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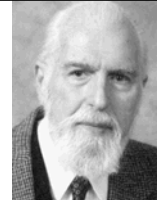
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The Annunciation

Luke 1:26-38

December 18, 1967

It is difficult to approach the story of our Lord's virgin birth without a sense of holy awe. It is one of the most moving and inspiring of all stories.

Luke tells us that in the sixth month the angel Gabriel came to Mary in Nazareth. The sixth month of what? The sixth month of Elisabeth's conception. Elisabeth, a kinswoman of Mary, was a greatly older woman, well along in years after a lifetime of barrenness. God had announced that through her the forerunner, the prophet who should prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, would be born.

Ave Maria

The birth of John the Baptist was announced in the solemn grandeur of the temple; that of Jesus, in a humble home in Galilee. And yet the beauty and holiness which accompanies that annunciation and the events that follow are unrivaled in all of history. A hymn written in the very earliest times of the Christian church echoes the sense of reverence which the church has felt as it has sung of that event: "Ave Maria." The song in its original form is purely Biblical. The third portion, which begins, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us," was added in the 15th century and was not even officially in use until 1568; but the original form of the hymn, the first two parts, comes from the earliest days of the Christian church.

Mary, we are told, was a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. In those days in Israel, betrothal, or we would say

"engagement," was the *legal* act of marriage. The only way a betrothal could be broken was by divorce. The property settlement was made at that time; the girl's property was vested in the future husband; and although they did not live together until at least a year was passed, they were legally man and wife. Commonly during that year the young man earned the dowry which was to go to the bride to be part of the family capital, her treasury, and the inheritance of her children. Thus, any unfaithfulness on the part of a betrothed girl was, according to law, punishable by death; this is clearly stated in Deuteronomy 22, 23, and 24.

The angel came in unto her and said, "Hail, thou that are highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

Mary's Reaction

The reaction of Mary to the appearance of the angel Gabriel and this salutation perhaps comes through to us a little more clearly — because the wording is unfamiliar enough to give us a little bit sharper focus on it — in the translation by the great Lutheran scholar Lenski in his commentary. He translates verses 29 and 30 thus:

But she was greatly perturbed at the word and began to argue with herself of what kind this greeting might be. And the angel said to her, "Stop being afraid, Mary, for thou didst find favor with God."

Then Gabriel went on to make the great announcement: "And, behold,

thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus." The name Jesus means, "God is our salvation." "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest (or, 'Son of the Most High'); and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David." (He who shall be born of you miraculously shall be the Son of God, very God of very God; but He shall also be the son of David, very man of very man.) "And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (He shall be the Messianic King, the Messianic King foretold by David and the prophets of old, and He shall also be the eternal King, King of kings and Lord of lords, eternally King, so that His rule shall be over time and over eternity, over this world and over the world to come.)

"Then said Mary unto the angel, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?'" Mary was not only a woman full of grace but also a woman with a down-to-earth realism, and this is real holiness; she realized immediately that this glorious miracle presented for her a tremendous problem: she was legally wed to someone; and if she became pregnant, she was liable to the death penalty if her husband filed charges against her. She knew she would be wide open to gossip, to accusations; and indeed, we do know that for a time, according to St. Matthew, Joseph thought of putting her away until God spoke to him in a vision.

“And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.’” Not a word said as to how she is to protect herself. Simply the announcement, and Mary’s responsive duty to receive it by faith.

God Becomes Man

The virgin birth is the greatest miracle of Scripture. It is in a very real respect the key miracle because we cannot take away the supernaturalness of our Lord’s birth without destroying Christianity. Without the virgin birth we reduce the faith to the level of all paganisms because the essence of all paganism is man’s apotheosis — man becoming God. But the essence of the Christmas story is that *God became man*. This was an act of sheer grace on God’s part; and man’s salvation is not man becoming God as it is in all of paganism, but God became man and for our salvation assumed the fullness of humanity, fulfilled the full requirements of the law, died as our sin-bearer, and arose as He who conquered sin and death for us.

“And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.” Here Gabriel, in effect, hints to Mary, “Go to your cousin, Elisabeth. She, too, is the object of a miracle. Rejoice with her and she with you in that which God has done.” “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” This then is a tremendous declaration. Problems, yes, of a certainty. God cannot enter into this sinful world without the sinful world striking back. Men cannot take the course of holiness and truth and righteousness without the world lashing out at them in hatred. Problems, of a certainty; but with God nothing shall be impossible.

Mary’s Faith and Ours

“And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.’ And the angel departed from her.” Here we see the greatness of Mary’s faith, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” The word “handmaid” has a beauty, an old-fashioned ring to it that takes away, to a certain extent, the literalness of the word and its meaning. It means simply, “Behold the female slave of the Lord.” And with that statement she avows her total submission to whatever God does, whatever God brings upon her. Here we have true faith, this total submission. And there cannot be true faith without this kind of submission. Where men pick and choose at God’s Word and declare, “I will believe this and I will not believe that,” they have denied Scripture and set themselves as gods above God, as judge over His Word. But true faith everywhere will say even as Mary, “Behold the handmaid (or, manservant) of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.”

The New Humanity

This was the annunciation of our Lord’s birth. His birth marked the beginning of a new creation, of the new heavens and the new earth. He was the second Adam, born from above, come to usher in a new world. That new world grows day by day. Whenever a Christian enters into the kingdom, is converted, he is born into the citizenship of that new creation so that we have, as it were, a life in two worlds: by virtue of our birth in the old Adam we belong to a world which is sentenced to death; by virtue of our rebirth in Jesus Christ we belong to that new creation which shall grow and abound unto eternal life and to the fullness of all hope, all the promises of life.

Moreover, the birth of our Lord sets forth God’s continuity in His work. He did not destroy the old creation to

make way for the new Adam and the new world. He used the old to create the new: Mary, a daughter of Adam, to give birth to Christ, the second Adam. And there is the same continuity in our lives. He uses the material and the framework of the old man in us, the old Adam, to create the new man in Christ. When Scripture declares, “Behold, I make all things new,” this is what the Lord means. It is to be understood in terms of this continuity, of the new or renewed work of creation in terms of Christ so that we are fully recognizable in terms of what we were before we became members of Christ and yet wholly new in that we have a new heart, a new life, a new perspective. We are fully recognizable and yet truly new. And so is the new creation which is our destiny. It is now beyond our imagination; but when we enter into it, it shall be fully recognizable; and we shall know it to be the fulfillment of all this in our being, of all our hopes, of all the potentialities of nature and men. “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5).

This, then, is the glorious annunciation of our Lord’s birth declared unto Mary and in Mary finding a response which is the type (meaning “symbol” or “foreshadowing”) of true faith: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” Let us pray:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we give thanks unto Thee for the glory of Thy Word and of Thy so great salvation made known to us through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Savior. We thank Thee, our Father, that He as born of us, of the virgin Mary, is very man of very man, in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. But we thank Thee, our Father, that He is also very God of very God, the eternal One, and that in Him we have access unto the throne of grace. Our God, we thank Thee.

In Jesus Name. Amen **CR**



The Immanent or the Incarnate? The Definition of Chalcedon, A.D. 451, as the Foundation of Western Liberty

When I tell people that the name of our foundation is Chalcedon, many ask what that name means. The short form of my usual response is usually, “Chalcedon is the name of the early church council that defined Jesus Christ as being truly God and truly man.” I get a lot of responses to that description. The most interesting are from Christians who respond with “Oh” and an approving nod. Suspicious as many churchmen are of creeds, many seem relieved that, perhaps, they can live with a creed that defines Jesus as truly God and truly man. How we live in the West today has, in fact, been dictated by the definition of Chalcedon.

Pagan Thought

The ancient world believed in a *unity of being*, that the natural and divine, man and the gods, were only different by degrees. In what has also been called “the great chain of being,” the reach of man was unlimited. Many of the gods of the ancient world, such as those of Greek mythology, were men who became gods. Man and nature, the immanent, were potentially the equal of any god in the ancient world, and salvation was achieved through deification by some means. This claim of common nature with the divine did not, however, elevate the individual. Rather, it elevated the state as the ruler of man, which assumed a divine role. As the ruler

and benefactor of the masses the state claimed a preeminent position to divine aspiration, becoming both the political and religious center of man. Freedom apart from the state was impossible, because any opposition to the state was both treason and heresy. This was the universal pattern of ancient social order.

The Bible, however, presents not a unity of being but a difference by nature between God the Creator and man the creation. Satan’s temptation, in fact, was that man had the right “to be as gods” (Gen. 3:5). Man’s rebellion in terms of this satanic quest added a moral gulf between the already clear Creator-creation distinction. The distinction in nature and moral standing is very clear in the Old Testament law and requirements of worship. The Hebrews were clearly instructed to acknowledge the difference in nature, not degree, between themselves and God. Jesus Christ, as God in human flesh and the only Mediator between heaven and earth, stands as the reminder of the clear distinction in the Hebraic-Christian tradition. Because of this, modern man stumbles. Men who still desire “to be as god” will tolerate a “teacher Jesus” or an “historical Jesus”; they are offended by His claims to be the only means of access to the Father.

The nature of Christ’s incarnation dictates His role as Mediator and as the means by which we are saved. One of the first controversies after the close of

the New Testament canon concerned the nature of Christ, because the gospel flew in the face of all pagan thinking. If Jesus Christ was not fully God, or if He was a man who somehow rose to divinity, salvation cannot be in His power. If Jesus Christ became God, then others may do so as well. Christ’s role in the Trinity is at best a subordinate one. Jesus might then be an example of salvation by divination, but He would then not be its means. Without anything transcendent, that means would necessarily be sought in nature and natural man. It would be salvation by means of the immanent.

The search for the “historical Jesus” is a search for an immanent, or human, Jesus so that we might see Him as no more than a remarkable man. Remarkable men, remember, can be imitated and even superceded in relevance. Modernism is also a denial of the supernatural Jesus for the human, and humanistic, Messiah. The subordination of Jesus Christ to less than truly God means that He cannot have all power and authority committed to Him, that He cannot be the coming judge of the quick and the dead. That right then devolves to the immanent, to man.

Contrary to the state-god of ancient times, some have tried to claim ultimate power in the immanent individual. This is the false claim of both pure democracy and the anarchist. The individual,

however, can never exist in isolation. Man was made to be a covenantal being, to exist in relationship to others in a community. Covenant and community either are subordinate to a higher authority, or they inevitably delegate that authority to themselves. Authoritarian statism results. This is why non-Christian representative governments in the West have tended to increase their claims and limit liberty.

