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# EDITORIAL

## IS THERE AN AFTERLIFE? *The Intermediate State Reconsidered*

by Stephen C. Perks

SINCE we first began publishing this journal nine years ago we have encouraged our readers to write letters to the editor interacting with the material in it. The reason for this is that we believe in the church argumentative; i.e. that debate and discussion are essential to the development of the church's understanding of the faith and her mission in the contemporary world. Unfortunately, few issues that we have addressed have provoked much response of a kind that is conducive to constructive debate. It seems, however, that in my April editorial I hit a rich vein of controversy that has goaded some readers at least to enter into debate. In defending my position on the intermediate state in this editorial, however, I would not want readers to think that I have a closed mind. I am certainly open to debate and if I am convinced that I am indeed mistaken in my understanding I shall only too gladly acknowledge it. Before reading the rest of this editorial, therefore, readers may wish to read the *Letters to the Editor* section on p. 10ff.

I get the impression from reading most of these letters that the viewpoint of their authors is not one of outright hostility to my views but rather of sympathetic caution; that whereas they might agree with a great deal of what I wrote in my editorial, I went too far and launched into an idea that I should have been wiser to be more cautious about. If I have read them correctly, and this is so, I have some sympathy for their reservations and desire for caution. I have been attracted to the view put forward in my April editorial for many years. But until recently I have always pulled back from it, feeling, for reasons that will be explained below, the need to be cautious about it. Recently, however, in thinking through this issue again I have become convinced that it is the correct view.

Before proceeding to the exegetical and theological issues I must deal with Stephen Hayhow's objections that the language I used in my editorial was highly prejudicial. First, Steve says that my comment that "... the Bible does not teach that man is made of two different, essentially incompatible substances: body and soul" is a straw man argument because traditional Christian anthropology does not posit that body and soul are incompatible. I understand what Steve is saying here. But my response is that what he is saying is only half true. The problem is that the church has always known the Bible does not view the physical world in the way that Greek dualistic philosophy viewed it, and that all that God created he created good, including the physical world, the body etc. But the church, nonetheless, throughout history, has had a great problem in fully accepting this biblical doctrine. The church has never thrown off the spectre of Greek dualism, as Allen Baird so aptly puts it. The church has always spoken with a double mind on this subject. If we put the biblical perspective to Christians, that God created the physical world and it was good, and that sin is ethical not metaphysical, they will of course agree. But the church's theology, and Christian folklore, which, unfortunately, does the job of theology for most Christians, has so often given the lie to this, because so much of it presupposes the opposite, sometimes explicitly asserts the

opposite, namely, the Greek dualistic perspective. The church has always suffered from a lack of commitment to the biblical doctrine on this issue. She has never been able to rid herself completely of the suspicion that the Greeks were right in their dualistic perspective all along. I disagree with Steve therefore. I think his statement is only half true. Christian anthropology has always been ambivalent about the soul/body relationship.

To illustrate my point I will quote, not those Christian theologians who promulgated the worse excesses on this matter, but one of the church's very best theologians: John Calvin. Let me repeat myself in order to make myself clear at this point. I use Calvin not because I think he represents what is worst among the church's theologians, but because he represented what is among the very best theology the church has produced. If it can be shown that the spectre of Greek dualism hangs over the church's theology here, it seems to me few can honestly doubt that my point is well-made. The vitiating influence of Greek dualism among the church's lesser theologians can hardly be denied. But even Calvin could not free himself from the spectre of Greek dualism. Says Calvin: "And when Christ commended his spirit to the Father [Luke 23:46] and Stephen his to Christ [Acts 7:59] they meant only that when the soul is freed from the *prison house* of the *body*, God is its perpetual guardian . . . It is of course true that while men are *tyed* to *earth* more than they should be they grow *dull* . . . For surely these passages and similar ones that occur repeatedly not only clearly distinguish the soul from the body, but by transferring to it the name 'man' indicate it to be the *principal* part."<sup>1</sup> And a few sections later we get a revealing insight into Calvin's thinking on this matter. He says: "It would be foolish to seek a definition of 'soul' from the philosophers. Of them hardly one, except *Plato*, has rightly affirmed its immortal substance." Yet Jesus *denied* the immortality of the soul in Mt. 10:28. Calvin continues: "Indeed, other Socratics also touch upon it, but in a way that shows how nobody teaches clearly a thing of which he has not been persuaded. Hence *Plato's* opinion is more correct, because he considers the image of God in the soul. Others so attach the soul's powers and faculties to the present life that they leave nothing to it outside the body."<sup>2</sup> And the source of Calvin's thinking on this issue? Well, there are no Scripture references cited in the latter quotation, either in the text or in the footnotes. But, interestingly, the editor cites the following in the footnotes: Plato, *Phaedo*, 105–107; *Phaedrus* 205–209; *Alcibiades* I.133; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I.xxxvii.

