nor did he ignore his responsibilities in it by deferring faithfulness until eternity. Paul did not say, "The church needs me. I have work to do; I'm not ready to die." Neither did Paul say, "I'm tired. I'm done, I want to go to my reward." Paul struck an honest balance, as must we all. Paul said he did not know if he would live or die or which he desired most. Paul admitted that dying and being with Christ had its real allure. It was, he said, a "far better" thing.

### Choosing Life

Paul, however, came down on the side of life. The reason is quite simple: choosing life was an option for Paul, choosing death was not. Paul could confide that presence with Christ had a very real appeal, but his duty was to choose to live for Him, to serve Him, to suffer, and endure for Him. Faithful service was Paul's decision to make. Serving God was Paul's

decision to make. The time of Paul's death was God's decision to make for Paul.

The apostle could thus come down on the side of life and service, even though he was in prison. He thus turned his attention from himself, his imprisonment, and his understanding of it to the church at Philippi. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you," he said. "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you for all your furtherance and joy of faith" (v.25). Paul, not controlling the time of his death, plans his life's calling, his work, his service to Christ even from prison.

Believers must love life not because it is ultimate, but because life is God's creation and our life in Jesus Christ is His grace displayed in us. We therefore work willingly and joyfully because we serve God by our calling. We must see time itself as a blessing, a creation of God, which at once constrains us and yet, in its every measured tick, delineates our labors in His service. We can desire heaven, and we would be sorry Christians if we did not, but we must see our duty, our responsibility, and the source of Christ's blessings as in the here and now. We do not reward quitters in life and we should not expect God to do so in eternity.

There are some things for which God gives us assurances — forgiveness of sins, access to God in prayer, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the dead are examples. Some things, however, we must take in faith, and leave in the hands of God. Paul did this with his future, and so has no alternative but to speak of work, life, and ministry. We can see presence with a loving and merciful Savior as our sure reward, and as a source of confidence, but we must never use it as a rationale to neglect our earthly calling. We all desire heaven, but for now our duty is to "get back to work!"

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# Toward Learning Any Subject Biblically

*By Ronald Kirk*

## Binding Theory and Practice

**I**f God's Word accurately reflects reality, then for the Christian there ought to exist little gap between theory and practice. The Reformation launched a movement toward directly applying the Faith of Jesus Christ to every area of life. Such a universal view of Christianity found a high expression in the American Pilgrims. In his memorial, Daniel Webster declared that they sought to "diffuse its influence through all their institutions, civil, political, or literary."<sup>1</sup> Many of America's great institutions can trace their lineage to the Pilgrims' applied faith. Today, Christians in our country universally bear a responsibility to build upon this legacy. Without such an integral view of faith and life, only a tiny portion of the power of the gospel is available to our evangelism — the mere vocal part. Furthermore, to deny through our practice God's power over all aspects of our lives in practice is to hold Him in contempt. God saved us to an abundant life! Eternity for us begins now. The dominion mandate remains. God rewards faithful responsibility with blessings and more responsibility (*Mt. 25*). One knows a tree by its fruit. Theory and practice ought to be inseparable.

After two hundred years of increasingly pietistic Christianity, the evangelical church largely denies the importance of "ordinary life" except as a holding cell while we await heaven. Meanwhile, Christians increasingly labor under the influence of godless, mainstream, statist education, culture and civil government. We have all but lost the vision and ability for applied Biblical learning. To bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, Christians must regain the scholarly tools to learn and practice the art of life on God's terms. My experience avows that virtually any serious Christian can master applied Biblical scholarship with a modest investment.

## A Brief Apologetic

Such scholarship begins with the understanding that Christ is indeed Lord of all life — this one and

the next. God created man in His image. However, while man thus possesses certain potential and responsibility, sin corrupts the faculties needed to receive God's bounty toward him. The Lord commands dominion over the earth. Yet from birth, sin so confounds man's faculties that men from infancy acquire the necessary rational skills only with considerable effort. God provided this educational imperative. The Christ-centered man desires to know God's view of life, accepting His revealed will by faith. We thus accept the difficulty of learning and make every effort to learn of God on His terms and put that learning into practice. God rewards such acceptance of His ways, just as He rewards the farmer who plants his crop by faith. The end of scholarship is *application* such that Christ is glorified. The end of all education is to love God and love one's neighbor in particular ways.

Note that we do not seek perfection of knowledge or ability in this life. We will always remain finite and, in this life, sin-compromised to some degree. Apart from enduring trials with faith, we would tend to trade our dependence upon Christ for pride and, thus, break fellowship, leading to our own destruction. In a word, we *need* trials and faith. We ought then routinely to repent and accept God's way in all things. He will bring the fruit of accomplishment and blessing according to His good pleasure. Education and growth in Christ is the norm. Hence, applied Biblical scholarship ought to be universal.

## Objects of Biblical Scholarship

One may expect important general results from an applied Biblical scholarship. The ordinarily gentle trials of learning prove character and faith, and strengthen the skills needed for serving the Lord. Wisdom emerges from faithful effort to view life as God requires it. Accomplishment with an integrated gospel view of life in a given discipline creates opportunities to influence others. A systematic approach to Biblical scholarship in all areas of endeavor will tend toward a general repentance,

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bringing increasing glory to God before men as its fruit in the scholar grows.

The ability to represent God in the earth with respect to any human discipline or endeavor is a powerful tool for the gospel. Any subject may become an effective instrument of godly civilization. Better apprehension of God's reality will enable higher craftsmanship and accomplishment in all endeavors. Valuable and useful products will result. Mastery should lead toward making an historic personal contribution. Christians should once more realize the potential for great individual contribution.

More particularly, learning God's mind in a particular discipline leads to better decision-making ability. Applied Biblical scholarship should enable discernment of appropriate frontiers and limits — the liberty and law of the subject — leading to appropriate expressions. A Biblical scholarship utilizes God's fundamental relational principle. This principle utilizes the fact that God, reflecting His Trinitarian nature, unites all individuals into greater wholes, without diminishing the meaning of the parts. Thus, we *organize* the subject to support ever further mastery and practice. A Biblical method of scholarship will provide a ground of wisdom for choosing appropriate teachers and appropriate learning instruments. As Jesus declares, the student will become like his teacher. This fact of discipleship holds great historic ramifications either for evil or for good. These perhaps homely-sounding ends actually represent powerful means for taking Christian dominion.

## The Method

Here is a primer of sorts for applied Biblical scholarship. First, identify the philosophic nature of the subject and describe it in propositions or theses. Historic definitions provide an initial vocabulary for Biblical inquiry. Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*<sup>2</sup> provides an excellent instrument for this purpose. I use Webster because of his Reformed view of the world. He defines words philosophically from a Biblical and theological perspective to enable understanding of the nature of the subject and its application. For example, of *philosophy* Webster says in part, "The objects of philosophy are to ascertain facts or truth, and the causes of things or their phenomena; to enlarge our views of God and his works, and to render our knowledge of both practically useful and subservient to human happiness. True religion and true philosophy must ultimately arrive at the same principle." In Webster, one may find a rudimentary philosophical vocabulary of virtually any subject, even technical

ones. Then we can continue to define the subject's defining terms until an articulate composite definition in one's own words results.

A simple example: Webster defines music, in part, as "Melody or harmony; any succession of sounds so modulated as to please the ear." Music ought to be pleasing. Webster immediately defines two major elements of music, *melody* — pleasing sounds individually over time — and *harmony* — pleasing sounds taken together. Variation or modulation also appears as a principle of music, suggesting much of music's interest to us.

Next, we seek the subject in the Scriptures, using its vocabulary. We note its origin and purpose, and the character God requires for handling it. We seek to know how God's law governs the subject. Principles that rightfully govern the subject, such as that making music ought to glorify God, should appear. This step often requires a kind of detective ability, and working cleverly with synonyms, as the Scripture's vocabulary in English may not easily coincide with any given subject. Faith and perseverance rule the day. For technical subjects, one seeks philosophical understanding and not necessarily technical data, though the Bible often contains very specific information. A young student once amazed me with his finding a perfect description of a volcano, though the word *volcano* is itself nowhere found in the Bible. Revisiting music as our sample subject, we note the Biblical injunction to make a new song, to praise God with instruments and with skill, but at least with a joyful noise. Such propositions guide our investigation and will tend to beg important questions. Is worship music alone allowed to the believer? Does Scripture forbid music for personal enjoyment? We seek systematic and balanced answers to such questions. Scholarship in systematic theology provides tremendous support for efforts to identify particular disciplines Biblically.

Third, we identify the subject historically to find our place in the lineage of godly thinking, seeking God's providence upon it. History is the record of God's providence. We should note where pagan thinking failed to produce godly results, and where Providence gave some degree of success to pagan or clouded Christian efforts. Such observation highlights God's sovereignty and may provide hints as to the need for particular repentance. We seek those expressions found in the hands of faithful Biblical thinkers to ascertain the best legacy as a starting place for new contributions. And we should be aware of those countries most influenced by the gospel, those that knew the greatest blessing and liberty. It also helps to know and understand the Biblical and



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historic language of institutional Christian liberty. Civil liberty, a gift of God, reflects godly thinking among a people. Such qualities as personal restraint and magnanimity help to identify the best expressions of Christian faith as exemplified in the ability to love one's neighbor. We may also expect to observe a lowering of expressions as a society increasingly secularizes, as for example, with the poor literacy which results from behavioral psychology-based methods education.