While many in the apostolic era sought to limit Christ's deity, some in the church sought to limit His humanity, ostensibly so as to keep the divine pure. But if Jesus Christ was not fully man, His role as Savior was impossible. Christ came to be the last Adam, to be slain as the Lamb of God. Instead of exalting Christ, denying His incarnation as a true man actually denies His saving work. This limits Christ's realm and that of the church to the spiritual. The result is mystical faith, not one focused on Christ's role as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Definition of Chalcedon

The Council of Chalcedon met in A.D. 451 to resolve this problem concerning the nature of Christ. Its definition or formula summarized the Biblical doctrine of the incarnation. It declared that Jesus Christ was:

[A]t once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects apart from sin....

Moreover, the definition declared Christ was to be understood:

[I]n two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of

each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ....

As a theological statement, the definition of Chalcedon was simple enough. Its theology, however, had long-range implications in philosophy and politics. Chalcedon was a great blow to the political and philosophical order of the ancient world. Chalcedon, based as it was on the Biblical doctrine of Christ as the sole Mediator between God and man, made Western culture distinct by making liberty possible. Chalcedon made Christendom possible by recognizing the uniqueness of Christ's incarnation. Given the position of Christ as defined by Chalcedon, all other authority had to be limited and ministerial.

What Chalcedon Meant

Chalcedon announced that believing the ancient idea of the unity of being was inconsistent with the Christian faith. Chalcedon said that only Jesus Christ mediates between heaven and earth, that salvation is only found in His accomplishments. Chalcedon claimed that Christ's incarnation was unique, that no person or state could claim unity with the divine. Man and his institutions were strictly temporal.

Without an orthodox view of the incarnation such as Chalcedon established, Christ's incarnation could have opened up the door to rampant humanism. Belief in man's union with the divine, sanctification as deification, and the Lord's Supper as a stepping-stone in this process have, in fact, existed in the church. Such ideas, however, have been clearly outside the parameters of orthodoxy since the definition of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

Chalcedon's Orthodoxy Today

Today, in the post-Christian West, statism has again reared its ugly head. The right of the church to exist has been challenged since the Enlightenment, and tax codes and zoning are slowly defining its rights as privilege. Man is immanent, as is his political order. When men reject the supremacy of the incarnate Jesus Christ our Lord, they will, by default, justify the supremacy of man's order.

In order to return to limited government, a higher order must be recognized. In order to deny sovereignty to man the sovereignty of Jesus Christ must be recognized. In order to return to jurisdictional, ministerial roles for the state, its authority must be seen as derivative. Only the doctrine of Jesus Christ as the incarnate God can do this. Christ's claims are not based solely on His divinity, but are based on the fact that He is the *incarnate* Deity who restores us to the Father, giving the totality of our lives meaning, purpose, law, and hope. Unless Christ's unique right to this role is recognized, man will in some way assume it, as in the ancient world and all non-Christian regimes of history.

Man will never find self-realization. Fulfillment only comes through his restoration to God, which is an act of grace received by faith in Jesus Christ. Christendom gave the world liberty for the first time because it operated on a recognition of the centrality of Jesus Christ. Liberty did not come about for its pragmatic benefits ("so we could preach the gospel") or for man-centered reasons ("man has been freed by Jesus Christ so he has a right to liberty") but for truly Christ-centered reasons. Liberty came about because the church was faithful to the Scriptures, and because after the definition of Chalcedon it declared that Jesus Christ alone is the



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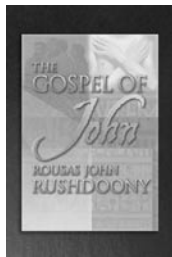
Mediator between God and man. Consequently, no man or human institution has a right to claim prerogatives that belong to Him alone. Power in Jesus Christ means man's power is limited. Authority in Jesus Christ means all human authority is limited and derivative. Christian liberty is in the context of Christ's rule, not rights inherent in man; His primacy necessarily denies it to man or his institutions.

Christians may debate the sequence or timing of the end times, but the central image of the Revelation of St. John is Christ, the Lamb of God, reigning from the throne of heaven. This is why the epistles so frequently refer to His coming, so that we can think in terms

of its centrality. The center of history was incarnate in human flesh and shall come again in like manner. Man finds his hope not in the immanence of the world but in the incarnation of its God.

Thus, our foundation's name is Chalcedon. Far from being a historical curiosity or a long-forgotten church document, Chalcedon was a watershed for the church because it clarified the message of the gospel by boldly proclaiming the uniqueness of its Messiah, the incarnate God, Jesus Christ. **CR**

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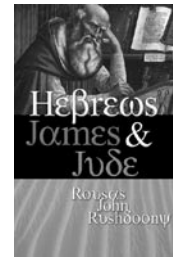
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The Judge Yields to the Mailman

Greg Uttinger



As postmen pile bag after bag before a befuddled judge, the defense attorney bellows, “The U.S. Post Office, an official arm of the United States Government, recognizes Kris Kringle as the one, the only Santa Claus.” We all know the scene. It plays every Christmas. Of course, the judge immediately dismisses the case to save his political skin, but the dismissal only works because the judge is yielding to a coordinate authority within the American system — in this case, the United State Postal Service.²

The Christmas message in this familiar scene is more profound than it seems. Forget about who Kris Kringle is, or claims to be. Think about the judge’s ruling and the nature of American law. A judge in the New York State Supreme Court yields to the authority of a bunch of mailmen because he can, and because he needs to; and American audiences find his decision believable, if somewhat laughable. Yes, in America such things can happen. After all, such things have been happening since the War for Independence. Lesser magistrates, to use a Puritan phrase, are always telling off bigwigs and putting them in their places. This American attitude toward law and authority has distinctly Christian foundations, however, and they are wrapped up with the Christmas story.

The Incarnation and Authority

Christmas celebrates not merely the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, but the Incarnation of the divine Son of God. “The Word was made flesh,” we are told (Jn. 1:14). In the womb of the virgin

Mary, the eternal Logos assumed true human nature. Without giving up His deity, the Son of God took to Himself true humanity. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, God in the flesh.

For the pagan world, however, the state was God incarnate. Pagan societies worshipped god-kings and raised pyramids and ziggurats to the religion of political power. *Polis* and empire were religious institutions, and pagan man defined himself in terms of them. The state was savior; the state was sovereign.

Christianity overthrew the worship of man and slew the Beast (cf. Rev. 19). But a new humanism weaseled itself into the church and tried to use the very idea of the Incarnation to revive the worship of man and the myth of the divine-state. For Jesus was God and man. But what did that really mean?

The Gnostics had held forth a divine Christ masquerading in the appearance of flesh. The Arians made Christ the greatest of creatures, a Son of God by adoption, and worshipped him as such. The Nestorians split Christ into two persons, one human and one divine: they worshipped Him as a man who had become God. The Monophysites blended the human and divine into one nature and erased the line between Creator and creature. All of these heresies had similar political implications.

If the Incarnation were unreal, then the immanent power of God still rested in the state. If Jesus Christ were only a created being who received worship, or an ordinary man who somehow became God, then the doorway to divinity might be open to all. God might have many sons, Caesar among them. In each case, salvation becomes a func-

tion of the state, a matter of legislation and technocratic control. For society, as for the human soul, the issue is fundamental. The ancient church confessed the truth of the Incarnation with these words:

We believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father by Whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man.³

...one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation....⁴

The Incarnation was a unique event. Only Jesus Christ is both God and man. Only He has all power in heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18). All human authority is, therefore, limited and subject to His word. No king, no emperor, no state, can rightly maintain a claim to divinity or to divine sovereignty.

One Law, Many Administrations

The earliest confession of the church was “Jesus is Lord.” One Lord necessarily means one law. Just as surely, however, it means many administrators of that law — in other words, a *decentralization* of government. For no man, institution, or office can fully exercise the authority that is Christ’s. No man can wield sovereign power. Instead, Christ ordains multiple authorities within human society. The way He ar-

ranges those authorities can be wonderfully complex.

For example, as Christendom developed in the Middle Ages, it multiplied administrative agencies and jurisdictions. There was fief law, common law, village law, canon law, Roman law, merchant law, and so on.⁵ Each governed some aspect of mediaeval life; each in some measure reflected the higher law of Scripture. Yet this complexity helped to generate freedom. Harold Berman writes:

The pluralism of Western law, which has both reflected and reinforced the pluralism of Western political and economic life, has been, or once was, a source of development, or growth — legal growth as well as political and economic growth. It also has been, or once was, a source of freedom. A serf might run to the town court for protection against his master. A vassal might run to the king's court for protection against his lord. A cleric might run to the ecclesiastical court for protection against the king.⁶

Sometimes the complexities of mediaeval government were hard to sort out. Consider this feudal contract, for example:

I, John of Toul, make known that I am the liege man of the Lady Beatrice, Countess of Troyes, and of her son Theobald, Count of Champagne, against every creature, living or dead, saving my allegiance to Lord Enjorand of Coucy, Lord of Arcis, and the Count of Grandpre. If it should happen that the Count of Grandpre should be at war with the countess and count of Champagne in his own quarrel, I will aid the Count of Grandpre in my own person, and will send to the Count and the Countess of Champagne the knights whose service I owe to them for the fief which I hold of them. But if the Count of Grandpre shall make war on the Countess and Count of Champagne on behalf of his friends and not in his own quarrel, I will aid in my own person the Countess and Count

of Champagne, and will send one knight to the Count of Grandpre for the service which I owe him for the fief which I hold of him, but I will not go myself into the territory of the Count of Grandpre to make war on him.⁷

Complicated indeed, but no more so than the American system. And the distance from mediaeval feudalism to American federalism is far shorter than most history texts suggest. The *Magna Carta*, which we often look to as a forerunner of our own Constitution, was actually a defense of England's feudal order against the usurpations of Norman kings.⁸ For all its defects, feudalism gave mediaeval Europe a system of government that was limited, decentralized, and contractual.