As for Calvin's statement that man's powers and faculties are essentially related to the soul, and therefore survive the death of the physical body, it is precisely the *powers* and *faculties* of man that Hebrew anthropology *denies* to those who go down to Sheol,<sup>3</sup> i.e. who are dead: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10). "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. 6:5). "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Ps. 115:17). And, most significantly, Is. 38:18–19: "For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. *The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day*" (see also Ps. 30:9; 88:10; Eccl. 9:5). This categorically refutes Calvin's claim concerning the powers and faculties of the disembodied soul, and the

1. *Institutes* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960, Battles translation), I.xv.2, (p. 184f.), my emphasis.

2. *Ibid.*, I.xv.6, my emphasis.

3. Sheol is the place of the dead, i.e. the *grave*. I have not found, so far, any references to Sheol in the Old Testament where the word cannot be translated as "grave" instead of hell and therefore interpreted consistently with my denial of the intermediate state.

notion of an intermediate state where believers experience paradise in the presence of the Lord. These texts deny everything that the intermediate state asserts about the condition of the disembodied soul.

Likewise, Calvin refers to “this earthly prison of the body” in *Institutes*, Book III.vii.5. Again, the editor comments that “The notion of the body as prison of the soul is from Plato: cf. *Phaedo* 62 B, 81 E, 82 E, 83 A; *Cratylus* 400.”<sup>4</sup> Of course, in order to maintain this doctrine when he comes to expound Gen. 2:7 Calvin has to treat the text in a rather cavalier fashion. He says: “Moses first speaks of the breath; he then adds, that a soul was given to man by which he might live, and be endowed with sense and motion.”<sup>5</sup> Moses did nothing of the sort. The text states that God breathed into Adam the breath of life and that by this act of inspiration Adam *became* a living soul. Calvin’s understanding of this text is deeply coloured by the Greek dualistic background to the church’s understanding of man’s nature. He reads the text with Plato’s spectacles on. Calvin’s doctrine is ambivalent to say the least. It is *not* merely that he considers the soul and body as two different elements or constituent parts of man’s nature—though even this would be incorrect. He sees the soul as the *essential* man: “I understand by the term ‘soul’ an immortal yet created *essence*, which is the nobler part”<sup>6</sup> he says. The body he sees as man’s *prison*, a shell, from which man escapes or is delivered at death. In other words, he believed precisely what I am arguing against. I cannot accept Steve’s objection, therefore, as valid. The kind of dualistic perspective that coloured Calvin’s views on this matter has plagued the church throughout history.

The church’s infatuation with the Greek dualistic perspective is illustrated, perhaps at its worst, by the following quotation from Origen, which comes from a passage in which he argues, by means of a comparison with mankind, that the heavenly beings, e.g. sun, moon and stars, have souls that are subject to corruption as a result of their being embodied in a material form: “But let us see whether we can find in Scripture any indications properly applicable to these heavenly existences. The following is the statement of the Apostle Paul: ‘The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ To what vanity, pray, was the creature made subject, or what creature is referred to, or how is it said ‘not willingly,’ or ‘in hope of what?’ And in what way is the creature itself to be delivered from the bondage of corruption? . . . Let us see then, in the first place, what is the vanity to which the creature is subject. I apprehend that it is nothing else than the *body*; for although the body of the stars is ethereal, it is nevertheless material. Whence also Solomon appears to characterize the whole of corporeal nature as a kind of *burden which enfeebles the vigour of the soul* in the following language: ‘Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity. I have looked, and seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity.’ To this vanity then, is the creature subject, that creature especially which, being assuredly the greatest in this world, holds also a distinguished principality of labour, i.e., the sun, and moon, and stars, are said to be subject to vanity, *because they are clothed with bodies* . . .”<sup>7</sup>