For example, the investigations that some Christians are now undertaking in physics hold some promise of a return to physical models of matter and energy, possibly relieving us of the apparent mysticism and mere mathematical constructs of contemporary quantum and relativistic physics.<sup>3</sup> With respect to music, it is interesting to observe how music grows from a folk art or worship expression to a high art as it is more exquisitely wrought. Higher expressions typically build upon more homely ones. J.S. Bach worked the historic material, self-consciously for God's glory, to a high degree of development of both melody and harmony. Unfortunately, what often begins as a Christian expression, men appropriate for the glory of man. Much of the music of the Classical, Romantic, and twentieth-century eras reflects this predisposition. In an age of superb technical attainment, Christians now possess a tremendous opportunity to assume creative leadership if we will once more master the craft of musical composition beyond contemporary fashion.

Finally, we should collate the vocabulary and Scriptural and historical research to compose a distinctly Christian model of the subject in terms of propositional truth. Working accurately with the internal qualities of any thing will yield appropriate expressions. A rock will act like a rock and water will act like water due to their constituting qualities. Soup made from rocks makes poor fare. Water makes a poor fire fuel. Evil assumptions will yield corrupt results. Righteous understanding should lead to righteous expressions. Reasoning ability is central here. Paul the Apostle reasoned daily from the Scriptures. So ought we to learn to do in everything that concerns life and living.

Of course, initial efforts may be very rudimentary and may not offer much improvement over existing expressions. However, it is wise to remember that scholarship is learning, and that accomplished scholars are merely experienced learners. Even mere academic exercise can be useful toward subsequent efforts. Nonetheless, I have watched early application to favored subjects light zealous fires for such humble subjects as grammar and accounting! More-

over, discovery through the Scriptures and history can revolutionize a subject for the student. I suggest choosing a limited topic and one that may ordinarily be considered "secular," as an appropriate initial exercise. This will help to drive home the truth that God is Lord over the most ordinary of concerns. Understanding Van Til's learning spiral may be encouraging. One returns cyclically to the topics that naturally compose a subject. Each new visit gains a greater understanding of any subject topic in terms of the rest. Innovative concepts may arise from such research. Christians bear responsibility to test and prove such novelty as true to the Scriptures. A Berean faith (one that searches the Scriptures) and charity, not skepticism, should rule.

Understanding one's goal — namely the true nature of and God's purpose for a subject — leads to a curriculum for learning and implementing it. Determine how the subject breaks into its natural departments for scientific understanding. Organize the subject for skill acquisition — its art — from its rudimentary to its more advanced skills. This is particularly important for subjects such as music, mathematics, or grammar that require skill upon skill in a definite order.

Ultimately, the goal of applied Biblical scholarship is the mastery of a discipline such that its practitioner is capable of contributing to it in history, leaving some legacy for future Christians to build upon. Imagine society's best musical composers, authors, statesmen, scientists, and teachers being Christians!

## Conclusion

To accomplished scholars, all of this may appear a little quaint and elementary. In practice, I have found that appearances are deceiving. How many of us actually possess the tools to apply theology directly to specific subjects, particularly those usually classified as "secular"? How many have mastered a given discipline for application in purely Biblical terms? However, elementary proficiency in applied scholarship can lead to amazingly sound results even among people of little previous accomplishment. Such scholarship provides a God's-eye-view (by faith) of the subject. I believe God honors in every way the effort to see our work from His point of view. Psalm 91 petitions God to reveal His works and to bless the work of our hands. Many people are using such a homely, self-conscious discipline to accomplish some very interesting work. Some may not pan out; others may lead to startling new frontiers. In

— Continued on page 11 —



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# Great are the Works of the Lord

Part 2 of 2

By James Nickel



Last month, I investigated the nature of the practice of Biblical Christian meditation as it relates to God's law revealed in His Word and in His Works (cf. *Ps. 19*). In this issue, I want to focus on the Biblical Christian attitude toward the Works of God: what they are, why we should delightfully explore them, and how we are obediently to declare (or apply) the results of our deliberations.

## What Are the Works of God That We Should Delight Therein?

- Following the standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter IV and Chapter V), the Works of God are two-fold: Creation; *i.e.*, every atom of the physical creation including its structure and laws. Operational science<sup>1</sup> and mathematics are perfectly suited tools that we can use to explore this realm.
- Providence; *i.e.*, God's control of history, man, and his environment. This includes the disciplines of history (*Hab. 1:5*) and geography. The focus of these disciplines should be on God's redemptive plan and the eschatological goal of salvation. Christian geographer Arnold Guyot (1807-1884) said, "The entire globe is a grand organism, every feature of which is the outgrowth of a definite plan of the all-wise Creator for the education of the human family, and the manifestation of His own glory."<sup>2</sup> Specifically and personally, a study of God's Works should include God's electing grace in the salvation of sinners and His acts of kindness in our lives (*Ps. 139:14; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6; Isa. 64:8; Rom. 8:28-39*).

Man's relationship to the truth about God's Works will ultimately be determined by his obedient or disobedient response to God's Word. The writings of the early European scientists were impregnated with Biblical texts; they were conscious of the imminent

hand of God upon every act and moment.<sup>3</sup> The Word of God is the *key to knowledge*. According to Luke 11:52, Christ accused the lawyers of His day with taking away the key of knowledge. In our day, lawyers are the brunt of many jokes and are accused of taking away (or pocketing) dollars. Perhaps today's target of Christ's woe should be the educators of secularism (kindergarten through university) for they certainly have dislodged the Word of God as the source of all knowledge for the students under their tutelage (cf. *Mt. 18:6-7*).

## Why Should We Delight in God's Works?

God's Word tells us why we should delight in the study of God's Works. We delight in them because...

The Works of God are good (*Gen. 1:31*). They reflect His kindness, good will, and generosity. They are also good in that they reflect a marvelous and intricate interconnectedness. The universe (comprising the heavens and the earth) can *only* be understood *properly* in the Biblical context. The universe is good in its reflection of the nature of its Creator, the Triune God (the eternal unity in diversity). The temporal universe reflects its Creator because it unfolds the interconnectedness (the unity) of all created things (the particulars). It is in this context that we are to understand that the Works of God are perfect (*Dt. 32:4*). They have no defect; they are whole, sound, upright, and honest. The Works of God are marvelous and wondrous (*Rev. 15:3; Ps. 26:7; Ps. 75:1; Ps. 139:14*). They are marvelous in that they awaken in us wonder and surprise. They are wondrous in that they are distinguished and extraordinary. Being full of grandeur and magnificence, they reflect God's beauty, order, and mighty power. They transcend human art as infinite power and wisdom exceeds the finite. Consider the star Betelgeuse (pronounced BET'l-jews) in the constellation Orion. This star is the *single largest created thing that our eyes can see*. Picture it as a globe big enough to enclose a 20-story building, and in comparison, the Earth as nothing but the "period" at the end of this

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sentence. Imagine this star to be an empty jar and that we can unscrew its lid and pour in balls the size of the Earth at the rate of one hundred per second. It would take 30,000 years to fill the jar. Through the lens of the Hubble Space Telescope, Betelgeuse appears as a *disk*, not a point of light like the other stars.

The Works of God are terrible (*Ps. 66:3*). The Hebrew word translated in the King James Version means “stupendous, admirable, wonderful, illustrious.” Nothing can compare to the Works of God (*Ps. 86:8*). The Works of God reflect God’s loving-kindness or covenant love (*Ps. 136:4-9*). The Works of God reflect God’s faithfulness and truth (*Ps. 111:7*). They are firm, sure, reliable, stable, and trustworthy. His Works are done in truth (*Ps. 33:4*). The Works of God reflect God’s wisdom, a wisdom that is hidden in Christ (*Ps. 104:24; Pr. 8; Col. 2:3*). The Works of God are honorable and glorious (*Ps. 111:3*). They are splendid, majestic, magnificent, significant, stately, elevated, and lofty. The Works of God are just (*Ps. 111:7*). They are regular, orderly, proper, full, and complete. The Works of God are pleasant (*Gen. 2:9*). The beauty of His Works gives pleasure to the senses. The Works of God are great (*Ps. 111:2; Ps. 8:3*). They are great in quantity (*Ps. 104:24; Ps. 40:5*). According to the Psalmist David, “God tells the number of the stars and calls them all by name” (*Ps. 147:4-5; cf. Isa. 40:16*). Astronomers estimate that the number of stars in the visible universe is approximately  $10^{26}$  (1 followed by twenty-six zeroes).<sup>4</sup> Counting one every second, it would take you 3,000 trillion centuries to count to this number. The Works of God are also great in quality (significance). Man, created in God’s image (male and female) is the crown of His Works. Man’s body is fearfully and wonderfully made and man’s life is the object of providential care to the degree that even the hairs on our head are numbered (*Ps. 139:16-18; Mt. 10:30*).

