

# Godzilla Meets the Pluralists

By Roger Schultz and T.E. Wilder

*Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism*, by Gary North (Tyler Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989) xxiv, 773 pages, index.

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Gary North once compared a devastating theological exchange to the cartoon “Bambi Meets Godzilla” which showed Bambi skipping through the woods, only to be crushed by a huge reptilian foot. In *Political Polytheism* North himself assumes the Godzilla mantle and proceeds to crush all pluralists and compromisers, from the framers of the American Constitution to Cornelius Van Til and Francis Schaeffer to contemporary neo-evangelical historians. The book, part of the dialogue on Christian approaches to civil government inspired by *God and Politics* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1989), offers a no-holds-barred covenantal and theocratic formula for America.

Subtitled “The Myth of Pluralism”, *Political Polytheism* argues that pluralism is an illusion, since there can be no neutral ground. Implicit in the argument is the assumption that all relationships, including political ones, are religious, built upon a theological and covenantal foundation. The United States, for example, ostensibly pluralist, does not allow polygamy, child sacrifice, or cannibalism, all religious practices. Nor does it allow Bob Jones University tax exempt status as a legitimate religious entity (even though a Rhode Island witch coven has this status). Since absolute political neutrality in religious affairs is impossible, North argues that pure pluralism is a fiction.

An interesting part of this discussion is the treatment of Roman Catholic libertarian Michael Novak and Lutheran theologian Richard John Neuhaus, both advocates of pluralism, who are popular with conservative Christians. North argues that pluralistic arguments are rooted in a compromised form of theology—a “halfway covenantalism”. Halfway covenant thinking rises from biblical interpretations which divide Old Covenant Israel from the New Covenant nations in such a way that God's Old Covenant pattern of law and sanctions in dealing with His people is no longer in force. (p. 121) In essence, then, halfway covenant theologies are anti-theonomic, denying the validity of God's law and of His covenantal government of nations. North's assault on halfway covenant thinking takes two forms; he criticizes the views of notable advocates of pluralism within and without the church, and he gives a hostile historical account of the establishment of pluralism in America. Arguing that “Halfway covenant” compromises do not work, North

argues for truly biblical civil and ecclesiastical covenants.

## **Biblical Covenantalism**

The foundation for these covenants and the focus of the first section of the book, “Biblical Covenantalism”, is the biblical model of the covenant. Anyone familiar with North's recent publications knows of his five point model of the covenant: 1) Transcendence, yet presence of God, 2) Hierarchy of representation and administration whereby the covenant head represents the community before God and acts as God's authority over it, 3) Ethics, or the terms of the covenant, 4) Sanctions, positive and negative, (called Oath for the acronym THEOS), which are the rewards for abiding by the covenant or the punishments for violating it, and 5) Succession, how the covenant passes on to its heirs. By applying this formula to three covenant institutions: the Church, the family, and the State (the most controversial of the three), North presents a “seamless garment” approach to Christian Reconstruction, producing an integrated soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology that is explicitly Calvinistic, covenantal, and postmillennial. It should be noted, however, that the five-point covenant model which North uses as the standard for reforming society and criticizing past generations is only four years old and is not even accepted by all theologians (Bahnsen, for instance, rejects it).

To bring the United States into conformity with the biblical covenant, North proposes that a national covenant be added to the Constitution. The covenant would recognize God's ultimate sovereignty over the nation, confess the people's subordination to God through their civil rulers, mandate the Bible as the basic law of the land, and proscribe a trinitarian, covenantal oath for civil magistrates. This religious test oath, administered by many states in the colonial period but specifically abolished under the federal constitution, is the critical component of North's vision for national reform.

Following an Old Testament precedent, North outlines a two-tiered society revolving around the test oath. The United States, like Israel of old, he argues, should be a haven and sanctuary for all immigrants, because the state should be as open as the Church. Profession of Christianity and membership in a church, however, would be a prerequisite for citizenship and the right to vote. North notes that a “stranger” in Israel was not allowed to become a civil judge until he was circumcised, became a member of the ecclesiastical congregation, and formally swore allegiance to God, demonstrating that he acknowledged that he was under God's eternal covenant. All citizens and magistrates, then, were under dual authority: civil and ecclesiastical. North's program for reform is inherently internationalistic and, because of its stress on the covenantal oath alone, seemingly places no value on cultural characteristics or national identity. (Note that virtually the entire population of Latin America would be eligible for immediate U.S. citizenship.) It is necessary to stress this since opponents of Christian Reconstruction have misconstrued the movement as nationalistic and fascist. On the other hand, why should we wish to see America remade in the image of officially trinitarian Bolivia?

