

# ANTITHESIS

A Review of Contemporary Christian Thought and Culture

## INSIDE:

Evangelical Thomism,  
Personal Injury Insanities,  
and Dissents on Pax Americana  
and German Reunification

"Because what it is to be God is not evident to us, the proposition is not self-evident to us and needs to be made evident....Such truths about God have been proved demonstrably by the philosophers guided by the light of natural reason."

*Thomas Aquinas*

"No long or toilsome proof is needed to elicit evidences that serve to illuminate and affirm the divine majesty, since whithersoever you turn, it is clear that they are manifest and obvious....Not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful."

*John Calvin*

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ANTITHESIS



I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

**Genesis 3:15**

My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations...and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

**Genesis 17:5-7**

Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

**Deuteronomy 6:4,5**

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Proverbs 1:7**

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant — As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from old — Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant — the oath which He swore to Abraham our father.

**Luke 1:68-73**

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."

**Matthew 28:18,19**

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

**II Corinthians 10:5**

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

**I Corinthians 1:20**

Though there are very many nations all over the earth,...there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities,...one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God....To the City of Man belong the enemies of God,...so inflamed with hatred against the City of God.

**Augustine**

Without Christ, sciences in every department are vain....The man who knows not God is vain, though he should be conversant with every branch of learning. Nay more, we may affirm this too with truth, that these choice gifts of God — expertness of mind, acuteness of judgment, liberal sciences, and acquaintance with languages, are in a manner profaned in every instance in which they fall to the lot of wicked men.

**John Calvin**

Christ is exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God, in that as God-man, he is advanced to the highest favour with God the Father, with all fulness of joy, glory and power over all things in heaven and earth; and doth gather and defend his church, and subdue their enemies; furnisheth his ministers and people with gifts and graces, and maketh intercession for them.

**Westminster Larger Catechism**

There can be no appeasement between those who presuppose in all their thought the sovereign God and those who presuppose in all their thought the would-be sovereign man....Rather than wedding Christianity to the philosophies of Aristotle or Kant, we must openly challenge the apostate philosophic constructions of men by which they seek to suppress the truth about God, themselves, and world,...so that we may present Christ without compromise to men who are dead in trespasses and sins, that they might have life and that they might worship and serve the Creator more than the creature.

**Cornelius Van Til**

The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations but also all of human thought.

**J. Gresham Machen**

# ANTITHESIS

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# Observing the Current...

## Bush Aiming to Outdo FDR

Policy analyst Stephen Moore has recently noted that "Among the post-World War II presidents, Bush ranks as the highest spender on domestic programs, as the highest in average tax burden on workers, and as the highest in national debt accumulation."

Moore argues that quite apart from the savings and loan bail-out, domestic expenditures have exploded under the initiative of the Bush administration. The President has not only endorsed spending increases in established programs (e.g. increases of \$34 billion for the Dept. of Health and Human Services, \$18 billion for housing programs, \$5.5 billion for agricultural programs, etc.) but he has instigated new spending programs of his own (education, space exploration, transportation, drugs, etc.). In short, since Reagan left office, domestic spending, adjusted for inflation, has "grown by an enormous 10% per year."

The President's tax policies present a similar horror story. Though we are familiar with the President's

notorious violation of his promise not to raise taxes — "I will not raise your taxes, period" (Bush, Oct. 1988) — we have ignored the particularly flagrant manner of this breach.

The President endorsed the tax package that will raise federal taxes to 19.5 percent of the GNP, which as Moore describes "represents a higher average tax burden than the people have shouldered under any previous post-World War II president."

In 1980, after the legacy of the "big-spending" Carter years, Americans paid \$600 billion in taxes. In 1992, after years "tax slashing" conservative Republicans, we will pay twice that amount — \$1.2 trillion.

And Americans were afraid of Michael Dukakis? At least Dukakis might have been so fearful of fulfilling candidate Bush's accusations of being a "tax and spend" Democrat that he would have moved more slowly. But "conservative Republican" presidents can and have done far more damage under the guise of restraint than their opponents could ever imagine.

Since the past few decades of experience should have bludgeoned us with the truth that self-professing "conservative, no tax, budget cutting Republicans" are never that, perhaps we could resolve this frustration by means of some fanciful Medieval witch-hunt practice.

If a candidate claims to be a "conservative, no tax, budget cutting Republican," then we could test that claim by immersing (no sprinkling in this case) the candidate in water for, say, the time Republican presidents transform into Democratic presidents, plus an hour. If the candidate bloats and turns dark blue, then we know that he wasn't a "conservative, no tax, budget cutting Republican" because elephants are never blue (unless you're at a really cheap circus).

If, on the other hand, the candidate does not bloat or turn blue but merely gets pasty-faced, then he might have been telling the truth, but it doesn't matter since he wouldn't get into office anyway. Nevertheless, the whole process could serve to distract Democrats for quite a while.

DMJ

## Transition to Pax Americana

There are a number of things which ought to give Christians a serious case of the fantods. And right at the top of our pile of yellow-beribboned heeble-jeebies is the New World Order.

At the outset it is important to note that principled Biblical opposition to the NWO (and all resultant interventionist wars) is not related at all to the woolly-minded leftist pacifism we saw displayed in opposition to Desert Storm. This includes pacifism in all its forms; there is the pacifist extraordinaire, who feels guilty over his body's militarism with regard to infectious bacteria, and then there is the pacifist militant, who wants to beat our heads into plowshares. It is not the use of military force we deplore, but the unbiblical use of military force. Such an abuse will always involve an idolatry of statist power. In brief:

- Interventionist wars simply increase the power of the state. At a time when the power of the state is already overweening, that is the last thing we need. This means that American victories abroad, instead of being a defense of our freedoms, can be a means of eroding them. Query: Is George Bush using his enormous popularity from all this to dismantle Leviathan? We thought not.

- This war has contributed to the ongoing erosion of constitutional government in the United States. For example, the authority to take this action was sought in the U.N., and not from the Congress. The fact that Congress did little more than whine about it illustrates how severe the problem is.

- The Gulf War has accelerated the transition from the American republic to the American empire. We can see it plainly enough: when our Ciceronian *National Review* is

championing the pax Americana, it is time to start wondering who wants to be Caesar.

- This war also shows our continued implicit faith in the power of our government to solve any problem. But although our smart bombs can do a lot, they cannot transform Muslims into free men. Only the Spirit of God can do that.

In the light of all this, we are more than a little suspicious that American conservatives who supported the war are drunk on the dismay of the liberal Democrats. After all the incompetence shown in the Vietnam War, they are heady over the sensation of seeing American technological and military competence in successful action. But competence is a means, not an end. And the legitimate end of foreign policy can only be determined by returning to the law and the testimony.

DJW



# Problems With German Reunification

Thomas Schirrmacher

Following the Second World War, Germany was rebuilt out of practically nothing into one of the richest countries of the world. This well-known transformation is known as the "Wirtschaftswunder" (wonder of economics). Yet in the recent reunification of West and East Germany, German leadership has ignored crucial lessons from this successful period of transformation. Three problems highlight this claim:

1. *Reunification promised to quickly alleviate forty years of East German Socialism by means of tax money:*

Prior to and especially during the November 1990 reunification election, political parties and government leaders all agreed that East Germany could be raised to the West German standard of living within the time of one parliament (four years), largely by means of State funding, although much of the GDR remains in the same condition that Hitler left it in.

Reunification advocates ignored the post-War lesson that the western parts of Germany were not rebuilt by means of tax-money but by hard work in a relatively free economy. The people of the Federal Republic of Germany had to work hard for years

and years to rebuild their economy. However, most of the people of the former GDR still cling to the old socialist dream that poverty can only be overcome by the State, and the German government is extremely weak in arguing against this mentality. For the most part, the German government instead sends billions of Deutschmarks to the former GDR and promises wealth without hard work, since hard work is so unpopular. This attitude is reflected in a common jest concerning a former GDR citizen who, after reunification, starts to work at the Mercedes assembly line but at 10:00 am complains to his co-worker: "I am tired. We are already over the time, and the material usually runs out."

2. *Reunification promised to bring "social freedom" by ignoring the crimes of former Socialist party leaders:* In the "Entnazifizierung" following World War II, thousands of Nazi criminals were brought to American and, later, German law courts. Not all Nazi criminals were found or sentenced, but justice became a part of the common mentality, and former Nazis remained silently powerless for fear that common citizens could take them before the courts.

In contrast, the German government has not attempted to restore

this sort of criminal justice in the former GDR. Thousands of the leading members of the SED (the East German Socialist party) are criminals even by old GDR standards, but, as of yet, German citizens are not bringing lawsuits against such criminals like they did following World War II. Most former GDR citizens fear to talk about known crimes, because SED leaders still control most of the factories, city administrations, universities, and even courts of law so that SED leaders are still able to work against "capitalistic" citizens. Freedom cannot prosper without justice.

3. *Reunification advocates condemn the statism of the former GDR but ignore the statism of the FRG:* The German government holds numerous state monopolies, some of them official (post, telephone, railway, local transportation, public education), some of them by way of ownership (airlines, electricity), and some by strict regulation (long-distance transportation — businesses need a government permit to transport goods further than fifty kilometers). Moreover, Germany has an extensive social welfare system in which citizens must contribute to state insurance for health, unem-

Continued p. 4...

## In Defense of Joyful Solemnity

In a recent review of a new translation of Homer's *Iliad*, the reviewer makes the perceptive observation that the translation is readable because it is faithful to the way that we think, but for that reason not an accurate reflection of the way that Homer himself thought. This is instructive.

Instead of trying to understand those who have gone before by making a part of our minds momentarily like theirs, we make theirs like ours. Whereas Homer believed in dignity, magnanimity, majesty, sobriety, formality, and joyful solemnity, we moderns believe in informality, comfort, equality, and hilarity. We are embarrassed by the old attitudes and cannot conceive of anyone seriously having them. Whether we are simply incapable of holding such values, or believe that no one should, we mock them or pretend that no one

else ever really held them either.

Some of us think that we ought to change. Some of us think that the principles of submission, respect, filial piety, friendship, leadership, and honor are meaningless without genuine behavioral expression. Some think that a man need not call his friend by his Christian name in order to show affection, that to call his elder by his (or worse, her) Christian name is dishonoring, that his children (while they are children) are not a man's friends and do not wish to be treated as such, for they love him far too much. Some of us think that Paul meant more than "just an attitude" when he said to honor the emperor, and to obey one's parents, and that Peter's commendation of Sarah for calling Abraham "lord" was not intended to be fodder for jokes but rather to call attention to an example to be followed.

A few of us think that the welcoming phrase "make yourself at home—we don't stand on formality around here!" is a pitiable, though innocent, admission of our lack of social grace and absence of understanding about what really makes a guest feel comfortable and welcome.

Fewer yet (though we exist, and though we may have a poor grasp of it ourselves) believe that the presence of certain patterns of life — traditions, customs, and rituals — is not only unavoidable, but a great benefit to our individual, family, and community existence. They introduce order where none tends naturally to exist or to survive, if it does exist. They counteract entropy. They give us parts to play on our stage, so that we may spend less time trying to discover what to do next and more time enjoying participating in the play.

WJC

# The Capitulation of Cal Thomas

C-Span recently aired a roast that was given for Paul Weyrich, a noted conservative activist. I stopped my channel-jumping with some interest. What I got was a lesson in the spiritual rootlessness of generic evangelicalism in politics.

Cal Thomas, a noted evangelical author, was one of the speakers. His talk was one of the most wretched things I have ever seen. He made a joke about John Tower in a massage parlor, a joke about how it is taking Ted Kennedy longer these days to get his pants on after a sexual assault, a joke about how Paul Weyrich was a test-tube baby — sperm from Jabba the Hut and egg from Molly Yard, and so forth. He was in a self-destruct mode — he just went on and on. I sat in disbelief for a while. There, on the tube, was a national defender of

traditional values, trampling all over those values to get a laugh.

Evangelicals should recognize that our minimalist, generic, lowest-common-denominator Christianity is ill-equipped for the battle we face. We either keep our rootless piety and lose, or we lose our piety for the sake of winning. It is time for us to return to the older paths. We must return to a full-orbed classical Protestant worldview — we need a piety with dirt under the fingernails, not dirt under the tongue. The Reformation provides the historical example of a Christianity which is capable of overcoming without being compromised in the process.

The rootless piety of pietism has to be secluded in order to be safe — it must be monastic. In any conflict with the enemy, we may either retreat or capitulate. Cal Thomas has capitulated.

In principle, he has shown to the world his spiritual rootlessness. Consequently, he is fighting the right people, but he fights fire with fire, dirt with dirt, malice with malice.

Others, in order to keep this from happening to them, have sounded retreat. After doing brief battle with pornographers and abortionists, they have gone back into their isolated evangelical ghettos.

We desperately need controversialists who will challenge those who hate God, but we need men like Samuel Rutherford, men who combined a warm love for the Lord Jesus and uncompromising loyalty to the Lord Christ. In contrast, modern generic evangelicalism in politics cannot avoid compromise. It is time we stop going into battle without our armor.

DJW

## Understanding Art

George Bernard Shaw once wrote a review of a play based on Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In it, he says that Shakespeare "wrote for the theatre because, with extraordinary artistic powers, he understood nothing and believed nothing." That is truly an amazing statement for Shaw to have made! Shakespeare is on every list ever made of Western civilization's greatest literary masterpieces precisely because of what is considered to be his great understanding of human nature. But Shaw lists the sorts of people that he thinks populate the Bard's plays:

villains, fools, clowns, drunkards, cowards, intriguers, fighters, lovers, patriots, hypochondriacs who mistake themselves (and are mistaken by the author) for philosophers, princes without any sense of public duty, futile pessimists who imagine they are confronting a barren and unmeaning world when they are only contemplating their own worthlessness, . . .

Shaw says Shakespeare has no heroes, lacks energy and reality of imagination, and is silly and resourceless.

All this he contrasts with John Bunyan, to whom he attributes a sort of vigor and energy that comes from simple understanding based in expe-

rience, not in "paper." Shaw argues convincingly, but he never fully carries through with the contrast as he began it. He says that Shakespeare "understood nothing and believed nothing" — the obvious implication is that Bunyan's greatness springs, at least in part, from the fact that he does indeed understand and believe something.

This is not an insignificant bit of pedantic argument. Psalm 111 says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." The understanding that results from obedience is understanding for the artist as well as for the theologian, civil magistrate, father, and truck driver. Shakespeare was, after all, great, and did observe and capture human nature. But there is a reason that an untrained author such as Bunyan was able to compete with Shakespeare on his own literary terms: Bunyan *believed* in a way that Shakespeare never did, and therefore *understood* in a way that Shakespeare didn't. And the fact is, that however much we ought to disagree with G.B. Shaw in many other areas, he did recognize the literary power that comes from genuine belief.

Bunyan is as good an artist as Shakespeare in his use of language, depiction of moral conflict, and

ability to appeal to the imagination, and Christians who read him ought to have no fear that for the sake of good content they are sacrificing artistic soundness. They are not.

WJC

### ... "Reunification" Continued from p. 3

ployment, and rent.

Thus, former West German politicians have a difficult time explaining the difference between statist socialism and statist "capitalism". Of course, they refer to it as a "social market economy," but this is simply a euphemism for the old promise that the State will subsidize citizens that are poor, ill, unemployed, old, or just not willing to work. The former GDR promised this to its citizens, and this is what they still expect.

The new government promised this to its citizens in order to win the election, but this promise and the others noted above will hinder a second "Wirtschaftswunder".

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## On Defining "Peace" in the Middle East

J. Daryl Charles

Christians ought to be particularly discerning regarding popular non-Christian notions of "peace." This discernment should affect the way we live, including the way we pray. There is a "peace" after which unregenerate humans clamor — the *absence of conflict* — and a biblical peace which is rooted in *covenant relationship with God*. To blur or neglect this distinction is fatal — if, that is, the Christian community is to be cooperating with and not unwittingly "working against" the purposes of God.

While "peace = the absence of conflict" is a foreshadow of heavenly, eternal peace, and therefore, something to be desired, it becomes an idol, a false god in essence, when divorced from its source. Modern man does not want the yoke of God's (= Christ's) lordship. But a Biblical peace has at its center the redemptive, atoning work of Christ which brings reconciliation to God. Therefore, it is possible for an "unjust" peace to arise. Both the prophet Jeremiah and the apostle Paul decry such an "unjust peace" in a context of divinely intended judgement: "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace." (Jer 6:14 and 8:11). "While people are saying 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly..." (1 Thess. 5:3).

Similarly, Jesus Himself appeals to an "unjust peace" when He states, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). The context of this statement is *divided loyalties* in light of the cost of Christian discipleship. And since the nations will hear none of Christ's lordship, they are at war with God's purposes and His people. The nations still rage, and the raging is fundamentally *spiritual* in nature. As the Psalmist declared:

Why do the nations rage  
and the people plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth take their  
stand and the rulers gather  
together against the Lord  
and against his anointed.

The inherent danger, whether in our preaching or our praying, is to parrot and hence succumb to the popular notion of "peace" (i.e., the absence of conflict), a notion lacking in Biblical support. The prayer "Lord, send peace (i.e., an absence of conflict) to the nations in the Middle East," however desirous this may be, should yield to the cry "Lord, work out your purposes in the Middle East, and cause the nations — all of them — to acknowledge your might and salvation, even if this means events which shake the earth."

The mission of the church, which incarnates the presence of God in the earth, is to "speak the truth in

**A Biblical peace has at its center the redemptive, atoning work of Christ which brings reconciliation to God.**

love," since it is a "pillar of the truth." Implied in this calling is the fact that speaking the truth will provoke resistance. That is to say, the Church is armed with and advances the unchanging truth of God in a world which, whether pacifistically or militaristically, defiantly rejects the truth. This "prophetic" posture necessitates at times conflict with the consensus — a conflict which, historically, may mean gross unpopularity, even persecution.

The Church should highlight its prophetic role as the world's attention is riveted anew to the fragility of the Middle East in the aftermath of the Gulf War. The complex scenario of the Mediterranean world, where hostilities between Arabs and Jews have simmered for several millennia, is not about to be resolved simply because of United Nations involvement or fragile "peace-keeping" missions by the diplomats of concerned nations.

The sacred Scriptures afford insight into the Middle East cauldron. Furthermore, they indicate a peculiar relationship between the Church and ethnic Israel which is not merely "theological." Paul reminds the

Christians in Rome that the Church is indebted to Israel. This "debt," a matter of grace which precludes any notion of "repayment" in a strict or literal sense, does not arise because the Jews as a people are perfect, righteous or impeccable. Rather, it is because they are the divinely-chosen instrument through which the messianic seed was brought into the world.

Because of this correlation between the Church and ethnic Israel, the Church, though not oblivious to political error, is forever grateful for its *spiritual* heritage. This gratitude, not confined to the political sphere, is primarily spiritual in character. Moreover, it has at its core the desire for ethnic Israel to come into a realization of the eternal purposes of God — not the least of which are the full implications of divine atonement. Hence, we may pray, along with the

Psalmist, for the "peace of Jerusalem." Here it is important to bear in mind the full-orbed (and prophetic) character of *shalom*, at the heart of which is found covenantal faithfulness of God. Such an understanding of "peace," regardless of differing convictions concerning the precise nature of the Church's relationship to ethnic Israel, will aid the Church in conceptualizing — and praying for — a Biblically-founded notion of "peace." This awareness will prevent the church from capitulating to prevailing notions of peace which are humanistic in nature.

The Church thus prays for the "peace" that is only a result of the revelation of God's reconciling work. As antecedent action in history affirms, God will do something extraordinary among the nations (though not necessarily in conformity with desires of the status quo) so that His glory will be revealed in the Middle East — and the world.

The Christian community must come to grips with the critical importance of not buying into the seductive and unbiblical notion of "peace" so rampant around us. It is the Church which comprehends the true notion of peace — a notion not grounded in pragmatic thought but rather in a Biblical precedent.

*J. Daryl Charles is Scholar-in-Residence at Prison Fellowship Ministries, Washington, D.C.*

Dear Editors,

As an evangelical Anglican, I was so encouraged to encounter in the Sept/Oct 1990 Issue [Reflections on Roman Catholicism] such a fine defense of the Reformed doctrines of justification, the sacraments, and Holy Scripture. (Might I note here that these doctrines are enshrined in the 39 Articles as well as the Westminster Confession.) I was also encouraged by the presentation of these crucial issues in the context of irenic and intelligent dialogue with Roman Catholics. Keep up the good work.