*The God of nature and of grace, in all His works appears, His goodness through the earth we trace, His grandeur in the spheres.*

*Behold this fair and fertile globe by Him in wisdom planned, 'twas He who girded, like a robe the ocean round the land.*

*In every stream His bounty flows, diffusing joy and wealth. In every breeze His Spirit blows, the breath of life and health.*

*His blessings fall in plenteous showers upon the lap of earth that teams with foliage, fruit and flowers and rings with infant mirth.*

*If God has made this world so fair where sin and death abound how beautiful, beyond compare, will paradise be found!<sup>5</sup>*

## Declaring God’s Works

God’s Word not only commands us to delight in His Works; God’s Word commands us to *declare* His Works (*Ps. 64:9*). Note that if we do not *first* delight in God’s Works we will have nothing to declare! We declare God’s Works by:

- Taking hold of our vocational callings to the glory of God. The phrase, *glory of God*, is perhaps too overused in Christian circles. We dare not misunderstand its meaning or use this phrase flippantly (like some do when they tack *in Jesus Name* to the end of their prayers which to them is equivalent to rubbing the proverbial rabbit’s foot). The best definition that I found for *glory of God* is “the inescapable weight of the sheer Godness of God.”<sup>6</sup> It is only as we situate our vocational callings under this weight that we will faithfully fulfill the *dominion mandate* (*Gen. 1:26-28*). In our vocations we must learn to understand, to excel in, and to appropriate God’s Works properly in order to reflect the glory of the Creator.<sup>7</sup> A farmer plows the soil of God’s earth for His glory. A carpenter constructs with wood to reflect God’s glory. A physician maintains the body for God’s glory. A musician creates melodies, thereby using sounds for God’s glory. An executive or manager leads people for God’s glory. An educator or parent instructs youth for God’s glory. A scientist analyzes, innovates, and utilizes the elements of the created order for God’s glory. A writer composes words for God’s glory. A theologian interprets and applies God’s Word for God’s glory. In this computer age, we use sand and electric current to help us use knowledge efficiently for God’s glory. For those called of God in the computer arena, a properly coded computer problem is as much a “work of art” as a painting by Rembrandt. I have written programming code for computers for three decades. After completing a piece of efficient and structured code or delivering a system of programs that interact seamlessly with every given interface, I can also understand what Eric Liddell felt when he ran “head back and arms flailing” for God’s glory. I can testify, using his words, “When I code, I feel His pleasure.”

- Discipling the nations and thereby fulfilling the redemption mandate (Mt. 28:18-20). In this context, we are to apprentice the nations generationally; that is, to pass to the next generation what God has faithfully discharged to us (cf. 2 Tim. 2:1-2).

*We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony ...which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach them to their children ...that they should put their confidence in God, and **not forget the works of God...** (Ps. 78:3-8, emphasis added)*

*So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands (Ps. 90:12-17)*

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<sup>1</sup> Operational science concerns itself with the practical applications (primarily useful technology) of God's law-word revealed in the structured order of the cosmos. Operational science is *contra* the "vain imaginations" of scientific cosmologists who squander their God-given intellectual capital and creative aptitude through the development of futile cosmogonic theories such as inflationary universes, multiple universes, and universes created in a laboratory. Other examples of nugatory scientific investigations include the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (as depicted in the movie *Contact*, directed by Robert Zemeckis) and the creation of artificial intelligence (*i.e.*, robotic machines that think like humans as portrayed in Steven Spielberg's movie *A.I.*).

<sup>2</sup> Arnold Guyot, *Physical Geography* (New York and Chicago: Ivison, Blakeman and Company, 1885), 121. By 1870, only eleven years after the publication of Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) *On the Origin of Species*, Guyot, a professor at Princeton University, was one of

only three prominent American naturalists who rejected Darwin's thesis. The other two were Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) of Harvard University and John Dawson of McGill University.

<sup>3</sup> Their view of the world, especially in terms of physics (a branch of science that primarily deals with the study of the laws of motion) was not a crass mechanistic view. *It was mechanistic secondarily, not primarily.* It was mechanistic in terms of the principle of causality (the connection between cause and effect) and the principle of quantification (the interconnectedness of the patterns of the created order that can be intelligibly explained using numbers and functional relationships). But they did not equate the mechanistic view with impersonalism (*contra* modern scientific naturalism). To them, God's decrees and ordinances reflected His personal faithfulness in sustaining the workings of His creation. *It is because of God's faithfulness in sustaining creation that the pursuit of science is removed from realm of futile sophistry.*

<sup>4</sup> God's naming of each star signifies that each star has a unique and distinct purpose in God's plan. God does not count the stars just to count them; *He counts each star in order to appoint to each His decreed purpose.*

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Richard Newton, *Nature's Mighty Wonders* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1871), 17. Newton cites the author of this poem as Montgomery (possibly the hymn writer James Montgomery (1771-1854)).

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 397.

<sup>7</sup> A man who takes hold of his vocational calling in this manner will eventually be honored by God and he shall stand before kings, not obscure men (*1 Sam. 2:30; Pr. 22:29*).

— Continued from page 8 —

any case, God will certainly glorify Himself as we take applied Christian scholarship to heart.<sup>4</sup>

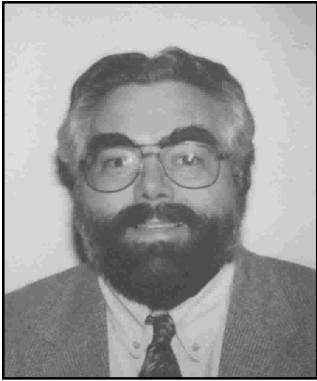
*Please write Ron to let him know how this column has helped you or to make requests. Our goal is to enable real people to learn and live the Christian life. E-mail him at ronaldwkirk@goldrush.com or c/o Chalcedon.*

<sup>1</sup> Verna M. Hall, *Christian History of the Constitution* (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1975), 248.

<sup>2</sup> Available either as a facsimile reproduction from Foundation for American Christian Education, <http://www.face.net>, or P.O. Box 9588, Chesapeake, VA 23321-9588, or on CD-ROM from Christian Technologies, <http://www.christiansoup.com/>, or P.O. Box 2201, Independence, MO 64055


<sup>3</sup> See David Bergman, et al, at Common Sense Science, <http://www.commonssencescience.org>.

<sup>4</sup> For more in depth treatments of the subject see *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*, and *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* by R.J. Rushdoony, both available at the Chalcedon Website, <http://www.chalcedon.edu> or P.O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251.



# A Christian Philosophy of History: Theocentric Principles

By Roger Schultz

 Gregg Singer once described a discussion group of historians at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. The conversation concerned the meaning of history, and, to a man, the historians argued that history lacked any discernible purpose. If that is the case, Singer asked, “Then why teach history?” There was no answer. The problem, Singer concluded, is that historians teach and write with “no conviction that the history they present is worth teaching or learning.”<sup>1</sup>

For Christians who are committed to the Word of God and the doctrine of God’s providence, history is filled with meaning. This essay is the first in a series on a Christian philosophy of history and the implications of allowing the Bible to govern our approach to the past. History is valuable and meaningful, but only when understood from the perspective of the One who has ordained history. What follows, then, are the parameters of a theocentric or God-centered philosophy of history.

First, a Christian philosophy of history emphasizes God’s creation. God is the Lord of history and He began it and directs it for His purposes. Non-theistic approaches assume that history is driven by naturalistic, humanistic, or irrational forces. The non-Christian historian, to be consistent with his anti-religious presuppositions, must exclude God from the dynamics of history. Christians, on the other hand, heartily concur with the great London Baptist Confession of 1689, which states that “God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass.”<sup>2</sup>

Second, a Christian philosophy of history emphasizes God’s comprehensive sovereignty. Our sovereign God, who “works all things after the counsel of His will” (*Eph. 1:11*), governs and directs history. As R. J. Rushdoony notes in *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, “The Christian accepts a world which is totally meaningful and in which every event moves in terms of God’s predestined purpose, and, when man accepts God as his Lord and Christ as his Savior, every event works together for good to him

because he is now in harmony with that meaningful destiny (*Rom. 8:28*).”<sup>3</sup>

The lesson of God’s comprehensive sovereignty is clearly set forth in Scripture. Daniel blessed God, affirming, “And it is He who changes the times and the epochs” and “He removes kings and establishes kings” (*Dan. 2:21*). King Nebuchadnezzar learned that lesson as well, stating, “That the most High is ruler over the realm of mankind” and “He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth” (*Dan. 4:17, 35*). The Servant sections of Isaiah particularly testify to God’s sovereign governance of human history. The Lord is the one “declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure” (*Isa. 46:10*).

Third, a Christian philosophy of history stresses God’s particular providence in dealing with individuals. God’s dealings are not restricted to the “big picture” of nations and kingdoms. In Psalm 139, for example, after speaking of God’s omniscience and omnipresence, David describes God’s gracious providence in fashioning him from his mother’s womb: “Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them” (*Ps. 139:16*). Thus, Christians have great confidence that their individual lives have meaning. God has foreordained the days of our lives; He has even written those days into His book. In Psalm 56:8 David says, “put my tears in Thy bottle, are they not in Thy book?” What great consolation in time of trouble! Our trials are not meaningless. The sorrows and travails of the believer are foreordained by God and are written in His book, where they are stored and cherished by our Lord.

Fourth, a Christian philosophy of history is cautious in approaching particular events in the past. Where Scripture explains God’s purposes in history, Christians may speak with authority and confidence. But where Scripture is silent, Christians must be circumspect and humble. Finite humans do not

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comprehend the fullness of God's purposes, and believers must not be hasty in identifying God's particular purposes in history, or in their own lives.