## Missing Answers

North's civil covenantalism may be usefully compared with the views of one of his chief targets, James Madison. In his notes on the establishment controversy in Virginia, Madison argued that a Christian establishment was inherently flawed since the state could not determine what constituted true Christianity. "Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions", Madison explained in his version of the slippery slope, "may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects?" North's civil covenant, using doctrinal standards to admit some and exclude others from political participation, could become increasingly restrictive, exclusive, and arbitrary.

North needs to provide more than an argument for *some* religious test; he must show that the sufficient justification for having the religious test also justifies its specific content. He needs to substantiate the need for a trinitarian oath; that was certainly not required in the Old Covenant, which serves as a model for North. Moreover in some places North proposes the Bible as the basic legal document, so why not an oath upholding the authority of the Bible? Some trinitarians follow sources of authority, such as natural law, which they hold to be coordinate to the Bible, both in ecclesiastical and civil matters. (The United States poses a unique problem in this regard, for it contains numerous sects which affirm the Bible, but deny the Trinity, and many denominations which are trinitarian, but deny biblical infallibility.) Madison argued that the content of religious oaths was problematic; given the importance of such oaths in North's system, he needs to further legitimize his form of civil oath.

We should notice right away a certain parallel between the concept of a *trinitarian* oath and a basic plank of Reformed theology. Reformed churches accept the baptism performed by other churches if it is done in the name of the Trinity. The Reformed hold that baptism is a non-repeatable sign and seal of the covenant and that the doctrine of the Trinity is the standard of the validity of the administration of that sign and seal. Thus in a sense the doctrine of the Trinity forms the ecumenical standard for Reformed theology. It is not really a ecumenical standard in another sense because profession of the doctrine of the Trinity falls far short of what is necessary to secure adult church membership in any Reformed church. In fact, some Presbyterian churches excommunicate their members for merely attending a Roman mass. Can North appeal to Reformed sacramentalism to justify using doctrine of the Trinity as the test for entry to the civil covenant? Not in the minds of the members of the non-sacramental churches. For them profession of the Trinity is an arbitrary standard in the sense that there are lesser (e.g. profession of a Creator Deity) and greater (e.g. the Nicene creed) standards with equal *prima facie* claim to be the threshold of admission to the civil covenant.

For a model North could draw on his belief in a two-tier church membership. Ordinary church members must only make a minimal doctrinal profession and abide by the church discipline. Those admitted to church government (including the congregational vote) have

to meet the test of the full church doctrinal standard. Thus the low doctrinal standard for the civil covenant parallels the low doctrinal standard of the church covenant. (And tithing parallels tax paying as a coordinate requirement.) The advantage of being able consistently to incorporate Reformed standards on the sacraments also accrues to North. So far from solving the problem, however, this raises the issue of the adequacy of a trinitarian test at the ecclesiastical level. A second problem is the need to show why the civil official must meet only the minimal qualifications of the low level church member, the trinitarian oath. Why is not the test for an officer of the civil government parallel to that for church government?

## **Critique of Van Til**

After outlining his “Biblical Covenantalism”, North spends the next section assailing proponents of “Halfway Covenantalism”. Though claiming fealty to Cornelius Van Til, North has been moving steadily away from him in recent years, a process that is not yet complete. A survey of the large number of fat books North has been writing over the years shows the breadth and intensity of his application of Van Til's thought to numerous issues. Given North's remarkable intellectual power and refusal to ignore theological difficulties, any shortcomings in Van Til's thinking in these areas were sure to manifest themselves; North's mental juices were bound to rupture the Vantillian wineskins in time. North sees Van Til as a man who applied a uniquely effective critique to the pretensions of pluralism but who failed to offer a replacement for pluralism in the critical area of the civil covenant.