Second, regarding Steve’s objection that the term “inter-

mediate state” implies that this is not the final state of man and that Christian theology has always held to the resurrection of the body, I fully grant that the church has always *confessed* the resurrection of the body. This was precisely the point of my editorial. But this is not always what the church has *believed* and *taught*, and this confessional doctrine of the resurrection of the body has often fallen foul of what can only be described as Christian folklore that is based *not* on what the church has historically confessed but on what it has unwittingly imbibed from paganism. My argument is not with what the church has universally confessed. I am advocating just that confessional doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which every church and every believer ought to confess every Sunday. My argument is with what the church and Christian folklore has assimilated from paganism. And again, even Calvin was not free from this error. In his introduction to Book IV of the *Institutes* he states: “First of all, he [Christ] instituted sacraments, which we who have experienced them feel to be highly useful aids to foster and strengthen faith. Shut up as we are in the prison house of the flesh, we have not yet attained *angelic* rank. God, therefore, in his wonderful providence accommodating himself to our capacity, has prescribed a way for us, though still far off, to draw near to him.”<sup>8</sup> It is not the physical body, as if a prison, that hinders our communion with God at all, but *sin*. It seems astonishing that Calvin should speak in such a way. Of course, Calvin believed in and taught the resurrection of the body. But the above quotation shows how, despite that fact, he could speak with ambivalence about the future state of the believer, referring to it as an angelic rank, and imply that it is the physical nature of man rather than sin that hinders man’s communion with God. Calvin here provides a good example of the ambivalence that has characterised Christian thinking on this issue.

My point, therefore, was precisely this: despite the confession of the church throughout history, many Christians do not believe in the resurrection of the body. I have this first hand from many different churches and individuals, Protestant and Catholic. Indeed, one Roman Catholic deacon told me that the Roman Catholic Church insists on orthodoxy from her members and that the Church’s unity is based on this orthodoxy. When I asked him for a statement of this orthodoxy he referred to the Apostles’ Creed. I then asked him about the resurrection of the body. “Oh well!” he said “I’m not too sure about the resurrection of the body.” Well, this was fine coming from a Roman Catholic who had just finished lecturing Protestants on the necessity of orthodoxy! About one thing he was sure however: purgatory—though to be fair to him he denied emphatically that this doctrine has any biblical warrant or even any warrant in the Apocrypha. The same inability to accept the bodily resurrection of the saints at the end of history is evident among many Protestants. The fact that the church has historically confessed the resurrection of the body means nothing to these people. A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. Heaven is their destiny, not the resurrection of the body. They have a doctrine of resurrection after a fashion but it is a “spiritual” resurrection. There is no real difference between this and the disembodied condition posited by the intermediate state, and many Christians have no clear idea of any difference.

So I fully accept what Steve says in one sense, i.e. that the church confesses the resurrection of the body, and always has done. But the faithful do not necessarily believe what the church confesses. In fact, very many Christians do not—and the reason for this is that the church often does not teach what she confesses. I was publicly rebuked from the pulpit in one

4. *Ibid.*, p. 689; see also *Inst.* IV.xii.30.

5. *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses* (Wm B. Eerdmans), Vol. 1, p. 112.

6. *Institutes*, I.xv.2 (p. 184), my emphasis.

7. Origen, *De Principiis*, I.vii.5, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark), Vol. VI, p. 264*af.*, my emphasis. For a sustained treatment of the human soul in terms of the Greek dualistic perspective see John Flavel’s *Pneumatologia: A Treatise of the Soul of Man*.

8. *Institutes*, IV.i.1 (p. 1012), my emphasis.

church I was in many years ago (an evangelical Baptist church) for confessing the resurrection of the body. I gave my opinion regarding this “unspiritual” doctrine that the church has confessed for two millennia in a house group meeting. My “error” was deemed serious enough to be reported to the pastor and rebuked the following Sunday from the pulpit. It is because of this kind of belief, which I fully agree is unorthodox, that I make my point about the church’s teaching on the final state of the believer, and therefore I must disagree again with Steve.