Those reading the Book of Job, for example, are privy to the conversations of God and Satan in the first two chapters and learn to understand the cosmic significance of Job's trials. Job and his friends, however, didn't have access to that information. The friends too quickly speculated about God's purposes and the meaning of Job's sufferings. Job felt that he was treated unfairly and demanded an explanation from God. God never answered the particular questions that Job raised, but He did emphasize His power and perfect providence (*Job 38-41*). By the end of the book, a repentant Job can only confess, "I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted" (*Job 42:2*).

Fifth, a Christian philosophy of history requires that the past be evaluated from a divine standard. One of the lessons of Job is that we must measure the events of life from God's standard, not from a human standard or measuring stick.<sup>4</sup> "When man makes himself and his reason god over creation," Rushdoony writes, "he thereupon destroys all meaning in creation and leaves himself a chained and gibbering baboon, sitting in terror on a wired electric chair in the midst of a vast universe of nothingness."<sup>5</sup> In subsequent essays, we will consider how the Bible can be used to measure and judge the past.

## Disasters

Sixth, a Christian philosophy of history is personally challenging and should move us to repentance and faith. Luke 13 provides an excellent example of how Jesus interpreted current events, and of how we might evaluate history. Christ's followers raised questions about two disasters, one natural (the collapse of a tower) and one human (a massacre by Pilate), and asked about the purposes of God in such events. Jesus warned them not to draw hasty conclusions from the catastrophes.

Jesus never explains *why* the disasters of Luke 13 happened. It is simply not important for them, or for us, to understand the meta-historical purpose of God in those disasters. But Jesus does make a personal and evangelistic application from the disasters: "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (*vv. 3, 5*). Every disaster and every particular providence from the hand of God is a reminder of our mortality and weakness and is an occasion for introspection and repentance, and should ultimately bring us to greater faith in God.

The collapsing tower of Luke 13 presents a good paradigm for understanding the attack on the Twin Towers on 9/11. We believe that the disaster was

under the sovereign governance of God, but we do not know the overarching purposes of God in the event. It may, or may not have been a temporal judgment on the United States, and we can make no claim to know such matters with certainty. The attack, however, should have been an opportunity for individual and national soul-searching, for repentance, and for renewed commitment to Christ.

In conclusion, Christians have an obligation to read history from a theocentric and Christian perspective. It is the same approach to history that the Apostle Paul used in dealing with the men of Athens in Acts 17. Paul preached a sovereign and transcendent God, who made the world and sustains all things by His providence (*v. 24f*). He emphasized creation, noting that God made all men from "one," or from "one blood" (*v. 26a*). He emphasized God's foreordination of both history and geography, noting that God "determined [the nations] appointed times and the boundaries of their habitations" (*v. 26*). Paul notes that God is moving history toward a fixed conclusion, specifically the great day of judgment (*v. 31*). He also emphasizes the resurrection of Christ, a critical element of the gospel proclamation and one that the Athenians disliked. The dramatic point of the message, however, comes in verse 30, where Paul proclaims that "God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent."

For Paul in Acts 17, then, history had vital meaning. Though addressing a hostile audience, he gave a theocentric and evangelistic reading of history. History reminded them of the creation of God, demonstrated His sovereign control of the nations, underscored the importance of the resurrected Christ, warned listeners of the coming day of judgment, and emphasized the need for human repentance and commitment.

Those who defy God and deny His presence in history are left with meaninglessness. They are like "gibbering baboons" in a "universe of nothingness." Christians, however, have great opportunities in studying the past. History has meaning. It was ordained by God for His purposes and for His glory. Through it God governs the nations, and in it He sent His Son to be our Savior.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Gregg Singer, "The Problem of Historical Interpretation," in *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective*, ed. Gary North (Vallecito, California: Ross House, 1979), 53 and 63.

— Continued on page 23 —



# The Law, the Gospel, and Social Justice

*By John B. King, Jr.*

**W**ithin a Biblical framework, the term “social justice” refers to a situation in which the equity of God’s law prevails, leveling society. As understood by liberals, however, “social justice” becomes a mere buzzword with racist and Marxist overtones. “No justice; no peace,” they cry as they fuel the flames of racial hatred and class envy to solidify their grip on power. As seen by this emphasis on class antagonism, the liberal view of social justice has definite economic implications. In particular, “social justice” is thought to include “economic justice” and thus a so-called “equitable distribution of wealth.” In other words, the liberal view is thoroughly socialist and therefore unbiblical to the core. Since God’s Word alone forms the necessary and sufficient basis for a just society, the liberal program produces a result that is neither social nor just.

That socialism is unbiblical follows from the fact that the forced redistribution of wealth violates both the law of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. With respect to the law, socialism violates the Eighth Commandment by allowing a person to claim another’s property. With respect to the gospel, socialism undercuts the concept of grace by holding that benevolence may be constrained by considerations of need. In other words, socialism entails a mindset in which salvation (in this case economic salvation) is a needs-based right rather than a gracious gift. Thus, in seeking to *constrain* salvation within a *man made* legal system, the liberal notion of social justice attacks both the law of God and the gospel of Christ. It is simultaneously antinomian and legalistic.

## Ownership

The liberal view is antinomian because its program of wealth redistribution violates the equity of God’s property laws. For instance, according to the Eighth Commandment, a man may not steal his neighbor’s property (*Ex. 20:15; Dt. 5:19*). Since one may not steal even to sustain his life (*Pr. 6:30, 31*), it follows that even extreme need does not constitute a claim upon another person’s property. Biblical law

bases property claims on ownership rather than need. Since one cannot use his need to claim another’s goods, it follows that the liberal view of social justice violates the equity of God’s law. Of course, some will argue that socialism is not stealing since the government has the power to tax. However, the legitimate taxing power of government pertains to functions like civil justice and common defense, from which everyone benefits and so must pay their fair share (*Rom. 13:1-7*). Programs like socialized medicine and public education involve an attempt to appropriate another’s property for one’s own personal use, and any such attempt is covetous and larcenous, even if the government acts as the middleman. Christians must oppose welfare, public education, and related socialist schemes *in principle*, and not just because of their high cost and ineffectiveness.

In levying property taxes, the government claims ultimate ownership of the land within its domain. In theory and in fact, home ownership is nullified by state ownership, and the supposed homeowners in fact rent from the state. A failure to pay property taxes results in a government lien against one’s property that has priority over all private claims. Continued failure to pay these liens eventually results in government foreclosure and sale of the home, thereby revealing the true *locus* of ownership. Thus, in assessing a property tax, the government implicitly claims ownership over the property itself thereby robbing the homeowner of his rightful claim. Since such a claim is implicit in every property tax (no matter how small), it is the *principle* of such a tax and not its amount that is so dangerous. Christians must oppose property taxes *in principle*, and not just quibble over the amount. The legitimate taxing authority of the government must operate through other means.

If the property tax implies state ownership of land, the income tax implies state ownership of people. After all, in working for a wage, a person is simply trading his knowledge, skill, and/or strength for money. Implicit in such an exchange is the assump-



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tion that the person owns himself first of all, and, therefore, the talents he possesses. Owning himself and his talents, he is free to exchange a specified use of them for a specified wage. However, when the government steps into this transaction and demands a share of the wages, it asserts its ownership over the person and his talents. Since the amount of the tax is determined strictly by the whim of the government and could therefore rise to 100%, the claim to state ownership is total *in principle*. Of course, since God is the ultimate owner of everyone, He is entitled to charge the income tax that He requires in the tithe. The state, however, is not God and therefore has no business imposing an income tax. In doing so, it asserts state ownership of people as units of production, thereby reduces its citizens to the status of slaves. Since such an assertion is implicit in every income tax (no matter how small), it is the *principle* of such a tax and not its amount that is so dangerous. Christians must oppose government income taxes *in principle*, and not just quibble over the amount. The legitimate taxing authority of the government must operate through other means.

### The Social Gospel

In addition to violating the law of God, the liberal socialist program also violates the gospel. In particular, by seeking to constrain economic salvation by considerations of need, it turns such salvation into a needs-based right, rather than a gracious gift. Since charity and the gospel both rely on the principle of unconstrained benevolence, they are alike manifestations of a common principle of grace. In seeking to constrain benevolence, the liberal program directly attacks the very principle of grace upon which both charity and the gospel rest. Of course, the salvation to which the gospel refers is eternal, regenerative and, therefore, deeper and broader in its effect than a merely economic salvation (although in its regenerating power the gospel has economic implications as well). In advancing the principle that physical salvation is a needs-based right, socialism attacks the very character of grace and, therefore, lends itself to a parallel notion that eternal salvation is also a needs-based right. Thus, on the basis of socialist logic, one should shake his fist in the face of the Almighty, demanding eternal salvation apart from grace and apart from Christ simply because he needs it! As horrid as such a thought is, it is a direct consequence of the socialist idea. Christians must oppose socialism *in principle* since its core idea is antithetical to the gospel and, thus, to the central reality of the Christian Faith.

In opposing socialism, however, one must remember the legitimate and pressing needs of the poor.