Evaluating Van Til in terms of the five points of the covenant, North finds him lacking. Van Til was sound on the first point of the covenant, transcendence, because God's absolute sovereignty was at the heart of his method. He partially identified and followed the second and third points, hierarchy and ethics. To the fourth and fifth points, sanctions and continuity, Van Til was hostile, teaching an amillennialism that “denied moral cause and effect in history.” (p. 141) North puts it bluntly: “Van Til, like all non-theonomic amillennialists, had a radically anti-historical concept of covenantal ethics, and this led Van Til, like all non-theonomic amillennialists, into antinomianism.” (p. 138) While denying any area of neutrality where humanism might flourish, Van Til still taught that in society and in history there is a disconnection between God's rules and the concrete results. He tried to justify this disconnection with the doctrine of Common Grace, whereby God somehow nullifies the antitheses between covenant keeping and covenant-breaking. North's summary: “Van Til was a classic victim of intellectual schizophrenia, a schizophrenia produced by his amillennialism. He got point five of the covenant wrong, and points two through four toppled, too.” (p.161).

Although North reads Van Til as a theologian of divine sovereignty, sometimes he appeared to waffle on the first point of the covenant as well. In “The Problem of Theological Paradox”, for example, in a work edited by North, John Frame emphasized

the role of paradox and “apparent contradiction” in Van Til's theology of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on paradox was a major cause of the controversy between Van Til and Gordon Clark over the doctrines of common grace and predestination in the mid-1940s. In *Dominion and Common Grace* North attacked Van Til's concept of common grace and sided with Protestant Reformed theologian Herman Hoeksema.

North then has a problem. He calls himself a disciple of Van Til yet he wants to correct Van Til through Hoeksema's rejection of Common Grace theology. Contrary to what North would like to believe, but as Hoeksema makes clear (“The Text of a Complaint”—A Critique), Van Til's Common Grace message and method is rooted in his treatment of the first point of the covenant, divine sovereignty, in a paradox based dialectic which from there permeates all his thinking.<sup>2</sup>

## Critique of Schaeffer

Frances Schaeffer is next. Though he initially defends him against his neo-evangelical detractors, North criticizes Schaeffer for being inconsistent. In trying to argue with non-Christians on neutral ground, he refused to begin with the Bible as the self-attesting word of God. Silent about theonomy (even though he borrowed extensively from Reconstructionist writers), predestination, infant baptism, his presuppositional roots (he studied under Van Til), and his association with Carl McIntyre's Presbyterians, Schaeffer seemed to conceal his Reformed roots.

Yet North is unduly hard on Schaeffer. In the same way that Van Til claimed to be only an apologist, Schaeffer claimed to be an evangelist. Furthermore, Schaeffer did emphasize the continuing application of God's covenant sanctions in both church and society. Anyone who doubts this should read *Death in the City* for his application of Jeremiah's message to our current situation of apostasy. The rest of North's criticism, that Schaeffer refused to accept theonomy and consequently fell into pluralism, may well be true, but it is hard to complain about Schaeffer's tremendous evangelistic and apologetic legacy.

## Halfway Covenant

In an excellent section on “Halfway Covenant Historiography”, North goes after neo-evangelical historians George Marsden, Mark Noll, and Nathan Hatch. Their book, *Search For A Christian America*, trashed early American Christians because they were inconsistent in living up to twentieth century evangelical standards. They argued that Puritans are poor examples for Christians because they tried to apply the Bible to society rather than create a pluralistic, secular order. North, who is an expert in Puritan history, capably refutes these arguments, shows their origin (there is an fine appendix on the

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1 Gary North, ed., *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective*, (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1979).

2 Published by the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Grandville, Michigan.

influence of H.R. Niebuhr) and paints a compelling picture of Puritan society.

In other areas North does a poorer job with the historians. He borrows the “unChristian America” theme (that Christians in early America were hopelessly compromised) in his own treatment of the American Revolution. He ignores Gary Scott Smith's *Seeds of Secularization*, a major work on pluralism. (North refers to this work, but obviously has not read it. Smith also edited *God and Politics*.) Smith argued that secularization in the United States began when Calvinists tried to dominate the culture. Documenting the rise of the National Reform Association, a broad-based organization (including Charles Hodge) which tried to establish a Christian amendment to the Constitution, Smith argued that “they confused Old Testament theocracy with the pluralistic pattern of civil government taught by the New Testament”. North could have vastly improved P.P. by discussing the N.R.A. and Smith's challenging, if dubious, thesis. North's treatment of modern evangelical historians is perceptive but limited.