Rev. C. Craig Schilling  
Assistant to Bishop Knight  
United Episcopal Church  
of North America

Dear Editors,

I was shocked and dismayed to read of Mr. Packer's opinion that the regulative principle of worship was a departure from Calvin's teaching and classified as an innovation of the Puritans (Vol. II, No. 1, "The Puritan Approach to Worship"). While I will readily admit that the Puritans may have added to the clarity of this doctrine, I find that it is an exercise in poor scholarship to assert that Calvin himself did not teach the very same doctrine. In his commentary on Leviticus 10:1, Calvin clearly lays out the regulative principle of worship in discussing the fearful judgment of God upon Nadab and Abihu:

A memorable circumstance is here recorded, from whence it appears how greatly God abominates all the sins whereby the purity of religion is corrupted. Apparently, it was a light transgression to use strange fire for burning incense; and again their thoughtlessness would seem excusable, for certainly Nadab and Abihu did not wantonly or intentionally desire to pollute the sacred things, but, as is often the case in matters of novelty, when they were setting about them too eagerly, their precipitancy led them into error...This, therefore was the reason of such great severity,

## Second Opinions

that the priests should anxiously watch against all profanation. Their crime is specified, *viz.*, that they offered incense *in a different way from that which God had prescribed*, and consequently, although they may have erred from ignorance, still they were convicted by God's commandment of having negligently set about that which was worthy of greater attention. The "strange fire" is distinguished from the sacred fire which was always burning upon the altar....Now God had forbidden any other fire to be used in the ordinances, in order to exclude all extraneous rites, and to show his detestation of whatever might be derived from elsewhere. *Let us learn, therefore, so to attend to God's command as not to corrupt His worship by any strange inventions.*

This teaching is identical in spirit to that later refinement which we find in such Puritan classics as Jeremiah Burroughs' *Gospel Worship* recently republished by Soli Deo Gloria. Mr. Packer cannot escape from the fact that the regulative principle is rooted in and flows out of the very teachings of Calvin.

Further evidence is found in the teachings of Knox who wrote in *True and False Worship*:

All worshipping, honoring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without His own express commandment, is idolatry. The Mass is invented by the brain of men, without any commandment of God; therefore, it is idolatry.

Certainly, Knox is here advocating the exact principle which Mr. Packer would have us believe was the later innovation of the Puritans.

I have benefitted much from the teaching of Mr. Packer and in fact can trace my first enlightenment in gospel truths to his book *Knowing*

God. However, in this matter he is not correct either factually or doctrinally.

Stephen Flanagan  
Vienna, Virginia

Dear Editors,

Thank you for your magazine. It has many stimulating articles and much food for thought. It seems likely to me that you will live up to your name, and present a true antithesis to much of the thinking of the world system. Even when I disagree with you, I enjoy reading your articles because they are fresh and honest in the desire to present the truth.

Robert Sluis  
Redlands, California

Dear Editors,

I offer my thanks to both Doug Wilson and Robert Simonds for the tone of their debate on the moral permissibility of placing Christian children in public schools. Their gentlemanly demeanor is refreshing.

I can't go so far as Mr. Wilson to say that sending a Christian child to a public school is sin (because I haven't examined the point, not because I believe he's wrong). But I do agree with his assessment of the difference between what the Bible requires in an education and what the public schools provide. Not even Dr. Simonds believes that public education is a Biblical education. That is why I am puzzled by Dr. Simonds' tacit belief that the public education system is even worthwhile. He acknowledges its corrupt state, yet continues to espouse its validity, all the while failing to see that the corruption is the nature of the beast.

The public schools are in their current state of immorality because the providers and patrons of public education are in rebellion against God. Since they are in rebellion, any system or philosophy of education based on God's revealed Word will be rejected, even if it works (and especially if it works). Dr. Simonds responds to the corruption by encouraging Christians to get involved to reform the public schools ("it takes only three out of five school board members to control an entire local system"). Question: if Christians are



running for the school board and being honest about their agenda, will they be elected? If Christians are elected and begin to implement a Biblical agenda, will they be re-elected? Public schools will never be truly reformed until the heart of man is reformed. That requires preaching the gospel, not obtaining a seat on the board of Baal High.

Dr. Simonds relates that he and his wife kept very careful track of what their children were taught at public school and then worked with them at home to ground them in the Word of truth. He counsels other parents to do the same. But even if parents are able to use the home hours to correct the false information

their children are required to learn during the day, why subject them to the false teaching in the first place? That's like asking your children to digest garbage all day, and then excusing it by saying they get a nutritious meal at dinner. Why not give them real food and real drink all day long?

The public schools are more than a corrupt educational system in need of reform. They are a tax-supported, coerced usurpation of parental responsibility. Heeding Dr. Simonds' call for reform will only turn the public schools into tax-supported, coerced usurpations of parental responsibility run by Christians. Dr. Simonds is a man of obvious energy

and talent. If he would apply those gifts to the establishment of private schools founded on the gospel, then real educational reform would be accomplished.

Gregory Dickison  
Moscow, Idaho

Dear Editors,

Your periodical is challenging and well written. I pray that you may continue your endeavor with integrity and humility.

Brett Baker  
Kirkland, Washington

## Cross-Ex

Dear Editor,

Your editorial in the Nov/Dec 1990 issue entitled "Rational Suicide and the Dearth of Courageous Humanists" takes me to task for defending the notion of rational suicide. While I wouldn't expect devout Christians, who feel that all life is in the palm of God's hands, to agree with my position, I was dismayed by the ad hominem assertion that humanists cannot defend the notion that life is precious. Do you honestly believe that only Christians (and Presbyterians most of all) can love life?

While I certainly grant that the Christian notion of compassion has played a significant role in human development, so has the Buddhist notion of *karuna*, the Islamic notion of *Shari'a*, the Stoic notion of *cosmopolis*, and countless other beliefs which attempt to bring humans together in a state of harmony. Humanism and Christianity are both heirs to the traditions and creeds of other belief systems—but the former, not having to maintain the fiction of divine inspiration, is better able to be forthright about its heritage.

Tim Madigan  
Executive Editor, *Free Inquiry*

### Jones responds:

Mr. Madigan confuses a "defense" of the dignity of life with a "love" of life, but, obviously, one can sincerely love the Easter Bunny without being able to *justify* claims regarding the same. The Christian challenge to non-Christians, especially humanists in this case, is to justify non-Christian claims regarding the "preciousness" or dignity of human life in terms consistent with the non-Christian worldview. In responding to this sort of question, the Easter Bunny-believer is on better grounds than the humanist; at least the belief in the Easter Bunny is consistent with the Easter Bunny-believer's commitment to a world containing well-dressed animals, but the "dignity of life" can only fit into an evolutionary framework by a mystical fiat. Mr. Madigan only aggravates his internal conflict by forthrightly announcing his indebtedness to a number of religious viewpoints, but he does so only by ignoring the implications of his own worldview.

Finally, Mr. Madigan's claim that "Humanism and Christianity are both heirs to the traditions and creeds of other belief systems" is true only if we assume the truth of humanism, but the humanist ought to at least first beat the Easter Bunny-believer before we adopt his assumption.

Dear Editors,

In "A New Perspective on the Problem of Evil" (March/April 1991), Doug Erlandson entertains and re-

jects several traditional theodicies (e.g., free will and greater good theodicies) and presents a Biblical perspective (*viz.*, that God's purpose for allowing evil in this world is to most fully manifest *His* glory) as the only genuine solution to the problem of evil.

Why couldn't an anti-theist argue that Dr. Erlandson has not really resolved the Biblical problem of evil because his proposed solution is subject to the same criticism that he used to refute the "greater good" theodicies?

For example, why would it be unsound for the anti-theist to argue in the following manner: Dr. Erlandson argues (p. 15) that evil in the world is *necessary* for the full manifestation of God's glory. (If evil in the world is *not* necessary for the full manifestation of God's glory, then the anti-theist can argue that on Dr. Erlandson's view, it was *not necessary* for God to allow evil to enter the world, and, therefore, Dr. Erlandson's theodicy fails.)

On the other hand, if evil is necessary for the full manifestation of God's glory, then, on Erlandson's principles, we should expect to find evil in the new creation.

John Brooks  
Chicago, Illinois

### Erlandson responds:

Mr. Brooks raises an interesting objection. I would respond as follows: The presence of evil at some

point is necessary if God is to fully manifest His grace (which is an aspect of His glory). This does not mean that evil must be present *both* in the present world and the new creation. Those who dwell in the new creation will still remember that they are sinners saved by grace prior to the final consummation. Their total understanding of God's glory will have been enhanced in a way impossible had God originally placed them in the new creation (or had ordained a world in which Adam and his posterity never fell into sin).

The issue is very different, however, if we focus (as do the traditional theodicies) on characteristics God wishes to give to or develop in *man*. If they (e.g., free will, courage, etc.) are valuable to all, they are presumably valuable *both* in the present and the new creation. Otherwise, it is difficult to see why they would be of value to man in the first place.

---

Dear Editors,

The Scriptures instruct Christians in God's nature and ways. God's Truth is absolute, although among His people there can be differences in understanding and applying His Word. [Regarding David Hagopian's critiques of Operation Rescue in Vol. I, Nos. 3, 4 of *Antithesis*,] Christians' differences in understanding and applying God's Word to the Operation Rescue movement have profound consequences for the young children who are taken away to death daily. Although the discussions will not help those slaughtered, Christians can debate whether or not the Biblical exhortation to rescue people applies only to governmental leaders vs. to each of God's people. Christians are expected to obey the Lord's commands to "seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless" (Is. 1:17).

Although their discussions will not defend preborn orphans from abortionists' attacks, they can debate whether God's people are required to intervene only when a government mandates the slaughter of others vs. when it merely condones it by allowing some to kill innocent ones. People can speculate why prophets like Jeremiah didn't rescue children about

to be sacrificed to idols. Was it because he realized such attempts would have been futile and merely resulted in his own death vs. did he think it was wrong to interfere with someone's choice to sin, even when the choice was to kill another, helpless individual?

Although it makes no difference to the 27 million children who have already been exterminated, church members can debate whether God's Word requires them to exhaust all legal alternatives before choosing to disobey a trespass law to prevent killing. Even if all were to agree that such a requirement is implied in the Scriptures, what errorless prophet will announce when sufficient exhaustion has occurred? Christians can debate whether Esther exhausted all legal alternatives before she chose to rescue by trespassing, which she knew was "against the law" (Esth. 4:16). Since her trespass was immediately pardoned by the grace of her king, some can argue whether she actually disobeyed the law of men in order to obey God.

People can debate whether rescuers in Nazi Germany were right in continuing to act "against the law" of their land in order to save people from unjust death sentences. Since D-Day brought the possibility of a lawful end to the death camps, should they have stopped their illegal rescue work and simply waited for a change in government? Although the victims of the new "final solution" may never know that others had concern for them, people can debate whether Operation Rescue is wrong for using non-violent civil disobedience to keep innocent ones out of killing centers today, since there is the possibility of a future change in the law.

However, instead of debating viewpoints, there is an easier way to put peoples' opinions, conclusions, and convictions to the test. Let us assume you are among the oppressed group of people. You are to be killed because the government has allowed one of your immediate family members to choose to do so. You have done nothing deserving death. You are considered inconvenient and unwanted, and your existence is the only justification necessary for the legal termination of your life. On your appointed day of execution, if

some people were to attempt to save your life by non-violently preventing entrance into the killing center, would you tell them not to interfere with the choice of your family member to kill you vs. bless them for their work? Would you condemn Christians trespassing to save your life as a poor witness for Christ vs. appreciate them as an example of self-sacrificial love? If your life were on the chopping block, would it affect your view of Operation Rescue?

M.G. Forrester, M.D.  
Fallbrook, California

#### **Hagopian responds:**

If my life were on the "chopping block," I would not want God's people to think that my death -- no matter how unjust -- was to dictate their ethic, since a victim-focused ethic, at best, is a subjective ethic propelled by the vagaries of human emotion. Instead, I would pray that God would grant me the strength to implore His people to obey the absolute and objective standard of Holy Scripture, even if obeying Scripture required detailed analysis and even if, as a result, I would suffer my ultimate demise.

While it may be hard for some to see, the goal of the Biblical ethic is not to save life. It is to obey God, by doing His work, in His way, and in His time. May God graciously grant us zeal in accordance with knowledge so that we need not be ashamed as we rightly divide His Word of truth.

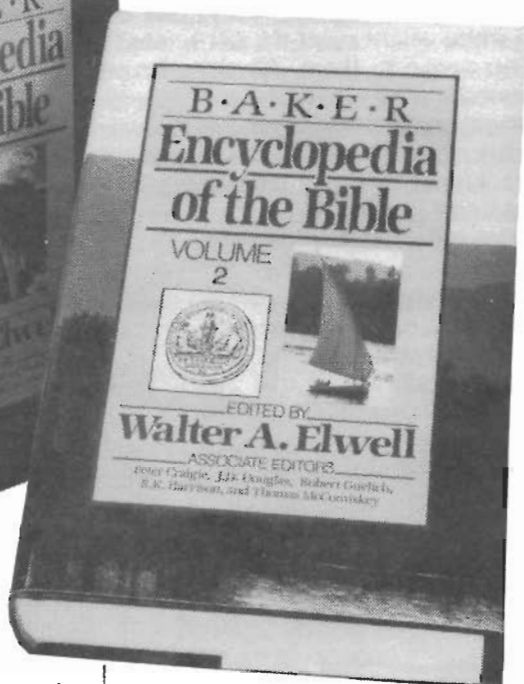
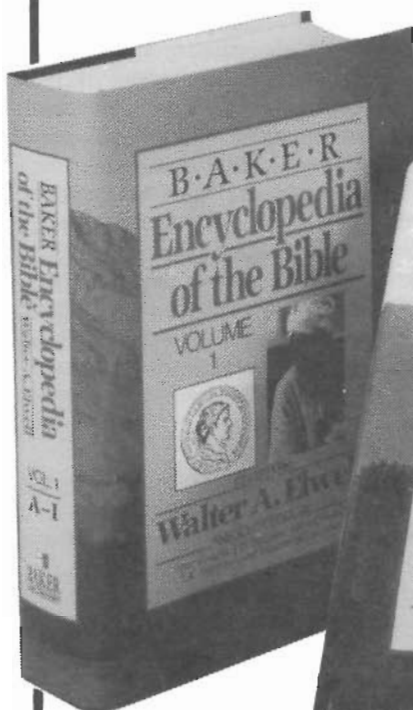
A victim-focused ethic or a God-focused ethic? You be the judge. My heartfelt prayer is that we would all fix our eyes on Christ who alone enables us to see things as God sees them. Only then will we live the way God wants us to live. Only then will we learn what it really means to obey God rather than man.

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# In Other Words

## The Passing of Arthur

Wesley Callihan

Turning the corner at a fast walk, knowing I had taken too long over lunch again, I nearly stumbled over the old man. He sat with his back to the bricks of the only auto parts store in the downtown district, ignoring the passersby on the noon sidewalks, stretching his legs in the sun. His khaki pants were tattered, and his coat was stained and faded, but his hair was neatly combed. All this I noticed as I awkwardly tried to step over him; this and the words he crooned as he rocked himself gently against the warm brick — "Rex quondam, rexque futurus." The phrase didn't actually register until I was halfway down the next block, and then it made me suddenly stand still in the middle of the busy sidewalk. Someone jostled me -- "Watch it, guy!" — and I saw my supervisor hurry into my building, late too, so I ran in, up my two flights, and to my desk.

But I kept thinking, why did he say that? I recognized it. I hadn't read all of Malory, but surely that phrase is the most well-known part and the most significant. Why would an old bum on a downtown city sidewalk be quoting Malory to himself? I thought about it as I ran my programs, as I leaned against the wall at the coffee machine, as I waited for the computer to spit the forms back at me for another round of programs. I thought about it as the hour hand hit five, and I locked my table.

I hoped the old man would still be there, although I didn't know what I might do if he were. Walk up to him and say, "Hey you! How come you're quoting Malory?" That wouldn't do. In the first place, people would think I was as touched as he probably

was. Then too, you never knew how these old winos might react if a normal person spoke to them. All city people know the rules — look straight ahead, never speak to them, do not acknowledge their existence. But I wanted to know. But why was he quoting Malory?

Was he an ex-English professor? I knew the stories: half the bums on the streets were former high-powered financial execs or some such thing, had hit a streak of bad luck and chucked it all. Maybe this guy had been at a hot-shot college, got fed up for some reason and thumbed down here. On the other hand that

**I awkwardly tried to step over him as he rocked himself gently against the warm brick — "Rex quondam, rexque futurus." The phrase didn't actually register until I was halfway down the next block, and then it made me suddenly stand still in the middle of the busy sidewalk.**

was hardly likely at all. Where would a man have come from who quoted Malory? I managed to become so thoroughly intrigued that I planned to sit down next to him, when I found him, and get to know the old fellow and his secret.

But when I saw him, still sitting there near the now-shady corner moving his lips, I lost all my nerve and swung wide of him, heart pounding at the audacity of the thing I had planned for myself; I told myself I was a creature of habit, not a bold man.

All evening, in my little apartment, I was bothered. Why did this old bum have the nerve to sit unconcernedly on a street corner and quote English literature? Why didn't I have the courage even to ask him why he did it? Here was a break in the monotonous routine of my normal schedule and something that fasci-

nated me all in one package — the intrusion of poetry into reality. Bums were real, English professors were not. Computer programmers were real, fifteenth-century knights (in jail or out) were not. But now, without any fanfare worthy of the name, Arthur and Malory had shown up on the third-to-last street corner of my route to a workplace housed in the world's second most nondescript building. Why?

Late in the evening, I dug into my box of old school texts and found it, and read:

Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse: HIC JACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM, REXQUE FUTURUS.

The longing that had swept me the very first time I read those words as a boy now washed over me again, and I wanted to find the old man and ask him why he was saying those words and tell him how he made me feel the ache again and not be afraid to talk, and maybe say thanks to him.

Instead, I made sure I had enough in my savings, then called my supervisor and told him computers were destroying my soul, and quit my job. He was even more surprised when I told him I was going back to school and maybe become a teacher, and so was my landlord when I told him five minutes later that I'd be out when the month was up.

The old man slumped against the bricks. He was pleased with himself, so he took another swig of cheap wine and decided to try sounding out some different words. He laboriously shifted his attention from the bookstore posters to a city sign: "Bus Terminal, Two Blocks." Δ

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Wesley Callihan is a Contributing Editor of Antithesis.

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# THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

A TREATISE ON THE NATURE, POWERS, ORDINANCES,  
DISCIPLINE, AND GOVERNMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## James Bannerman

The twentieth century is a period of unequalled confusion over the character of the Christian church. Some are willing to encourage the death of the Church as an institution. Others look to the union of all denominations irrespective of belief. Often pragmatism dictates solutions to problems, in both evangelical and non-evangelical circles.

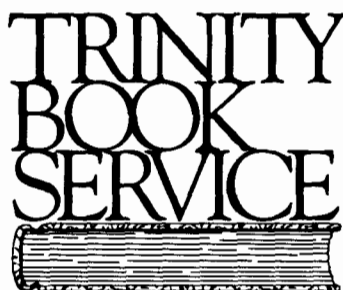
There is a crying need to get back to basics and to re-think our unique modern situation in the light of them. This is where Bannerman's *The Church of Christ* can be of real help. Although first published over a century ago it remains a classic treatment of first principles. Even where the reader finds himself forced to disagree with the author this is because Bannerman has exposed the heart of an issue.

After dealing with basic principles and distinctions, such as the contrast between the visible and invisible church, and between the local and universal church, Bannerman takes up the important and far-reaching question of the relation between Church and State.

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**The modern Church  
needs spiritual  
power, but it also  
needs the framework  
of biblical principles.  
James Bannerman's  
monumental study  
remains *the* classic  
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But the body of the work is really a treatise on Church power—the nature, limits and exercise of Christ's power in the church in its universal and local aspects.

Although the book is firmly presbyterian in conviction, the author's method is to undertake a 'comparative' study of the various classic positions on each issue as these are expressed in the confessional symbols and standard authors.

The modern Church needs spiritual power, but it also needs the framework of biblical principles. Bannerman's monumental study remains (in the words of Principal John Macleod) the 'classic work'.

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# CHRISTIANITY YESTERDAY

## Selected Meditations of Richard Sibbes

*Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) served as lecturer at Trinity Church, Cambridge, from 1610-1615, preacher at Gray's Inn, London, from 1616-1635, and Master of Catherine Hall, Cambridge, 1625-35. Sibbes' contemporaries referred to him to as the "Heavenly" Dr. Sibbes and "the sweet dropper" because of his Christ-centered and God-honoring preaching.*

*Izzak Walton said of this prince of Puritan preachers: "of this blest man, let this just praise be given: Heaven was in him before he was in heaven." Another wrote "No man that ever I was acquainted withal got so far into my heart or lay so close therein." Sibbes was a practical preacher, a true Doctor of Souls, and multitudes gathered to hear him open the Word of Life. His most familiar works, The Soul's Conflict and The Bruised Reed, were instrumental in the salvation and sanctification of many, including Puritan leaders such as John Cotton and Richard Baxter.*

*The following selections are taken from Sibbes' Divine Mediations, a collection of brief reflections on the Christian life.*

- Glory follows afflictions, not as the day follows the night but as the spring follows the winter; for the winter prepares the earth for the spring, so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory.