The Nature of the American System

Rushdoony has pointed out that in America the Christian doctrine of limited powers has meant “first, a *division* of powers, which naturally implied, second, a *multiplicity* of powers, and third, a *complexity* of powers.”⁹ Of course, any analysis of the federal system created by the U.S. Constitution will include a discussion of the division or separation of powers and the accompanying idea of checks and balances. The federal system was meant to be complex for the sake of liberty. But the federal system was never meant to be the primary sphere of American civil government.

In the United States the basic civil government has traditionally been that of the county.¹⁰ State government has come next, and the federal government last of all. Yet all three governments deal directly with the individual citizen. Every American citizen lives under the jurisdiction of three or more civil governments. This is actually to our benefit; at least, it was meant to be. Each sphere of civil government has limited responsibilities and, therefore, limited claims. None is the servant of the others; none

is the lord of the others. Any one can serve as a buffer against any other should the need arise.

Such is the American system. It is complex, even competitive, but it offers greater protection from tyranny than a simple, monolithic state can ever afford. It gives us multiple authorities and, therefore, multiple channels of appeal. It gives us options. We may appeal the decision of a lower court to a higher court. We may question an act of Congress before a federal court. We may seek state or county intervention against federal usurpation. We can call on Congress to impeach a lawless president. We can recall a wicked governor. In complexity lies a greater opportunity for freedom.

Conclusion

The judge yields to the mail carrier. Where else but in America? The mediaeval legal tradition has failed nearly everywhere else. So has the Reformation and Puritan tradition of legal resistance by lesser magistrates.¹¹ The long history of decentralization and interposition we enjoy in these United States may likewise be drawing to an end. But it's not gone yet. So no matter how you may feel about “Miracle on 34th Street,” you might want to watch the climax one more time. And when you do, please raise a cup of eggnog to the truly remarkable thing in the film, the real legacy of Christmas that it celebrates. **CR**

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1. “Miracle on 34th Street,” (20th Century Fox, 1947), written and directed by George Seaton.

2. In 1973, a television remake appeared, but by then the Postal Service had lost its place in the federal government. In consequence, the defense counsel's legal ploy was

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The Meaning of Christmas

Samuel Blumenfeld



Before Christians began to celebrate Christmas, there was the feast of Epiphany, which celebrated the baptism of Christ.¹ In Antioch as

late as c.386, Epiphany and Easter were the two great feasts. The emphasis was on Christ's baptism at the age of 30, for as Chrysostom said, "It was not when he was born that he became manifest to all, but when he was baptized." The date of baptism was believed to be January 6.

The Armenian fathers kept the feast of the birth and baptism together on January 6. They argued from Luke's gospel that the Annunciation took place on April 6, and therefore the birth on January 6. The baptism was on Christ's thirtieth birthday, and should therefore also be kept on January 6.

In time, however, the churches began to celebrate the birth of Christ, once the date of birth was established. That took place when Pope Julius (337-352), asked by Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem to find the birth date of Christ, looked in the works of Josephus and found the date to be December 25th. It was Pope Liberius (352-366) who displaced January 6th in favor of December 25th and celebrated the first Christmas in Rome on December 25, 353 or 354. The Eleventh Edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (Vol. IX, p.697) states:

Chrysostom seems to have known of it, for in his Epiphany homily preached at Antioch, c.392, he refers to the archives of Rome as the source from which the date December 25 could be confirmed, and declares that he had obtained it

from those who dwell there, and who observing it from the beginning and of old tradition, had communicated it to the East.

Matthew's Account of the Miraculous Birth

Thus began the celebration of Christmas on December 25. The miraculous birth of Jesus is recounted in the gospel of St. Matthew, who tells us that Mary, Jesus' mother, "was found with child of the Holy Ghost." When the angel of the Lord appeared before Mary's distraught husband, Joseph, he was told:

Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

St. Matthew goes on to describe the circumstances of Christ's birth in the next chapter. On hearing of His birth, the wise men from the east come to Jerusalem seeking the newborn King of the Jews, "for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." Thus in the year 2003 we still celebrate Christmas: the miraculous birth.

Christ's divine origin and destiny as Savior and Messiah were established at birth. And, as an adult, His reputation was already known far and wide, for when Jesus at age thirty went to John the Baptist to be baptized, John said to Him, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"

Jesus answered: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." In other words, the time for His eternal messianic mission

had come. The Bible then goes on:

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And that is what we celebrate at Christmas: the miraculous birth of the Messiah, who was sent to this earth to save us from our sinful natures and to offer us forgiveness of sin, salvation, and eternal life after death. That, in essence, is the meaning of Christmas.

The birth of Jesus told the world that God truly cared for mankind, and had sent His only begotten son to offer us salvation. That was good news indeed, and that is why Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are the most celebrated days in the entire calendar.

In Spite of Humanists and Atheists

Many complain that there is too much commercialism associated with the Christmas season. And each year seems to become more commercial than the year before, even eclipsing Thanksgiving Day and rolling on until the New Year like a consumer-driven, cultural tidal wave.

But when a whole nation, as secular as it is, is caught up in this most religious holiday, we must be impressed that what the world is celebrating with lights, music, feasting, and gift-giving is not the birth of Buddha or Muhammad, but the birth of Jesus Christ.

No matter how hard the humanists and atheists work to deny the religious

character of the holiday, they cannot obliterate Jesus Christ. Christmas is not some dull Winter Solstice, which could hardly arouse the excitement and delight of millions. Christmas is the world's celebration of God's goodness. That is why it is a feast day for families, a celebration in which marriage, the birth and rearing of children, and God's abundant blessings are readily manifest in the feast itself and the exciting exchange of gifts.

For children, Christmas is especially glorious. They understand through song and narrative that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sent by God because of His love for us. And every child un-

derstands that he or she will be in God's hands for as long as he or she lives.

Even the department store Santa has special meaning. For children, he is the giver of gifts and a monitor of their behavior. And it is all charmingly conveyed in a song that children will hear and sing during the entire Christmas season. Santa is childhood in all its wonders and dreams. And all of the popular sentimental songs about Christmas that we hear on the radio always bring back warm memories of past Christmases, for Christmas is also a milestone in one's life. What is more heart-rending than listening to a Christ-

mas song that reminds us of parents and grandparents gone, and childhood vanished?

There is so much tradition, so much art, so much music surrounding Christmas that it has become the central cultural and spiritual event of the year. Handel's Messiah is always there to remind us of the multitude of souls who have listened to that music over the centuries. New masterpieces devoted to Christmas will be created in the centuries ahead, and modern technology will advance their reach to everyone on earth.

I believe that as more and more people in America and elsewhere come to Jesus Christ, we shall see a growing acknowledgment of the true meaning of Christmas, as a time of joy and happiness as we rejoice in the birth of the most important person in human history, the Son of God. For He was sent to us for our own sake, to save us from sin, to make our lives better, richer, happier: to bring us closer to our Maker so that we may live according to His word and enjoy Him forever. **CR**

Samuel L. Blumenfeld is the author of eight books on education, including *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*, *How to Tutor*, *Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers*, and *Homeschooling: A Parents Guide to Teaching Children*. All of these books are available on Amazon.com or by calling 208-322-4440.

1. The word epiphany, in Greek, signifies an apparition of a divine being.



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Christmas and the Conversion of Ebenezer Scrooge

Rick Williams

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, must lead, but if the courses be departed from, the ends will change." ~ Ebenezer Scrooge

"But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." ~ Ezekiel 18:21

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." ~ Matthew 1:21



Late on Christmas Eve this year, I will do as I have done consistently since my children were small. After our traditional Christmas Eve supper of fried oysters, ham, pumpkin pie, and apple cider, (just a tad "hard") I will sit down with whoever will join me (usually one or two of my daughters) and watch one of the many screen adaptations of Charles Dickens' (1812-1870) literary classic, *A Christmas Carol*. The version I most often watch, and probably one of the most popular and best done is the 1951 film, *A Christmas Carol*, starring Alastair Sims as Ebenezer Scrooge and Mervyn Jones as Bob Cratchit.

Christian purists may scoff at such an activity on this holiest of Christian holidays but Dickens' story of a hateful, selfish, old man's transformation into a joyful, generous old man offers a wonderful opportunity to contemplate the transforming affect that the Incarnation has had upon society. It is interesting to note that while Dickens would not be considered a true follower of Christ by Biblical standards, it is undeniable that the miraculous story of Christ's birth made a dramatic impact upon this prolific author.

Dickens' classic Christmas story certainly espouses a Christian worldview. The beginning of the Victorian period in Britain had seen a decline in the celebration of Christmas. This was due to two factors. The lingering Puritan influence of Oliver Cromwell's rule had discouraged the celebration of the holiday and the industrial revolution gripping England permitted little time for holiday festivities. But Dickens' story, published in 1843, rekindled both Britain's and America's desire to celebrate the holiday in grand fashion. And while much of the story is not *explicitly* Christian, the novel does focus on the Christian holiday and the Biblical concepts of charity, repentance, and forgiveness.

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, Hampshire (England) on February 7, 1812. He moved to London in 1822 where he would reside most of his life. During Dickens' formative years, Dickens' father often brought the family to the brink of economic disaster by his extravagance and poor management of the family finances. For a time, young Dickens' had to leave school and work in a factory due to his father's confinement to debtor's prison. This was an in-

fluent experience in Dickens' life and one sees his sensitivity to the underclass and what he considered the oppressed all through his writings.

Another powerful influence on Dickens was the Christ-centered revival that took place in England during the 1830s. The Christian activism that sprang from this revival took root in Dickens' political philosophy. At the center of much of this reform movement was the Christian statesman William Wilberforce, whose faith, hard work, and evangelical zeal eventually led to the abolition of slavery in the British Isles (1833). Wilberforce also led the efforts for prison reform and relief for the poor. Much of Wilberforce's work and thought would manifest itself through Dickens' characters and stories. And while there is plenty of room for critical analysis of Dickens' works, as well as his theology (Dickens attended an Anglican Church, but most would consider some of his beliefs Unitarian), the classic story of Ebenezer Scrooge and his miraculous transformation is filled with allusions to Biblical principles and Christian allegories. Though Dickens' theology rejected the need for Christ alone for salvation, he could not escape the beautiful and unparalleled truths contained in the Incarnation. It is evident from the story

line in *A Christmas Carol* that Dickens was well versed in Biblical principles and need for redemption.

Scrooge, the Depraved

First we see the utter depravity and selfishness of mankind expressed in the character of Scrooge. Dickens' description of Scrooge is vivid:

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

In an opening scene in Dickens' story, we see Scrooge's nephew cheerily enter the old miser's counting-house and greet him with, "A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!"