## **Hobbyhorses**

*Political Polytheism's* third section, on “Apostate Covenantalism”, attacks the framers of the U.S. Constitution. According to North, fascination with Newtonian deism, natural law and Great Awakening enthusiasm seriously eroded America's covenantal foundation in the eighteenth century. Ultimately the revolutionary leaders, products of this decline, deliberately conspired to de-christianize America by creating a Constitution that was an “atheistic, humanistic covenant” (emphasis North's). They substituted a pluralistic, deistic, Masonic, and Unitarian religion for biblical Christianity. In the same way that Charles Beard offered a revolutionary interpretation of the Constitution, North breaks new ground with a radical, covenantal-based interpretation of the Constitution and its framers.

North marshals some excellent evidence for his thesis on the changes in America and the Constitutional “coup”. Most helpful is the discussion of the religious oaths (central to the argument of P.P.) which, though required in most states, were specifically abandoned under the federal constitution. North further argues that the doctrine of popular sovereignty, seen in “we the people”, shows how the Constitution created a new, autonomous and transcendent authority for the nation. North also includes interesting sketches of the framers' religious convictions; Washington (a Mason), for example, deliberately avoided taking communion. Ominous warnings about the statist and humanistic direction of the new Constitution by the anti-federalists, most notably Patrick Henry, who “smelled a rat in Philadelphia”, help make North's case.

Unfortunately, “Apostate Covenantalism” has many problems. North suggests that all attempts to use natural law are examples of compromise and/or apostasy. That is not true. While some Christians undoubtedly relied too heavily on natural law in their political theories, they acknowledged the supreme authority of the scriptures and used natural law to illustrate biblical truths, persuade unbelievers, or search for common ground. Their use

of natural law was no more sinister than the practice of present day conservative Christian economists, such as North, of buttressing their arguments with quotes from non-Christian Austrian economists.

Or, let me use another example; a couple years ago a dispensational outfit named Go Ministries did an expose of Reconstructionists revolving around the term “paradigm shift”. Arguing that term was developed by a non-Christian philosopher of science and was used by New Agers, they concluded that the Reconstructionists who constantly referred to paradigms must be New Agers. They even had a little cartoon of a “Christian Reconstructionist bus” travelling down the “paradigm shift road to hell”. In a similar fashion, North depicts colonial Christians on the natural law road to Unitarianism and Freemasonry. And then, sometimes he gets mixed up and praises people for using natural law, as when he commends Patrick Henry for distributing copies of Joseph Butler's *Analogy*.

In keeping with a tendency to identify key villains in history, North launches a diatribe against Isaac Newton.<sup>3</sup> Citing numerous studies, which when consulted are found to contradict North's interpretation of Newton, he accuses Newton of laying the foundations of modern atheism. He sees Newton as the fount of the rationalism that actually preceded him by a century in Anglican theology, he confuses Newtonian physics with the mechanism of Descartes and his continental followers whom Newton opposed, and he accuses Newton of holding deist views, though North is clearly unfamiliar with what deists believed. He expounds on Newton's supposed rejection of a meaningful divine Providence, ignoring Newton's historical writings which are full of the doctrine.

Errors occur throughout his exposition. He says, for example, that only with the purchase of Newton's papers by Keynes did the scholarly public learn about Newton's alchemy, whereas in 1888 Cambridge University Press published a catalogue of Newton's books and papers at Portsmouth including works on alchemy. (It is interesting that the Hermetic, Rosecreucian, and alchemic works in English in his library were published in Cromwell's period!) In describing the “cosmic personalism” (actually a good term for Newton's science) of the Puritans, soon to be corrupted by Newtonianism, North suppresses the information that a major source for Newton's alchemy was the American son of a Puritan