After all, God commands His people to remember the poor and give generously to them through tithes and offerings (*Dt. 14:2-29; 16:10-14*). Because the needs of the poor must be met, the state will naturally step in to fill the gap whenever Christians fail to meet legitimate social needs. In fact, it is precisely because Christians have largely abandoned their social responsibilities that the welfare state has arisen in the first place and then assumed such great authority. To fight socialism it is necessary not only to oppose various welfare schemes, but even more basically to encourage tithing among all Christians so that the church has sufficient resources to meet various social needs. After all, when the church implements such a program, she, unlike the state, will be in a position to minister to the whole person and to provide loving guidance in addition to financial assistance. Because of this more personal approach, she will be able to give people a hand up and not just a handout. The social need, which is used to justify the welfare state, will wither away so that government programs implode from the lack of clients. At such a point, the electorate will be more receptive to political arguments calling for the elimination of such programs that will have become superfluous. Thus, the welfare state will be supplanted by a godly social program that will truly minister to the poor out of love and compassion. Of course, such a program will be a far cry from current policies that imply that the poor can demand the property of others on the basis of physical need. After all, since Biblical charity is based on giving rather than taking, it is rooted in the concept of grace rather than coercion. And while it is true that God commands charity, it is at the same time free and voluntary since it is not enforced by the state. In contrast to the liberal view, the Biblical notion of social justice produces a result that is both social and just. It is social because people of varying economic means are drawn together through godly concern rather than wrenched apart by class warfare. It is also just, because a system based on giving rather than taking honors the property rights of the giver. Within the framework of Biblical law, true social justice prevails because mercy and justice come together to form a just society. May God give us clergy with the insight and integrity to declare these simple truths.

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# FOCUS on Dominion

## Interview With Rev. Norman Milbank

*By Ford and Andrea Schwartz*

**F**riends of Chalcedon recently interviewed The Very Reverend Norman Milbank, rector of St. Paul's Anglican Church in Los Altos, CA, which is a member of the Anglican Churches of America and Associates. Reverend Milbank lives and works with his wife of 60 years, Tille Ann, at Canterbury Christian School (K-6<sup>th</sup> grade), which has been the main work of St. Paul's for 32 years. Friends of Chalcedon (FOC) spoke with Rev. Milbank recently and posed the following questions.

FOC: As members of the group of ex-Episcopalians that founded St. Paul's Anglican Church in 1964, what was the biggest challenge you faced and how did you meet it?

Milbank: Our biggest challenge was finding a location for a worship service and finding reliable, knowledgeable leadership. At first we had lay-led services using the 1928 version of the *Book of Common Prayer* (which is reliable in any age). Shortly thereafter we met R. J. Rushdoony, I went to seminary and was ordained, and we also met Bob Ingram.

FOC: What were the major influences that caused you to feel that you should take on such a challenge?

Milbank: The fact that the social gospel was being adopted and pursued by major denominations was a big factor. Then there was the necessity of training four children in the unadulterated Word of God.

FOC: Over the years has your vision for St. Paul's undergone any major changes?

Milbank: I can't say that it has. Article 19 of *The 39 Articles of Religion* states, "The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the



Rev. Milbank (as Moses leading the Children of Israel to the Promised Land) at the annual All Saints Day Parade held each year at Canterbury Christian School.

Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

FOC: Prior to 1974, what were the major ministry outreaches of St. Paul's?

Milbank: Our main focus was on individual witnessing.

FOC: When did the idea for Canterbury Christian School begin to materialize? Why did you choose that name?

Milbank: That occurred immediately following our move to our first permanent church home in 1970. Conversations with R. J. and Dorothy Rushdoony and Bob and Maryann Thoburn helped move it along. Rev. Rushdoony thought it was *mandatory* not *optional* that the church should have a Christian school attached to it. The names St. Paul's and Canterbury reflect our English

heritage and the English Reform movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

FOC: In the 32 years that the school has been in existence, how have the issues changed in education? What groups (if there are any) seem to appreciate the idea of Christian schooling the most?

Milbank: The issues of preparing children for a profitable life of service to the Lord are still the same. The enemies (such as the media with their total humanistic perspective on life) are now somewhat more blatant. The appreciative groups seem to be the parents who understand what we are all about and want *no* part of the alternative — humanism. They also have a high regard for the academic standard of excellence that we demand. When you hold the Bible as the unchanging standard and learn politics or economics or anything, by that standard, you learn a Christian worldview.

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FOC: By now you must have graduates of Canterbury spread all throughout the country. Do you hear from many of them?

Milbank: We've had visits from time to time, including some very pleasant visits from several who have a continuing interest in seeing that this Christian school work is as active and focused as when they were here. It's always very exciting to have them come back and say, "I really enjoyed Chapel Service," "Oh, this hasn't changed since we were here," "Have you heard from [so and so]?" and "Is a [particular teacher] still here?"

FOC: In your opinion, what are the major challenges for the future for schools like Canterbury? How do you think they will be met?

Milbank: There are many persons in government as well as in the private sector who are antagonistic to Christian schools for what they regard as legitimate reasons. The Christian schools must keep on doing what they know to be right and not be cowed by those "anti-s." Also, there needs to be a more concerted effort to convince churches of their obligation to provide Christian education. This will *only* be done by sacrificial commitment, very much including financial sacrifice.

FOC: You and your wife both have been planting faithfully the seeds of Christian faith for quite some time. Do you ever get weary of another school year and a whole new crop of students?

Milbank: We are human beings and human beings do get tired. However, as long as the Lord sustains us, we'll very likely be doing the same things. Each new group is interesting and a new challenge.

FOC: Would you encourage Christian young people to become teachers and work to start Christian day schools?

Milbank: I can't think of a greater need and a more honorable career than elevating the citizens and leaders of tomorrow to an awareness of serving the Lord faithfully. As far as I'm concerned, a teacher is way at the top as far as careers go.

FOC: Please describe how your association with R. J. Rushdoony was helpful to you.

Milbank: Being called into the trenches at a somewhat advanced age (46 in 1962), it was extremely helpful to have the counsel of a recognized superior leader in both church and school activities. His assistance was of value beyond measure. He saved me so much time by directing me in my study — what I should and should not bother with. His help was very practical in nature. When I told him I didn't think I really had the background for running a school and that I was uncertain how to begin, his advice was, "Just start!"

FOC: You have quoted Rev. R. J. Rushdoony as having said that the *Book of Common Prayer* is one of the three great works to come out of the Reformation. What were the other two and could you give a brief description why?

Milbank: The Anglicans under Thomas Cranmer contributed the *Book of Common Prayer*; John Calvin, for the Presbyterians, produced the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; and Martin Luther gave the Lutherans *The Bondage of the Will*. All of these made a huge impact on the Christian religion and are still very important to dedicated scholars. Rev. Rushdoony stated that the Presbyterians could have had the *Book of Common Prayer*, and he believed they should have adopted it.

FOC: Today we see various forms of sincere worship being practiced by committed Christians. What does the *Book of Common Prayer* (1928 version) have to offer to today's congregations?

Milbank: It offers a dignified, structured service absolutely faithful to God's Word. In the General Confession, the General Thanksgiving, and one of the Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian) as well as other parts of the service, the parishioners participate more than in most other major services. The liturgy incorporates more Scripture than perhaps any other and if followed faithfully, without deviation, will keep one from error.

FOC: Why isn't the *Book of Common Prayer* more widely used?

Milbank: People tend to want innovation and things to be more casual. They often feel uncomfortable being told they are sinners, which the *Book of Common Prayer* reminds you that you are. People want "social gatherings," which is why the social gospel of the 40s and 50s gained popularity. In my opinion, they headed mainline off into bypass meadows! Great men of American history, such as George Washington, were very positively influenced by their use of the *Prayer Book*.

FOC: You and your wife have been married for over 60 years with four children, twelve grandchildren, and two (and a half) great grandchildren. What do you have to say to the challenges that young couples face today regarding marriage and family?

Milbank: Get busy with the Bible. Raise children with the Bible. Don't be concerned about what your neighbors are doing or saying. You have to be solid as a rock. I often recommend that families use the *Book of Common Prayer* for their family devotions.

FOC: Can you cite noteworthy instances where the faithful application of God's law to a specific area

— Continued on page 27 —



# Thriving in Babylon Quit Whining and Start Enjoying

By Craig R. Dumont, Sr.

**C**hristians are no longer the head, but are closer to the tail. No one is listening to Christian leaders, except to high profile religious leaders who rebuke other Christians for being, well, Christian. We Christians are reduced to begging for “just a place at the table,” and we live in a time when this is considered to be an incredibly lofty ambition!

The reason for our dilemma is two-fold. Over the past several generations Christians have stopped thinking and acting as Christians, which means that the salt has lost its savor and is not good for anything. When we are fortunate enough to have a Christian assume a position of power or influence, that Christian doesn't do much differently than the non-Christian did. We have a President who testifies of his conversion to Christ, and I believe President Bush is a Christian. But he is a product of a Christianity that mimics liberalism — good intentions, not Biblical actions, are what's important. I believe John Ashcroft is a fine man and a Christian, but this high-profile conservative Christian man elevated to the top law enforcement position in the nation continues to uphold and promote the mindset and operating methods of all those non-Christians before him. So even when we're at the head of the political table, we're still beggars!

While America has deep Christian roots and many of the forms or structures arising from Christian thought still remain, America has ceased to be a Christian nation and, therefore, has no desire for Christian culture. Most of the time it has no clue what Christian culture really would look like. (I don't believe we're completely “post-Christian,” as some have asserted. Nazi Germany was post-Christian, and despite all the horrors of modern American life, we're not there yet. Believe me, you'll know when and if America ever becomes “post-Christian.”)