"Bah, Humbug!" is Scrooge's gruff reply.

A few moments later two men enter Scrooge's office soliciting funds for "the least of these my brethren" or in the words of Dickens, the "Poor and Destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time." Scrooge denies their request of benevolence and suggests it would be better if the poor wretches die "and decrease the surplus population." Scrooge aptly lives up to Dickens' description. His comment also reminds us that modern American culture's disdain for what it considers the weak and valueless or, what the founder of Planned Parenthood and the architect of modern birth control and abortion, Margaret Sanger,

called "human waste,"¹ is nothing new.

We also see the persecution of the righteous in the character of Bob Cratchit. A church going, hard working (if not very bright) father who labors faithfully for Scrooge and whose only joy comes in the love of his wife and children. Cratchit's universally loved but crippled son, Tiny Tim, exemplifies Christian contentment and charity in his prayer request for Scrooge, "God bless us every one!" as his father proposes a toast to the man who has just "sacked" him on Christmas Eve.

Scrooge's conscience is "awakened to righteousness" as he is visited on Christmas Eve by four apparitions. First, the "ghost" of his dead business partner, Jacob Marley and then, "the ghost of Christmas past, the ghost of Christmas present, and the ghost of Christmas yet to come." One can see the workings of the Holy Spirit depicted by these visitors as one by one they bring Scrooge face to face with his sins of greed and selfishness.

Marley bemoans the course he chose in life as he admonishes Scrooge:

"Business," cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!"

Scrooge, Reborn to "Goodness"

The allusion to Christian themes is obvious. In the end, Scrooge comes to himself, repents of his selfish ways and makes restitution to his fellow man. Dickens most certainly linked Scrooge's transformation to the new birth:

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him

pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk — that anything — could give him so much happiness.

While Ebenezer's "conversion" was to human goodness rather than to Jesus Christ, Dickens had to resort to Christian principles and metaphors to make his point. Despite Dickens' unorthodox beliefs, he could not escape the impact of Christ's birth — and neither can anyone else. While ironic and sad, Dickens' humanistic quest for redemption is an admission of his need and illustrates what we so often see in our family, friends, and acquaintances at this time of year — being drawn to the warmth and love of Christ, but ultimately grasping at the false and deceptive humanistic trappings of the Christmas season. Perhaps this Christmas God can use us to show them that redemption can be found only in that One born in the manger who ultimately died on the cross so that we could be saved from our sins. **CR**

Rick Williams is a businessman, publisher (www.virginiagentleman.com), freelance writer, and formerly served as a Magistrate for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

1. Source — *The War on the Weak* by Doug Phillips of Vision Forum, 21 October 2003 via email. VisionForum.com

Intolerant Tolerance

Warren Kelley



The buzzword we hear popping up in almost any discussion on a moral issue today is “tolerance.” “We should be *tolerant* of other people’s beliefs.” “We shouldn’t judge other people’s lifestyles, we should be more *tolerant*.”

The problem with being tolerant of everything is that the only thing left that isn’t tolerated is intolerance. In our culture it has become common for someone who believes in moral absolutes immediately to be labeled as intolerant. As Christian people who believe in the moral absolutes of God’s truth, that leaves us in an unpopular position in this pluralistic society.

The Birth of Tolerance

The tolerance movement is an outgrowth of pluralism, which holds that all beliefs are morally equal and need to be treated with equal respect. It believes that all religions contain truth and no one religion or belief system is superior to another.¹ Cultural pluralism gained respect in this country during the 1960s when musicians and pop culture icons began to explore and promote Eastern religions. This also spurred the growth of the New Age movement, which is very popular today.

Over the past four decades pluralism has rapidly become the dominant belief system of our media, Hollywood, and many of our political and cultural leaders. During the same time also, pluralism has increasingly become the committed enemy of Christianity.

For those who believe in the god of pluralism, the only true sin is violation of its principle doctrine, tolerance.

Christianity is based on God’s absolute values and allows for no compromise on His commandments. This is an abhorrent concept for pluralists.

The definition of tolerance has gradually been adapted by our pluralist society. No longer is it adequate to allow others to hold their own beliefs; tolerance now dictates that we must accept the beliefs and practices of others and respect them as equal to our own, no matter how distasteful they may be.

Confronting Pluralism

Pluralism is difficult to engage, partly because it has become so entrenched in our society but also because no one wants to be considered intolerant. It is also very dangerous, especially to Christianity, because of where it eventually leads.

When Judge Roy Moore placed a monument to the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building, there was an outcry. To in any way promote Christianity in a public place might offend people of other religions. Judge Moore’s perceived public endorsement of Christianity was a direct affront to pluralism.

Our laws are also gradually becoming hostile to Christianity. Consider the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that would make it a criminal act for a Christian employer, even a church, to deny employment to someone based on his lifestyle. If passed, this legislation will be used to force churches and Christian schools to hire homosexuals.

Senator Ted Kennedy’s proposed hate crimes legislation will also be used against Christians. Again, the language has been carefully crafted to make the legislation difficult to oppose. What

kind of person would be in favor of hate? The strategy has been effective, as already forty-nine Senators have signed on as cosponsors to the bill.

Our Future, Unless...

Unless we take action now, it will soon be illegal for a pastor to condemn sinful lifestyles from the pulpit. Even the reading of certain Scriptures will soon be illegal.

Many would say that this is alarmist rhetoric and that it could never really happen. Tell that to our Christian brothers in Canada where it already has. Just a few miles to the north, the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council has banned *all* radio and television stations airing *anything* negative about homosexuality.

In Ireland, Christians face up to six months in jail for distributing literature that opposes same-sex unions because to do so would violate the 1989 Incitement of Hatred Act. One such piece of literature produced by the Catholic Church has already been targeted by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL). While the literature does oppose homosexual activity it clearly states that homosexuality should be treated with “respect, compassion and sensitivity.”

In spite of the compassionate treatment of a controversial issue, Ms. Aisling Reidy, director of the ICCL, has stated that even though “the document itself may not violate the Act” it may be used to say “that gays are evil, (which) is likely to give rise to hatred, which is against the Act.”

Even in our land of free speech, Rev. Kristopher Okwedy’s ministry was attacked by homosexual activists when

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The Free Market: What It Is, What It Implies

Tom Rose



The Power of Ideas

The attracting power of right ideas never ceases to amaze me! I recall with fondness how a student approached me after a particularly stimulating class discussion. “Sir, this thing you call the ‘free market,’ will you please explain it for me in more detail?” The person standing before me was a young man from Lebanon; he had recently enrolled in a small Christian college where I was teaching. He had never heard the term “free market” before, and it interested him.

I quickly outlined the essential ideas behind the philosophy of man’s individual freedom and self-responsibility before God. As I did, the young man’s eyes lit up, his face literally shone, and he exclaimed, “Why, it’s beautiful! This is exactly what I am looking for!” Then he went on to share with me the dream that brought him to America: He and his compatriots back home have had the dream of making Lebanon a land of “milk and honey” that shines as a beacon of moral, economic success so that other nations might follow.

I was forced to end our discussion, which had moved to my office, after two hours because of a prior engagement. But I made sure the searching scholar went home armed with some carefully selected books and Bible readings to shape his and his friends’ ideas — ideas that could point the way to personal and national greatness.

Vision and Integrity

History has proven, with Old Testament Israel and America as her most shining examples, that right ideas held by men of vision and integrity can rapidly transform underdeveloped nations into economic giants, which in turn richly bless the rest of the world. When sowed at an opportune time, in a friendly and receptive climate, ideas germinate quickly.

Our Founding Fathers recognized that man is free by his very nature, as they stated in the Declaration of Independence. In doing so, they uncovered once again the moral base of cooperative society which had been obscured for thousands of years. Their declaration reiterated man’s inherent right to be free and self-responsible before God and in relation to his fellow men. Their declaration re-echoed the cry of Moses some 3,000 years earlier when he stood before the Egyptian Pharaoh and cried, “Thus saith the Lord, ‘Let my people go, that they may serve me!’” (Ex. 8:1)

The Free Market Defined

The free market is the voluntary exchange of goods and services between free persons who stand as self-responsible individuals before God. The idea of free-market exchange is as simple as that! As a teenager I became aware of the tendency for society to devolve into centralized collectivism (statism). So since my early twenties I have been dedicated to the challenging task of reversing America’s forsaking the rich blessings of voluntarism and succumbing to the

false promises of socialism, fascism, and communism. Many scholars differentiate between the welfare state, socialism, communism, and fascism. But, in essence, they all rely on one common factor: Each depends on state-mandated coercion rather than *voluntary persuasion* to induce exchange between consenting individuals.

Many people favor compulsory exchange over voluntary exchange because they fail to understand the underlying morality and personal relationships presupposed in each system.

For instance, we should recognize that the free-market “system,” in essence, is not really a system at all. For the word “system” connotes an already planned scheme or method of doing things; but free-market exchange is not planned at all in this sense. Rather, the free-market method of facilitating exchange between individuals is the natural outgrowth of human interaction (or aggregation of human interactions) resulting from the very nature that God planted in man at the time of his creation (Gen. 1:26-28). What we call the free market is simply the natural result of man’s internal ability to place (or impute) a value on a good or service, and the necessary freedom to act externally based on those values. Thus, free-market exchange was not planned — indeed, could not be planned — by any finite being. The spirit of freedom that is found in man is a spiritual gift from God (2 Cor. 3:17). Thus, it is found in the heart of every man, woman, and child all over the world! It is too big, too all encompassing, and too perfect

to have been the handiwork of mere man. In short, the free market, and its innumerable voluntary exchanges, is what it is because of what God created man to be!

The Elusive Concept of Value

The essence of man's inherent free nature, and his *right* to freedom and his *responsibility* to maintain his freedom, can be ascertained in two ways:

First, it can be seen in the Bible (Gen. 2:7), which is sufficient for those who accept the Bible as God's inspired word. The signers of the Declaration of Independence understood and accepted the revealed truth that man was created as a free moral agent and, thus, by his very nature is and has a right to remain free and self-responsible.