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3 For example, “It was Isaac Newton who more than any other figure made possible the culture-wide ideological shift of the West from Trinitarianism to Deism, and from thence to atheism.” (p. 369) But other interpretations have been made, as by C. FitzSimons Allison : “The new school of thought which arose during the English Civil War ... was represented, among others, by such disparate figures as Jeremy Taylor, Henry Hammond, Herbert Thorndike, George Bull, and Richard Baxter. Of subsequent students of the period, Samuel Taylor Coleridge alone affords a responsible criticism of the theology of Jeremy Taylor. It was Coleridge who acutely observed: 'Socinianism is as inevitable a deduction from Taylor's scheme as Deism and Atheism are from Socienianism.' This remark not only exposes the fatal flaw in Taylor's own theology but also sums up the trend from orthodoxy in the early Caroline period to a moralism and deism in the eighteenth century and on to the secularism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” (*The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter*, Morehouse Barlow Co., Inc. 1966). Who is the leading exponent of this covenantal moralism today? It is Norman Shepherd, defended by Gary North!

divine, George Starkey, who claimed to have learned his alchemy from a New England adept.<sup>4</sup> North passes over in silence the parallels between Newton's and his own chronological revisionism. North is not familiar with the last decade of Newtonian research. In fact, most of what he says about Newton is wrong.

Another problem with this section is North's fanciful emphasis on a Masonic conspiracy. Arguing that Masonry “is *the* missing link” (emphasis his) in American historiography, North claims that Washington, Franklin, and their lodge brothers plotted to make the Constitution a “*secular, humanist, covenant document*” (emphasis his). To show the lodge's contribution to American history, P.P. relies on Masonic historians who, even North concedes, are not the most reliable. In arguing for a monolithic masonry, North does not mention that Masonic organizations had serious power struggles (Franklin was bumped from power in Philadelphia) and were divided on political issues (Masons fought on both sides during the Revolution and Constitutional ratification). Nor does he prove that Masons were dedicated conspirators and revolutionaries; most probably saw the lodge as nothing more than a social club. Recognizing these problems, North begins to hedge on the conspiracy angle, arguing that the Masonic worldview at least “shaped the terms of judicial and political discourse”. Unfortunately North hurts his credibility and the book's argument by chasing Masons down the back alleys of American history.<sup>5</sup>

North also argues that 1787 was the turning point for the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterian synods met in Philadelphia, coincidentally, at the same time as the Constitutional Convention. A year later they returned to Philadelphia to ratify a new

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4 Gale E. Christianson, *In the Presence of the Creator: Isaac Newton and His Times*, (New York: The Free Press, 1984), p. 232. The adept is identified by Christianson as “probably John Winthrop, Jr.”. The reference to the Puritans in this connection is PP p. 347.

5 North's account of Masonic history is slanted, fanciful and full of errors. For early masonry he draws from the account of kook historians Baigent and Leigh in their *Temple and Lodge*. Modern masonry was founded in Scotland in the 1590's by the King's Master of Works William Schaw, a Roman Catholic. For its first century most members were Presbyterians. North claims that “Modern Freemasonry began as a 'cult of Newtonian science’”. (p. 476) North makes much of Robert Moray. “The first Englishman to be initiated into this ancient form of Freemasonry...on May 20, 1641” and “one of the founders of the Royal Society.” (p. 476) Moray was, in fact, Scots, and seems in early days to have been a construction engineer. He entered military service in France but returned to Scotland to join the rebellion against Charles I (perhaps as a French agent) and was appointed quartermaster-general in the covenanter army in 1640. David Stevenson, in his history of Scottish masonry reports that “the quartermaster-general was in charge of laying out camps and fortifications, duties which required knowledge of surveying and other mathematical and technical subjects.” (*The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century 1590-1710* Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 167) On May 20, 1641 Moray and the covenanter artillery general Alexander Hamilton were admitted to the Edinburgh Lodge by members serving in the army. He later returned to the royalist side and was involved in the Highland “Glencairn rising” of 1653-4. Following the Restoration in 1660 he lived primarily in London. (Stevenson, p. 168). All this side of his career is omitted by North.

North claims that “Jonathan Belcher was the original Freemason in the colonies, having been initiated in London in 1704. He was literally the pioneer.” (p. 548) North calls him “the driving force of the development of the College of New Jersey” (p. 547). In fact the first known freemasons in America were John Forbes and John Skene who were members of the Aberdeen Lodge already in 1670 and who emigrated to New Jersey in the 1680s. (Stevenson, pp. 203-204) They were Quakers. By comparison, Newton's *Principia* was published in 1687.



constitution, giving greater powers to a General Assembly, and to revise the Westminster Standards about the separation of church and state. North sees this as part of the same movement, conspiracy even, that led to the de-christianizing of civil realm.