- There is no true Christian but has a public spirit to seek the good of others, because as soon as he is a Christian he labours for self-denial. He knows he must give up himself and all to God, so that his spirit is enlarged in an increasing measure unto God and towards the church. Therefore the greater portion a man has of the Spirit of Christ the more he seeks the good of all men.

- Our happiness consists in due subordination and conformity to

Christ, and therefore let us labour to carry ourselves as He did to His Father, to His friends, to His enemies. In the days of His flesh He prayed whole nights to His Father. How holy and heavenly-minded was He, that took occasion from vines, stones, and sheep to be heavenly-minded, and when He rose from the dead His talk was only of things concerning the kingdom of God, in His converse to His friends. He would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed; He did not cast Peter in the teeth with his denial; He was of a winning and gaining disposition to all; for His conduct to His enemies, He did not call for fire from heaven to destroy them but shed many tears for them that shed His blood. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37), and upon the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

So that if we will be minded like unto Christ, consider how He carried Himself to His Father, to His friends, to His enemies, yea to the devil himself. When He comes to us in wife, children, friends, etc. we must do as Christ did, say to Satan, "Get thee hence," and when we deal with those that have the spirit of the devil in them, we must not render reproach, but answer them, "It is written."

- To walk by faith is to be active in our walking, not to do as we like, but it is an acting by rule. Since the fall we have lost our hold of God, and we must be brought again to God by the same way we fell from.

We fell by infidelity, and we must be brought again by faith, and lead our lives upon such grounds as faith affords. We must walk by faith, looking upon God's promise and God's call and God's commandments, and not live by opinion, example nor reason.

- A sincere heart that is burdened with sin, desires not heaven so much as the place where he shall be free from sin, but to have the image of God and Christ perfected in his soul; and therefore a sincere spirit comes to hear the Word, not so much because an eloquent man preaches as to hear divine truths, because the evidence of the Spirit goes with it to work those graces. You cannot still a child with anything but the breast, so you cannot satisfy the desires of a Christian but with divine truths. "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee" (Isaiah 26:8).

- Poverty of spirit should accompany us all our life long to let us see that we have no righteousness nor strength of our own for sanctification; that all the grace we have is out of ourselves, even for the performance of every holy duty; for though we have grace, yet we cannot bring that grace into act without new grace, even as there is a fitness in trees to bear fruit, but without the influence of heaven they cannot be fruitful. That which oftentimes makes us miscarry in the duties of our callings is this, we think we have strength and wisdom sufficient, and then what is begun in self-confidence is ended in shame.

We set about duties in our own pride and strength of parts and find no better success; therefore it is always a good sign that God will bless our endeavours, when out of a deep sense of our own weakness, we in prayers and supplications like our Lord also water our business with strong crying and tears: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb. 5:7).

- The bitterest things in religion are sweet — there is a sweetness even in reproofs, when God meets with our corruptions and whispers unto us such and such things are dangerous, and that if we cherish them they will bring us to hell. The Word of God is sweet to a Christian that has his heart under its influence. Is not pardon sweet to a condemned man, and riches sweet to a poor man, and favour sweet to a man in disgrace, and liberty sweet to a man in captivity? So all that comes from God is sweet to a Christian that has his heart touched with the sense of sin.

Δ



# Restoring Sanity to Our Tort System

**The chaos of contemporary personal injury litigation stems from a neglect of Biblical standards of justice**

**E. Calvin Beisner**

A man trespasses on his neighbor's property and dives into the pool — at the shallow end — despite a clearly posted sign warning "Do Not Dive." He suffers serious injuries. A lawsuit ensues. By the property owner against the trespasser? No, by the trespasser against the pool's maker. And the New Jersey Supreme Court rules that the trespasser can prevail if he

can convince a jury that the "risk posed by the pool outweighed its utility" — even though his attorneys admitted that he could not show that the pool could have been designed more safely.<sup>1</sup>

Another man stands in a phone booth, fifteen feet from a street. A drunk driver's car veers off the road, careens over the curb, jumps the sidewalk, crosses a parking lot, and slams into the booth, injuring the man inside. The injured man sues — not the drunken driver, but the companies that designed, installed, and maintained the phone booth! His attorney argues that they should have foreseen the possibility that an out-of-control car would hit the booth and so should have designed, placed, and protected it better. Former California Chief Justice Rose Bird, writing for the majority, agrees, saying, "there are no policy considerations which weigh against imposition of liability...even though the defendant's conduct may have been without moral blame."<sup>2</sup>

## Liability Without Blame: A Fit of Madness

Hundreds of similar cases could be cited in which America's courts have succumbed to what can only be explained as a fit of madness, holding individuals

and businesses liable for injuries to others without asserting even the vaguest hint of blame, much less willful or malicious disregard for others' safety.

While the awards assessed in such cases can be huge, mounting into the millions of dollars, they are minute compared with the widespread impact of the liability explosion on the rest of society. Rising product liability judgments frighten manufacturers out of developing, producing, and marketing new products and sometimes even result in the removal of dependable, time-tested products from the market. As a result, consumers wait longer and pay higher prices for improved products and services — if they ever get them at all.<sup>3</sup>

One time-tested product that disappeared from the American market was Bendectin, a drug administered to over 33 million pregnant women to reduce nausea. Bendectin had been approved as safe in repeated tests by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. But some lawyers, realizing that roughly three percent of all children are born with some birth defects, however major or minor, persuaded the parents of some of the birth-defective children whose mother had used Bendectin to sue its manufacturer.

The company eventually removed the product from the market. Why? Because the drug was proven unsafe and causally related to the birth defects? No. In fact, at the time Merrell-Dow Pharmaceuticals removed Bendectin from the market, it had won every lawsuit involving the drug but one, and that one was on appeal.

But Merrell-Dow couldn't afford to keep fighting the suits. Its legal and insurance costs in defending against Bendectin suits were approaching \$18 million per year, compared with the drug's sales of \$20 million per year (from which production, marketing, and distribution costs had to be deducted). Not only that, but also, in one of the suits, though the jury ruled that the drug was safe and Merrell-Dow was not negligent, it still awarded the plaintiff \$1,160,000.

So Merrell-Dow stopped marketing Bendectin. Yet, according to Paul F. Orefice, president of Merrell-Dow's parent company, Dow Chemical, twelve thousand doctors officially protested, saying that Bendectin was a useful drug.<sup>4</sup>

## The Cost to Society

And so, millions of women suffer morning sickness without the once effective, safe, and inexpensive remedy. Not only Dow Chemical but also consumers pay the price for the courts' fit of tort law madness.

The story could be repeated again. Monsanto Corporation developed a new phosphate fiber that it believed was safer and more effective than asbestos as an insulator, but it decided not to market it; it expected the legal and insurance costs of fighting the inevitable (even if unfounded) product liability lawsuit to outweigh pro-

<sup>1</sup> Willard, Richard K., "Liability and the Law: How the Courts Were Hijacked," *Imprints*, vol. 16, no. 9 (September 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Cited in *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Lochhead, Carolyn, "Liability's Creative Clamp Holds Firms to the Status Quo," *Insight*, (August 29, 1988), pp. 38-40.

<sup>4</sup> Orefice, Paul F., "The Year Tort Reform Must Happen," *Imprints*, vol. 16, no. 7 (July 1987).

spective profits. So Americans go without the safer, more effective insulation.

Unison Industries, Inc. developed an electronic ignition system for piston aircraft engines, but dropped it before marketing; Unison was named in lawsuits following crashes of aircraft that didn't even have its system, and costs of extracting itself from the suits were so high that it figured future liability costs in suits involving planes that would have the system would outweigh potential profits.<sup>5</sup> Hundreds of doctors nationwide stopped delivering babies because of skyrocketing malpractice insurance rates that reflected skyrocketing liability judgments — judgments not paralleled by any deterioration in the quality of obstetrical care.

Such decisions appear warranted in light of major trends in liability litigation in the United States. The Rand Corporation's Institute for Civil Justice recently reported that average malpractice awards granted by juries in Cook County, Illinois, rose (in constant 1979 dollars) from \$52,000 in the 1960s to over \$1.1 million in the early 1980s, an increase of 1,167 percent. During the same period the average product liability award in San Francisco jumped from \$99,000 to \$1.1 million, or 1,016 percent, *after adjusting for inflation*. At the same time the percentage of cases won by plaintiffs rose dramatically.<sup>6</sup>

## Social Engineering in the Place of Justice

What lies at the root of this phenomenon that reduces American economic productivity, drives up prices, and drives down availability of useful products and services?

Former U.S. Assistant Attorney General Richard K. Willard recently cited several guesses by commentators: "Many . . . have tried to find an explanation through psychoanalysis; Americans have become 'soft' and averse to risk; people increasingly seek to blame others for their own shortcomings." While he agreed that there might be "a bit of truth in such explanations," he added, "I also doubt that human nature has changed that much in the last 20 or 30 years (if even in the last few thousand years)" — which is the same reason he rejects the idea that juries have become increasingly sympathetic to plaintiffs.<sup>7</sup>

Instead, Willard says, "In my opinion, the principal cause of the liability explosion is judicial activism . . . [by] a generation of judges engaged in social engineering." He traces much of the trouble to the rise of the theory of "no-fault tort liability," under which someone can be found to be without fault, either of willful malice or negligence, yet still be assessed damages when someone is injured.<sup>8</sup>

"The assault on traditional fault-based tort law," Willard says, "was led by Yale Law Professor Fleming James in the 1930s and 1940s . . . [who] felt that since accidents were inevitable, employers, manufacturers,

and society as a whole, ought to bear the cost. They were, in effect, obligated to compensate victims regardless of who was at fault. 'Social insurance,' not fault, was to be the focus of the new tort law."

What this amounts to is, in Willard's terms, "risk-spreading as social policy," backed up by legal judgments that frequently look more at a plaintiff's financial distress and a defendant's ability to pay than at real or imagined fault in someone's loss.<sup>9</sup> A defendant with large financial resources — a wealthy doctor, a large business, a school board, or a municipality — has what lawyers call "deep pockets." Such defendants are "generally assessed much more in damages than others," according to lawyer and Heritage Foundation policy analyst James Gattuso.<sup>10</sup>

Gattuso says the "problems in the tort system stem from its failure to differentiate between meritorious and unmeritorious claims and to allocate costs fairly." He suggests eight reforms that might bring about a more just tort liability climate in American courts:<sup>11</sup>

(1) "Give more weight to manufacturer's warnings to plaintiffs." If an injury results from ignoring a manufacturer's clear warnings, the manufacturer's liability should be significantly reduced or even negated.

(2) "Restore abuse, alteration, and misuse of a product as sound defenses in product liability cases." When a bodybuilder ties a refrigerator to his back, runs a foot race, and suffers injury when a strap comes loose, the refrigerator and strap manufacturers should not be held liable (as they were in one case!) for the injury stemming from misuse of the products.

(3) "Define 'foreseeable' injury in a more rational manner." It makes no sense to hold a college liable (as one court did) for a student's injuries when someone hides in campus shrubbery, jumps out, and attacks him, merely because, with 20/20 hindsight, one can allege that the college should have foreseen that the shrubs might provide a good hiding place for a mugger. Neither does it make sense to hold a hospital liable (as another court did) for injuries a doctor sustains when mugged in its parking lot — particularly when no other mugging had ever occurred there.

(4) "Limit 'noneconomic' damages." Require full compensation for economically measurable damages, but put some standard limits on damages for "grief" or "pain and suffering," which in some cases far exceed the economic damages awarded by juries.

(5) "Pay punitive damages to the court." Presently many juries award "punitive damages," supposedly on the grounds that they deter future negligence, out of sympathy for a needy plaintiff. Making such damages payable to the court would remove the sympathy motive for higher-than-reasonable penalties while still ensuring that the plaintiff received just compensation for his loss.

(6) "Modify 'joint and several liability' rules." When several defendants are found jointly liable for an injury, they should be assessed in proportion to the degree of their fault and the degree to which their action

<sup>5</sup> Lochhead, "Creative Clamp."

<sup>6</sup> Willard, "Liability and the Law," and James L. Gattuso, "The Liability Crisis: It's Not Over Yet, *Imprints*, vol. 16, no. 6 (June 1987).

<sup>7</sup> Willard, "Liability and the Law."

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Gattuso, "The Liability Crisis."

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

(or product) contributed to the plaintiff's loss. Presently, if a defendant with small resources is found 90 percent at fault and one with huge resources is found 10 percent at fault, the latter can still wind up paying most or even all of the damages merely because it has "deep pockets."

(7) Modify 'comparative negligence' rules." Under current practice, someone might suffer injury due primarily to his own negligence but still be compensated for the entire loss by someone else whose very slight negligence contributed ever so little to the loss. "The problem with the comparative negligence standard could be reduced by the adoption of a new rule under which a plaintiff is not to collect from a defendant less at fault than the plaintiff himself," Gattuso suggests.

(8) "Pay attorney's fees to the winning party." No one should be financially injured in a suit in which he is found not at fault. Neither should someone bringing suit have to devote a large part of his just compensation to the cost of litigation. The loser in liability litigation should have to reimburse the winner for legal fees.

Until these or similar reforms of America's tort liability practices occur, says Gattuso, the system will continue to have "more of the hallmark of a lottery to enrich plaintiffs and their lawyers, rather than of a means to right wrongs."<sup>12</sup>

## Restoring Justice to Tort Reform

"A means to right wrong." That is the right and proper purpose of liability litigation. And it is another way of saying that liability litigation is a means of justice, for righting wrongs is one of the chief aims of justice.

Justice, both private and public, must always be among the foremost concerns of those who value the survival of society. It is, as Adam Smith pointed out, "the main pillar that upholds the whole edifice" of society. Though charity, or beneficence, is a higher virtue than justice, society can survive without it. But if justice "is removed, the great, the immense fabric of human society . . . must in a moment crumble into atoms."<sup>13</sup>

Yet it is precisely justice that is wanting in the growing crisis of our nation's tort system. If Smith is right, that lack of justice foreshadows the system's collapse.

Where can we turn for standards of justice that might set our tort system back on track? Biblical stan-

dards, important sources of early American law,<sup>14</sup> offer some wise ground rules for a just tort system. Stepping back from the complexities of American tort law and looking again at some of these basic and fairly simple principles could help us to restore justice to our tort system.

## Impartial Application of Law

Underlying all specific rules we might apply in tort reform is the rule of simple justice. Justice, for the Bible, means rendering impartially to each his due in accord with the right standard of God's moral law (Romans 13:7).<sup>15</sup> Justice does not mean leveling out economic conditions; it means rendering what is *due*. Justice does not mean playing favorites with the rich or

the poor; it means applying the same rules *impartially* to everyone. And justice does not mean enforcing some ideologically defined structure on society; it means acting in accord with God's moral principles revealed in Scripture and in the human conscience (Romans 2:14-15).

This fundamental principle of Christian ethics cuts to the heart of the judiciary's social engineering that Willard wisely recognizes as the

root of the current crisis in liability law. It contributes to skyrocketing insurance rates, lost economic innovation, growth, and competitiveness, and rising prices, paralleled by diminished supplies, of products and services. The underlying ideology of the liability crisis is Marxist class warfare: the rich are so only because they exploit the poor; hence every opportunity must be grasped to erase the gap between rich and poor (or, as so often occurs in liability litigation, between rich and less rich).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, the Massachusetts *Body of Liberties* (1641), the first code of laws established in New England. In addition to explicit and implicit dependence on Scripture in its earlier parts, the code cites Biblical texts explicitly to justify all but one of its twelve capital laws.

<sup>15</sup> I discuss Biblical and classical definitions of justice, especially as related to economics and civil government, at length in my *Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1988), chapters 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, because so many large companies are owned by hundreds of stockholders, many of whom are middle class rather than wealthy, high liability judgments often result in transferring money from people with lower income to people with higher income. But perhaps it is asking too much of our judges to hope they will be able to make such simple economic analyses as this.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Smith, Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1976), II. II. 3, p. 167.



Enormous liability judgments, far out of proportion to actual loss and actual contributory fault, are one means of erasing the gap.

The Christian ethic of justice condemns such favoritism. Rather than viewing riches as inevitably gained by oppressing the poor, it sees them ordinarily (though not always) as a sign of God's blessing on those who live righteously and prudently (Proverbs 14:24; 15:6) and as the just reward of labor (Luke 10:7). While Scripture insists on giving the poor man justice in his dispute (Exodus 23:6), it simultaneously forbids being partial to him (verse 3). Equality before the law, not equality of economic condition, is the hallmark of justice. As Gattuso puts it, "The assets of the plaintiff, as are those of the defendant, are irrelevant to the degree of damage."<sup>17</sup>

## Five Principles of Liability

Justice, then, means rendering impartially to everyone his due in accord with Biblical standards. This general principle becomes concrete in tort law in light of particular rules that form the standard of justice in that field. The primary locus of law in Scripture, aside from the summarizing Decalogue, is the "Law of the Covenant," the fundamental body of law in Exodus 21-23. There we find five principles that — though space permits only a brief look at them here — can, by careful inference and application, serve well as a foundation for justice in liability law.<sup>18</sup>

1. Ordinarily, compensation should be neither more nor less than what is needed to restore the injured party, insofar as is possible, to the condition he would have enjoyed had the accident not occurred. "[I]f men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but remains in bed;<sup>19</sup> if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only

**Historian Roger Schultz points out that one can see a clear correlation between the growth of government as provider and the deterioration of belief in the providence of God.**

<sup>17</sup> Gattuso, *op cit*.

<sup>18</sup> The discussion here is restricted to civil liability in cases that are accidental. Outright theft, assault, and murder are, of course, different matters. While the Law of the Covenant addresses them, they are outside the scope of this discussion.

<sup>19</sup> If he dies, the death penalty is to be inflicted unless the killer clearly fought in self-defense (Exodus 21:12).

pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed" (Exodus 21:18-19). "[I]f a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it over, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall become his. And if one man's ox hurts another's so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide its price equally; and also they shall divide the dead ox. Or if it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its owner has not confined it, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall become his" (21:33-36). Notice that if the damage was unforeseeable, because without precedent, the victim and the owner of the ox (or, in today's terms, the maker of a defective product) were to divide the loss evenly. And even if the damage was foreseeable because of precedent, still its accidental nature meant that compensation was only to be equal, not multiple, as it was to be in case of intentional harm by theft (compare Exodus 22:4).

2. Culpable negligence exists only when past experience (including that embodied in statute law, like laws requiring railings around balconies [Deuteronomy 22:8], fences around swimming pools, or leashes on dogs, or laws prohibiting trash burning, drunken driving, or inadequate disposal of toxic wastes) has established the dangerous nature of an object or activity in someone's control, and without culpable negligence, compensation is limited to dividing the loss evenly. Nonetheless, if there is culpable negligence, the negligent person is as liable as if he had committed the act intentionally: "[I]f an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished. If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also [may]<sup>20</sup> be put to death" (Exodus 21:28-29). Notice that culpable negligence does not exist without clear historical precedent (either in personal experience or in statute law); what can only be seen to have been "foreseeable" through hindsight must not be confused with what was reasonably foreseeable prior to an accident.

3. The state cannot set a monetary value on a human life. Someone who is legally liable for another's death must pay with his own life unless the survivors of the victim offer to accept a ransom instead — however high it might be, including the person's perpetual slavery. "If a ransom is demanded of [the negligent owner of the goring ox], then he shall give for the redemption of his life *whatever is demanded of him*" (Exodus 21:30), since of course any payment would be preferable to death.

4. One is only liable for persons and things over which he has — or at least should have — control, and then only if others do not interfere with his control so as to negate it. He is not liable for others' acts outside his

<sup>20</sup> The context of the following verse indicates that this is not a strict requirement but a permission; he *may* be put to death, but must be only if a ransom cannot be negotiated instead.

authority. If someone opened a gate and let the goring ox out without its owner's knowledge, and the ox killed a neighbor, the person who opened the gate, not the owner, would be liable. Similarly, a manufacturer must not be held responsible for the consequences of misuse or alteration of his product, particularly if he has taken reasonable steps to instruct buyers of the proper use and warned against improper use. Scripture forbids punishing someone for an act he did not commit and for which he had no responsibility (Deuteronomy 24:16).

5. "Punitive damages" should be added to equal compensation in liability cases only if property damage resulted from deliberate sabotage, and even then the value of the "punitive damages" should be small compared with the actual compensation. "When a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution *from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard*" (Exodus 22:5). No "punitive damages" should be assessed atop equal compensation without proof of malicious intent: "When fire breaks out and catches in thorns, and shocks of grain, or standing grain, or the field is consumed, the one causing the burning must most certainly make the situation whole" (Exodus 22:6). In each case the person whose action led to the loss was to restore the injured party's property, but in the former case he was to do it "from the best in his field or vineyard."

## Warning Against Frivolous Suits

Clearly one of the greatest problems in our present tort system is the filing of frivolous lawsuits. In addition to their adding unnecessarily to the courts' already overburdened dockets, such lawsuits can cost their targets millions of dollars in legal fees, even when the defendants are completely innocent of any wrongdoing and eventually are ruled so by the courts.