## Welcome to Babylon!

Today, America is more like Babylon: powerful, prosperous, and tolerant of almost anything. After conquering Israel and scattering its people, Babylon

was tolerant of the Jews and granted them much latitude. In fact, Jews show up everywhere in Babylonian culture and history. They were granted favors by the Babylonian government, mostly because no one thought highly enough of them to worry about what they did or would do. For the most part, Jews lived quietly among the people.

This concept of “just living life” is powerful and worthy of examination, because at this time in history, God has seen fit to place us in a new Babylon. Furthermore, it appears that our Babylonian experience may last for quite some time. Am I pessimistic about this? Absolutely not. The concept of Christian “normalcy” — “just living life” — and the power it has to transform our culture excites me. Let the enjoyment begin!

We read in Jeremiah 29:4-7:

*Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:*

*Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters — that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.*

In this passage God tells us to stop whining and longing for the “good old days,” and instead to live the life He's given. We should be encouraged by the Lord's command to the Israelites who were to spend many generations in captivity. He encourages them to build new homes though their first homes were taken; to plant new gardens and vineyards though their lands had been taken; to marry and have children just as they would have in Jerusalem; to pray that Babylon, like Jerusalem would be a city of

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peace; and to build a synagogue to replace the temple that had been taken.

God tells the Jews in Babylon a couple of amazing things. First, they must take account of the marvelous land and the opportunity it affords. It is a good place to build a house and live. They must stop complaining about Babylon, because even though it's not home, God has made it very good. He reminds them that the land is fertile; so they should plant a garden and when it produces fruit, sit back and enjoy it. So, too, He tells them to eat, drink, and be merry — not because tomorrow you will die — but because “this is the day that the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.” In essence, God is saying to them, “The land is set forth before you and it is a good land. Take dominion and transform it in every way, physically, religiously, into a good place to live that will not only bless you and your family, but will also prosper and bless those around you.”

This was true not just then, but now as well. We get involved in this land and have great expectations, for tomorrow is ordered by the Lord. We are not longing to die, but rather to increase more and more until we come to that point (in Israel's case, 70 years in the future) where we can go home. We rejoice specifically because there is a future and our work is not pointless, but worthy of all effort to establish long-standing projects, to produce works of significance.

## **The Peace of the City**

God commanded the Israelites to “seek the peace of the city,” and John Calvin believed it was “to be understood [by] prosperity.” Christians are to seek the peace and prosperity of the place where they live, even if it's “Babylon” and not “Jerusalem.” The footnote in Calvin's commentaries by his editor says this:

*To “seek the peace of the city,” was, no doubt, to promote it by their efforts, to be careful in preserving it. To “seek the land,” in Deuteronomy 11:12, was to care for it; “not to seek the day,” in Job 3:4, was not to regard it. Hence, to “seek the peace of the city,” was to care for, or regard it, so as to do everything to promote it . . . therefore the first sense given by Calvin is the right one.*

There is a proper place for the social critic, but having a brilliant, analytical eye and a loud voice does not qualify a man to lead. Rather than cursing the darkness, he should light a match. This is an important point. We will never lead the culture if we fail to care about the well-being of our communities or their culture and fail to get involved in advancing

them. People are tired of complainers, but there is something very attractive about doers. Cultural leaders understand that everyone knows we've have major problems, so they don't spend much time and energy denouncing failing institutions, but rather invest their time building new, Biblical ones.

How do we become cultural leaders? By seeking the true peace and prosperity of the city, rebuilding on solid foundations all those mediating institutions and ministries that teach, heal, and sustain life — and life more abundant. We must stop the whining that masquerades as some prophetic vision and start producing something of value and service to our land.

We shouldn't spend time whining about the evils of government schools, but should start Christian schools, even if it's with just a few students, or even if it's just with one family's children in a home school. Today everyone knows the dangers of even the best government schools, and non-Christians probably outnumber Christians in looking for alternatives for their children. We should stop whining and start building a Christian school where people can enroll their children. If we build it, they will come.

We see the bankrupt intellectual status of Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and countless others, all universities originally established through the financial gifts of God's people. But rather than bemoan our losses, we should start new colleges and universities like Whitfield College and Bahnsen School of Theology. We've lost the old ones; yes, it's tough, but we must toughen up and build new universities that are faithful and excellent in every way.

Build for the future, because we're going to be here a while. Build because you love your neighbor as yourself and you seek the welfare of their children as surely as you seek the welfare of your own. For a city to flourish and be at peace, it needs good schools, schools that impart the fear and knowledge of God.

## **Bloom Where You Are Planted**

Without suggesting blanket approval for government funded colleges and universities, I'm glad that Michigan State University, in downtown East Lansing, Michigan (and right around the corner from my home and church) is prospering. Our community benefits tremendously from the school in so many ways it's almost incalculable. MSU is not a “Christian” university, but many Christians are employed there, and many others are professors and students. Much world-class research being done in agriculture and forestry is being undertaken at MSU by Christian men who have accepted invitations to

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share their knowledge and expertise with our church and boys' academy. While I don't appreciate much of what is transpiring on the campus, a healthy and strong university is vital for the life of our community. Without downplaying the evil, I can work to celebrate the good and utilize God's gifts in a redemptive way by supporting and edifying (even as our church benefits from) the Christian faculty and students. (Also, like Babylon, MSU has beautiful gardens and they're open to the community. I must say, as I walk through the sprawling complex with stunning colors and relaxing fragrances, it occurs to me that we're foolish not to take the prophet's advice to the Jews: Enjoy Babylon to its fullest!)

In that same vein, we must envision Christian universities that are beneficial to and influential in their respective communities. In other words, just as MSU makes people and resources available to our communities, Christian universities should not be walled fortresses keeping out evil culture, but rather dynamic, productive educational and research centers that extend the gospel of Christ throughout the community in terms of knowledge, productivity, and service.

We "just live life" by building new schools where we are. Whether at the elementary, secondary, or college level, we should start today with ten children or young adults and expand to twenty next year and fifty the year after. There is nothing "heroic" in just living lives and building homes and planting gardens and eating, or just rebuilding all those institutions that have collapsed around us.

We shouldn't whine and complain about ungodly medical practices and unjust health insurance companies. Instead we should recruit some Christian doctors to start a community health clinic that young people can afford and old people can trust. Hospitals, doctors, insurance companies, and Medicare/Medicaid are wildly off base today and face huge problems, so we should reestablish charitable ministries to the truly needy. We should help and minister to people as opposed to simply directing them to a government agency that supposedly "helps" them. We must seek the peace of our cities by establishing medical institutions that love and care for their people as Christ loves and cares for us.

We should stop whining about corrupt courts and the trial lawyers and learn what it means to be an elder, including the judicial function of binding and loosening in the legal affairs of church members. Instead, establish Christian courts based upon Canon law. Teach elders to judge impartially according to God's law in all matters so that even non-Christians will come to them for judgment.

If this doesn't seem practical, consider that almost 90% of all cases are settled before going to trial, and private arbitration is huge today. One of the top attorneys in Lansing, a Christian man who practices law for one of the top law firms in the Midwest, is also a professor at a local law school. This attorney is well known for his work in conflict resolution and is willing and able to help churches establish the structures to handle the requirements. He probably doesn't even think about it, but over time he will become a cultural leader as he changes the way people think and behave in the area of law.

We shouldn't complain about how Christians get no respect. We should learn our vocations so well and do such a good job that we are called upon by the leaders of our communities to work on the most important projects, build the most important buildings, design the most important landmarks, write the most important presentations, head up the most important associations, and serve on the most important committees.

Go out and build a home that says we're committed to our community and are here for the long haul. Make it a credit to the community by keeping it up and adding beauty to the neighborhood. Grow a garden that brightens the area and, in fact, exists just "for beauty and for glory." Throw a neighborhood block party with lots of good food. Get married and stay married, have children, and raise them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Be godly leaders in your household and constantly seek the peace of the city where God has caused you to live.

Don't spend your life complaining about what's wrong, but rather do something today that's right and will contribute to the prosperity of your city. Stop whining and start rebuilding.

Jeremiah encouraged the covenant people:

*Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters — that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.*

To put it bluntly: Enjoy life! Enjoy God's blessings! And without a doubt, enjoy Babylon!

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# Family Wealth

## Part 2

*By Timothy D. Terrell*



**I**n the first part of this two-part essay, we examined the principles of Biblical inheritance, including the incentives that a Biblically-managed inheritance creates for Biblical, unified family life. In this part we will take a look at one of the ways statism has weakened the family — heavy taxation.

### **Taxation and the Decapitalization of the Family**

Despite all the rhetoric from politicians about “family values,” the state today is carrying out what amounts to an all-out offensive against the institution of the family. The state has attacked home schooling, mocked parental authority and Biblical morality in the public school system, set up welfare systems that encourage single-parent homes, threatened parents who discipline their children with corporal punishment, and much more. Individuals who physically attack the family, such as murderers and rapists, are given shamefully light sentences, and (in the case of abortionists, for example) are even vigorously protected by the state.

Long before these audacious recent assaults began, however, the state began undermining the family through taxation. A fundamental part of the state’s aggression has been to decapitalize the family and thus deprive it of the financial resources necessary to perform vital functions. With around half of the average family’s marketable output going to the civil government, the family is crippled when it comes to fulfilling the traditional economic roles of school, welfare agency, lending institution, and venture capitalist.