North's case here is weak, at least judged by his treatment of John Witherspoon, whom he sees as the catalyst for apostasy in the Presbyterian church. North relies entirely on biased, secondhand accounts of Witherspoon; one by a liberal Presbyterian historian and the other by a neo-evangelical author he had earlier denounced. Witherspoon did not want to centralize, liberalize, and bureaucratize the Presbyterian church, as North implies. He had led orthodox Presbyterians against the “moderates” in control of the Church of Scotland and was well acquainted with ecclesiastical tyranny, hence his emphasis on “liberty of conscience” and his suspicion of religious establishments. While it is true that he quoted from Enlightenment authors, even a cursory reading of Witherspoon's books and sermons would prove his orthodoxy and ultimate reliance on Scripture. Witherspoon, in fact, would fare quite well under North's five point covenant standards; he was emphatically postmillennial and believed nations received the blessings and curses of God. Though criticized for his religious pluralism, Witherspoon's position is very similar to North's: Witherspoon wanted a Christian commonwealth, without a state church, where all Christian denominations worshipped freely. North's focus on 1787 as the beginning of America's troubles is unique.

Admitting that he “breaks with everybody”, North briefly, and politely (!), notes his differences with C. Gregg Singer, M.E. Bradford, John Eidsmoe, and Gary Amos, conservative Christian historians who are usually favorable to the framers and the Constitution. He adds a special appendix on “Rushdoony on the Constitution” to show his distance from the pro-Constitution position of Chalcedon. What North doesn't discuss is how much he has broken with Gary North. For a good example of the position North now ridicules, read his “The Declaration of Independence as a Conservative Document”, *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 3:1 (Summer, 1976): 94-115. The North of 1989 is radically different from 1976. Though I still believe the old North is more persuasive, the new North, despite the flaws of P.P., will force many Christians to reevaluate critically the Constitution.

## **North's Program**

In the last section of *Political Polytheism*, on “Restoring the National Covenant”, North outlines how a biblical covenant could be established. His hope is rooted in revival, specifically the widespread conversion to Christianity expected by postmillennialists. North estimates that 75-80% of the adult population would have to accept the biblical covenant to make it workable. He de-emphasizes politics: “Every revolution needs slogans. Here is mine: *politics fourth*”. The order of renewal is personal faith, then the Church, then the family, and finally society, beginning at the local level. North's vision for Christian politics is predicated on a revival taking place, and he often calls for a revival or expresses his hope for one. It comes as a surprise that he has no theology of

revival. Furthermore, he does not like past revivals, especially the most paradigmatic revival, the Great Awakening. North's clear hope, however, is that following massive conversions to Christianity and the reformation of Church and home, believers would implement a biblical covenant at the national level.

Though as an exploration of social theory *Political Polytheism* is an excellent work, there are some general problems with its format and style. North again earns his reputation as “Scary Gary” with his vigorous, Godzilllic rhetoric. He would have a larger audience if he were, well, nicer. His frequent lapses into a conspiratorial mode of writing also hurt his effectiveness. Furthermore, the book is too long. Most topics that North treats at any length appear in several places. This disorganization makes it hard to find and assess his views, as important qualifiers may be 150 pages away. With better organization and by avoiding repetition, he could have made the book a hundred pages shorter or focused on the issues that still call for greater clarity. North apparently believes that his time is more valuable than his readers' and that he need not bother completely to prepare his work for publication.

Perhaps North rushed his work because of the urgency of the hour. For North, there is a desperate need of a coherent biblical and Christian “blueprint” for national restoration. Natural law is dead; the humanists have abandoned it and Christians are increasingly turning away from it. The upshot for North is that the Constitution is being delegitimized intellectually and is on its last legs. And since God brings sanctions against covenant-breakers, North argues, only a crisis period will come. North's work is not a definitive, exhaustive treatment of the nature of the American system, but a polemic to force Christians to reconsider the foundation of their society.