Scripture has a clear and simple solution to the problem, and it goes beyond forcing frivolous plaintiffs to pay the winners' legal fees:

If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. And the judges shall investigate thoroughly; and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother (Deuteronomy 19:16-19).

If John Doe sues Exquisite Foods for \$10 million dollars and the suit is found to be frivolous, Exquisite

Foods should be awarded \$10 million — plus legal fees — from John Doe. It is hard to imagine any single rule that would more rapidly reduce the incidence of frivolous lawsuits.

## Living with Reality

Perhaps, however, our best hope of restoring sanity to American tort law is a restoration of the old Christian notion of contentment under the providence of God. In a fallen world, each of us will, from time to time, suffer through no fault of his own. Accidents — real accidents, in which the actors are devoid of all culpability, whether of malice or negligence — are part of ordinary life. It is part of the wisdom of the Christian tradition to teach people to accept accidents without resentment, discontent, or anger toward others, and without demanding that others bear the brunt of our suffering.

In America, the growth of the welfare state, in which civil government promises to do the impossible — to take care of everyone from cradle to grave — undercuts the virtue of trusting con-

tentment under God's providence. Roger Schultz, a historian teaching at Interim College in Bristol, Tennessee, points out that one can see a clear correlation between the growth of government as provider and the deterioration of belief in the providence of God. That trend makes citizens imagine that the state can make everything right, can salve all their wounds, can restore all their losses.

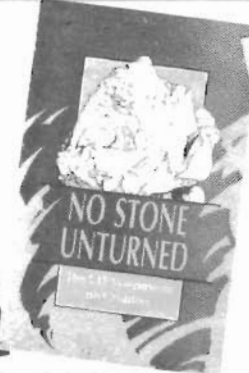
So long as that view prevails, people will seek relief from all their troubles at the bar of justice, not at the fountain of God's grace. But to the extent that people regain faith in God's providential care over them, they will be less likely to seek relief through litigation. A few good sermons on the lilies of the field, the fowls of the air, and the hairs of the head might do more to reduce tort actions than any number of new laws. Δ

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*E. Calvin Beisner writes and lectures on the application of Christian ethics to economics and public policy. His books include Prospects for Growth: A Biblical View of Population, Resources, and the Future (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), Prosperity and Poverty: The Compassionate Use of Resources in a World of Scarcity (Crossway Books, 1988), Psalms of Promise: Exploring the Majesty and Faithfulness of God (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), Answers for Atheists (Colorado Springs, CO: Campus Crusade for Christ/Northstar, 1988), and God in Three Persons (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1984).*

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# The Salt of the Earth

## An Overview of Scottish Presbyterian History — Part Six

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**Charles I aimed to crush the Scottish Covenanters, but instead he moved them to produce a lasting theological, political, and heroic heritage.**

**L. Anthony Curto**

"We have now cast down the walls of Jericho; let him that rebuildeth them beware of the curse of Hiel the Bethelite"<sup>1</sup> So declared Alexander Henderson at the close of the Glasgow Assembly (1638), which had called for a complete reformation of the Scottish church and overturned Charles I's imposition of episcopal government. When the news of the proceedings of the Glasgow Assembly reached Charles I, he was filled with anger. The king

saw the Covenanters as rebels who needed to be put in their place. The General Assembly had not only rejected episcopal government, it also asserted its right to convene yearly or more often if occasion or necessity required. This demand was sent to Charles who responded, "I would rather die than yield to their impertinent and damnable demands."<sup>2</sup> Though the Scots did not seek the death of Charles I, the king had spoken prophetically, for he would ultimately lose his head in attempting to oppose the Covenanters.

### The Bishops' Wars 1639-1641

Charles took immediate steps to put an end to the "rebellion." Using the Marquis of Hamilton once again to gain time by feigning conciliation, the king mustered an army of about 50,000 men. His goal was total retaliation. Charles could not have less than total control. He was a divine right monarch and would display his despotic power no matter what the cost. He would allow no liberty of conscience, worship, or religious rights outside his absolute rule.

Consequently, the Scottish Covenanters faced trying times. They did not want to go to war against the king. They were not against civil monarchical rule *per se* but opposed the despotic rule of a king in spheres not

Biblically sanctioned. How were they to carry on the battle? Their goals were spiritual. Was it right to use the arm of the flesh? Was their cause just? Would God own their cause as His? The Covenanters struggled with these and other such questions, but they had little time to seek answers. Archibald Johnston, Lord of Wariston, was in favor of fighting and sent letters to the Edinburgh committee and the counties of Scotland to persuade them of the need to fight the war. He wrote "they are not worthy to be freemen that will neglect their country which is now ready to bleed for their neglect. Be not wanting to yourselves, and be confident God will send an outgate to all these difficulties. Shall our enemies be more forward for invasion against the truth and our slavery, than we for our defense, for the truth and for our libertie? In the end, they have neither Christian nor Scottish hearts who will expose their religion, their country, their neighbors, and themselves to this present danger, without taking part."<sup>3</sup> The Council agreed and resolved to go to war. The issues were too great to leave aside. Johnston and others resolved to wait upon God's sovereign care for the outcome.

The Covenanters realized that failure to fight would mean surrendering the "Crown Rights of Jesus." They were fighting for their covenant with God which included the independence of the church from civil control, liberty of conscience, purity of worship, the rights of Scottish citizenship, the progress of Reformed Christianity, and the heritage of future generations.<sup>4</sup> With these firmly ingrained convictions, they would be willing to fight to the last drop of Scottish blood.

Charles had ordered his troops to meet him in York in April 1639. His larger but ill-prepared troops would prove no match for the Army assembled under General Alexander Leslie. Leslie had only 24,000 troops, a 2 to 1 disadvantage, but his troops were resolute in their convictions. When Charles drew up to Birks near Berwick, opposite the Covenanters, the British could see the Scottish color flying with its motto in bold display: "For Christ's Crown and Covenant." Each morning and evening, the British could hear the resonating sound of Scottish psalm-singing. The Covenanters were known as men who had hearts of lions, and the Psalms, especially 3, 27, and 72 were "the lions marrow upon which these lion-hearted heroes fed."<sup>5</sup>

O Lord, how are my foes increased!  
Against me many rise  
How many say In vain for help  
He on his God relies

Arise, O lord; save me, my God  
For thou hast owned my cause  
And oft hast beaten down my foes  
Who scorn thy righteous laws.<sup>6</sup>

Faced with these circumstances and realizing that he would receive no support from within Scotland (all his help had been captured by the covenanting troops),

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<sup>3</sup> Smellie, Alexander, *Men of the Covenant* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), pp. 135, 136.

<sup>4</sup> McFeeters, J.C., *Sketches of the Covenanters* (Philadelphia: Second Church of the Covenanters, N.D.), p. 106.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> Scottish Psalter version of Psalm 3; cf. *Trinity Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Great Commission Publ., 1984), Hymn 469.

<sup>1</sup> Loane, Marcus L., *Makers of Puritan History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> MacPherson, Hector, *Scotland's Battles for Spiritual Independence* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1905), p. 86.

Charles decided to negotiate. Thus, the first of the potential conflicts came to an end without a battle. The settlement was called the Pacification of Berwick.

According to the Pacification, the Covenanters were to disband their army in exchange for the king's promise to appoint an Assembly and Parliament in August of 1639 to deal with the Scottish complaints and resolutions. Charles did appoint the Assembly which ratified the actions of the Assembly of 1638. He did not, however, appoint a Scottish Parliament. Instead, he tried to appeal to the English Parliament to raise money for a second attempt at subduing the Scots. Due to tensions and disputes that Charles faced in England, he moved to dissolve the English Parliament quickly. It thereby obtained the name of the "Short" Parliament. Charles was between a rock and a hard place.

The Covenanters, realizing the king's intentional delay, called their own Parliament in June of 1640 and ratified the Acts of the Assembly of 1640. They also, once again, marshalled their troops, which under the leadership of General Leslie crossed the Tweed River into England in August 1640. In battles with the Royalist troops of England, the Covenanters took the English towns of Newcastle and Durham. This move forced Charles, once again, to call the English Parliament to session. In November of 1640, Parliament convened for what was later to be called the "Long" Parliament. This Parliament was made up mostly of Puritan and Presbyterian men who believed in the Scottish cause and so were in no hurry to demand that the Covenanters return to Scotland. Finally, after much debate, Charles was forced to pay the Scots an indemnity, ratify the Acts of the Scottish Parliament of 1640, and abolish episcopacy in the Scottish Church. Following these actions, the Covenanters returned to Scotland having achieved victory.<sup>7</sup>

Charles was not happy with the outcome. He had been forced to concede, but he had not changed his outlook. He was king and maintained that his will was law. Subsequently, Charles plotted to divide the Scots from the English Parliament. He conceded much to the Covenanters, hoping to secure their allegiance, but as tensions grew in England, and as the Covenanters believed that all forms of episcopacy and Roman Catholicism (Ireland) needed to be expunged from the realms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, they were willing to involve themselves in the English fight for freedom.

## Solemn League and Covenant

The English Parliament in 1642 sent a document to the National Assembly of the Church of Scotland entitled "A Declaration of the Parliament of England." This declaration stated that the English Parliament desired to avoid civil war but also wanted "such a reformation of the church (of England) as shall be most agreeable to God's Word. Out of which these will also most undoubtedly result a most firm and stable union between the two kingdoms of England and Scotland."<sup>8</sup> The Scots ardently debated what course to follow. The Marquis of Montrose

did not think it wise to enter into the affairs of England, but, of course, he was the king's prime supporter. Archibald Campbell, the Marquis of Argyle, persuaded the Assembly that they must aid the English in their struggle against the Citadel of Prelacy. Finally, the Scottish Assembly sent the following reply to the English Parliament: "The Assembly doth confidently expect that England will now bestir themselves in the best way for a reformation of religion, and do most willingly offer their prayers and utmost endeavors for furthering so great a work."<sup>9</sup>

Finally, in August 1642 civil war was no longer avoidable. Parliamentary troops began to clash with the Royalist Army at Nottingham. At first, the Royalist Army prevailed and seemed to have gained the day, if Scotland had not intervened. Parliament, in November 1642, appealed to Scotland for military aid. The Scots agreed to help but only on the basis of an agreement drafted by Alexander Henderson called the Solemn League and Covenant. The Solemn League and Covenant was both a civil league and religious covenant. It incorporated Presbyterianism, promised to promote religious uniformity, preserved the freedom of parliament, insured the liberties of the people, pledged support to the king in maintaining the Reformed faith, upheld the covenant, confessed the prevailing sins in the nations, and prayed for righteousness to be established.<sup>10</sup> When the English Parliament finally accepted the Solemn League and Covenant in September 1643, the Covenant Army of Scotland under David Leslie entered England once again, this time on the side of Parliament. It was not the Scottish goal to end the monarchy but to help England limit the king's power as it had done in Scotland.

## The Westminster Assembly

Several months before it had ratified the Solemn League and Covenant, Parliament, in an endeavor to bring about a reformation in worship, doctrine, and church government, had appointed an assembly of 121 ministers and 30 laymen. This Assembly was to direct and advise Parliament on the best means to achieve these goals of reformation. Parliament had nominated men from a variety of backgrounds including Presbyterians, Anglicans and Independents. The Anglicans, however, absented themselves for fear of reprisals from the king. Most of the Assembly was made up of Presbyterians, with a small number of Independents, namely, such men as: William Bridge, Joseph Caryl, Jeremiah Burroughs, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, and Richard Simpson. After Parliament had ratified the Solemn League and Covenant, it invited the General Assembly of Scotland to send down representatives of the Scottish Church. In response, the Scots gladly complied and sent four of their most able ministers and two laymen to the Assembly. The ministers were Alexander Henderson, Robert Baillie, Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie, and the laymen were John Maitland and Archibald Johnston. The Assembly held its first meeting at Westminster on July 1, 1643, hence the name, the Westminster Assembly. The Scots who attended the Assembly did not have any voting rights, but they took a very prominent role in its proceedings. In

<sup>7</sup> Burleigh, J.H.S., *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973) p. 223.

<sup>8</sup> Hill, Ninian, *Story of the Scottish Church* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1919), p. 167.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 168.

<sup>10</sup> Beveridge, John, *The Covenanters* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1944), pp. 18, 19.

fact, the Scottish Presbyterians had an influence in the Assembly far out of proportion to their number.<sup>11</sup> This influence was apparently due to their experience with Presbyterian government and their well-noted theological and reasoning abilities.

## The Scottish Delegation

I have already had the opportunity in this series<sup>12</sup> to discuss the life and contributions of Alexander Henderson, the supremely noteworthy, "chief of the covenant." The other three delegates, Robert Baillie, Samuel Rutherford, and George Gillespie, also demonstrated great strength and ability.

### Robert Baillie

Robert Baillie<sup>13</sup> was born in Glasgow in 1599 to a prominent Scottish family. In his youth, Baillie showed a great desire for learning and went on to receive his education at the University of Glasgow. Having turned his attention to theological studies, he received ecclesiastical orders in 1622. Through the help of Lord Montgomery, Baillie was presented to the Church of Kilwinning, where he worked until his appointment by the Presbytery of Irvine as a commissioner to the Glasgow Assembly of 1638.

Prior to 1638, Baillie had been part of the Covenanting party which opposed episcopacy in Scotland. In 1637, the Archbishop of Glasgow invited him to preach a sermon before the General Assembly on the Book of Common Prayer and the Canon of Church Order. Baillie declined to do this, stating that he was not convinced that they were in accord with Scripture.

In 1638 at the Assembly in Glasgow, Baillie demonstrated himself to be a man of great wisdom and zeal. He was an ardent defender of the Presbyterian cause and distinguished himself as a leader in future conflicts.

In 1639-40, Baillie served as a chaplain for the Scottish troops during the Bishops' Wars. He wrote concerning this period: "For myself, I never found my mind in better temper than it was all that time since I came from home, till my head was again homeward; for I was as a man who had taken my leave from the world and was resolved to die in that service, without return. I found the favor of God shining upon me, and a sweet, meek, humble, yet strong and vehement spirit leading me all along."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, he testified to the troops' dedication to the cause of Christ and the sweet communion they shared with the sovereign king Jesus.

Upon his return to Scotland in 1640, Baillie was sent to England as part of a commission to draw up charges against the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, for the role he played in trying to subvert Scotland under James VI. This endeavor kept him from his home in Scotland until 1642. So pleased was the church of Scotland with his erudition that, upon his return, they appointed him Joint Professor of Divinity with David Dickson at the University of Glasgow. In this position, he

especially set his hand to training future sons of the covenant. Though he was to hold this position until the Restoration in 1669, he was absent from its duties from 1643 to 1646, when he served at the Westminster Assembly.

Baillie was a loyal Scot and Presbyterian, and though he doesn't play a large public role as part of the Scottish delegation, he was always behind the scenes lending his careful mind to the cause. He was an adamant foe of episcopacy, independency, and Arminianism. Baillie kept a close diary of the proceedings of the Assembly, and we learn much about the other delegates from his pen.

### Samuel Rutherford

Samuel Rutherford, born in the quiet village of Nisbet in the year 1600, appears to have had a rather humble beginning, growing up on a farm in the Scottish lowlands. Nevertheless, he became one of the most notable figures in Scottish church history, known to many as the "saint of the covenant." Andrew Bonar described Rutherford as having a "thirst no earthly stream can satisfy: a hunger that must feed on Christ or die."<sup>15</sup>

Samuel Rutherford's public life can be divided into four periods: the pastorate in Anwoth, exile in Aberdeen, work at the Westminster Assembly, and professorship at St. Andrews.

In Anwoth, Rutherford ministered mightily. The saints of the parish had received him with open arms: "Our soules," they declared, "were under that miserable extreme famine of the Word that we had only the poor help of one sermone everie second Sabbath"<sup>16</sup> And as Marcus Loane remarks, "Now they were to be fed with the bread of life at the hand of one who sat daily at the king's own table, for that was the secret of his skill in making the loaves increase as he broke them on behalf of others"<sup>17</sup> God was pleased to own the ministry of Rutherford during these years, and many from all over the south of Scotland would own him as their pastor.

Alexander Smellie recounts that one day, Archbishop Ussher of the church of Ireland, disguised himself as a traveler in order to be entertained and catechized by Rutherford. When Rutherford learned that the traveler allegedly did not know the number of statutes written by God's finger on the tables of stone, Rutherford reproved him. The next morning, as Rutherford was on his way to preach, he heard a man praying near the church. He turned aside to see who it was and found the traveler who then identified himself. Ussher explained that, having heard of the great piety of Rutherford, he wanted to see it for himself and was not disappointed. Upon Rutherford's request, Ussher preached a sermon that Lord's Day on Christ's commandment that we love one another.<sup>18</sup>

James Urquhart, the minister of Kinloss, writes of Rutherford during this period: "I never knew one in Scotland like him. He seemed to be always praying, always preaching, always visiting the sick, always teaching in the schools, always writing treatises, always reading and studying"<sup>19</sup> As Loane comments, Rutherford's min-

<sup>11</sup> Burleigh, *Church History*, p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> See *Antithesis*, Vol. I, No. 6, pp. 13f.

<sup>13</sup> Most of this discussion of R. Baillie is dependent upon Reid, James, *Memoirs of the Westminster Divines*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), pp. 270ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>15</sup> Loane, *Makers*, pp. 57, 58.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, p. 65.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

istry "was a noble approach to the splendid ideal of Baxter's *Reformed Pastor* or Herbert's *Country Parson*." <sup>20</sup> During these years at Anwoth, Samuel Rutherford was an outspoken foe of Arminianism and Episcopacy and began to write for the cause of Presbyterianism.

Rutherford had entered the pastorate at Anwoth "without giving any engagement to the bishop."<sup>21</sup> In 1630, he was summoned before the High Commission in Edinburgh because he refused to conform to the Articles of Perth. This initiated an assault upon Rutherford which led to his confinement in Aberdeen from August of 1636 to June of 1638.

During this time, Rutherford wrote many devotional letters to his friends and family, of which John Macleod comments, "The fervid piety, the burning zeal, the love to his Lord, the loving response to his Lord's love, and the lively figurative dress given to all these letters, exhibits the workmanship of a spiritual genius whose branches ran over the wall."<sup>22</sup>

In 1638, Rutherford was freed and returned to his church in Anwoth. He was not destined to remain long in that quiet place, for the Lord had other plans. In 1639, he was chosen to fill a professor's chair at St. Andrews College, a position he held for the rest of his life. Rutherford quickly distinguished himself as a first-rate theologian whose astuteness was recognized throughout the Reformed world. On several occasions, he was invited to take a professorship at the Theological School of the Netherlands in Utrecht to work as a colleague with Voetius. But even when he was teaching, Rutherford continued to preach because he was consumed with the fire of God's Word and to remain silent on the Sabbath would cause him much sorrow.<sup>23</sup>

In August of 1643, Rutherford was chosen as a commissioner to the Westminster Assembly. In a letter written at this time, he notes, "I am now called to England; the government of the Lord's house in England and Ireland is to be handled. My heart beareth me witness and the Lord, who is greater, knoweth, my faith was never prouder than to be a common rough country barrow man in Anwoth; and that I should not look at the honor of being a mason to lay the foundation for many generations, and to build the waste places of Zion in another kingdom."<sup>24</sup> Rutherford was truly humbled by the task that God had now set before him, but he was also ready to invest all his best talents to the cause of the Reformation in England.

Rutherford not only gave himself to the work of the Assembly, participating in its committees and debates, but while in England, he penned his most famous work, *Lex Rex*. Charles had long maintained that a king is above the law and not bound by any constitutional authority. In opposition to this, Rutherford argued that though the king's authority was established by God, the king was not above the law but was put in trust by the people to maintain the law and live within it as directed by God's Word.<sup>25</sup>

Rutherford also opposed all sectarianism that

was so rampant in England at that time, wholeheartedly defending the Presbyterian cause at the Assembly. His co-commissioner, Robert Baillie wrote, "Had not God sent Mr. Henderson, Mr. Rutherford, and Mr. Gillespie among them, I see not that ever they could agree on any settled government."<sup>26</sup> John Lightfoot wrote, "Time and again his [Rutherford's] scholarship... swung the Assembly round to the Scottish Presbyterian doctrine and practice in the drafting of the form and order of the church government and of the Directory for the Public Worship of God."<sup>27</sup> Truly, Rutherford was a master-builder in the Kingdom of Christ in the British Isles.

## George Gillespie

George Gillespie was a youth who took the kingdom by storm. By the time he was twenty-three years of age, he was already recognized for his remarkable abilities in debate and rhetoric. In January of 1638, Gillespie was asked to pastor the church in Wemyss, but instead of having the Archbishop examine Gillespie, he was examined by the presbytery. The Presbytery of Kirkcaldy ordained him, in a clear act of principle and conviction against Episcopalian ordination. Subsequently, in November of 1638, the church of Scotland formally made ordination by presbytery the general rule.

Gillespie spent little time as a pastor. Almost immediately he was thrust into the arena of ecclesiastical politics. In 1641, he was made part of a commission to implement the Treaty of Ripon. He did such a fine job at this task that when he returned to Scotland, he was appointed as the minister of Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh. This position placed him right in the middle of all the debates raging in Scotland.