Second, it can be discovered through empirical evidence. Herman Heinrich Gossen (1810-1858), a German economist and statistician, derived certain economic laws from everyday observation. Example: "The value of a thing is to be reckoned entirely in terms of the enjoyment which it can procure."¹ Later, Carl Menger (1840-1921), who was not aware of Gossen's earlier work, came up with similar views on the concept of value. This led to the establishment of the Austrian School of Economics. These economists stumbled upon a Biblical truth without realizing it: that value is an imputed quality that is mentally placed upon a good, a person, or a choice — rather than an inherent quality that is already embedded in a good (Dt. 7:7). This discovery served as an important milestone that led to a more accurate understanding of man's thought processes and a deeper understanding of man's free nature. Value cannot be measured objectively. For instance, we cannot objectively determine the value of a pie by counting the hours of labor that went into producing it. If we could, then an awful tasting mud pie might be worth more

than a tasty cherry pie!

If objective measurements could be used to determine value, the output of an inefficient worker would be more valuable than that of a more efficient worker because the inefficient worker took longer to produce it. If we had the pleasant task of choosing between two seemingly identical new automobiles, would you pay more for one just because it had more labor costs than the other? Not by a long shot! The history of the auto industry is rife with firms that have gone out of business because consumers do not measure value objectively by the costs of producing goods, but rather by subjectively weighing the benefits derived from a good versus the "pain" of parting with one's money to obtain the good.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Wherever two individuals are free to higggle and haggle (barter) with each other to engage in voluntary exchange, it is there that we observe an automatic emergence of the free market. Civil rulers, more often than not, tend to interfere with the process of free exchange because of their own political goals and agendas. But wherever civil rulers adhere to God's directives by limiting their power to the maintenance of law and order by punishing wrongdoers, there we likewise find a natural tendency for society to be decentralized into an economy that is dynamically controlled by markets generated by millions of freely acting individuals. In contrast, wherever civil rulers systematically intervene in the economy in attempts "to take care of the people" through subsidies and welfare payments, or "to protect them from their own ignorance" or from "quacks," then we find the economy being centralized and controlled by special-interest groups behind the political elites — as has happened in most countries in the world, including these United States of America.

What can be done to solve the problem of the centralization of economic and political power that is so common in the world today?

Those who treasure freedom sometimes become apprehensive about the rising tide of statism throughout the world, including our country. They see the continued trend of government intervention in our private and public life and imagine a day when the free market will disappear. The free market can be restricted in many ways, but it can never be eradicated; God has implanted the spirit of freedom in the heart of man. Wherever two individuals come in contact with each other, the free market exists potentially if not actually. It can lie dormant for a long time, but the free market will bloom into mutually profitable exchange at the slightest recession of external coercion.

The free market comes into being naturally because man, by his God-given nature, is a free being. In the long run, the nature of man assures success in spreading the philosophy of voluntary exchange because God has gifted man with His spirit of freedom. Let us therefore apply ourselves conscientiously and creatively to the stimulating avocation of helping others to discover and understand the motivating power of Biblical freedom.

Let us heed God's warnings in the Bible regarding man's fallen nature (Jer. 17:9) and its impact on society, in both the economic and political spheres. Men whose minds and hearts are not governed by God's law will always seek ways to plunder others — either through outright force (illegally), or by the perversion of the law itself, as indicated in Psalm 2 and explained by Frederic Bastiat in his 1849 book entitled *The Law*.

We must constantly search Scripture to discover and understand God's

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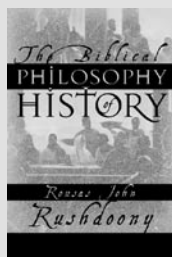
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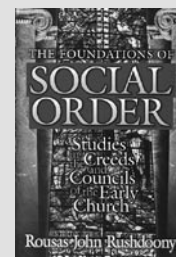


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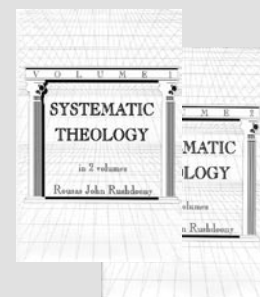


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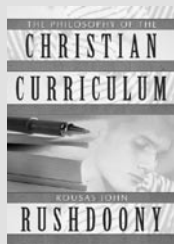
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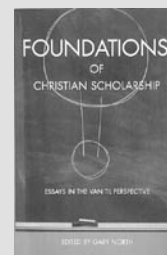


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On Reading Old Sermons:

Samuel Davies and the Power of Reformed Preaching

Roger Schultz, Ph.D.



On November 1, 1755, a killer earthquake destroyed Lisbon, Portugal. The quake was a monster — one of the worst in history. Some 60,000 people died, and, according to estimates, the earthquake would have registered a whopping 7.85 on the Richter scale.

Special circumstances made the earthquake even more tragic. The quake itself was followed by a seismic tidal wave, which flooded and devastated low-lying areas, and by fires that further crippled the city. Some have described the Lisbon earthquake as “the first modern disaster.” The quake struck the fourth largest city in Europe, one that had a reputation for religious devotion, and struck while many of the people of Lisbon were in church for All Saints Day services.

God and Disasters

The Lisbon earthquake dominated late 18th century discussions about God and nature and destiny. Four distinct worldviews were discernable. First, many Enlightenment philosophers posited a benign deity who mechanically superintended a tidy, reasonable and necessary universe. In the words of Alexander Pope, “One truth is Clear, whatever is, is RIGHT!” The French philosopher Voltaire represented a second position. Shaken by the earthquake and furious about the blithe confidence of the Pope, he published disheartening works with an “anti-optimism” theme. His “Poem on the Lisbon Disaster” (or

“An Examination of the Axiom ‘All is Well’”), for instance, is theologically focused and rails against divine Providence: “Those iron and irrevocable laws, this rigid chain of bodies, minds, and worlds. A God came down to lift our race: He visited the earth and changed it not.” Voltaire’s best-selling *Candide* (1759) also references the earthquake, as the leading figures of the famous novel careen from one disaster to another. Jean-Jacques Rousseau advocated a third view, that the disaster was largely human in nature, arising from overcrowding and crime. Finally, a fourth perspective was a Christian one, which acknowledged the direct and comprehensive providence of God in all things, even in the Lisbon tragedy. No one argued for this better than the great colonial Presbyterian Samuel Davies.

Samuel Davies (1723-1761) was a remarkable Christian leader. The father of Presbyterianism in Virginia, he was the primary force in organizing Hanover Presbytery in 1755. He was an advocate of religious freedom in Virginia, leading the cause of dissenters in a state dominated by the Anglican elite. Patrick Henry, the greatest orator of the Revolutionary generation, learned his eloquence from hearing Davies speak. Davies was committed to Biblical evangelism and genuine revival; Ian Murray begins his great book, *Revival and Revivalism*, with a chapter on Davies. Davies also supported the work of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), and served briefly as its president before his untimely death.

Davies the Preacher

Davies was a magnificent preacher. His sermons were rooted in Scripture, were theologically sophisticated, and were personally challenging. Martin Lloyd Jones considered him to be the finest preacher America ever produced. About ten years ago, Soli Deo Gloria Publications reprinted Davies’ sermons in three volumes. It is an excellent collection and gives a taste of Reformed preaching at its best.

Davies could easily capture the attention of his audience. “His sermons had a seamless unity, with emotion and reason flowing simultaneously to series of excited climaxes. The man could modulate his voice into a great variety of tones, booming, hushed, lyrical, penitent, frightened. He could enact, right before the congregation’s eyes, the majestic scenes of resurrection and judgment so that his listeners could see and feel the cosmic drama unfold.”

Davies was vigorously evangelistic. He pressed hearers with the demands of Christ and warned them of the consequences of turning away. He concluded one sermon, for instance, with an appeal to those who have not responded to the gospel: “And oh! Sinners, will your future conduct prove, that there was good reason for my fears? Alas! Is the ministry of the gospel a useless institution with regard to you? Will you resist my benevolent hand, when I would stretch it forth to pluck you out of the burning? Well, my friends, I cannot help it. If you will perish, if you are obstinately set upon it, I have only this to say, that

your poor minister will weep in secret for you, and drop his tears upon you as you are falling into ruin from between his hands.”

Davies even preached his own “funeral service” — and it had an evangelistic theme. Presidents at Princeton were accustomed to preach New Years Day sermons, and in 1761 Davies selected as his text Jeremiah 27:16: “Thus saith the Lord, this year thou shalt die.” (Past president Aaron Burr, Sr., had selected the same text for a New Years Day service in 1757, and when he died later that year, the text was considered to be bad luck. Davies scoffed at the superstitious, but he fell ill shortly after the January 1 service and eventually died on February 4.) Davies urges his hearers to respond to Christ, as it was the only way to “secure a happy new year . . . that will lead the way to a happy eternity.”

Davies’ Preaching Today

I am amazed at the power of Davies to reach people today. A week ago students in my graduate seminar were discussing a reading assignment (a comparison of different sermons from the Revolutionary period), and they agreed that Davies was a most compelling preacher. One young woman said she had never read anything like it, and said she’d spent her study time brushing tears from her eyes as she read Davies’ two hundred year old sermon on the glories of Christ’s kingdom. On another occasion, I read a section from a Davies sermon to my class and an older student, clearly moved by Davies’ message, asked, “Where can I find this kind of preaching today?” Few preachers are the equal of Samuel Davies, I warned, so it might be difficult to find anything comparable today. But I also suspect that modern preachers have lost the art of Biblical and Reformed preaching.

What is the secret of good preaching? John Carrick’s excellent new book,

The Imperative of Preaching: A Rhetoric of Sacred Theology, analyzes five great preachers from the past (Samuel Davies, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Asahel Nettleton, and Martin Lloyd-Jones). For Carrick, preaching involves four rhetorical moods. The *indicative* is a statement of fact or the proclamation of truth. The *exclamative* offers a passionate emphasis. The *interrogative* mood questions the listeners. And the *imperative* issues a command or an appeal. Carrick argues persuasively that the indicative-imperative construction is essential to gospel preaching. Biblical preaching must include a statement of propositional truth (the indicative), but it will also be applicatory, including an exhortation to hear and respond to the truth of Christ (the imperative).

God and the Lisbon Earthquake

Samuel Davies is an excellent example of this indicative-imperative approach to preaching, and he uses it in a sermon dealing with the Lisbon earthquake. On June 19, 1756, Davies preached a sermon on “The Religious Improvement of the Late Earthquakes.” The message is taken from Isaiah 24: 18-20 — “The foundations of earth do shake.”