*Political Polytheism* is best read as a great step forward in the discussion of the theological issues surrounding the covenant administration of the millennial kingdom. Those who do not want to go in the same direction as Gary North will have to work out their ideas with as least as much clarity and systematic rigor as he has. Of course, the person who writes first gets to set up the themes and categories of the debate. North's book thereby becomes a guide to what future discussion will look like. North's theme and hope for *Political Polytheism* appears in his would-be epitaph: “He laid down the theological, moral, and political principles of a decentralized, international theocracy. No Protestant before him ever did.” (p. 659)

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## Newton's Arianism

After this conviction [of Photius by Council of Sirmium? Ed.] the homousians began to change their language of one hypostasis to that of three, & to call those Sabellians who still adhered to the language of one hypostasis, & mutually to be called Arians by them for changing their language. And in this state things continued till the reign of Julian the

Apostate, when Athanasius reconciled the two parties about their language telling them that one party by their language of one hypostasis understood one substance in nature & species, & the other by their language of three hypostases understood three substances in number. And this exposition was allowed by the Bishop of Rome. For Jerome a little after the reign of the Emperor Julian, coming into Syria & there being reprehended for using the language of one hypostasis, would not change his language till he had written to Pope Damasus about it.

In these disputes Arius & Athanasius had both of them perplexed the Church with metaphysical opinions & expressed their opinions in novel language not warranted by scripture. The Greeks to preserve the Church from these innovations & metaphysical perplexities & put an end to the troubles occasioned by them anathematized the novel language of Arius in several of their Councils, & so soon as they were able repealed the novel language of the homousians, & contended that the language of the scripture was to be adhered unto. The Homousians made the father & son one God by a metaphysical unity, the unity of substance: the Greek Churches rejected all metaphysical divinity, as well that of Arius as that of the Homousians, & made the father & Son one God by a Monarchical unity, an unity of Dominion, the Son receiving all things from the father, being subject to him, executing his will, sitting in his throne & calling him his God, & so is but one God with the Father as a king & his viceroy are but one king. For the word God relates not to the metaphysical nature of God but to his dominion. It is a relative word & has relation to us as the servants of God. It is a word of the same signification with Lord & King but in a higher degree. For as we say "my Lord our Lord your Lord, other Lords, the King of Kings & Lord of Lords, other Lords, the servants of our Lord, serve other Lords", so we say "my God our God your God, other Gods the God of Gods, the servants of God, serve other Gods". And therefore as a father & his son cannot be called one King upon account of their being consubstantial, but may be called one King by unity of dominion if the Son be viceroy under the father: so God & his son cannot be called one God upon account of their being consubstantial. The heathens made all their Gods of one substance & sometimes called them one god & yet were polytheists. Nothing can make two persons one God but unity of dominion. And if the Father & Son be united in dominion, the son being subordinate to the father & sitting in his throne, they can no more be called two Gods than a King & his Viceroy can be called two kings.

His wrestling with Jacob is as full a proof that he had a body before his incarnation as his being handled by Thomas is a proof that he had a body after his resurrection. Not the body of an Angel, which hath not flesh & bones, but a body which by the power of his will he could form into the consistence & solidity of flesh & bones, as well before his incarnation as after his resurrection. Such a body as he had after his resurrection, such a body he had before his incarnation. And... [manuscript page ends. Ed.]

**From notes for Newton's lost work *History of the Church***

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The publication of the above review elicited an energetic response from North. Contact ICE, PO Box 8000, Tyler TX 75711 and ask for “Whatever Happened to Book Reviewing?”.

Sources that are useful in evaluating North's reply are:

C. FitzSimmons Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse Barlow, 1966); reprinted by Regent College Publishing; (May 1, 2003) .

Edward B. Davis, “Newton's Rejection of the 'Newtonian World View': The Role of Divine Will in Newton's Natural Philosophy”, *Fides et Historia*, Vol. XXII:2, Summer 1990.

Fauvel, Floor, Shortland and Wilson, *Let Newton Be!* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

Herman Hoeksema, *The Text of a Complaint*, 62 pages, available from The Trinity Foundation, PO Box 1666, Hobbs, NM 88240.

Roger Schultz, “Covenanting in America: The Political Theology of John Witherspoon”, *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1988, pp. 179-289.

David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century 1590-1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Read what North failed to read!

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