Third, although Steve is correct formally to say that holding to the idea of an intermediate state and the objective existence of the disembodied soul does not necessarily mean that these ideas are derived from Greek dualism, I reject his argument as *historically* valid. In other words, I assert that although belief in the objective existence of the disembodied soul is not *necessarily* linked with Greek dualism, historically this link is undeniable for the church. I used Virgil as a representative of this Greek dualistic perspective because I had to study his *Aeneid* many years ago. Plato will do just as well. My point is that *in fact* it is the influence of Graeco-Roman dualism on the church that has led so many to adopt the idea of an afterlife. This influence can be traced. The patristic authors were ever eager to incorporate as much as they could of Graeco-Roman philosophy into their system of Christian doctrine, and did so with a remarkably facility. Their apologetic method was a complete failure in this respect, a debacle. They laid the groundwork for centuries of wrong thinking by their eagerness to cannibalise Greek philosophy and religion in order to supplement biblical revelation with such ideas. If anyone denies this he only demonstrates his ignorance of church history. Steve’s point on this may have some logical validity—i.e. hypothetically. But historically it is untenable. Greek dualism was precisely where the church got its ideas of the body/soul dichotomy and the afterlife from.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in his providence God preserved the church in her confession of the resurrection of the body. Yet it seems this confession was maintained at times more in spite of the church’s infatuation with dualism than because of her orthodoxy regarding the doctrine of creation.

To move on to the crux of the matter now, the point at issue here is the validity of the idea of an intermediate state, which I deny and my correspondents affirm. The citation of the various texts and references in these letters, with the possible exception of one, begs the question, i.e. assumes the truth of the point to be proved. These texts are cited to show that the Bible affirms the intermediate state. But in order to show this they have to be interpreted in a particular way. That particular interpretation assumes that there is an intermediate state.

For example, Steve refers to Rev. 6:9–10 and asks how the dead, even if the passage is taken symbolically, can be described as crying out to God if their souls do not have objective existence apart from their bodies. I answer: How can the voice of Abel’s blood be described as crying out to God from the ground in Gen. 4:10? It is a figure of speech. But, doubtless, it will be said that the reference in Rev. 6:9–10 is far more than a figure of speech. Indeed, we must be even more careful when we come to the book of Revelation because it is apocalyptic, a form of literature with which we are in the West very unfamiliar. How literalistic are we going to be about this then? Are the souls of the martyrs really kept under the altar in heaven? Why, we may ask, even if we accept that this language is symbolic in

9. I do not discount the influence of Persian religious thinking in this process. Persian religion had a significant influence on Jewish religious thought in the intertestamental period. However, the Jewish culture of the first century had also become very Hellenised. The church of the patristic era was on the whole a Gentile church and the influence of dualism on the church’s thinking was largely Hellenic in origin.

some way, must this piece of symbolism be taken as proving the objective existence of the soul independently of the body? Steve admits the passage is symbolic but still wants to have his cake and eat it; i.e. the passage is symbolic but it also proves the objective existence of the disembodied soul. This whole scene in heaven in the book of Revelation is apocalyptic symbolism. It is not meant to be used as a premiss for constructing theological syllogisms regarding the nature of man’s soul/body relationship. To read it that way is to miss its message. As a piece of apocalyptic it is written in a form of literary code. It is not meant to be taken literally in any way. It is highly allegorical and, furthermore, highly eclectic in its use of literary forms. D. S. Russell writes in his book *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* that “In their interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, moreover, the apocalyptists quite regularly drew upon non-biblical tradition, making free use of cosmic mythology with its profuse symbolism and of foreign ideas generally, culled more often than not from Babylonian and Persian sources. This practice, of course, is to be found already even within the Old Testament Scriptures, but in the apocalyptic literature it is put to much greater use. But in thus borrowing foreign ideas to interpret prophecy, the apocalyptic writers seldom failed to give new significance both to the ideas borrowed and to prophecy itself. ‘The Jews’, writes F. C. Porter, ‘knew how to borrow what they liked and use it as they liked. They knew how to appropriate foreign mythological figures without the mythology and even dualistic conceptions without the dualism, and could build a Babylonian story of creation into their system, and the Persian idea of a ruling evil spirit, without giving up their monotheism.’ This is true of the Jews in general and of the apocalyptists in particular.”<sup>10</sup> Of course, what is being referred to here is mainly writings outside the canon of Scripture. But the point is that Revelation also makes extensive use of this literary form. It simply does not make sense to subject this kind of language to a literalistic interpretation or use it as proof texts for the idea of an intermediate state.