### **Inheritance Taxes and Family Capital**

Early twentieth century egalitarianism and the expenses of World War I contributed to one of the most direct tax assaults on the family — estate, inheritance, and gift taxes.<sup>1</sup> Though these taxes are avoidable with planning, and recent legislation has tempered their impact, these taxes should not be ignored as having

contributed to family breakdown, intergenerational tensions, and massive wealth destruction.

Recently, the federal government began to increase the amount of an estate excluded from estate taxes, and to decrease the tax rates. The exclusion is now \$1 million and is supposed to increase substantially over the next few years. (The change was long overdue, as inflation had eroded the original exclusion.) The federal estate tax is supposed to be eliminated entirely in 2010.<sup>2</sup> This is a great victory for the financial integrity of the family. However, a recent bid to make the 2010 repeal permanent was narrowly defeated in the Senate on June 12, 2002. Therefore, unless estate tax opponents can regroup, the tax will be reinstated in 2011 with the old exclusion of \$1 million.

There are two primary ways that estate taxes break down the institution of the family. First, the estate tax renders ineffective some of the important financial obligations that preserve and solidify parent-child relationships. Second, these taxes foster misplaced, short-term investments, since the taxes create incentives to divert family resources to tax-deductible charities and foundations.

### **Estate Taxes and Family Disunity**

Estate taxes disrupt the Biblical incentive structure by encouraging filial disloyalty and misbehavior, and by removing much of a parent’s power to transfer intellectual capital to a child. The ability of the parents to impose consequences on bad behavior is seriously compromised, and children grow up ignoring their obligations toward their elders. It’s no wonder so many elderly people in this nation are neglected by their children and grandchildren and left to the care of complete strangers. Children are growing up isolated from their elders, ignorant of their family heritage, and disrespectful of the beliefs and traditions their parents and grandparents hold dear.

Rather than honoring their parents and grandparents, children seek the favor of government bureaucrats. After all, whatever family wealth re-

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mains after decades of predacious income taxation is snatched away by the state through estate taxation, and it is to the state that the children must appeal if they wish to see their inheritance. By siphoning power away from the family, civil government becomes even larger and freedom is lost. Politicians, not parents, receive the respect and adulation of the younger generation.

## Estate Taxes and Investment Choices

Estate taxes also create incentives for the bequeathing generation to divert resources to non-profit organizations rather than to their own families. Thus, these taxes encourage the decapitalization of the family in favor of groups satisfying the government's 501(c)3 requirements. There are quite a few worthy endeavors among these tax-favored organizations, but bequestors may well prefer to build up a family capital base for children, grandchildren, and later generations.

Estate taxes, therefore, penalize forward-looking families. This sends repercussions throughout the whole economy. Not only do these taxes discourage the long-term investment necessary for a high level of economic growth, but they prevent families from accumulating, over several generations, the resources required for starting a family business or for preparing for uncertain times ahead. The short-term focus that estate taxes force onto families may result in a lower standard of living for everyone in the long run.

In his 1942 book *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, the great economist Joseph A. Schumpeter remarked that in the free-market system, the long-run interests of society depend upon the "family motive" certain people have to accumulate wealth for future generations. This businessman-investor class works not so much for consumption as for the building of family capital over generations. The civil government, however, takes a short-run view and seeks to tax this accumulated wealth away from families, with disastrous results:

*With the decline of the driving power supplied by the family motive, the businessman's time-horizon shrinks, roughly, to his life expectation. And he might now be less willing than he was to fulfill that function of earning, saving and investing even if he saw no reason to fear that the results would but swell his tax bills. He drifts into an anti-saving frame of mind and accepts with an increasing readiness anti-saving theories that are indicative of a short-run philosophy.<sup>3</sup>*

This philosophy, Schumpeter continues, can lead to ineffectiveness and apathy among businessmen, which "decomposes the motor forces of capitalism from within."

Some claim that government confiscation and redistribution of bequests is necessary in order to maintain income equality. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, made plain that the "abolition of all right of inheritance" was one of ten essential measures for equalizing the distribution of capital and making the State the supreme power in society.

Estate and inheritance taxes persist at the state level, and even under the 2001 repeal plan, gift taxes will continue after the federal estate tax is eliminated in 2010. All of these should be abolished. It certainly should be a priority to resume the effort to see that the federal estate tax stays dead after 2010.

## Taxes and Long-Term Family Capital

Estate taxes may be one of the most direct attacks on family capital, but other forms of taxation can actually have a more insidious, and more powerful, impact. *All* taxes limit the family's ability to build up capital for succeeding generations. It is not only the estate tax that can create disunity within the family and encourage the diversion of family wealth. Income taxes, property taxes, Social Security taxes, and taxes of every other sort have the potential to hinder the family's ability to handle its traditional economic functions. By draining capital from families, taxes force reliance upon extra-family resources for business start-ups and expansions. Also, heavy taxation makes it difficult for the family to perform welfare functions, as the family reserves are depleted and significant relief of the family's poor or afflicted becomes more difficult.

The state may collect taxes for the performance of its Biblical duties. The Bible states this unambiguously in Romans 13:6-7. Yet it is important that the method, and the amount, of taxation not undermine the family. We will not delve into the debates over tax methods here. It seems clear, however, that estate taxation deprives the family of a key institutional support, and weakens the entire structure.

## Family Wealth and the Family Welfare System

R.J. Rushdoony wrote that the family is "the major welfare agency of all history with its care of old and young, relatives and friends, and its assistance to members of the 'nuclear' family."<sup>4</sup> He argued that it was the family, more than the state or



even the church, that was the most important institution in society and the primary source of relief for the needy.

It is only within the context of the family that the providers of assistance can gain accurate and comprehensive information about the needs of the recipients. There is no way a state bureaucrat can know all the relevant details of the complex situation that has led to a person's welfare application. Nor does the bureaucrat have an incentive to inquire. After all, it is taxpayer dollars he is handing out. Family-oriented welfare is fundamentally different. The check-writer is more completely aware of the recipient's situation and has an incentive to refuse support if the recipient is unwilling to take steps that might solve the problems leading to the financial distress. Also, while the state bureaucrat does not know or care about the moral state of the recipients, family welfare must take this into account so as not to pass on family wealth to the unrighteous.

Most families today are not in a financial position to provide substantial support for needy family members or friends. Think of what it would take for the family to take over the role of providing for the temporarily unemployed. Most people will find a new job within 12 weeks of losing their old one, and in most years nearly half of all jobless people are out of work less than 5 weeks. For someone making \$45,000 a year after taxes and tithing to maintain 85% of their normal spending for 12 weeks with no current income, about \$8800 would need to be set aside in liquid assets. For someone netting \$30,000 a year, it would come to around \$5900. It is not an impossible sum to accumulate, it would provide a small amount of interest income, and it involves no expensive state bureaucracy to administer an unemployment insurance program. Yet how many families can say that there is an appropriate amount set aside in reserves for every worker? Were it not for high tax rates, family reserve funds would be much easier to accumulate.

## The State vs. the Family

The family has always been a more influential institution in human society than the state. Craving this power, the modern government is attempting to supplant the family by being a parent to every child and a child to every parent. The good-faith efforts of parents to provide for, educate, and discipline their children (and later generations) are thwarted by government bureaucrats who imagine themselves to be better than natural parents. The children, as subjects of this gigantic government parenting experiment, are trained to believe that government

can easily fulfill any function of the family, and they dutifully turn over the responsibility for their aging natural parents to politicians. When the government takes this role, it has become the *de facto* heir to the parents' fortune.

However, Biblical societies will protect the intergenerational transfer of wealth, recognizing that inheritances enable families to fulfill their mutual responsibilities to one another. As parents provide for their children, and children for their aging parents, the family — and therefore all of society — is stabilized and preserved. We must remember, too, that a spiritual inheritance is of far more value than a physical inheritance, and *that* gift to one's children can never be taxed away.

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<sup>1</sup> Inheritance taxes are imposed upon the beneficiary; estate taxes are paid out of the decedent's estate before wealth is passed on. Gift taxes are legally unified with estate taxes. The consequences are similar, though inheritance taxes may be worse because beneficiaries are more likely to be forced to liquidate property in order to pay the tax. The federal government does not impose inheritance taxes. Estate taxes are much more common than inheritance taxes in state law.

<sup>2</sup> The gift tax is to be retained, with a \$1 million lifetime exclusion.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 161.

<sup>4</sup> Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, vol. 2 (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books), 1986, 131.

— Continued from page 13 —

<sup>2</sup> *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* (3:1).

This Baptist classic is in theological harmony with the Westminster Confession of Faith and to other Reformed confessions of theology.

<sup>3</sup> Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Rousas J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard?: An Analysis of the Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til* (Tyler, Texas: Thoburn Press, 1983), 189.

Rushdoony notes that the Book of Job made him a Calvinist.

<sup>5</sup> Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History*, 15.



# Christianity and The Culture of Death

By John E. Stoos

**T**he rise of modern terrorism in recent decades has brought the depravity of man into full view. As Christians, we have an obligation to follow our Lord's command to be salt and light by showing that only Christians can understand and explain what I call the "culture of death." As Christians we must confront this culture of death both at home and abroad.