Finally, in 1643, he too was appointed as a commissioner to the Westminster Assembly. He thoroughly gave himself to the debates on church government, especially combatting Independency and Erastianism. During this period, Gillespie also participated heavily in the pamphlet wars which eventually brought him to write his most famous work, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming* (1646), a wide-ranging critique of Erastianism, addressing such questions as the sole authority of the church, not the state, to excommunicate.

Gillespie never tired in his fight for the cause of God and truth. For all his efforts, he met an early end at the age of thirty-six.<sup>28</sup>

When these Scottish commissioners returned from Westminster, they found that their work had only begun. The Scottish church would face increasing turmoil in the coming years which would ultimately divide her and take her into years of intense persecution. The great Head of the church had indeed demonstrated His faithfulness by granting unto Scotland such worthies of the covenant. Δ

<sup>20</sup> Loane, *Makers*, pp. 79, 80.

<sup>21</sup> Campbell, W.M., *The Triumph of Presbyterianism* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1958), p. 79.

<sup>22</sup> Most of the material on Gillespie is drawn from Campbell, *Triumph*, pp. 51-72.

<sup>20</sup> Loane, *Makers*, p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>22</sup> Macleod, John, *Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: Free Church of Scotland Press, 1958) p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> Loane, *Makers*, p. 71.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 78.

<sup>25</sup> Macleod, *Scottish Theology*, p. 73.

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# A Free Market Energy Policy

**Enthusiasm for government "plans" seems eternal, but the U.S. does have an effective energy policy: reliance on the market**

**Doug Bandow**

Ever since the 1973 Arab oil embargo Americans have thought of the Persian Gulf as the West's lifeline. And that's why the U.S. rushed into the Gulf back in August — to preserve "jobs," in the words of America's Secretary of State.

In fact, the importance of Middle-Eastern oil has been greatly exaggerated.

But this widely accepted mythology is fueling calls for a national "energy policy" to reduce our dependence on petroleum imports. Indeed, the Bush administration has been widely criticized for not embracing energy taxes, conservation controls, and the other sort of draconian government regulations that characterized the Carter administration's approach to energy.

Contrary to the claims of the doomsayers, the U.S. does have an effective energy policy: reliance on the market. And we should continue that approach, so that any price increases from a future disruption bring forth new supplies, promote new technologies, processes, and substitutes, and encourage conservation.

Indeed, this is the lesson of the "energy crisis" a decade ago that the planners and meddlers want us to forget. Despite the hectoring of Congress and predictions of disaster by the "consumerist" lobby, oil decontrol brought forth more energy at lower prices. OPEC's domination of international oil markets was broken.

Unfortunately, however, memories are short. Once gas prices began rising last July, consumers, many of whom had made tens of thousands of dollars from selling their appreciated homes, began complaining. Democratic and Republican legislators charged "plundering" and "profiteering." (Their charges weren't original. In 1977 Jimmy Carter attacked the oil companies for "potential war profiteering.") Even George Bush joined in, browbeating the oil companies to hold the line on prices.

Along with the usual demagoguery against the usual suspects, the oil companies, were calls for federal action. Analysts started dusting off their policy panaceas of a decade ago, calling for energy taxes, subsidies

for alternative fuels, strict enforcement of the 55-mph speed limit, and tighter CAFE auto mileage standards. *Washington Post* columnist Judy Mann even advocated nationalizing the oil companies. The war pushed energy planning from the front burner, but now attention is again turning to the issue. And, unfortunately, enthusiasm for government "plans" seems eternal.

What happened the last time the government attempted to micromanage the oil markets? The result was, to say the least, less than desirable.

## Oil Price Controls

Richard Nixon first imposed limits on oil prices as part of his wage and price control programs. Government regulation left companies with neither the money nor the incentive to explore for new domestic supplies — an off-shore platform can cost tens of millions of dollars, for instance. Nor did firms want to invest in new technologies that could enhance the recovery of oil from old wells, refine "heavy" oil, and so on. (A 1978 Office of Technology Assessment study concluded that high-cost recovery techniques could yield up to 30 billion extra barrels of oil — if American companies were allowed to realize the revenue.) Oil price controls also stifled the development of lower-grade oil resources, such as coal (liquefied coal could provide up to a trillion barrels of oil), oil shale (the possible source of 1.8 trillion barrels), and tar sands (even larger potential reserves).

Further, to combat the obvious unfairness of some companies being more reliant on more expensive foreign oil, the government created an "entitlements" program which required companies with more domestic reserves to send checks to firms that imported more oil. In practice this operated as an *import subsidy*. Two M.I.T. economists figured that by 1977 the program had caused oil imports to be three and one-half times greater than they would have been without controls.

The final impact of price controls was to encourage consumption and discourage conservation through added home insulation, more fuel-efficient cars and appliances, and so on. With the lifting of controls, however, Americans looked for ways to reduce their energy consumption; as a result, energy use per ton of output has dropped by nearly a third since 1973.

## Windfall Profits Tax

The demagogues in Congress, horrified at the thought of oil companies making even an average return on capital, imposed a roughly 70 percent excise tax on oil (misleadingly called the "windfall profits tax"). The tax has since been repealed, but during its prime it discouraged production of between 415,000 and 800,000 barrels a day.

## Gasoline Price Controls and Allocation Rules

Most Americans are not aware that during the 1970's the government decided how much gasoline was to be shipped where. Since allocations were based on previous use, fast-growing urban areas were short-changed, resulting in gas lines, while rural states were flush with gas. The rules were further distorted by the political clout of such groups as auto fleet operators,

boaters, and farmers, whose members received larger allocations than average motorists. In a free market local shortages would have pushed up prices, causing firms to divert shipments to those areas. But federal bureaucrats learned nothing, and the problems persisted throughout the decade.

## Energy Fascism

President Carter's Moral Equivalent of War included a range of other measures, including an energy Gestapo to enforce temperature controls in "public" buildings. There were oil overcharge prosecutions that continued into the 1980's. And on and on.

It is not enough to simply avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, however. For as long as we are willing to allow arcane environmental regulations to block expansion of our energy supplies, U.S. soldiers may find themselves at risk in the Middle East.

Most of America's remaining reserves are on federal property — both the third of the U.S. that the federal government owns and off-shore areas claimed by the state or federal governments. All told, the national government owns mineral rights to 52 percent of U.S. land and controls 95 percent of oil resources, 85 percent of high grade tar sands, 76 percent of oil shale, 40 percent of natural gas, and 35 percent of coal.

Indeed, the federal outer continental shelf (OCS), which already provides roughly 14 percent of our crude oil and 29 percent of our natural gas, is thought to contain as much as 32 billion barrels of oil and 116 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Unfortunately, we don't know how much there is because less than 3.8 percent of OCS lands have been leased and just two percent are now under lease. With much of the OCS — placed off-limits by Congress and the administration, little leasing is likely to occur in the near future.

There is also Alaska. Although Prudhoe Bay yielded a major find, only two of the state's 23 basinal areas have been intensively drilled and a dozen haven't been explored at all. As much as nine billion barrels of crude oil may be present in a sliver of land just 65 miles away from the North Slope, but again, we don't know, because the area, within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWAR), has not been explored.

Ironically, the environmentalists who so fervently oppose developing federal lands allow drilling within their own wildlife preserves. The National Audubon Society in its Louisiana Rainey Reserve and the Michigan Audubon Society in its Michigan Bernard W. Baker Sanctuary both collect millions from oil production. The drilling is carefully controlled and the wildlife is unharmed.

Similar procedures could be used in the devel-

opment of federal land. Energy reserves tend to be concentrated in limited areas: the U.S. Geological Survey says that only 2.7 of about 82 million acres of Wilderness lands have much potential for oil; of the 1/5 million acres in Alaska's ANWAR, only 15,000 acres are thought to possess most of the oil. Drilling might be commercially justified on a larger portion of OCS lands, the safety record there — 95 percent of OCS oil is piped to the mainland — has also been very good. Over the last 15 years the spillage rate has been just one one-thousandth of one percent.

Unfortunately, even after land is opened for leasing, the regulatory process is unnecessarily complex: Offshore drillers have to obtain 15 different permits and comply with 90 sets of safety regulations. There is normally almost a two-year delay between the lease sale and the acquisition of drilling permits, and litigious environmental groups, local politicians, and federal bu-

reaucrats can drag the process out indefinitely. For example, a Chevron-led consortium has spent \$2.5 billion to develop the Point Arguello field off of California, which could produce roughly 100,000 barrels of oil a day. But the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors has so far blocked production by refusing to issue permits to transport the oil to refineries.

The energy crisis a decade ago was always a political crisis. Thus, if officials in Washington are really worried about our dependence on foreign oil, so worried, in fact,

that they are willing to send tens of thousands of troops to prop up authoritarian, oil-rich monarchies, then they should adopt an official energy policy of *getting out of the way*. Federal land, including mineral rights, should be sold off *in toto*. What is not sold should be leased. On particularly environmentally sensitive land, drilling need only be more carefully controlled, as it is on the Audubon Society's own property.

"Crises" seem to bring out the worst in everyone, and the current crisis is no exception. Although the administration's plan, announced in February, is relatively modest, interventionist legislation is proliferating on Capitol Hill. Before the public falls under the spell of Washington politicians and bureaucrats chanting "energy policy, energy policy," however, people need to reflect on how poorly federal controls worked in the past. If not, the Congress might succeed in creating what Saddam Hussein was never capable of achieving: gasoline lines in the U.S. Δ

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**As long as we are willing to allow arcane environmental regulations to block expansion of our energy supplies, U.S. soldiers may find themselves at risk in the Middle East.**

# The Resurrection of Thomism

**Though evangelicals race to embrace Thomistic arguments, the results are question-begging and Biblically misguided.**

**Doug Erlandson**

At the heart of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas lies his natural theology. The linchpin of that theology is his Five Ways—his arguments for the existence of God. The presupposition behind all this is the belief that God's existence can be demonstrated on *theologically neutral grounds*. If God's existence cannot be demonstrated, then neither can His

attributes. It is no accident that Aquinas' arguments for God's existence *precede* his discussion of God's attributes.<sup>1</sup> Without the former, his demonstration of the latter would be impossible.

Many twentieth century evangelicals have been attracted to the natural theology of Aquinas, agreeing with him at least in their belief that God's existence can be demonstrated on theologically neutral grounds. The list includes Stuart C. Hackett,<sup>2</sup> Norman Geisler,<sup>3</sup> R.C. Sproul,<sup>4</sup> J.P. Moreland,<sup>5</sup> and William Lane Craig.<sup>6</sup> In light of the resurgence of the Thomistic arguments and their attractiveness for evangelicals, we must examine afresh its approach to the apologetic task.

Those familiar with the history of apologetics of the past couple centuries are certainly aware that this procedure flies directly in the face of much contemporary thought. Subsequent to Hume's and Kant's seemingly

devastating critique of the various theistic "proofs," Christian apologists were generally content to assume that a theistic world view could not be established through the use of reason but could only be accepted on faith. Whatever their differences, men such as Soren Kierkegaard, William James, and Karl Barth agreed on one crucial point—theism could not be rationally demonstrated. Because of this shared belief, their approach is sometimes called *fideism*. Broadly speaking, a fideist in apologetics is one who believes that because the truth of theism cannot be demonstrated, it must be accepted by a "leap of faith" (to use Kierkegaard's phrase).<sup>7</sup>

What, then, of the attempts to resuscitate the traditional proofs? Can a viable apologetic proceed along these lines? Can a foundation be established which will provide the groundwork for a Thomistic natural theology?

## The Rationalistic Assumption of Natural Theology

Before looking at the specific arguments for God's existence proposed by Aquinas and his present-day evangelical followers, I would like to examine an assumption which I believe underlies all rationalistic apologetics. (I am using *rationalistic* broadly here to encompass all apologetics which assume that the truth of theism can be demonstrated on theologically neutral grounds) This assumption may be stated as follows:

(P) There exists a set of theological propositions, S, which can be rationally demonstrated.

Some comments are in order.

First, apologists may differ on the extent of S. All rationalistic apologists agree that S includes the proposition "God exists." Most believe S is considerably broader. Aquinas, for example, believed God's existence and His attributes could be demonstrated. Others have gone further still. Bonaventure thought "God is Triune" and "Jesus Christ is God" were to be included in S. So, apparently, does Geisler.<sup>8</sup> Craig appears to hold to the demonstrability of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> If the minimal proposition "God exists" is not included in S, it would seem to follow that S is a null set.

Second, "can be rationally demonstrated" means "logically demonstrable to all rational people in ideal circumstances." Let's unpack this a bit.

(a) A proposition in S is "logically demonstrable" if it can be validly deduced from true premises. (Logicians refer to an argument with true premises and a valid inference as a *sound argument*.)

(b) "Rational people" are those who are capable of recognizing certain premises as true and others as false and can make valid inferences.

(c) Nobody is completely rational in the sense just defined. A person may not have access to all the data

<sup>1</sup> The Five Ways are found in Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (London: Blackfriars, 1964), IA.2. His discussion of God's attributes begins in IA.3.

<sup>2</sup> Hackett, Stuart C., *The Resurrection of Theism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), and *The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Geisler, Norman, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> Sproul, R.C. et al, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositional Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Moreland, J.P., *Scaling the Secular City*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> Craig, William Lane, *Apologetics: An Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> Many evangelicals have assumed that this is the position of presuppositionalism as well (See for example, Geisler, op. cit., p. 56-58). Indeed, some have sensed enough of a parallel that they have argued that presuppositionalism is a sub-species of fideism. This is incorrect. Presuppositionalism and fideism are diametrically opposed (as we shall see).

<sup>8</sup> See Geisler, op. cit., Ch. 17.

<sup>9</sup> See Craig, op. cit., 5.2.

necessary to determine the truth or falsity of a premise and may therefore suppose a false premise is true or vice versa. Or, he may not be able to determine whether or not an inference is valid. (This is particularly true of extremely complex arguments or of those couched in a symbolic notation unfamiliar to the one to whom the argument has been presented.) This is why the caveat "ideal circumstances" is needed. An otherwise rational person may not be persuaded by a sound argument if he is ignorant of certain relevant data or doesn't have the capacity (for whatever reason) to make the inference. Such a person is not in "ideal circumstances" in relation to the argument.

The rationalistic apologist, then, is not committed to saying that all rational people will accept S, but only that those who are in ideal circumstances will.

Of course, many rational people do not accept the most minimal S-proposition—"God exists." Of those who do, a significant number believe that the rationalist's purported demonstrations are logically unsound. If (P) were true, this would mean that such people either did not possess the relevant data or were unable to draw a valid inference.

However, the typical rationalistic proofs for the existence of God have straightforward inferences. They bear much more resemblance to

All men are mortal.

Socrates is a man.

Therefore, Socrates is mortal

than to a complex syllogism of math logic. Moreover, their premises generally are easily verifiable. Rational people, then, are typically in ideal circumstances vis-a-vis the rationalistic proofs. Some reason other than lack of perspicuity must be given for why these alleged proofs are unpersuasive.

### Outline of the Thomistic Cosmological Argument

The evangelicals upon whom we are focusing by and large reject the so-called ontological argument for God's existence.<sup>10</sup> Following Aquinas (who also rejects this argument), they have espoused one form or another of what is commonly known as the cosmological argument.

Although Aquinas presents Five Ways to prove God's existence, the first three have received the most attention and have had the greatest influence on contemporary evangelicals. We will accordingly focus on them as well.

Each of these Ways begins with a readily observable feature (or features) of the world and tries to demonstrate therefrom the existence of God.

The *First Way* is sometimes called the argument from *motion* or *change*. The feature of the world with which it begins is that every finite being changes. When something changes, however, it is going from its potential state to its actual state. It cannot do this on its own. This actualization must be caused by something else that has already passed from its state of potentiality to actuality. This second being must itself have been in a state of potentiality at one time and have passed to its state of

actuality through the agency of yet another being.

Although Thomas uses confusing terminology (viz., "potentiality" and "actuality"), his point is really quite simple. Finite beings are always changing. The change in any given being, A, cannot be self-caused. We must assume that another being, B, caused this change. However, to cause change in A, B must also have undergone change. This can only be explained through positing another being C. And so forth.

Thomas proceeds to argue as follows:

Now we must stop somewhere, otherwise there will be no first cause of the change, and, as a result, no subsequent cause. For it is only when acted upon by the first cause that the intermediate causes will produce the change...Hence one is bound to arrive at some first cause of change not itself being changed by anything, and this is what everybody understands by God.<sup>11</sup>

A word of clarification is in order. Aquinas is not arguing for a first temporal cause. (As a matter of fact, he does not believe that the non-eternity of the world can be demonstrated apart from revelation.) Rather, he is arguing for a *first sustaining cause*. All finite things are dependent for their change on something else. So long as we explain this change by appeal to an "intermediate cause," we will not have given a full explanation. Ultimately, something that can sustain change in finite objects but is not itself changing must be posited. This first sustaining cause is God.

The argument of the *Second Way* is similar to the First. The major difference is that while the First Way talks about the cause of change or motion, the Second focuses on the cause of the existence of things. Finite beings are not self-existent. They are caused to exist by something else. However, so long as we appeal to other finite beings, we have not given an adequate explanation. To fully explain the existence of any and every finite being, a self-existent being must be posited. This self-existent being is God. Again, the idea of cause at work here is not temporal cause but sustaining cause. A first sustaining cause is necessary to explain the ongoing existence of finite beings.

The *Third Way* shows that the being whose existence is being established is a *necessary being*. The argument here proceeds by pointing out the fact that this world is populated by *contingent beings*—i.e., beings which are but need not be. But, as Aquinas notes:

A thing that need not be, once was not; and if everything need not be, once upon a time there was nothing. But if this were true there would be nothing even now, because something that does not exist can only be brought into being by something already existing. So that if nothing was in being nothing could be brought into being, and nothing would be in being now, which contradicts observation. Not everything therefore is the sort of thing that need not be; there has got to be something that must be.<sup>12</sup>

Something that must be is, of course, a necessary being.

Aquinas' argument in the *Third Way* may be clarified as follows:

<sup>11</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, IA,2,1.

<sup>12</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, IA,2,3.

<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that the ontological argument has not had its contemporary defenders. Perhaps the most rigorous exposition has been given by Alvin Plantinga. See, e.g., *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).



Either there is a necessary being or there isn't. Suppose there is no necessary being. There is either a first contingent being or there is not. If there is a first contingent being and no necessary being, the first contingent being would have had to pop out of nothing. This is impossible. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. Therefore, if at one time nothing existed, nothing would exist now.

If there is no first contingent being (perhaps because the contingent beings comprise an interrelated whole) and no necessary being, each contingent being will depend for its existence on another contingent being but not on any necessary being. But, not even an interrelated sum of contingent beings can provide a fully adequate explanation for the existence of other contingent beings. The existence of that interrelated whole (and therefore of each one of them) still must be explained. Only if a non-contingent, i.e., a necessary being exists can this explanation be given.

### Rejection of the Cosmological Argument

Before evaluating the cosmological argument, I would like to schematize it. I have tried to account for what Aquinas is saying in his first Three Ways, but I am also drawing on contemporary formulations.<sup>13</sup> In so doing, I am trying to present the argument in its strongest possible form. This argument, which we'll call Argument A, runs as follows:

- (1) Contingent, non-self-existent, changing beings exist.
- (2) Their existence implies the existence of other beings upon whom they depend for their existence and their change.
- (3) The sum of contingent, non-self-existent, changing beings upon which any given being depends either has a first member or it does not.
- (4) If it has a first member, a necessary, self-existent, unchanging being must exist. Otherwise, the first member could not exist since the first member could not pop out of nothing. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*.
- (5) If it does not have a first member, a necessary, self-existent unchanging being must exist. Otherwise, the contingency, non-self-existence, and changing nature of the interrelated whole would not be explained. ("If the parts are contingent, then the whole is contingent."<sup>14</sup>)

Therefore, from (3)-(5) it follows that a necessary, self-existent, unchanging being must exist. This being is God.

Those criticisms which challenge the supposed impossibility of an infinite temporal series of causes<sup>15</sup> are

<sup>13</sup> Especially the one presented by Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 238ff.

<sup>14</sup> Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>15</sup> A defense of a "temporal" cosmological argument may be found in Craig, *op. cit.*, 3.13.

irrelevant to this formulation. At issue here is not temporal but sustaining causation.

Another unpersuasive criticism is the one which focuses on the concept of a *necessary being*. It alleges that the cosmological argument fails because a necessary being is a contradiction in terms. Propositions can be necessary; beings can't.