Let us look a little closer, therefore, at the symbolism of this reference in Rev. 6:9. We are told that the souls of the martyrs are kept under the altar in heaven. The word for soul here is *ψυχή*, which means *breath, breath of life, life*.<sup>11</sup> This is the word that the LXX uses to translate the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which means *that which breathes* and is translated variously as *breath, mind, spirit, life, person, self* (see my April editorial). The Bible also connects *nephesh* with blood. For example, the law teaches that blood is not to be eaten because “the life [*nephesh*] is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11). Likewise Dt. 12:23: “be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life [*nephesh*]; and thou mayest not eat the life [*nephesh*] with the flesh.” As we have seen, *nephesh* and *ψυχή* refer to the same thing. It seems, therefore, that the word “souls” (*ψυχὰς*) in Rev. 6:9 refers to the shed blood of the martyrs. Thus, commenting on this verse, T. Hoff writes: “It is very easy to picture that supposed immaterial aspect of a slain saint waiting during an intermediate state for the time it might again be housed in a material substance—the body. Nevertheless, this verse also has its heritage in N[ephesh] of the O[ld] T[estament]. The P[suchas] to which John referred alluded to the N[ephesh]-blood that was poured out at the base of the altar. (see Lev. 4:7, 18). The P[suchas] under the altar were saints who had been slain. That the saints were referred to as P[suchas] communicates something about their death. The imagery of John’s revelation connected the sacrificial blood of these saints who had followed Christ’s example with the blood

10. D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1964), p. 185f.

11. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark), p. 488.

of the bull which was poured out before God at the base of the altar.”<sup>12</sup> The imagery of Rev. 6:9, therefore, i.e. the image of the souls of the martyrs under the altar in heaven crying out to God for justice, is the same kind of metaphor that is used in Gen. 4:10 with reference to the murder of Abel, although the imagery is more fanciful, occurring as it does in a book that makes extensive use of a highly apocalyptic form of language.

But what about Lk. 23:46 and Acts 7:59? Here we are told that Jesus committed his spirit to his Father, and Stephen his to Christ. The word used (*πνεῦμα*) means *wind, breath, breath of life, life, animating spirit*, then *spirit, soul*. The word is used in a very wide variety of ways, but all are derived from the basic meaning of *air in motion*. The use of the word to mean *spirit*, as in Jn 4:24: “God is a Spirit,” is no exception, since such language is used of God anthropomorphically. The breath of life (*πνεῦμα*) is the animating principle of human life. In this sense *spirit* is equivalent to *ψυχή*<sup>13</sup> and *nephesh*. Spirit, i.e. breath, is what gives life to man (Gen. 2:7). Without breath man is a lifeless body. Spirit is the animating principle. But God is not corporeal in any sense. He is life without body or parts. By means of anthropomorphic terminology, that which is the animating principle of what without it would be a lifeless human body, is used to describe God. God is described, therefore, in terms of the principle of life itself considered apart from any form of animated body. The term is used anthropomorphically to show the non-corporeality of God’s nature. Spirit as used of God, therefore, is a metaphor, since it is impossible to describe God in non-anthropomorphic terms that are accessible to human understanding. In Lk. 23:46 and Acts 7:59, however, what is being referred to is the animating principle of human life itself. All that is being said is that in the face of death Jesus committed himself to his Father and Stephen likewise committed himself to Christ. To read into this figure of speech a dualistic conception of man as soul and body is unnecessary and lays one open to the charge of being hermeneutically challenged. It is understandable how a term signifying the breath of life and the concept of the soul as the higher essence of man’s being became so linked for the Greeks given their dualistic perspective, since at death the breath of life departs from man, as if escaping from the dying body. Thus, for the Greeks “On the one side . . . *πνεῦμα* is an element (along with earth, water and fire) from which the human body is made, Epic. Diss., III, 13, 14f. On the other, like *ψυχή*, it stands in contrast to the *σῶμα* [body] with which it is bound in life. At death it is separated from this, for, breath-like, it escapes with the last breath, returning to fulfil its higher destiny in the element from which it came or in the upper region to which it is by nature related, in the atmosphere of heaven or the aether (which later in Stoic teaching was equated with *πνεῦμα* as a kind of *quinta essentia* [fifth element]).”<sup>14</sup> But to read the Bible in terms of such a philosophy is to misunderstand it. We must ask what is *meant* by the terms that are used in the Bible. In seeking the answer to this question we must understand what the terms meant to those to whom the authors of the Bible initially addressed their message. And this means that we must understand how words were used in Greek, what idioms they conveyed. But we must not read into the Bible the pagan world-view of the Greeks merely because the Bible employs a figure of speech