Davies noted that earthquakes are one of God’s temporal judgments. They are “*extraordinary* executioners of his vengeance,” used to “rouse a slumbering world” and “convince us that we are not beyond the reach of that desolating judgment.” God’s temporal judgments are designed to drive us to Christ and to that eternal city which has a firm and unshakable foundation. “There is not safety but in Jesus Christ,” Davies concluded, “Away to him, therefore; let me lay the hand of friendly violence upon you, and hurry you out of your present condition, as the angel did Lot out of Sodom. [E]scape for thy life, look not behind thee — escape to Jesus Christ,

lest thou be consumed!”

Attached to the sermon is a special hymn Davies wrote about the disaster. (Only a Presbyterian would write a worship hymn about earthquake!) It describes the sovereign power of God “who shakes creation with his nod.” He emphasizes human sinfulness — and a globe that “totters to its fate [and] trembles beneath her guilty sons.” Finally, the hymn contrasts the terrors of sinners facing God’s judgments and the eternal lake of fire with the serene confidence of Christians who know that their Savior lives and can preserve them.

Modern culture, and even many modern evangelicals, have followed the path of Voltaire. They either question God’s presence in times of tragedy, or rail at Him for the perceived imperfections of His providence. We should, instead, follow the example of Davies: use the Scriptures to proclaim a sovereign God who governs all things, brings judgments upon the earth for His purposes, and uses astonishing means to drive His children to refuge in Christ. **CR**

Dr. Schultz is the Chairman of the History Department at Liberty University, teaches Church History at Christ College, and is the homeschooling father of nine children.

The Fallacy of Simplicity

Timothy D. Terrell



One of the most valued books on my shelf is a compilation of hundreds of R.J. Rushdoony's essays, under the title *Roots of Reconstruction*. One of the many gems in that book is a five-page article from 1971 on the fallacy of simplicity. In it, Rushdoony describes the yearning men have for simplicity when faced with overwhelming complexity. There is too much about society that one does not understand and cannot control. The individual feels powerless when confronted with surroundings that seem chaotic, and distrusts what he does not comprehend. He yearns for a way out. He wants a quick, simple answer, and will give up both wealth and freedom to whoever promises that simplicity.

A complex society is a highly specialized society. And, because specialization means that a person does not have to be a jack-of-all-trades, but can focus on a handful of things one can do relatively well, a complex society means simplified lives for individuals. As Rushdoony wrote, "When a man no longer has to build his own house, grow his own food, and protect his own family, his ability to be free and productive increases." He understood the principle of the division of labor.

Wages, Prices, and Profits

In a free economy, one can get information on what to specialize in, and how far to specialize, by looking at wages, prices, and profits. Wages, prices, and profits are a way of communicating the availability and desires for various goods and services. They enormously

simplify decisions about what to use, what to produce, and how to produce it. To make a decision about buying gasoline, for example, does not require the individual to do a lot of research or understand economic theory. One does not have to know that there has been a war in the Middle East that resulted in a decline of 5 percent in oil exports out of the Persian Gulf, and that one's own need for another gallon of gasoline is more vital than the need of a certain New York City commuter but less vital than the need of a delivery van driver in Denver. One observes that the price has risen, and cuts back on gasoline purchases. The decentralized decisions of millions of individuals results in lower gasoline consumption by those who least need it.

A price system, then, simplifies our society. But because prices are not planned by some visible group "in charge," prices seem to be another inexplicable force making life more unpredictable. Yet here is the problem: people seek visible planning and coordination of society to replace only *apparent* chaos of the decentralized social order.

The Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises explained how government planning squelches the more effective decentralized planning of individuals:

One of the characteristic features of our day is that people use many names for the same thing. One synonym for socialism and communism is "planning." If people speak of "planning" they mean, of course, *central* planning, which means *one plan made by the government* — one plan that prevents planning by anyone except the government.

A British lady [Barbara Wootton]... wrote a book entitled *Plan or No Plan*, a book which was quite popular around the world. What does the title of her book mean? When she says "plan," she means only the type of plan envisioned by Lenin and Stalin and their successors, the type which governs all the activities of all the people of a nation. Thus, this lady means a central plan which excludes all the personal plans that individuals may have. Her title *Plan or No Plan* is therefore an illusion, a deception; the alternative is not a central plan or no plan, it is *the total plan* of a central governmental authority or *freedom* for individuals to make their own plans, to do their own planning. The individual plans his life, every day, changing his daily plans whenever he will.¹

The Government Planners

Government planners, in their conceit, latch on to the fallacy of simplicity, namely that society is simple enough for the planners to obtain and digest all the relevant information they need to make good decisions. They believe that computers can make up for the deficiencies in the information-processing power of the human brain, and ignore a more fundamental problem — what do they do with relevant information that cannot be observed, measured, or typed into a computer? But the simplicity-seeking mind tosses out this unsettling difficulty, and the fiction of omniscience and omnipotence is maintained.

Number-crunching central planners have long been with us. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) developed what he called a "felicific calculus," which would help legislators in their planning according to the "pleasure-pain" principle.

Ironically, this was a development from the celebrated Adam Smith, who was not exactly the foremost proponent of central planning. But Smith's simplistic views of mankind (among other errors and inconsistencies) contributed directly to the flaws of later thinkers like Bentham. As Joseph Schumpeter wrote of Smith, "Human beings seemed to him to be much alike by nature, all reacting in the same simple ways to very simple stimuli, differences being due mainly to different training and different environments." This thinking led to essentially anti-Christian consequences in Bentham. Because Bentham's philosophy placed humans in a passive role, being pushed from one place to the next by the search for pleasure and the avoidance of pain, he essentially eliminated morality. There could be only erroneous calculations of pleasure and pain, which presumably could be corrected by education.

The economist Arthur Cecil Pigou (1877-1959), who taught at Cambridge for many years, was an intellectual descendant of Bentham. Pigou is generally regarded as the father of welfare theory. That's not the theory of government checks to the poor, but the theory of human welfare: an attempt to figure out what makes mankind better off by measuring costs and benefits. Bentham's legacy to Pigou was a utilitarian ethic, combined with an idea of deficiencies in the laissez-faire principle. Pigou took these ideas and ran with them, ultimately renouncing Smith's "invisible hand" idea that found order in decentralized markets. Pigou thought markets would lead to chaos. Instead, he preferred the apparent simplicity of government planning:

It is as idle to expect a well-planned town to result from the independent activities of isolated speculators as it would be to expect a satisfactory picture to result if each separate square inch were painted by an independent artist.

No "invisible hand" can be relied upon to produce a good arrangement of the whole from a combination of separate treatments of the parts. It is, therefore, necessary that an authority of wider reach should intervene....²

R.J. Rushdoony, in the essay mentioned at the beginning of this article, told of a professor of his who wrote on the blackboard the number of acres of arable land in the United States, the number of bushels of grain that could be produced from that acreage, and then the number of people in the world who could be fed "if someone (presumably with his intelligence) organized and centralized all this and gave the right orders." But, as Rushdoony pointed out:

At that time, in the 1930s, a similar plan in the Soviet Union had destroyed production and led to famine; he refused to believe that this was anything but propaganda. If proven to him, he would no doubt have said that the peasants were resisting progress when they resisted collectivization. In any case, he was guilty of the fallacy of simplicity.³

Rushdoony understood that only God grasps all creation in its totality, and that God is therefore the only one who can give simple answers to complex problems. Ultimately, the fallacy of simplicity is the effort to become like God, to be able to know and comprehend everything. It is a failure to submit to the law of God, and to substitute the humanistic law of man. **CR**

Timothy Terrell teaches economics at a small liberal arts college in South Carolina, and is a member of Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church in Simpsonville, SC.

1. Ludwig von Mises, *Economic Policy: Thoughts for Today and Tomorrow* (Irvington-on-Hudson: Free Market Books, 1995), 28.
2. Arthur C. Pigou, *Economics of Welfare* (London: MacMillan, 1932), 195.
3. Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Roots of Reconstruction*, Vallecito: Ross House Books, 1991), 775.

Kelley, Tolerance...continued from page 13

Keywords Ministries bought space on two billboards in Staten Island, New York to display Leviticus 18:22. The activists claimed that because the verse condemned their lifestyle it constituted a hate crime. It was simply a verse from the Bible, but the local government ordered that it be removed.

Pluralists even find it offensive when a Christian follows Christ's command and shares his faith. They contend that to attempt to convert a non-Christian to Christianity is to say that Christianity is superior to the belief system of another person. This is so offensive that there are ongoing attempts to make it illegal to proselytize.

Unfortunately, pluralism is becoming so pervasive in our society that it is even taking hold within the church itself. Just last year, *U.S. News & World Report* conducted a poll that reported that 71 percent of Americans, including 70 percent of Christians, say Christians should be tolerant of people of other faiths and not try to convert them. Only 24 percent of Christians think it is a Christian's duty to convert members of other faiths.

If we are to reach our world with the truth of God's Word, we must quickly get involved in the fight to defend our faith and our rights as Americans. If not, we will soon live in a country that will not allow us to share our faith with others or allow any public expression of Christianity at all. **CR**

Warren Kelley serves as Executive Vice President for International Christian Media, the ministry that produces *Point of View Radio Talk Show*.

1. The pluralism discussed in this article is not to be confused with Christian Communitarians with whom we also disagree.

Depraved New World: Radical Feminists' Plan for America

Lee Duigon



Behind today's push for homosexual marriage lies a detailed plan to deconstruct American society from top to bottom — abolishing marriage, the family, and the Judeo-Christian basis of our civilization.

The gay activists get the publicity, but the serious work is being done behind the scenes by academic feminists. They have a plan for America, and they have clearly articulated it in print, at public meetings, and in their classrooms.

Not since Adolf Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* has a blueprint for revolution been so openly laid out. The world ignored *Mein Kampf*, with disastrous results. Will America likewise ignore the published aims of radical feminists?

Depraved New World

Philosophically, these revolutionaries are the children of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the 18th century Swiss savant who proclaimed, "Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains." Human nature is not the problem, Rousseau taught; basic human nature is good. Our problems all originate from our social, political, and economic institutions, which are corrupt and restrictive. Note the inherent illogic of this position. If we are by nature good and wise, then why are the institutions we create bad and foolish?