The culture of death is often what people simply call evil. Consider some of these shocking examples from the Middle East:

- On June 18, 2002, the BBC reported on a mother who appeared in a videotape with her son who was about to go on a suicide mission: "God willing you will succeed" she said. "May every bullet hit its target, and may God give you martyrdom. This is the best day of my life." The son responded by saying, "Thank you for raising me." Asked if it mattered whether her son killed women and children she said, "The women and children are also Jews, they're all the same for me." She has nine more children.
- On July 18, 2002, Gary Bauer did a report on the conflict in Jenin contrasting the truth with much of what was reported by the mainstream media: "During the heavy fighting, the Israeli Defense Force worked hard to keep the hospital open in Jenin and offered the Palestinians blood for their wounded. Incredibly, the blood was rejected because it came from Jews! The IDF brought in blood from Jordan but a Jewish reporter asked the right question: "How do you negotiate with a hatred so great that it will refuse to accept your blood even to save its own people's lives?"

*When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation. Matthew 12:43-45*

- Finally, on August 10, 2002, Michael Oren recounted a series of Palestinian celebrations for the *Wall Street Journal*: After the cold-blooded murder of seven people and maiming of 80 more by a terrorist bomb at the Hebrew University, Palestinian children were seen cheering and singing in the streets as adults showered them with candies. He talked about the dancing from the rooftops in 1991 as the Iraqi scud missiles landed in Israeli

neighborhoods and the estimated 70,000 Palestinians who filled a Gaza stadium to cheer a re-enactment of a bus bomb that had killed dozens in Israel including the writer's sister. Mr. Oren reminded Americans that the death of 3,000 of our citizens on September 11 was also cause for dancing in Palestinian streets even though coverage was greatly restricted for the Western press.

Mr. Oren went on to contrast properly this culture of death with reactions by Western civilizations to the death of women and children, even accidental death. His piece is a thoughtful consideration of how difficult this Middle East situation will be to solve, but in the course of his discussion he makes an interesting comment: "[T]here is no rational explanation for the outburst of joy bordering on ecstasy at the dismemberment of innocent children, women and men."

Christians, and only Christians, can and must provide a rational answer to this type of madness. More importantly, not only can we rationally explain why these things happen, we can provide the hope that there is a solution.

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## Beginning at the Beginning

Christians must begin at the beginning; or as Ken Ham would say, you must find the answers in Genesis! In the early chapters of Genesis, we learn that the fall of man ushered in the culture of death. It is important to understand that God was serious when He said: “You shall surely die.” Man experienced death *both* physically and spiritually. Man experienced death *both* now and for eternity. From the point of the fall of man forward, on one side man struggles, trying to earn his salvation, and on the other God reaches out in His abundant grace.

The salvation found in Christ is a real answer because we are clearly told the end:

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*

*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:20-26).*

In 2 Timothy 1:8-11, we find more encouraging words from the Apostle Paul referring to “*our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death.*” We should also remember those sobering words about the end of time in Revelation 20:11-15, including the fact that “Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.”

Only with the truth of Christianity can we begin to understand and rationally explain the culture of death. Only a solid Biblical worldview can honestly explain this profound evil and then offer the hope that people, and nations, so desperately need.

Recent events provide us with an incredible opportunity because people see more clearly that this culture of death is a *big* problem. As Christians, we must consider how to engage this culture of death with a properly balanced Christian response. We must have a solid Biblical worldview that centers on Christ as the answer! We would, and must, confront the terrorist. The confrontation can be anything from rhetoric to war. We would, and must, protect, and comfort the victims. We can do these through anything from preaching to practical compassion.

And of course, we will want God to be on our side in this battle!

However, God might have a few questions, like Jesus did when He walked with the disciples:

*Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me remove the speck from your eye"; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (Mt. 5:1-5)*

## The Sacrament of the West

Let's go back to that shocking Palestinian mother who appeared in the video with her son. She was willing to sacrifice her own son to help her people. Allow me to contrast her with a modern western mom who was the focus of an article by Ken Connor of the Family Research Council in a recent *Washington Update*. The parents made a television appearance to discuss plans to work with a controversial doctor and a secret medical team to produce a cloned baby. According to Connor's report, “Despite the mounting evidence that cloned animals develop defects, Dr. Zavos says the mistakes made with animals may not apply to cloned human beings.” Even so, the mad scientist has a contingency plan. The following is an excerpt from the show.

*BILL (husband): We're not going to give birth to a monster or an abnormal child. If there is a serious abnormality, absolutely we will — and Dr. Zavos concurs — that we will abort.*

*GUILLEN (host): And when you said the word "abort," lots of people are going to think... you're piling one abomination on top of another.*

*KATHY (wife): Well, at least they'll have stem cells to possibly help improve someone's life who is having a problem.*

*GUILLEN: You would harvest stem cells from the aborted fetus for... research?*

*KATHY: Well, I'm a controversial person.*

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We are also learning about some odd results from the war on terrorism. In a recent report from ProLife Network we learn that “A British abortion business said that it will officially open one of the first dedicated ‘reproductive health clinics’ in Afghanistan.” Steve Mosher, president of the Population Research Institute, said it best: “Afghan refugee women face a new reign of terror designed to violate their right to bear children.”

I would humbly suggest that we as Americans have a very *big* log in our eye. Since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, we have had abortion on demand. Consequently, over 40 million of our children have been lost. Instead of repenting of this holocaust, today many see abortion as the new “sacrament,” not unlike how that Palestinian mom saw terror.

Father Frank Pavone recently discussed the 1992 book, *The Sacrament of Abortion*. The author, Ms. Ginette Paris, argues in the book that abortion is a sacred act, a sacrifice to Artemis, a goddess known to the Romans as Diana. Father Pavone observes, “Diana is both a protector of wild animals and a hunter who kills them with deadly aim. How can these contradictory roles be found in the same female deity? The view proposed in this book is that a mother properly cares for life only if she possesses full power over life and death. Death is sometimes preferable. The one who can provide death in order that one may escape an unfriendly life, is really loving the one who is being killed. Abortion, then, is seen as ‘an expression of maternal responsibility and not a failure of maternal love’” (p. 8). “Diana stands for the refusal to give life if the gift is not pure and untainted... As Diana might kill a wounded animal rather than allow it to limp along miserably, so a mother wishes to spare the child a painful destiny” (p. 55).

In the garden, Satan tempted the woman by saying in part, “you shall be as gods.” Ms. Paris has taken the original rebellion against the Creator to new heights with her “maternal responsibility” that has woman exercising the complete power of life and death over her offspring.

## Defeating the Culture of Death

If we want God’s blessings in these battles against the culture of death, then we must be honest. After the completion of the great temple in Jerusalem, King Solomon heard this warning from God:

*Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: “I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or*

*command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open and mine ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.” (2 Chr. 7:12-15)*

Dr Gene Veith stated our challenge well in the July 20, 2002 edition of *WORLD* magazine: “Civilization requires vigilance against barbarians, both from without and from within.”

Yes, as Christians and Americans, we must confront terrorism abroad and clearly present Christ as the answer. But, we must also confront terrorism here at home! If we desire God’s mighty blessings, we must be willing to stand up to this new Diana as the early Christians did in Ephesus. Read Acts 19:24-34 to review the impact that those early Christians had on that pagan city. Both here at home, as well as abroad, we must see and boldly proclaim Christ as the answer.

We Americans above all others have a special responsibility based on the light that we have been given. Consider these sobering words of our Lord as He spoke to the enlightened cities of Israel in His day:

*The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation. (Mt. 12:41-45)*

After September 11, many thought that the proverbial demons were being cast out and the house was starting to be swept clean: flags were flying, many public prayers were offered, people were singing “God Bless America” and, boy, was there a

national uproar when Dr. Newdow tried to take "under God" out of the Pledge!

Yes, a demon can be sent packing at times and we can even sweep things up and make the house look pretty tidy. But, if it was not Christ who drove away that demon, and if we don't keep Christ at the center of all we do, that same demon can easily return with a whole lot of his fellow demons!

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*John E. Stoos is a political consultant living in Sacramento California with his wife Linda. They have six children and soon fifteen grandchildren. John is also host of the radio talk show, Dialog, on KFIA, AM710 in Sacramento, which airs weekdays from 5-7 pm. You can reach him at (916) 451-5660 or stoos@pacbell.net.*

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or situation greatly affected the direction of your ministry?

Milbank: Romans 8:28 comes to mind. When discouraged because of how the general society influences my thinking, I've said, "Wait a minute... All things work together for good!" I encourage myself to just keep on with church, school, family, and whatever it might be.

FOC: You have acknowledged R. J. Rushdoony and Bob Ingram as major influences. How about C. S. Lewis?

Milbank: Not really. I was and am very grateful to J. I. Packer and his contributions. He saw the church going in a liberal direction (e.g., same sex unions), and actively opposed it. His little booklet *The Gospel in the Prayer Book* is one I heartily recommend. I also want to mention the value to our ministry of a close relationship with Truman Davis, our first bishop. His inspirational and knowledgeable leadership was of inestimable value to us. His successor, Ron Johnson, is likewise doing an outstanding job of spiritual leadership.

FOC: At the seasoned age of 86, we sincerely hope that the Lord provides you with many more years of service to His kingdom both for our sake and for the sake of all those children who pass through your school.

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*Rev. Milbank can be reached c/o St. Paul's Anglican Church and Canterbury Christian School at 101 North El Monte, Los Altos, CA 94022, (650) 949-0909.*

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