common to the Greek world. The meaning here is surely that Jesus committed himself in death to his Father and likewise Stephen committed himself to Christ, knowing that his future hope of life everlasting in the Resurrection was in the providential care of his Lord and Saviour.

Again, take Jesus’ words to the thief on the cross next to him in Lk. 23:43: “Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Does this text speak against my position as Steve maintains? I think not. The Bible uses a wide variety of types of literature and language, and when it speaks about God it uses language anthropomorphically. Likewise, when it speaks about many other things it uses language that is not meant to be taken literally. Of course, some of the language in the Bible is meant to be taken literally. But much of it is not meant to be taken literally, and in fact is not taken literally any more than I take everything Steve says literally all the time. I recognise when he uses metaphor and allegory etc. With the Bible though it is a bit more difficult because it is written over a long period of time in terms of the kind of speech and conventions of language particular to the cultures of its authors, and some of these linguistic conventions are alien to modern Western people, e.g. apocalyptic. So, we have to try and understand the *meaning* while taking account of the language that is used. The problem is, we very easily read our own presuppositions and preconceptions into Scripture. And this is what I believe happened with the church’s understanding of the human soul. Biblical anthropology was unwittingly forced through the filter of an essentially Greek dualistic philosophy.

Now, what is paradise? Are we to take this statement literally? Well, paradise was the walled gardens of the Persian kings. That is what the word means literally.<sup>15</sup> Not even my correspondents, I am sure, take this literally. They interpret this statement in a non-literal sense, because if it were to be taken literally it would be absurd. Did Jesus go to the walled parks of Babylon after his death? Of course not. This is a *metaphor*. No one has ever taken this statement literally, not even my correspondents. They interpret Jesus’ saying metaphorically. And so do I. I believe that the thief on the cross next to Christ was with him in paradise that day. But I suspect we would disagree about what precisely paradise is a metaphor for.

It may, of course, be argued that Jesus said “*Today* thou shalt be with me in paradise” and that this means that very day, not so many thousand years hence. But it is not necessary to subject Jesus’ language to such a literalism in this case any more than in the case of the word “paradise.” The question is, What does Jesus *mean*? The Bible uses such language in a variety of ways. In Gen. 2:17, for example, Adam is told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Is this to be taken literally? If so, did Adam die on that very day? Of course not. What this statement *means* is that on the day he disobeyed we would become subject to death, that death would take effect. But he did not actually die for many years hence. Yet in a sense we accept that that was the day on which death took hold of him. Now, why should Gen. 2:17 be taken in a non-literal sense like this but not Lk. 23:43? The same kind of interpretation seems highly appropriate. There is a symmetry to it. Life took hold of the thief on that day. He became subject to the Resurrection, to *life*. Of course, my position is that from the point of view of the thief he did enter into the Resurrection on that day (see below for more on this). Anyway, I cannot accept that the state

12. T. Hoff, “Nephesh and the Fulfilment It Receives in Psyche” in Arnold H. De Graff and James H. Olthuis, eds, *Towards a Biblical View of Man* (Toronto, Ontario: Institute for Christian Studies, 1978), p. 117.