Christians believe in original sin, which explains why fallen human beings cannot create perfect institutions. Feminists and gay activists, however, believe

they can create a virtually perfect society. But first they must deconstruct the existing society. This means, in their view, that "bad" and "restrictive" institutions like marriage, family, and Christianity must be torn down like derelict buildings to make room for the better, freer institutions.

According to these radicals, we may all be innately wise and good, but the wisest and the best of us are an elite of feminists and gay activists. As Thomas Sowell explains in *The Vision of the Anointed*, these elitists believe strongly that their exclusive possession of the truth authorizes them to say and do *anything* to promote their policies. This is why they habitually resort to the courts rather than subject their schemes to the uncertainties of legislation or election. After all, the non-anointed will probably get it wrong.

So we are dealing with people who assign to themselves the perfection of God — that is, they put themselves in the place of God — and believe the end justifies the means.

Meet the Ms.

This spring, Hofstra University on Long Island, New York, hosted a conference on "Marriage, Democracy, and Families."¹ The participants included the elite of America's family law profession, many of whom are lesbians and radical feminists.

Of particular note was a panel discussion, "Intimate Affiliations and Democracy: Beyond Marriage?" Panelists included:

- Martha Fineman, Professor of Feminist Jurisprudence at Cornell University, author of *The Neutered Mother*
- Martha Ertman, University of Utah law professor, Gender Studies, University of Southern California
- Judith Stacey, former Barbra Streisand Professor of Contemporary Gender Studies, University of Southern California
- Linda McClain, law professor at Cornell, author of "Toward a Formative Project of Securing Freedom and Equality."

Who are these people? They are respected, highly paid professors at prestigious universities. Some of them are on a career track that can lead to a federal judgeship, as was the case for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

They are teachers and trainers of future lawyers and judges, founders and members of legal advocacy groups (such as Fineman's Feminism and Legal Theory Project), authors whose works are regularly published in America's law journals. You won't see them on television, nor will you find their writings in the popular press. But if they are invisible to the public, they constitute what Hoover Fellow Stanley Kurtz calls the power elite of American family law. As such, they are in a strong position to influence public policy — especially through the courts.

What Do They Want?

What, specifically, do they want?

First, an end to marriage. “The institution is a failure,” Fineman says in the *SCU Law Review*. Indeed, according to Fineman, traditional marriage is “plagued with violence” against women and “inappropriate for many people in today’s world.”² The family, says Ertman, is “exploitive,” and *not* “normatively superior to domestic partnerships.”³

“Gay marriage,” for them, is only a step toward the goal of abolishing marriage altogether. This makes good sense to *Washington Post* columnist Michael Kinsley.⁴ Rather than fall into endless debate over gay marriage, “That solution is to end the institution of marriage.” Family law revolutionaries ignore the public debate and seek ends well beyond gay marriage. In place of traditional marriage, they would, in Professor Stacey’s words, completely “redesign” kinship “with creativity and verve.”⁵

Between them, Fineman and Ertman have developed a scheme to replace marriage by treating every “intimate affiliation” — any relationship involving any number of consenting adults — as a legal contract among private parties, subject to enforcement by the courts as other contracts — say, between a swim-

ming pool owner and a cleaning service — are enforced. Existing contract law could be adapted for this purpose.


At the same time, Fineman proposes government subsidies and income guarantees to *all* “caregivers” in a “universal” welfare payment that would be granted “regardless of other sources of caretaker wealth.”⁶ In her book, *The Neutered Mother*, she says “motherhood” should no longer be confined to women, but be open to all. Thus, almost anyone, in her view, might qualify as a “caregiver” and so be eligible for benefits. Under this scheme, two or more unwed mothers could declare themselves “married” and instantly qualify for benefits, including paid health care. Meanwhile, Fineman wants government “to regulate and standardize” wages and benefits.

The goal of this is to establish, as a basis for organizing American society, “polyamory.” Polyamory, according to Ertman, takes many forms, including polygamy, polyandry, group marriage, and assorted gay and lesbian ménages — “myriad variations.”⁷ Family law, she says, should recognize polyamory. Otherwise, the law would be guilty of “impos[ing] norms of sexual fidelity and continuous cohabitation” — in other words, of forging chains for people who are born free.⁸

Deconstructing Society

The gay marriage campaign is only a camel’s nose in the tent. The camel itself is a wholesale deconstruction of society in favor of polyamory and an economy based on a massive welfare pyramid.

One need hardly say that such a re-engineering of society is incompatible with Christian doctrine and tradition. The question for Christians is: How far can these trends go before their proponents demand more absurd hate speech laws, penalties for churches that refuse to perform “gay marriage” ceremonies, restrictions on Christian homeschooling, and an end to the church itself as one more “restrictive” social institution?

It must be said that all of the above are already under discussion among the Left’s anointed. 

Lee Duigon is a Christian free-lance writer from New Jersey. He has been a newspaper editor and reporter and a published novelist. He and his wife, Patricia, have been married for 26 years.

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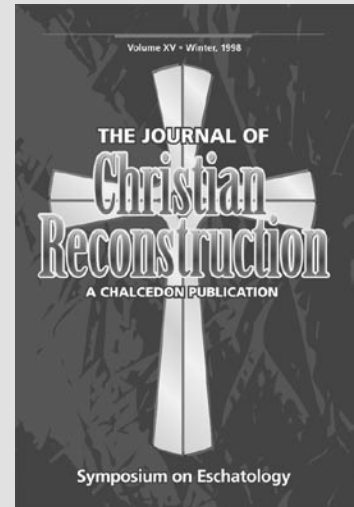
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Political Language and the Lust for Tyranny

Michael Wagner



Dressing Up Bad Ideas

The human mind is cunning, and so bad ideas continue to appeal to God-rejecting men.

Indeed, these bad ideas can be dressed-up in nice terminology so that the most virulent forms of tyranny are advanced under the banner of freedom and liberation. And this is just what is happening today in the western world. Terms such as “democracy” and “tolerance” are used to camouflage the most dreadful things.

The word “democracy” is infused with exclusively positive connotations. Nobody wants to be seen as opposing democracy. It is used to refer to political systems where citizens are involved in the selection of their rulers, as opposed to dictatorships where they are not. The Cold War was commonly seen in the West as a struggle between democracies on the one side, and communist dictatorships on the other.

But for some thinkers on the Left, the Cold War was actually between different forms of democracy. For example, world-renowned Canadian political theorist C.B. Macpherson presented this view in a series of radio messages broadcast in the 1960s by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Subsequently published in a book entitled *The Real World of Democracy*,¹ these lectures argued that there were three forms of government in the present world that could legitimately be called “democracies”: the liberal democracies of the West, the Soviet bloc countries, and the

one-party states of the Third World. As Macpherson put it, “[D]emocracy is not properly to be equated with our unique Western liberal-democracy,” instead, “the clearly non-liberal systems which prevail in the Soviet countries, and the somewhat different non-liberal systems of most of the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa, have a genuine historical claim to the title democracy.”²

The meaning of “democracy” has undergone some change over time. It hasn’t always referred to the kind of constitutional system common in the Western countries. For example, “Democracy originally meant rule by the common people, the plebeians. It was very much a class affair: it meant the sway of the lowest and largest class.”³ Thus Macpherson argued that Soviet communism and other one-party states can legitimately be called democracies, based on this definition. Indeed, he used this conception of democracy to cover the most brutal and repressive regimes. The “dictatorship of the proletariat” promoted by Karl Marx entailed genuine democracy in this view. Macpherson noted that many people would find it outrageous to consider the dictatorship of the proletariat as a form of democracy. “But to call it democracy was not outrageous at all: it was simply to use the word in its original and then normal sense.”⁴

Democracy *a la* Lenin

It gets worse. Lenin extended Marx’s theory by arguing that the revolution would need to be undertaken

by a relatively small group of class-conscious people he called the “vanguard,” the Communist Party. Because the vast majority of people in any society are debased by the structure of the old society (in Leftist lingo they have “false consciousness”), they cannot be trusted to participate in political decision-making. To allow their participation would just perpetuate the problems of the old society. Only the vanguard could bring about the necessary reforms. “Lenin, building on Marx, came out for a seizure of power by a vanguard who would forcibly transform the basic relations of society in such a way that the people would become undebased and capable of a fully human existence, at which point compulsive government would no longer be needed.”⁵ In Macpherson’s view, this rule of the vanguard to “forcibly transform” society is a legitimate democracy.

He justified this view by evoking what he called the “broader concept of democracy” involving “an equality as could only be fully realized in a society where no class was able to dominate or live at the expense of others.”⁶ The so-called broader concept of democracy legitimizes the Leninist state. “Wherever the circumstances are such that no motion towards this kind of society is possible except through the action of a vanguard, then the vanguard state, so long as it remains true to its purpose, may be called democratic.”⁷ Thus an outright communist state is (or at least can be) legitimately called a democracy. Many of the most brutal, bloodthirsty,

and repressive regimes in the history of the world were democracies in this sense.

Using a similar line of argumentation, the one-party dictatorships of the Third World can also be justified as democracies. Invoking Rousseau, Macpherson stated that one-party states can be legitimately called democracies because “there is in these countries a general will, which can express itself through, and probably only through, a single party.”⁸ As a result, “opposition to the dominant party appears to be, and sometimes actually is, destructive of the chances of nationhood. In such circumstances opposition appears as treason against the nation.”⁹ Thus a one-party state, where opposition to the ruling party is considered “treason,” is a legitimate form of democracy.

Creative Semantics

It bears repeating that Macpherson was an internationally known and respected political scientist. The views he expressed were not the rantings of an activist running wild in the streets. Some elements of the intellectual Left truly believe that a Marxist-Leninist state (or any other Left-wing single-party state) is a genuine democracy. And for those of us who are Canadians, it is a cause for concern that these lectures appeared on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, a branch of the Government of Canada.

Of course, this sort of Left-wing extremism and their creative semantics is not confined to Canadian intellectuals. Herbert Marcuse, an American academic and New Left guru, did some interesting work on the concept of “tolerance.” In his article “Repressive Tolerance,”¹⁰ Marcuse argued for what he called “liberating tolerance.” Marcuse was concerned about the expression of views that support “the Establishment,” especially conservative views. Because

conservatives are able to make their case in public and in the media, many people are influenced by their perspective. This perspective will reinforce or further develop the “false consciousness” of people that results from their living within a capitalist society, and which prevents them from supporting the utopian schemes of the Left. Somehow the “false consciousness” must be overcome in order for the Left to achieve its goals.