This criticism confuses two types of necessity—*logical* and *ontological* necessity. We may grant that propositions alone can be logically necessary. This says nothing about whether beings can possess a different sort of necessity. An ontologically necessary being is one whose existence is necessary for the existence of contingent beings. By definition, it possesses properties opposite those which make a being contingent—e.g., it is uncaused, independent, indestructible, incorruptible, etc. To claim that no such being *could* exist is simply to assert the contrary to the conclusion of the cosmological argument without defending this assertion. Such a procedure is question-begging.<sup>16</sup>

Some critics have argued that positing a necessary being to explain finite beings doesn't solve anything. Its existence too must be explained by appeal to yet another being. And so on, *ad infinitum*. Since the quest for explanatory adequacy is bound to fail, we may as well stop with the world of finite beings.

This criticism also fails. By definition, a necessary being is uncaused, independent, and so forth. It is the one being that can account for the existence of other beings but does not itself need to be accounted for. Therefore, positing it does not start us on the road to an infinite regress but rather forestalls that very regress.

Yet another criticism is that even if the cosmological argument were sound, natural theologians, notoriously, do not demonstrate the existence of the God of Scripture but some impersonal idol. The cosmological argument is thus unbiblical and as Van Til has stated, "We are frankly out to establish the truth of Christian theism not theism in general. We are Protestants."<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the cosmological argument ought to be rejected on other grounds as well. The above schematization of the cosmological argument makes two assumptions which, although initially persuasive, are not logically necessary. The first is *ex nihilo nihil fit*. The second is, "If the parts are contingent, then the whole is contingent." Let's look at each of these in turn.

1. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. The cosmological argument makes this assumption about a first contingent being. The following argument (Argument B) shows the contrary:

- (1') Contingent beings exist.
- (2') Their existence implies the existence of other beings upon which they depend for their existence.
- (3') Because no necessary being exists at least one otherwise contingent being does not depend for its existence on another being.

<sup>16</sup> Geisler admirably defends the notion of an ontologically necessary being in *op. cit.*, p. 255-256.

<sup>17</sup> Van Til, Cornelius, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969) p. 278.

(4') Because this being is not necessary, its existence must be explained somehow.

(5') The only explanation is that it simply comes into existence.

Therefore, it is false that *ex nihilo nihil fit*.

This argument, of course, assumes the truth of atheism and is therefore question-begging. However, if we examine Argument A, we find that its premise (4) is equally question-begging. Let's note that premise again:

(4) If the sum of contingent beings has a first member, a necessary, self-existent, unchanging being must exist. Otherwise, the first member could not exist since the first member could not pop out of nothing. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*.

An atheistic universe with a first member requires that at least this first member simply come into existence, as Argument B demonstrates. However, to assume that nothing can come from nothing, as premise (4) of Argument A does, is to guarantee the theistic conclusion in advance. By definition, the first member cannot be caused by another finite being. If it were, it would not be the first member of the chain. However, to assume that the first member must be caused (which is what *ex nihilo nihil fit* amounts to) is to assume that a necessary being must exist. This is the very issue in question.

2. "If the parts are contingent, then the whole is contingent." Again, an argument (Argument C) may be given to show the contrary:

(1") Contingent beings exist.

(2") Their existence implies the existence of other beings upon whom they depend for their existence.

(3") Because no necessary being exists, the whole cannot be contingent on any such being.

(4") The only alternative is that the whole is non-contingent.

Therefore, it is false that if the parts are contingent, then the whole is contingent.

Like Argument B, Argument C assumes the truth of atheism and is question-begging. But so is premise (5) of Argument A:

(5) If the sum of contingent beings does not have a first member, a necessary, self-existent, unchanging being must exist. Otherwise, the contingency, non-self-existence, and changing nature of the whole would not be explained. ("If the parts are contingent, then the whole is contingent.")

An atheistic universe, all of whose members form an interrelated whole, requires that the whole be non-contingent, as Argument C demonstrates. However, to assume that the sum of contingent parts must also be contingent, as (5) of Argument A does, is to guarantee the theistic conclusion in advance.

If the whole is contingent, a necessary being must be its cause. (A contingent cause would simply be part of the whole.) But, again, this is the very issue in dispute. Why not just say that the whole is itself necessary?

In sum, to assume that nothing can come from nothing or that the whole universe is contingent if its parts are contingent is to presuppose the truth of theism. To assume the opposite presupposes the atheistic conclusion.

The cosmological argument, then, doesn't fail because it lacks perspicuity. All in all, it is fairly straightforward and easy to understand. It fails because it assumes the truth of theism. A

person who does not already believe that the universe as a whole or its first finite cause is dependent on a necessary being will remain unconvinced.

### Autonomy vs. Dependence

Although the cosmological argument fails as a proof for God's existence, the real issue is now before us. This is the issue of *autonomy* versus *dependence*. The atheist is committed to the *autonomy* of the universe. Whether he asserts that the first finite being simply came into existence or that the universe as a whole exists on its own, he refuses to acknowledge any dependence on God. In his eyes, the space-time universe is self-sufficient. Indeed, it serves as his god.

In this, he behaves exactly as the Bible says he will. In Romans 1:18-23 the Apostle Paul declares:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imagina-

**The cosmological argument doesn't fail because it lacks perspicuity. All in all, it is fairly straightforward and easy to understand. It fails because it assumes the truth of theism.**

tions, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

According to Paul, the problem for the unbeliever is not ignorance. Nor is it the inability to understand the cosmological argument. That argument rightly points out that man and the world are *not* self-sufficient, that they are dependent on God. The problem is rebellion and a willful disregard for the truth. The unbeliever knows better. (He "holds the truth in unrighteousness.") But he would rather assume that the world simply popped into existence out of nothing or that it somehow is self-sustaining than acknowledge the Creator from Whom he is doing everything he can to hide. That this universe is dependent is clear—so clear that men who do not acknowledge this are "without excuse." But those who are in rebellion against God must assume the contrary, and so long as they do, they will never be persuaded by the cosmological or any other argument for the existence of God.

In reality, the cosmological argument as traditionally presented does not go far enough. Every object, every event, every fact, every thought in this space-time universe is utterly dependent on God for its origin and ongoing existence. As Paul told the philosophers gathered on Mars' hill, "In [God] we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The cosmological argument is designed to show that the first finite cause or the universe as a whole is dependent on God. In truth, however, God's providence and governance extends to *everything* in this world.

But this is exactly what the unbeliever refuses to admit. No argument, the cosmological or any other, will get him to see it. If he starts with presupposing the autonomy of the universe (which he must do so long as he is in rebellion against God), he will reject at all costs the idea that the universe is dependent on God. Indeed, his atheistic conclusion will appear rational to him. The unbeliever will reject the very starting point of traditional natural theology—the arguments for the existence of God—because he *must* reject them.

## The Failings of Natural Theology

We are now in a better position to evaluate the assumption (P) with which we started. Even the minimal S-proposition, "God exists," is not rationally demonstrable, in the sense intended by advocates of natural theology. By its very nature, it challenges the professed autonomy of the unbeliever. Because this autonomy is foundational for him, he will reject the conclusion "God exists," no matter how carefully arguments to establish this conclusion are drawn. If the minimal S-proposition is not rationally demonstrable, however, then neither are any other S-propositions. Natural theology as conceived by Aquinas and other rationalists cannot even begin to get off the ground.

Rationalistic natural theology makes two crucial strategic blunders. The first is that it treats the unbeliever's problem as though it were primarily *intellectual*. Although the intellectual aspect cannot be ignored (the mistake of the fideists), the primary problem is *sin*. The unbeliever is capable of reasoning as rationally as is the believer. He may even possess greater reasoning capacity. He is kept from

seeing the truth not through a lack of intellectual acumen, but because his autonomous starting point will not allow him to draw theistic conclusions.

Even more important is the second blunder. Rationalistic natural theology assumes that the believer can share a professedly neutral common ground with the unbeliever. He claims to start with an assumption that does not require belief in a transcendent, sovereign God Who governs every facet of the universe. For those like Thomas, who ground their natural theology on the cosmological argument, that starting point is contingent matter in motion. The existence of God, then, is supposedly derived from this naturalistic starting point. As we have seen, this conclusion follows only if God's existence is surreptitiously presupposed. Although not all unbelievers are able to identify the problem, they implicitly sense a fallacy in this argument and therefore reject it.

By starting with an allegedly neutral fact, the rationalist gives away the ranch. If the sovereign God of the Bible exists, there can be no neutral facts. If neutral facts exist, the God of Christian theism does not exist. Even if the cosmological argument somehow persuaded an unbeliever of the existence of God, his assumption of the autonomy of man would not have been challenged. God would merely be the most plausible hypothesis to explain the existence of the world. The total sovereignty of almighty God would remain hidden from him.

Van Til rightly sums up this approach to natural theology:

They [i.e., all non-presuppositional forms of natural theology] have allowed that...natural man is right, at least to some extent, in asserting his autonomy. If this is true, then the natural man would also be right, to an extent at least, in claiming that he can stand in judgement over the revelation, even the redemptive revelation, of God.<sup>18</sup>

## Rejecting Fideism

Although the Christian apologist ought to reject the rationalistic approach, he is not thereby forced into the fideist camp. Fideism is not so much apologetics as capitulation. To claim that Christianity is to be believed despite the fact that it is not rational is to do as much disservice to the God revealed through Scripture as rationalism does. God is the Supreme Mind and the source of *all* true rationality. The unbeliever's problem is not that he is too rational or that he lacks faith. He *does* have faith—in the autonomy of man. His problem is that his ability to reason has been thoroughly distorted by the sinful presupposition of man's autonomy which stands in the way of truly thinking aright.

The fideist may regard the apologetics task as hopeless. Not so the presuppositionalist. While he rejects the traditional arguments for the existence of God, he has a better starting point—the self-attesting sovereign God of Scripture. From this ground he can successfully challenge all belief systems which deny this.

The Bible makes clear that God is present everywhere and governing every aspect of creation. In addition to the already-quoted passages (Acts 18:28, Romans 1:18-22), Psalm 139:7-12 tells us:

<sup>18</sup> Van Til, Cornelius, *The Case for Calvinism* (Nutley, N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), p. 109.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

Any presupposition, such as the belief in autonomy, which denies this inevitably leads to chaos. The unbeliever does not see this because he is unwilling to apply this presupposition consistently. To live with the fairly well-ordered, rational set of beliefs he does, he must tacitly accept certain theistic presuppositions.

For example, as we have seen, his rejection of the cosmological argument leads him to assume a self-existent first finite being or a self-existent universe. This assumption fits in quite well with his desire for an autonomous starting point. Consistency, however, demands that he go much further. If the first finite being is self-existent, other finite beings could possess this property. If the universe as a whole is self-existent, why not its parts? A universe of self-existent beings would be chaotic. The unbeliever, however, does not apply his principle consistently. Rather, once he thinks he has eliminated God from his system, he tacitly accepts a principle of order which is explicable only on the assumption of a Supreme Orderer of the universe.

Similarly, his rejection of belief in a Supreme Lawgiver should lead to his rejection of all morality. The fact that it doesn't, that he still believes in right and wrong, shows that he refuses to apply his principles consistently. The Christian apologist should show him where these principles really lead. (I have not argued for this point. This would take us beyond the scope of this paper. I simply raise it to show how apologetics should proceed in another area.)

At the same time, the Christian apologist should challenge the unbeliever to show whether such confusions arise from a Biblical starting point. Knowing that God is the God of order and not chaos, he should be eager to see this challenge accepted.

The apologist who adopts this starting point is under no illusion that the unbeliever will thereby see his folly. The only hope for the unbeliever is through the awakening and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that all apologetic methods are equally effective—or equally useless. God uses human means to reach the lost (cf., Romans 10:14ff). He expects us to use the best means at our disposal. For God's Spirit to work, a person's pride must first be abased. An apologetic that destroys the folly of autonomous reasoning will be much more effective to this end than will one which appeals to man's ability to reason apart from God.

## Missing the Mark

In closing, I want to answer two criticisms of presuppositionalism raised by Norman Geisler. Because he erroneously classifies presuppositionalism as a type of fideism,<sup>19</sup> he includes these in his critique of fideism. It is clear, however, that he has presuppositionalism in mind.

The first is that "fideists [i.e., presuppositionalists] do not differentiate clearly the difference between the *basis* of belief in God and the support or *warrant* for that belief....The fideists properly stress the basis for belief, namely, God or his revelation; but they seem to neglect entirely the warrant or support for exercising this belief."<sup>20</sup>

While this criticism may be applicable to some forms of fideism, it entirely misses the mark if it is directed at presuppositionalism. For the presuppositionalist, every fact, every thought, every experience provides warrant for belief in God. With the Psalmist he exclaims, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). Even the cosmological argument, the linchpin of the rationalist's warrant, has its place. Rightly understood it shows the utter dependence of this world on a self-sufficient Being and the consequences of denying this truth. This warrant, then, is far broader than the warrant of the rationalist. "In him we live, and move, and have our being."

Geisler's second criticism is that "fideists fail to understand the implications of the difference between the unavoidability of and the justifiability of presuppositions....The crucial question is not whether we can *avoid* using presuppositions but whether we can *justify* those we use."<sup>21</sup> Geisler apparently believes that the presuppositionalist has no way of justifying his presuppositions.

To the contrary, he does. His justification is this: Only the theistic view makes sense of all of reality. And insofar as the unbeliever can justify his beliefs he must rely upon theistic assumptions to do so. In a word, everything is ultimately a justification of his theistic presuppositions. One can't have better justification than this. As Van Til has noted: "The natural theologian [i.e., the rationalist] is like a child who daily and constantly sees his father in the father's home and yet who takes a lantern in order to search for him."<sup>22</sup> The presuppositionalist, on the other hand, knows that all men walk daily in the light of God's presence. Therefore, he stands with confidence on this ground, trusting that God will graciously shed His light into the mind and the heart of the unbeliever.

The attempts by modern evangelicals to resurrect Thomism have failed. Its very starting point—the cosmological argument—does not accomplish its purpose. It is now time to bury the corpse once for all. Δ

<sup>19</sup> Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 56-58.

<sup>20</sup> Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>21</sup> Geisler, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> Van Til, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

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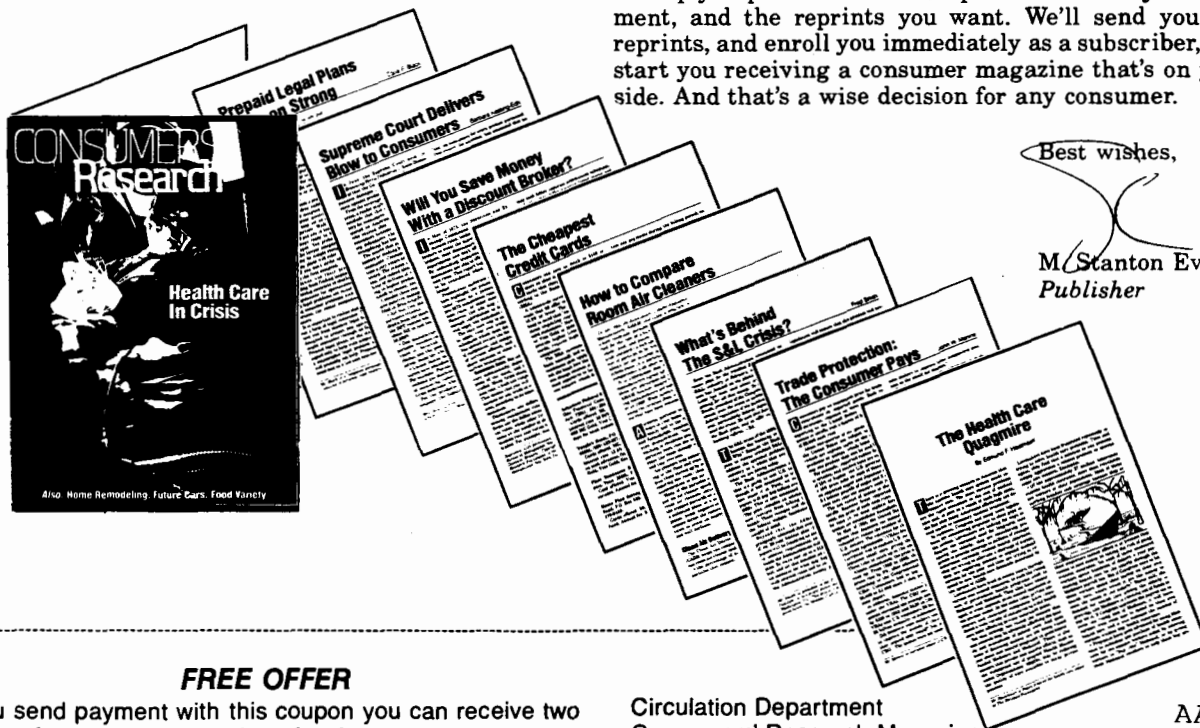
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# Covenant Evangelism

**Modern nations and institutions whose founders covenantally bound their descendants to faithfulness ought to be challenged to turn from their apostasy.**

**Douglas Wilson**

To put it mildly, American Christianity is regrettably permeated with an individualism that stands in stark contrast to the Biblical teaching of covenantal Christianity. But even Christians who believe in and emphasize covenantal thinking are still influenced by this individualism; they often exhibit a marked tendency to limit the emphasis and teaching on covenants to the church (the New Covenant) and to

families (the marriage covenant).

Our individualism is so thorough that we don't even limit it to individuals. Modern Americans have awarded individual status to decades, generations, and centuries. For example, we think of "The 60's" almost as though they were a person, now deceased. We think of the Victorian Era as a distinct entity or a distinct "individual."

Thoroughly modern, we never realize that obligations do not cease with the passage of time or with a change from one generation to the next. Covenantal Christians hopefully affirm current covenantal obligations to God, church, wife, husband, children, and so forth. But virtually no one affirms the obligatory nature of covenants over an extended time. Who today cares what his ancestors may have covenanted to do? Or who thinks covenantally about his descendants beyond two generations?

My aim is to briefly consider the Scriptural teaching regarding covenants made for subsequent generations and then apply this understanding in the modern world. Our task should be to seek understanding that we — and our descendants after us — may obey: "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children" (Ps. 103:17).

## **Covenants Made by God**

The beginning of our understanding must be found in God and in what He has done. How does He deal

with men? We see in the Decalogue that God does not just deal with individuals, but with families. But when He gives His Law to families, the obligations do not cease after one generation. They also involve the descendants.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (Ex. 20:4-6).

For the disobedient, the chastisement flows down to the third and fourth generation, but for those who love God, and keep His Word, His mercy is shown to thousands. Thousands of what? The context appears to require thousands of generations. The covenant was intended to be perpetuated over generations, with each new generation being born into the obligations of the covenant.

This understanding is confirmed in Deuteronomy. In chapter five the people are reminded of their obligations to keep the covenant made with them at Horeb (Deut. 5:1-2), even though the majority of those present were not even alive when the covenant in question was made (Deut. 2:14,15; Num. 14:28-35). Two chapters later, the generational obligations of the covenant are made explicit: "Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments..." (Deut. 7:9). Even more striking, when Moses renews the covenant in Moab, he declares: "Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that stands here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day" (Deut. 29:14).

The faithful king Josiah provides us with another example of the binding nature of God's covenants over time. When Josiah ascended the throne, he instituted a series of reforms, one of which included refurbishing the Temple. During the time the Temple was being restored to a place of honor, an ancient scroll was discovered there. The scroll was the Book of the Law — probably Deuteronomy.

The time which had elapsed between the making of the covenant in Deuteronomy, and the recovery of that ancient covenant in the time of Josiah was approximately 800 years. But when the terms of the recovered law were read to Josiah, he did not treat it as an arcane bit of archaeological trivia (II Kings 22:1-11). He did not have the manuscript placed in the Jerusalem Museum of Judean History. He tore his robes. And over what? If we discovered something comparably ancient, it would date around 100 years after the Norman Conquest, and we would therefore treat it as though it had nothing to do with us. And we would be wrong — at least about the time factor.

The radical individualism of modernity is baffled by Josiah's response. The thought that commands given to our ancestors, or actions taken by them, can somehow be binding on us leaves us aghast. But how does the Bible record Josiah's response?

Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the Lord." Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king. Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes" (II Kings 22:8-11).

Some may want to argue that modern Christians do acknowledge the authority of ancient covenantal obligations, since, after all, do we not submit to the authority of the Bible? Yes, but most Christians treat it as a book that falls out of Heaven into the warehouses of Zondervan or Thomas Nelson. We buy it at the Christian bookstore brand new. It is therefore commonly treated as a grab-bag of proof texts, inspirational quotes, and so forth. The Bible is not treated as an ancient collection of documents, which has continuing authority over us. This can be seen in the atrocious ignorance of church history on the part of modern evangelical Christians — it is as though we think the New Covenant springs into existence each generation, over and over again. Part of the reason we may have this attitude is that we no longer read the Word of God from old copies of manuscripts. The Bible is treated as an historically contextless Word from God, which we apply as we see fit.

Now if our obligations under God's covenants do not cease because those who initially incurred those obligations have been dead for two hundred years, what can we say concerning obligations placed on us by men, *without explicit divine direction*? The Bible indicates that obligations of this nature are also carried over generations; they also flow downstream.

## Covenants Made by Men

In Jeremiah 35, the prophet encounters a group of men, living in accordance with a command made by an ancestor. The Lord instructs Jeremiah to go to the house of the Rechabites, bring them to the house of the Lord and invite them to drink wine (Jer. 35:2). When Jeremiah does so (v. 5), the Rechabites decline the wine because Jonadab the son of Rechab, their father, had commanded them not to (v. 6). The command was to them and to their sons *forever* (v. 6). But, says the modern, "And who does Jonadab think *he* is?"

The prophet Jeremiah draws a contrast between the obedience of the sons of Jonadab, and the disobedience of the sons of Israel. If these Rechabites were faithful to the terms of a covenant initiated by a man, how much more should the Israelites have been obedient to the covenant from God? Having drawn the comparison, Jeremiah blesses the Rechabites for their covenantal faithfulness.

"Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before me

forever'" (vv. 18b-19).<sup>1</sup>

Now Jonadab himself was not present at this meeting with Jeremiah; he had lived about three hundred years before — he was the man who helped Jehu slaughter all the priests of Baal (II Kings 10). Nevertheless, his descendants were still abstaining from wine and living in tents hundreds of years later, according to their ancestor's command. The modern temptation is to dismiss this as yet another instance of traditionalism run amok, but that is not Jeremiah's response. He praises them for their faithfulness, and uses them as a contrasting example to the disobedience of Judah.

An example may put this in perspective. Our individualism makes us think of our ancestors as inhabiting *another world*, a world which is totally detached from us. But this is a thoroughly unbiblical way of thinking of generations. The cast of characters in the collage of the modern American mind includes the Puritans, but it also includes the Klingons from Star Trek. Consequently, we can no more imagine a sane Christian modifying his behavior on the basis of something done by an ancestor in 1691 than we can imagine an emotionally-balanced Trekkie.

## Caveats

Granting the obligations of trans-generational covenants, no one, of course, has the right to bind the conscience of another person contrary to the Word of God. In addressing the nature of covenants over time, we must never forget that the covenants, in order to be binding on anyone, must first of all be lawful. As the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it, "Neither may any man bind himself by oath to any thing but what is good and just..." (Ch. 22; Sec. 3).

The Bible teaches clearly the authority of the magistrate (Rom. 13:1-7), but it also teaches that the authority, like all authority, is limited by the Word of God (Acts 4:19-20). In the same way, a lawful covenant cannot require something contrary to Scripture. But to the extent that the covenant is not contrary to the Bible, then we should consider the covenant to be binding — even on descendants.

In addition, we should remember that the principal locus of faithful obedience to all covenants is within the family. In what follows, I focus on national and institutional covenants, but there will be no faithfulness to such covenants unless there is faithfulness in families. Consequently, we find some of the strongest Scriptural statements on this subject addressed to families. This emphasis is not because other covenants are unbiblical, but rather because these other covenants depend on faithful families.

## Nations: The Solemn League and Covenant

Modern Scotland is not a Christian nation. It is no longer faithful, like so many other countries that once submitted to the Lordship of the Christ. "Woe to Ariel, to

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, the descendants of Rechab are apparently still around, living northeast of Medina — Green, Jay, ed., *The Classic Bible Dictionary* (Lafayette: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1988), p. 948.

Ariel, the city where David dwelt!" (Is. 29:1). Scotland, once a light in Europe, is currently unfaithful and disobedient to the Word of God.

But is unfaithful Scotland in the same condition as some primitive tribe which has never heard the Gospel? Not at all; to whom much is given, much is required. God does call them to repent (Acts 17:30); they consequently have an obligation to do so. But do the Scots have an additional and covenantal obligation to repent and believe? Are they violating, by their unbelief, the terms of a covenant made by their ancestors? I believe they are.

In the autumn of 1643, representatives of the Scottish Covenanters vowed, along with the English Parliament, to work together to protect and reform the churches "in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government according to the Word of God." What was stated in this great Solemn League and Covenant? They entered this covenant so, "that we, *and our posterity after us*, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us." Moreover, they agreed to "remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity, and that justice may be done on all the wilful opposers thereof...."<sup>2</sup>

If we focus on the Scottish obligations of this covenant, should we not ask modern Scots: Does the Lord delight to dwell in your midst? If not, then will they not incur a greater wrath than shall fall on those who sin against a lesser light? They should not attempt to justify or excuse themselves on the basis of the mere passage of time. Christ's command was to disciple the nations and to teach them obedience. When such a nation is brought to Christ and obligates herself to remain with Him, then how is it possible to argue that the obligation somehow ceases if enough time passes? How can an obligation to remain faithful over time be erased by time? A covenant was made which bound posterity; the fact that there has been great unfaithfulness does not abrogate the terms of the covenant.

The modern Christian may want to ask what difference does it make? Should we not just preach the Gospel to non-Christians and not worry about whether they live in Scotland or the Bongo Bongo? The answer to this is *no*. There is a vast difference between preaching the Gospel in a nation which has never heard the light and preaching the Gospel in a nation which has fallen away from the light. The latter will have a greater hardness, which is not seen even among the pagans. In my own experience, I have presented the Gospel many times to those who have grown up in a culture with a Christian heritage (Americans), and I have presented the Gospel to people from a non-Christian heritage (Koreans). The two groups differ starkly in their degrees of hardness.

Of course, the heart of the solution is to present the Biblical Gospel, with power and with doctrinal precision, and to do this no matter where the evangelist is. Nevertheless, an important part of the solution to the

hardness of apostate cultures is a preaching of their former covenantal obligations. If we are to preach about the sins of the people as a prelude to offering them the fruit of Christ's suffering for sin, then should we not address those sins in which the people are living? If a man were preaching to cannibals, his message should address their sins. And if a man is preaching in an apostate culture, *should he not preach against the apostasy?*

### Institutions: Yale University

"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug" (Is. 51:1).

We often reveal a great deficiency in our understanding of righteousness in the way we discipline our children. Our children think, and many parents concur, that forgetting to do our duty is a legitimate excuse for not having done it. How many parents have second thoughts about disciplining their children when they hear the excuse, "But Mom, I forgot!"

But in the Scriptures, forgetting is sin *in its own right* (Jdgs. 3:7; I Sam. 12:9; Ps. 78:11; 106:13,21; Jer. 23:27; Hos. 2:13; 13:6). Families and individuals are not the only entities required to keep the memory of certain things alive. The obligation includes institutions which have obligated themselves to stay faithful over an extended time.

To take one example among many, what did the original trustees of a new college called Yale say about their undertaking? "Whereas it was the glorious public design of our blessed fathers in their removal from Europe into these parts of America both to plant and under the Divine blessing to propagate, in this wilderness, the blessed reformed Protestant religion..." Part of the mission of Yale was to propagate the Christian religion. But how did they approach this task? Did they get together a group of believers to hand out tracts down at the taverns? Although that is certainly a worthwhile venture, that is not what they did — they had a longer vision in mind. They had history downstream in mind. They planted a college, which meant that their intention was to propagate the Christian religion over time. You do not build an ocean liner to get across creek. You do not build colleges unless you are thinking of *generations*. Yale was established with the mission of training future generations in faithfulness to the Lord. And what does this mean? Can we ignore this obligation by saying that was then — this is now?

Not at all. It means that Yale *now* is apostate, unfaithful, and under God's chastisement. It means that no matter what they do, no matter how well-trained their graduates are, no matter how much prestige they have in the eyes of the world, Yale is a failure in terms of her original commitment and mission. This kind of failure is not erased by time. It also means that an evangelist working there has a weapon in his arsenal which would be of no use, for example, at the University of Wyoming. The University of Wyoming is unbelieving, and outside any covenantal obligations as an institution. Yale is faithless to the covenant. The University of Wyoming is

<sup>2</sup> Neal, Daniel, *The History of the Puritans*, 1837 (Reprint: Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publ., 1979), vol. II, p. 219, 220 [emphasis added].



guilty of fornication; Yale is guilty of adultery.

And Yale is not the only institution or government in this position. A brief glance around our culture shows that any attempt to list the institutions in adulterous apostasy would quickly become unmanageable. And there are many other modern evangelical groups which, like Judah tagging along behind the northern apostate kingdom of Israel, are not there yet. Nevertheless, while retaining the name evangelical, they are seeking to put greater distance between themselves and the terms of their covenantal obligations to their God. Such groups within mainstream evangelical Christianity have a bad case of theological AIDS. The virus of unbelief is in the system, and the final results are simply a matter of time.

### A Scenario

I have already noted that an evangelist addressing sinners in such a situation has a weapon in his arsenal that could not be used elsewhere. But how would such a weapon be used? How would it be preached? For purposes of illustration, let us join such a hypothetical message in progress. It is the kind of message we may pray will one day be preached in many places:

...and friends, how is it possible to defend yourselves by saying that you know nothing of what I am saying? That is the nature of my charge; this is the crime of which you stand accused. *You have forgotten God.* When charged of such a thing, it is not possible to say that you could not have forgotten Him, for you don't remember a thing. A thin defense!

I am bringing you a subpoena; you must now appear in the court of God's justice. You must answer for yourself in this covenant lawsuit. Here is that of which your Lord and God accuses you — Your fathers said they would remember Him, and they did. Their sons said they would remember Him, and *they did not*. And you, *their* sons, continue their faithlessness. You are faithful in only one thing and that is in your faithlessness.

The Lord was once in your midst, blessing and keeping you. He delighted to honor and bless; He was once in your streets, and corridors, and halls. But you have forgotten and forsaken Him — for the sake of cisterns which hold no water.

But though you are faithless, He is not. Though you have been whoring after other gods, He remains faithful. And because He is faithful, He will have you back. I do not mean that He is willing to have you back, although that is quite true. I mean that He *will* have you back. What you have taken you have no right to keep; what you have stolen shall be returned to Him. What you have taken you have no strength to keep; your arms are too short to hold Him at bay.

The Lord Christ was lifted up from the earth; He said that this would draw all men to Himself. This He has been doing and will continue to do. And what is the power which draws? It is the proclamation I set before you today — the proclamation of the cross. Because He suffered, and bled, and died, and rose, all according to the Scriptures, the covenant will be restored. I do not know about you as an individual — you may fall under His

curse as one of the faithless. There have been many such before you. But because the Lord Christ suffered, He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. And He will be satisfied *here*. Here, on this soil, in this place.

The prophet tells us that the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. This place is not a mountaintop — this place will be covered like the rest. But more than that, this place was once covered. This nation once served the Lord. Ah, you say, that was another time. Yes, it was — they were faithful. And in their faithfulness, they made a commitment to Almighty God, and their commitment was made in *your name*. They obligated you to serve the Lord. Now, do you? I know, you do not. That is why I am here today. The Lord Christ has purchased His people in this place, and its inhabitants once walked in that redemption. But the redemption has not lost its power. The covenant your fathers made with Him, on the basis of His precious blood, is not a covenant which was buried with them.

The covenant *lives*. You may die, but the covenant lives. The Lord Christ lives — He is seated at the right hand of the Father — and He remembers what your fathers said you would do. Do you think the hundreds of years that have passed make any difference to *Him*? The covenant stands, and its words are terrible to you who are disobedient.

What will you do with this? What *must* you do with this? You must repent of your sins, all of you, and you must believe on the Lord Christ, and trust yourself to the merit of His sacrifice. And having done this, *you must renew the covenant.* Δ

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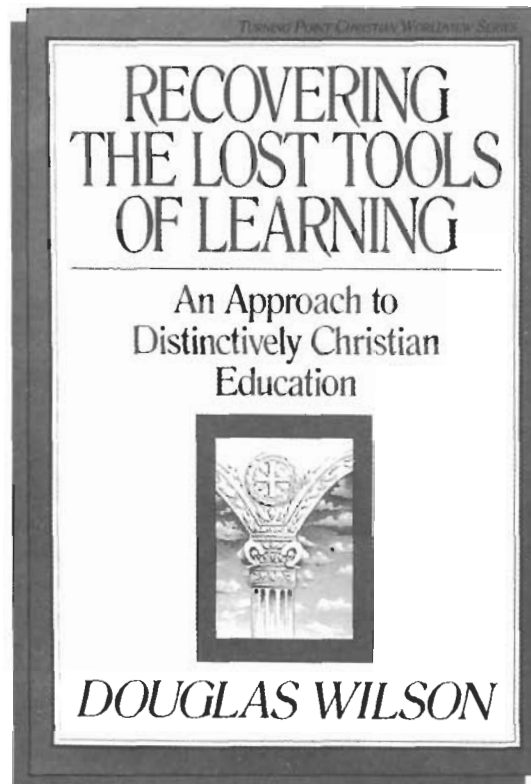
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# For the Record

*This regular feature is an attempt to provide an elementary Biblical analysis of various topics in Christian theology and practice. We anticipate that this and future contributions will be helpful in explaining fundamental theological issues to those who may be relatively unfamiliar with them.*

## Worthy Participation in the Lord's Supper

James Bordwine

Most contemporary Christians could not begin to understand the motivation behind the great historical debates on the subject of the sacraments. Men have been abused, condemned and even executed for the convictions they held regarding this doctrine. The modern Church has shamefully neglected the sacraments. She has become preoccupied with programs and numbers; she has not taught her children the significance of these means of grace. And the Bride of the Savior is suffering.

One aspect of the overall Biblical teaching on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper concerns how believers ought to prepare themselves for participating in the Lord's Supper. Though this type of question is sadly ignored in contemporary evangelical Christianity, earlier Protestants recognized the Biblical importance of the topic. In the *Westminster Confession of Faith's* summary of the Biblical teaching of the Lord's Supper (29:8), we read the following comment on worthy participation:

*Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but, by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.*

The condition of a man's heart determines how he receives the sacrament. Those who are of the household of God, who have been regenerated by the working of the Holy Spirit, are able to receive the elements of this sacrament by faith, thereby having communicated to them that grace which is therein represented. The ungodly, on the other hand, receive only the elements themselves and, in the absence of faith, cannot commune with Christ. This does not make the sacrament of no significance to them, however. Those who participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner are "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation."

### Scripture on Worthy Participation

Consider the teaching of Paul in I Corinthians 11 so that we might better understand this concept of worthy reception:

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly (vv. 27-29).

Here, Paul describes the possibility of taking part in the sacrament in such a manner as to incur guilt — "an unworthy manner." There is more involved in rightly participating in this service than simply being there and eating the elements. The spiritual state of the one receiving the bread and wine can, apparently, have a negative impact on the proceedings.

Throughout the Bible, the attitude or true condition of the heart is held up as supremely important in matters involving man's relation to God. The Old and New Testaments teach that what a man says or does is important, but it is not nearly as significant as what he is inside. It is the soul, or heart, which must be pure. So in the observance of this sacrament, Paul teaches that one's heart-attitude is paramount.

We can identify the "unworthy manner" by considering the "Therefore" which introduces this verse. This word points us back to what Paul has just stated concerning the sacrament. Whatever mistake may be made, it is tied to what has been said concerning the meaning of the sacrament. He has taught that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is, in part, intended to remind believers of their union with Christ and with one another. The sacrament relates the fact that believers are not just so many individuals coming together to eat, but are each members of the one, united body of Jesus Christ. When the apostle says that one may partake of the sacrament in an unworthy manner, therefore, he obviously has in mind one who would come to the Table of the Lord, receive the elements of the Supper, but not be properly aware of the symbolism, meaning, or significance of the very ritual in which he participates.

To receive the Supper unworthily is to receive it without understanding its meaning; it is to eat of the body and blood of Christ ignorantly. Discernment is required of those who come to the Lord's table; they are required to know what is taking place; they must comprehend what Christ's sacrificial death means to the believer and to the Church. If we participate in the Lord's Supper but fail to understand the meaning of the sacrament, then we participate in an "unworthy manner." To partake unworthily is to treat the Lord's Table like an ordinary table; to see no spiritual truth in what is taking place. This will always be true, by default, of unbelievers. It can also be true, however, of undiscerning believers.

### Guarding Our Participation

In order to apply this teaching, we should remember Paul's criticism of the Corinthians earlier. When they came to the Lord's Table,

they rushed and pushed, made sure they were fed and gave little or no attention to their brothers in Christ. Some were receiving the sacrament unworthily because they were failing to demonstrate its meaning in their conduct. Instead of love and concern for one another, some of the Corinthians were busily accommodating their own stomachs.

Due to the way in which we celebrate this sacrament in the modern Church, there is no danger of our behaving like the Corinthians; at least not exactly like the Corinthians. We can't imitate them outwardly, but we can easily duplicate the state of their hearts. We have to be careful that we sufficiently contemplate the sacrament to see all of its implications. We sit in the midst of dozens of others, many of whom are part of the great and glorious body of Christ. We cannot, we must not, fail to let the sacrament of the Lord's Supper speak to us about the unity and preciousness of that body. Only by the recognition of and meditation on the great truths contained in the sacrament do we rightly partake of it.

The *Larger Catechism* can help us at this point:

Question 171: How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?

Answer: They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, for their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayers.

To rightly participate in this sacrament, we must be certain that we are in Christ; meditate on its meaning; think of our Christian conduct and determine to improve in areas of weakness; be in an attitude of forgiveness toward those who have wronged us; and we must pray.

Perhaps it sounds as if we must be nearly perfect before we re-

ceive the elements of the Supper. To this concern, the *Larger Catechism* says: "One who doubts of his being in Christ, or of his due preparation to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, may have true interest in Christ, though he be not yet assured thereof; .... He is to bewail his unbelief, and labor to have his doubts resolved; and, so doing, he may and ought to come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be further strengthened" (Q. 176).

This truth is an important aspect of the theology of the Lord's Supper. We must not downplay the fact that this sacrament is able to strengthen the weak and suffering soul.

### Consequences of Unworthy Participation

The second phrase of I Corinthians 11:27 gives the result of partaking of the sacrament in an unworthy manner: one becomes guilty "of the body and blood of the Lord." This means that one stands in the place of those who crucified the Savior. In failing to recognize the significance of the sacrificial death of Christ, as portrayed in the sacrament, the sinner behaves as a scorner and transgressor (v.28).

Paul warns that judgment awaits the one who does not heed his warning in this letter (v. 29). The one who comes to the Table and does not rightly comprehend the basic truths of the sacrament "eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly." That which is intended for good becomes a cause of wrath. The one who fails to understand that this sacrament speaks of the unified nature of the Church of Christ and who, therefore, is missing the point of this observance, is partaking of it unworthily. He has not rightly comprehended the body of Christ nor, by way of implication, has he understood his place and responsibility in that body.

We should note two significant points in Paul's discussion: first, the time for preparation or self-examination, whatever that might involve, is before the sacrament is taken; second, the responsibility for this preparation rests primarily upon the recipient.

This is not to say that the worshiper alone is responsible for his state when receiving the sacrament. We see Paul acting as an instructor to

the Corinthians in this context. As the Church developed, the officers naturally assumed a role in this procedure. Ministers and elders took up the task of teaching the people as the Church became more organized and could devote its time to regular preaching and training. They informed the people in all areas of Christian conduct; especially in the matter of the Lord's Supper where a proper understanding of its basic meaning is essential. This Biblical practice continues today (although the degree of the involvement of the minister and/or elders varies from one church/denomination to the next).

### Fencing the Lord's Table

According to its nature, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not to be offered indiscriminately. It is intended for those who have cause and ability to commemorate the sacrificial death of the Savior. Therefore, the Church is obligated to protect the integrity of this sacrament by making it available to discerning believers only. This care is exercised by the Church, to whom the sacraments were given, in two ways. First, by the right preaching and teaching of the word, the minister and elders instruct their congregation regarding the meaning of the Lord's Supper and set down the guidelines for participation. Second, through the exercise of discipline, the elders uphold the teaching of the Bible so that, as nearly as is possible, only those who are entitled to the sacrament receive it. This protection of the Table is not optional. We must remember that Paul introduced the factor of judgment in the above discussion. The potential for divine retribution for the abuse of this sacrament should be more than sufficient to convince us that some method of supervision is mandatory.

Modern evangelicalism minimizes Scripture's clear and precious teaching regarding the Lord's Supper and, therefore, does not even consider questions regarding worthy participation. According to Scripture, we ignore such teaching to our own peril. Δ

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# Journal Journal

David Hall

*With this opening installment of "Journal Journal," we welcome David Hall as a new Contributing Editor of Antithesis. In this new feature, David Hall briefly summarizes and comments on various contemporary theological essays appearing in a spectrum of journals in order to provide a brief resource for continuing study and to update readers on current developments.*

**"Straddling Modernism and Postmodernism" by Leonard I. Sweet; *Theology Today*, July 1990, vol. XLVII, no. 2 (Princeton Theo. Sem.)**

This article may be up for article of the year, despite its liberal environment! In it, Sweet sees both of the major contemporary currents of theology as out-of-touch with the church. Quick to turn a phrase (e.g. Sweet refers to "'the killer Bs' — Allan Bloom and William Bennett" — p. 161), Sweet excoriates the agnostic heart of deconstructionism in this manner: "...in spite of all the anti-foundationalist critiques of reason and the barbarism of rationalism, process theologians prove to be some of the staunchest defenders and practitioners of the agnostic, agonistic nature of the scientific method" (p. 161). After exposing "a hermetic elitism" (p. 162) of the process theologians, Sweet criticizes that the, "incredulous insularity that leads John Cobb and Joseph Hough to 'call on Christians to give up Christocentrism' at the same time they advocate locating theological education wholly within the realm of the church" betrays "just how remote from the pew, process thought has built its bridges to the culture. The only more blatant irrelevance that comes to mind is the march toward Marxism-Leninism by the darlings of the Western church (liberation theologians) and the academic darlings of the Western university (Marxist scholars). This procession is unforgettable. For crossing the bridge going the other way was another liberation march — the whole geo-political world of communism in stampede from Marxism-Leninism, led by members of the Eastern church. Marxism has been moribund for years. The last to know it were the Western church and academy" (p. 163).