The solution proposed by Marcuse was the implementation of “liberating tolerance.” This kind of tolerance involves “stopping the words and images which feed this consciousness.”¹¹ The conservative message must be stopped. “Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left. As to the scope of this tolerance and intolerance... it would extend to the stage of action as well as of discussion and propaganda, of deed as well as of word.”¹² Marcuse promoted “intolerance even toward thought, opinion, and word,” intolerance, that is, “toward the self-styled conservatives, to the political Right.”¹³ In other words, his concept of tolerance was “a means of shifting the balance between Right and Left by restraining the liberty of the Right.”¹⁴ This form of tolerance is red in tooth and claw. In the Marcusean definition, tolerance here means the out-right suppression of conservative political beliefs.

To most people in the Western world, explicit appeals for dictatorship and repression are repulsive. Thus the Left’s most tyrannical proposals are dressed-up to be made more palatable. Beginning with the original definition of democracy, Macpherson reasoned his way into advocating communist dictatorships and other Left-wing one-party states as legitimate forms of democracy. Herbert Marcuse reasoned his way into advocating the

suppression of his political opponents as “liberating tolerance.” Tyrannical ideas are sugarcoated in a kind of semantic subterfuge designed to divert attention from their real implications. The lust for tyranny is hidden behind clever political language. But the deceptive terminology cannot hide the fact that the utopian dreams of these God-rejecting men would certainly lead to a hell-on-earth.

From a Biblical perspective there is no doubt that the political dreams of the Left are impossible to realize. Their assumptions reject God, or at least His real involvement in the world, and view human nature as changeable and unknowable. With such false conceptions of God and man, their most far-reaching efforts at political change are always doomed. Unfortunately, the people who get in the way are also doomed, as history has clearly shown. CR

Michael Wagner is a freelance writer living in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He has a PhD in political science from the University of Alberta. He and his wife are homeschooling their seven children.

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A Christian “Earth Ethic”

Timothy D. Terrell



Christian responses to modern environmentalism vary from dismissive, joking comments about tree-huggers to the attempt to absorb modern environmentalism into Christian ethics. While those who are claiming Biblical support for modern environmentalism may have the best of intentions, there are some serious problems.

A Land Ethic

Recently, in a magazine called *Creation Care*, Steven Bouma-Prediger examines Aldo Leopold’s “land ethic,” which places a kind of intrinsic value in land and all the land contains.¹ Leopold is well-known for his summary of the environmentalist code: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” It is obvious from the article that Bouma-Prediger is quite taken with Leopold’s land ethic, and attempts to evaluate it according to Christian principles. He suggests a modification called a “Christian earth ethic.”

But there are some serious problems in this “Christian earth ethic.” According to Bouma-Prediger, a strength of Leopold’s land ethic is that it “affirms that the earth and its many creatures are valuable in and for themselves, as well as being valuable for their usefulness to humans.” In his earlier work, Bouma-Prediger was less willing to concede that usefulness to humans was any part of the value of the earth and its creatures. In a 1998 article, he wrote:

God’s creatures are valuable not because of their usefulness to humans —

though some are useful, indeed essential, to us.... [R]ocks and trees, birds, and animals are valuable simply because God made them. Their value resides in their being creations of a valuing God, not in their being a means to some human end.²

Evidently Bouma-Prediger is confused over the nature of value. Fundamentally, the confusion comes from a failure to see value as *subjective* — inseparable from the individual valuer and the valuer’s goals. Value to Bouma-Prediger is more like an objective fact that must be discovered by humans in order to make good decisions.

A Hierarchy of Values

Bouma-Prediger understands that valuation is not simply a binary 0-1, good-bad decision. It is a continuous scale. He writes, “a hierarchy of values is necessary. Some scale of values is required, for within the biotic community relevant discriminations must be made.”³ A landowner must decide, for example, whether the land is more valuable as a forest or as a housing development. Both applications of the land have value — it is up to the owner to decide which is more valuable. But this scale of values does not originate in humans, according to Bouma-Prediger. “All value does not ‘center’ on humans, though some of it does,” he says. “Everything of value that happens is not ‘for’ humans; humans defend their own values, and humans need to recognize these values outside themselves.”⁴

What are these values outside humans? They may be the values of the Creator, who made the earth and pronounced it good. This is what Bouma-Prediger, as well as others who subscribe

to this version of evangelical environmentalism, would suggest. Would it not be humanistic, and therefore unChristian, to argue that “man is the measure” of value? Certainly Christians must insist upon seeking out and emulating God’s own value scale — how could we do otherwise?

The problem lies in discovering God’s value scale. How can we know whether or not God would have a landowner preserve the forest on a piece of property, or put a housing development there? Should the landowner place forest conservation over the provision of shelter for humans? Both goals are consistent with Christian ethics, but the Bible does not provide further information for settling the question (the Bible would of course rule out certain uses, like building a brothel on the land). Bouma-Prediger’s call for God-centered rather than man-centered valuation does not eliminate the problem of resolving differing concepts of what the divine valuation actually is.

The “Best Use” Dilemma

We are thus left with competing understandings of the best uses of scarce resources. To the Christian, “best uses” means the uses that reduce the most important discrepancies between the world as it exists and the world God would have us work toward. Obviously, people will differ about what immediate goals are consistent with that mission. Do we use a given acre of land for a forest preserve, for housing, for a library, for a garden, for a seminary, for a garbage dump, or for a playground? All of these different uses serve some godly purpose — even if it means a low use such as having a place to put trash so that our

immediate surroundings can be a little cleaner. We need a practical way of resolving conflicts of values.

We do not have continuing divine revelation to resolve these conflicts for us. So we need a way for people to compare their individual assessments of value. In other words, we need a system for providing information about which use of a resource is most valuable. I would suggest that, when it comes to environmental issues, the price system is that system. Talk is cheap. Anyone can say, "The highest and best use of that land is as a nature preserve." Someone else will contend that the best use is as a hospital. It is an irreconcilable argument, without further information. Only the requirement that people back up their value-assessments by being willing and able to *pay a price* (i.e., to make a sacrifice of other goods deemed less valuable by the bidder) separates mere talk from a serious personal value-assessment.

The Price System of Valuation

In humility, we must acknowledge that we do not possess, independent of other individuals, the information necessary to make good decisions about the natural environment. Sometimes we will imagine that we could have used the land, water, or air in a better way. The knee-jerk response of some environmentalists is to gather together some others with similar imaginations and politicize the situation. They call in the civil government to disrupt the market exchange process. "Market failure! Regulate! Regulate!" they say. A better response would be to try to convince the resource owner of his inappropriate valuation of that resource. Sometimes, the only just recourse will be to raise funds among like-minded environmentalists and *bid* for the resource.

Yet despite his confusion, Bouma-Prediger at least makes the attempt to apply the Bible to worldview issues, which is more than many Christians will

do today. Christianity today has become personal, pietistic, and retreatist. To hear some Christians talk, one would think that a Christian's responsibility in the world consists of sharing the idea that "Jesus loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," and not much else. This sort of retreatist attitude is nearly as bad as the usurpation of the market by environmentalists because in both cases value and dominion are warped. Christians have neglected to connect the "going" and "baptizing" of the Great Commission with "teaching." Teaching, that is, on how to live in the world according to the Word of God. Bouma-Prediger and the others who write for *Creation Care* are at least concerned with developing Christian ethics on environmental issues.

Christians concerned about the state of the environment should not dismiss the price system as being incompatible with proper valuation of the environment. To the contrary, we need the price system to help us with those valuations. Otherwise, it is an irreconcilable argument, ended only when the state coercively intervenes on the side of the more politically influential party. CR

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1. Steven Bouma-Prediger, "Living on the Land, Living a Christian Land Ethic," *Creation Care* No. 22 (Summer 2003), 4, 5.
2. Steven Bouma-Prediger, "Creation Care and Character: The Nature and Necessity of the Ecological Virtues" (Electronic version), *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* vol. 50 (1998), 6-21. See also Bouma-Prediger's 2001 book, *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 128, 142, 171.
3. Bouma-Prediger, "Living on the Land, Living a Christian Land Ethic," 5.
4. *Ibid.*

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far less clever and effective, and the nature of the judge's decision was completely altered.

3. *The Nicene Creed* (AD 325).
4. *The Formula of Chalcedon* (AD 451).
5. R. J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic, Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1964), 11.
6. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), Pt. II, quoted in Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh, Dominion Religion Versus Power Religion* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), 207.
7. James Westfall Thompson and Edgar Nathaniel Johnson, *An Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300-1500* (New York: Norton, 1937), 302, quoted in Rushdoony, 34-35.
8. Rushdoony, 14.
9. *Ibid.*, 33.
10. *Ibid.*, 54 and 62. Also see Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1965), 9.
11. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, ch. 3, "Legality and Revolution." Rushdoony discusses *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*, a French Huguenot document. Also crucial is Samuel Rutherford's *Lex Rex*, a defense of the Puritan Civil War in England. The roots of both documents are in Calvin's *Institutes*, "On the Civil Magistrate."

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intention for the proper role of civil government in society: decentralized civil government (Ex. 8); the limited powers of rulers (Dt. 17); the punishment of wrongdoers rather than caretakers of the people (Rom. 13); societal peace and tranquility being the goal of civil government (1 Tim. 2:1-6).

It is important to teach our children and churches about the Biblical role of civil government in society and the natural existence of a competitive free market economy.

Let us pray that our Lord will indeed turn the hearts of civil rulers to bow their knee and "kiss the Son" (Ps. 2:4, 12). And we should pray that God will unseat the ungodly and replace them with righteous rulers whom God will raise to positions of world-wide power and influence (1 Kin. 12:1-24; 1 Kin. 15: 9-24).

Remember that God's timing is not our timing. As Creator and Lord of the universe, *He* is in control (Is. 40: 12-31). His plan for the world is still in progress. Thus, we can rest in the salvation that Christ has wrought for us once and for all on the cross, and we can focus on reforming every social institution (including every aspect of family, church, state, business, and voluntary organizations) to the mind of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:1-12). For that is our calling! **CR**

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1. Eric Roll, *A History of Economic Thought*, 3d ed., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1954), 374-375.