Further, Sweet views the "conjunctive theologies" (similar to 'hyphenated-theologies', e.g., feminist-theology, or liberation-theology) as the final stage of theological degeneration, and exposes deconstructionism's philosophic root as follows: "Mark C.

Taylor upholding and John D. Caputo notwithstanding, we have been down this road before, in a different vehicle. The model and make was then known as 'death of God' theology. Deconstruction is one of the most blatantly atheistic theologies produced by the modern era" (p. 163). Sweet prophesies, "God only knows what to say about a theology which...is distinguished by its beliefs that nothing can be known for certain; that there is nothing outside the text, and the text breaks apart in one's hands until one is left holding emptiness; that every subject is dead or a bad metaphysical joke; that meaning is undecidable, indecipherable, and indeterminate; and that ideas of religious revelation are ludicrous" (p. 164). In his concluding paragraph, Sweet observes, "the modern era is undergoing collapse and disintegration; its wounds mortal; its illness, terminal....The church's intelligentsia, confused and dispirited, is in no position to do much about these destructive forces" (p. 1). This is an article to read, an example of a truly self-critical approach. It moves us to pray that all theologians will take an honest inventory of their adopted philosophies of ministry. It also dissects for us the latest theological fad — deconstructionism.

**"Sex Education and The Biblical Christian" by James L. Fletcher, Jr, M.D.; *The Journal Of Biblical Ethics in Medicine*, Spring 1990, vol 4, no. 2**

In a long overdue article, the Christian Pastor and Counselor can now have at his fingertips a concise rebuttal to the safe-sex myth (cf. also the recent editorial by Dr. Robert C. Noble in the April 1, 1991 *Newsweek* [p. 8] for a secular rendition.). In this article, Dr. Fletcher first argues that secular sex-education between 1960 and 1980, rather than preventing unwanted pregnancies, served to increase those by 500%. He calls on physicians as *doctores* to teach as their Latin moniker implies. In treating the casualties of the Sexual Revolution, it is important for the Christian physician to know both that (1) safe-sex education "has produced little or no effect on sexual activity" (p. 23), and that (2) safe-sex typically harbors no moral repugnance toward induced abortion, the ultimate back-up" (p. 23).

In the second part of this article, Fletcher presents empirical data showing that School Based clinics and other so-called safe-sex techniques have not proven effective in reducing unwanted pregnancies or STD's. He also recommends several good abstinence-based curricula, and reminds the Christian physician (and Pastor) that "the ideologies at war, despite the misunderstanding of some Christians, are mutually exclusive: We may hardly deliver a lasting lesson on chastity when it is followed by a condom-on-a-zucchini demonstration" (p. 26). In conclusion, he implores, "We remonstrate about tobacco and cholesterol, why not about promiscuity?" (p. 27). This is a well-documented article, with no unnecessary verbiage. It should be read by all. Share this one with a Doctor in your congregation. It even has the makings for a good sermon or two. These are the kinds of articles for which this journal is becoming known.

**"Church-Related Software and Hardware" by J. Ralph Hardee; *Review and Expositor*, Spring 1990, vol. 87, no. 2**

This article, with three appendices ("Church Administration Software", "Church Computing Resources", and "Glossary"), is an excellent and state of the art summation. It is one of the best bibliographies on ecclesio-computing I've seen. The first appendix lists suppliers and their basic products, while the second is an annotated bibliography. This is a worthwhile article to copy and save (or is it Flush Right and Merge?).

**"Dr. John Stott on Hell" by Robert L. Reymond; *Presbiterion*, Spring 1990, vol XVI, no. 1**

In a much needed response to Stott's recent apology for annihilationism, Dr. Reymond (now at Knox Theo. Sem.) answers Stott's plea for dialogue on this subject. Nonetheless, one realizes that Stott probably didn't want this kind of dialogue. Reymond seeks to rebut Stott's arguments point-by-point. This is a helpful article for those wading through this issue and could be adapted for a good adult Sunday School discussion on a number of related matters.

There is also an interesting, if brief response from Stott in the Fall, 1990 issue of *Presbiterion* (vol. XVI, no. 2). One can see in that response that Stott has received Reymond's criticism, yet is still unconvinced. Instead, Stott pleads for a recognition of the diversity of possible interpretations, and begs "that biblical Christians should not dogmatise here, but allow some flexibility of interpretation" (p. 128). Too bad.

Also this issue of the newly-improved *Presbiterion* contains several Short Contributions which are quickly read, and helpful. In addition, a spiffed up Book Review Section makes this journal much improved.

In *Presbiterion* Fall, 1990 are two outstanding models of exegetical artistry. The first article which I'd recommend is **"Who Are 'The Rich' in James"** by George Stulac. This pastor exhibits the skills of an exegete as he provides a fine study on the 'rich' in James, an extract of his forthcoming commentary on James on the IVP label. Stulac summarizes the linguistic, historical, literary, and canonical factors well, with a nice concluding section on application.

Another article which is even better is Ron Lutjens' **"You Do Not Do What You Want: What Does Galatians 5:17 Really Mean?"** In this survey of interpretations, ranging from Augustine, to Luther, to Hans Dieter-Betz, Lutjens shows his mastery of the history of the hermeneutic of this passage, as well as superior exegetical skill. All this from a Pastor, combines to yield an article which is both comprehensive and original. This is exegesis from the Reformed tradition at its best! It is hoped that this journal will continue to offer superior exegetical articles like these (Subscription for this semi-annual journal is \$6.00).

One more article to consult or copy from this journal is Prof. Robert Peterson's **"Perseverance and Apostasy: A Bibliographic Essay"**. In this short article, Peterson provides helpful resources on these subjects from popular, historical, exegetical, and theological perspectives -- nice to have available.

**"Has Lordship Salvation Been Taught Throughout Church History?" by Thomas G. Lewellen; *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan-Mar 1990, vol. 147, no. 585**

This article is a must for the contemporary pastor, because it contains so many defenses of error! In yet another response to J. MacArthur's last book, Lewellen argues that "Lordship salvation" as opposed to free (read: without commitment) salvation has not been taught throughout history. And he picks the worst possible pillars from history upon which to buttress his argument. Of all people, Lewellen chooses Luther, Calvin, and Augustine to agree with him. His revisionist (and poorly researched) history seeks to place a wedge between ancient and modern Calvinists. History will not support this. One wants to ask: "Has historiography ever been taught throughout certain Seminary's Church History departments?"

The "non-Lordship" view (a more honest term), Lewellen contends, was held by Augustine (based on a singular out-of-context quote — "Faith, to Augustine, was simply mental assent to understood propositions, and nothing more" — p. 56), and Calvin, whom Lewellen thoroughly misunderstands. You've got to read this to believe it! The only legitimate support for the non-Lordship view comes from Lutherans, who share a few aspects of the creedal position of DTS on the Law. Lewellen blames the Puritans for creating the Lordship view, and cites the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as a prime example of such. He at least gets it right that the WCF teaches Lordship salvation. He also cites Dabney out of context to make him appear to disagree with Calvin on this basic issue.

Most distressing is his distortion of Calvin (as seen in the following). While citing Calvin as viewing faith as "something merely passive" (p. 56), Lewellen rejects Calvin's own thesis that "The one coming to Christ does absolutely nothing" (p. 57), because this history does not fit with Lewellen's theory. When comparing J. MacArthur's recent agreement with the Westminster standards on this subject, Lewellen, thinks that MacArthur is more of a Westminster advocate than was John Calvin "who disagreed with it" (p. 59).

The historical errors abound in this article. The author seems so intent on buttressing his novel theory that he distorts the works of Augustine, Calvin, Dabney, Packer and most of our other Reformed forefathers in the faith — quite an accomplishment for one short article. Yet the article is a must read due to its centrality at the heart of our faith, sanctification, and in view of the esteem for the author and his theological community. This would be a good article to reproduce for an adult Sunday School class or for a group of Elders to hone their theological skills. Read it, but don't believe it!

**"And It Came To Pass: The Bible as God's Storybook" by Leland Ryken; *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April-June 1990, vol. 147, no. 586**

In this, the second of four parts of the 1989 Griffith-Thomas Lecture at DTS, Ryken continues his development of the possibilities for evangelicals using narrative theology. In this article, he suggests that we might see the Bible as a whole better, if we looked at it as

a literary piece connected by essentially literary features, e.g. central plot with conflict, interaction among characters, dialogue from the characters, focus on the choices of those characters, as well as, elements of suspense, surprise, and discovery present in stories. Further Ryken urges preachers to be sensitive to the unity and coherence of plot-lines, protagonist vs. antagonist motifs, and concrete experiences of the characters. Championing narratology as "the best possible organizing framework for individual parts of the Bible" (p. 133), Ryken is adroit at challenging us to be more sensitive to literary features, to be more extensive in developing settings, and to focus on characters as "in some sense universal" (p. 135). He also pleads for us to retain the distinctiveness of Biblical narrative, including the factual realism and marvelous romantic tendency. "Most distinctive of all," he says, "is the regularity with which God is a character in the stories" (p. 140). Finally Ryken encourages us to see our own "story-telling" as the most essential witness, and urges us to develop more story-tellers, who will tell the good story. This is another challenging article, which deserves to be read, as well as criticized. Yet, it has much of value for the Pastor.

Also, in the subsequent issue of **Bibliotheca Sacra**, July-Sept. 1990, vol. 147, no. 587 is the sequel. "I Have Used Similitudes: The Poetry of the Bible" by Leland Ryken is the 3rd installment of the 1989 Griffith-Thomas Lectures at Dallas Seminary. In this one, Ryken explores the dynamics and prevalence of poetry as a Scriptural genre. He even estimates that the Bible is at least 1/3 poetry. He sees the essence of this poetry, not so much in the parallelism alone, as in the imaging, employment of metaphor, and other figurative concepts. This part concludes with a section on "Implications for Preaching and Teaching," but it is the weakest in the series so far.

**"Presbyterians in the South, Centralization, and the Book of Church Order, 1861-1879" by Jack Maddex; Journal of Presbyterian History, Spring 1990, vol. 68, no. 1**

This is a superb article for the Pastor or Elder interested in the development of the Southern Presbyterian government. Spawned by the Civil War, along with the unique cultural factors at work during that era, the PCCSA was immediately faced with the creation of its constitution. This article by a Thornwell expert (at the Univ. of Oregon) explores the evolution of Thornwellian concepts as they survived the pressures of Reconstruction in the mid-19th century. Maddex is a most competent historian who includes a phenomenal set of footnotes. These are the most exhaustive footnotes, I've ever seen for one article (214 footnotes)! His thesis is that despite Thornwell's legacy of decentralization in Southern Presbyterianism, Thornwell really advocated a large measure of centralization in the beginning. The final result of the 1879 *Book of Church Order* was far different from Thornwell's original proposals in 1861. The fears, cultural distrust of Reconstruction, and exigencies of the post-civil war economy forced the Southern Presbyterian church into far more decentralization than Thornwell originally wanted. For all who desire a better understanding of the antecedent of modern southern Presbyterianisms, this article is central for a better understanding of such roots. It is written by a sensitive and realistic historian, who seems to have sniffed out the real plots, often obscured by reverence for tradition.

In fine, visit your local library, or subscribe to a few good journals, and save yourself a lot of time by benefitting from OPR ("Other People's Research"). Δ

*Rev. David W. Hall is Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Oak Ridge, TN. He has contributed to various theological journals and is Editor of The Presbyterian's Review, a digest of theological journals.*

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# Book Review

## *Gratitude: Reflections on What We Owe to Our Country*

by William F. Buckley, Jr.

Random House, 1990, 165 pages, \$16.95

Reviewed by Douglas Wilson

During my high school years, I lived in Ann Arbor, which was then being roiled by the turbulence we are now pleased to call "the sixties." An instinctive conservative, I was thoroughly and completely out of step with my peers. In this condition, I wandered one day into a bookstore and picked up a copy of *Up From Liberalism* by William F. Buckley, Jr. That marked the birth of my self-conscious conservatism; it is fitting that in reviewing *Gratitude*, by the same author, I should preface my criticism by acknowledging my deep gratitude to him. It is a gratitude untouched by my disappointment in the book under review — which disappointment is considerable, but then, so is the gratitude.

There are a number of confusions in the book which warrant mention. But first, a summary of Buckley's thesis: The book is an apology for national service. Buckley's proposed version would involve one year of service, directed and funded by the various states, with the federal government providing overall guidelines, along with various sanctions and inducements. As Buckley sees it, the service should not be conscripted, but neither should the government remain neutral on whether or not service is rendered. An example of one of his suggested sanctions is the refusal to grant a driver's license to one who had not spent a year in national service.

R.L. Dabney once spoke of the impotence of Yankee conservatism — he said it was simply the shadow that follows radicalism to perdition. Each innovation is opposed by the conservatives, but after enough time has passed, the conservatives take their stand on that innovation in order to oppose (unsuccessfully) the next one. Consider Buckley's argument for the constitutionality of his proposal in the light of Dabney's observation.

"If, under the Constitution, states can require students to attend schools, and if local boards can specify the curriculum of those schools, then it would seem merely an extension of this gestational authority of the state over the aspirant citizen to impose such other training as the state, which is the agent of its citizenry, deems necessary fully to qualify him as a fellow member" (p. 112). The observation is valid enough. If the government has the authority to keep you in Cell Block D for twelve years, surely

**Each innovation is opposed by the conservatives, but after enough time has passed, the conservatives take their stand on that innovation in order to oppose (unsuccessfully) the next one.**

they have the authority to transfer you to Cell Block E for one year. But validity is not the point here. The question is whether a national conservative spokesman should be using one form of statist tyranny (public schools) as an argument for establishing another form of statist tyranny.

Is the word *tyranny* too strong? I don't think so. But since the word has been used, it is important to make a comment about the theme of gratitude that is central to Buckley's argument. All of us, like Buckley, are very grateful for the freedoms we enjoy. But we should be grateful to God for them — He being the One who gives them. We should all love our country, but it does not earn this love by discharging its obligation before God to protect its citizenry. We must love our country in spite of the fact that its leaders are currently doing a very poor job as God's ministers. This is a difference over the nature of the gratitude we should have. A free man should be grateful to God that his fellow creatures (including the state)

respect his dignity to whatever degree they do. This is quite different from the servile gratitude of a slave, happy that his master has finished the beating — for now.

Buckley quotes, with approval, John Stuart Mill's contention that "every one who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit..." (p. 18). In contrast to this kind of thinking, I would maintain that I have a duty to God to honor the emperor, and that the emperor has a duty to God to administer justice.

There are practical, economic problems with the proposal as well. On page 20, he states: "What we have in mind is a program that seeks to meet needs undefined, or ill-defined, by the market, while inculcating a prime sense of citizenship among participants." When the government gets involved with things which have a quantifiable market price, we all know what kind of job it does. Just imagine the horrors that would be inflicted upon us if the government assumed the role of trafficking in things "undefined, or ill-defined" by the market. Here is a suitable thought experiment. Let's put the Post Office in charge of delivering truth, beauty, and the noumenal — which is crazy, but comparable to putting the National Service in charge of gratitude. Those struggling in kindergarten ought not to be thinking about graduate school.

Buckley argues the program is needed to shape a national ethos. We need to remember that America once had a national ethos of individual liberty and responsibility, which has been largely eroded by statism. More statism will give us an ethos alright, but one quite different from what we had before. It most certainly will not restore the old ethos.

The book serves as a useful reminder of one other thing. Students of history know that conservative Roman Catholicism is not the most conducive soil for growing liberty for individuals. William Buckley is a gentleman, and a patriot. But like all of us, he does think in terms of his world view, which in this case is dangerous. Δ

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Douglas Wilson is a Contributing Editor of *Antithesis*.

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**“In my classes at Harvard,  
the answer is always more  
government. But not at the  
Mises University!”** —*Liam Ford, Harvard University*



*Ludwig von Mises, 1881 - 1973*

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### **Faculty**

Murray N. Rothbard  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Robert Batemarco  
*Marymount College*

Walter Block  
*Fraser Institute*

Roy E. Cordato  
*Institute for Research on the  
Economics of Taxation*

Thomas DiLorenzo  
*University of Tennessee,  
Chattanooga*

John Egger  
*Towson State University*

Roger Garrison  
*Auburn University*

David Gordon  
*Ludwig von Mises Institute*

Jeffrey Herbener  
*Washington & Jefferson College*

Robert Higgs  
*Seattle University*

Hans-Hermann Hoppe  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Yuri N. Maltsev  
*formerly at the University of  
Marxism-Leninism, Moscow*

Sheldon Richman  
*Institute for Humane Studies*

Llewellyn H. Rockwell  
*Ludwig von Mises Institute*

Joseph Salerno  
*Pace University*

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*And new this year is . . .*

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# Novelty, Nonsense, and Non-Sequiturs

## Taxes Pay for Brilliance

Following the little publicized April launching of ten pipe bombs onto the Internal Revenue Service center in Fresno, California, the local chief of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms concluded from his investigation that,

"I think you can assume it is some kind of message to the I.R.S.," Mr. Vizzard said. "What we're looking at is someone who possibly doesn't like the I.R.S."

Not to be outdone, Robert Tobias, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents I.R.S. workers, said that the bombings, "show how the social and political acceptance of I.R.S.-bashing has helped tip the unbalanced to acts of violence." — *The New York Times*.

## Caring Mothers Against Live Babies

*TVTimes* recently revealed the reasoning behind TNT's decision to cast actress Cybil Shepherd in the adventure movie "Which Way Home," about an American nurse whose maternal instincts lead her to rescue seven orphans from upheaval in Southeast Asia. Producer Hal McElroy explained,

"I suggested Cybil Shepherd to [TNT]," he said. "Hers was a name that came up really early. I was aware, but not as much as I am now, of her pro-abortion activities and that she was a career mother. She's ideal because she's a mother, and she's politically committed."

## Political Berlitz

In "Turning a Phrase," Economist Thomas Sowell offers the following glossary of contemporary political/media terms of note:

- "Compassion" = Use of tax dollars to buy votes
- "Insensitivity" = Objection to the use of tax dollars to buy votes
- "Demonstration" = A riot by people you agree with
- "Mob Violence" = A riot by people you disagree with
- "A Matter of Principle" = A political controversy involving the convictions of liberals
- "An Emotional Issue" = A political controversy involving the convictions of conservatives
- "Funding" = Money from the government
- "Commitment" = More money from the government
- "Proud People" = Chauvinists you like
- "Bigots" = Chauvinists you don't like

## Battle Hymn of the Emirate

After the Gulf War ended, P.J. O'Rourke reported in *Rolling Stone* that,

The only Iraqi jokes I've heard, I've heard on the telephone from back home. As a matter of fact, there's only one war joke going around in Saudi Arabia:

What's the name of the Saudi national anthem?  
"Onward, Christian Soldiers."

## Prooftexts are So Inhibiting

When a special committee of the Presbyterian Church United States, Apostate (PCUSA) recommended that "gays and lesbians be received and accepted as full participant members in the life of the church" and that "any sexual relations in which there is genuine equality and mutual respect" ought not to be automatically condemned, the Associated Press described the committee as,

"affirming Scriptural authority, but says it is viewed in varying ways and there has been a shift away from 'prooftexting' specific passages to emphasizing broad themes."

## Missing the Big Sale

Prophecy salesman Hal Lindsey, whose upcoming best seller didn't make it out before the Gulf War, noted,

"I lament this rushing to get books out, capitalizing on the moment as if we're in the period of Armageddon," he said. "If they're clarifying, that's one thing, but some seem to be kind of exploitive."

Lindsey, not one to miss out on a sales trend, also explained, "The Lord is going to have to completely regenerate the ecology after that war."

## Child Abuse as a Private Matter

*The New York Times* summarized the growing trend of parents who allow their teen-agers to engage in sex at home:

Allowing sex at home is a way of protecting their children. If teen-agers are sexually active, the parents reason, they are better off at home than in a place that might not be safe.

"It's not that I think it's wonderful," said a mother of a 17-year-old son in a Chicago suburb. "But I don't want my son and his girl friend hiding in basements or the back seat of a car, getting mugged. I feel better knowing where my child is, so I decided that his room is his territory, his privacy."

*We invite readers to submit items for this feature and offer our thanks to those readers who contributed to this installment.*

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