13. “Next, *πνεῦμα* takes on the meaning and function of ‘soul.’ By virtue of its related character as the breath or principle of life, *πνεῦμα* is largely coterminous with *ψυχή*, and hence can easily be used in place of it” (H. Kleinknecht, “*πνεῦμα, πνευματικός*” in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Wm B. Eerdmans, 1968), Vol. VI, p. 336.

14. *Ibid.*

15. “*παράδεισος, ὁ, an enclosed park or pleasure-ground, well planted and stocked with game, a deer-park, and Oriental word first used by Xen., always in reference to the parks of the Persian kings and nobles*” (Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901], p. 1127b).

of death or of disembodiment can be legitimately described as paradise. The Bible says that death is God's curse on man for sin. In Christ we are delivered *from* the curse not into it.

I do not accept, therefore, that the way my correspondents interpret the texts they cite is the only way of interpreting these texts. Their interpretation assumes the validity of the intermediate state and operates in terms of that assumption. Once that assumption is removed and replaced with the assumption that there is no intermediate state, these texts can be interpreted consistently in terms of the argument put forward in my April editorial. The one text that poses a real problem for my argument is 2 Cor. 5:8: "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." This text seems to teach that there is an intermediate state, following the death of the physical body, in which believers are conscious of being with the Lord in some disembodied condition, and this is believed to demonstrate the validity of the notion that man has a soul that survives in some conscious state after death, that there is an "afterlife." How can anyone deny the validity of the intermediate state in view of this?

But the problem is not so easily resolved. The choice facing us is not that simple. If we reject the position put forward in my April editorial and adopt instead the idea of an afterlife between the death of the physical body and the general Resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgement, we are then faced with a number of other problems in making sense of what the Bible teaches. In fact, it seems to me that we have more problems if we accept the idea of an intermediate state than if we reject it. First, the broader context of 2 Cor. 5:8 gives us problems to start with. Paul has already said, a few verses earlier, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved [i.e. at death], we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens [i.e. a resurrection body]. For in this we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven [i.e. the resurrection body]: If so that [i.e. since] being clothed we shall not be found naked [i.e. disembodied]. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed [i.e. disembodied], but clothed upon [i.e. receive our resurrection bodies], that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. 5:1-4). Here Paul makes it clear that we shall *not* be unclothed, i.e. disembodied at death, but clothed upon, i.e. embodied with a glorious body. But an existence in a disembodied intermediate state would not be the condition of being clothed that Paul speaks of. It would, by contrast, be an unclothed, i.e. disembodied, condition. Paul here makes no mention of an intermediate state. The two conditions set forth are those of this mortal life and the immortal life of the resurrection. No intermediate state intervenes between these two. Then what does Paul mean by his statement in v. 8? I do not know. I have not yet arrived at a sufficient understanding of this. I do not have a satisfactory explanation that fits with the context. What I do know, however, is that Paul says in v. 3 "since being clothed, we shall not be found naked [disembodied]" and in v. 4 "we do not wish to be unclothed, but clothed upon." Yet in v. 8 he says "we are . . . willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

It seems to me that those who argue for an intermediate state or afterlife have no less a problem with this than I have. The fact is, Paul *seems* to contradict himself. Of course, there are those sceptics who will say that Paul *does* contradict himself. I do not agree with this of course. Ultimately, I do not find it credible that Scripture should contradict itself in this way. But it would not be honest of me to deny that this seems to be the case. I cannot make sense of this. Yet this does not mean it cannot be made sense of. I must frankly confess my ignorance

at this point. Nevertheless, if there *were* an intermediate, disembodied state, what could we make of Paul's statement that we shall not be disembodied, and that he does not wish to be disembodied? Paul still *seems* to contradict himself. In other words, the problem is not less serious for those who claim there *is* an intermediate state.

I do not deny I have a difficulty here therefore. I merely insist that those who believe in an intermediate state have a difficulty that is at least as serious, and indeed more serious in the light of a consideration of other Scriptures.

It might be argued, however, that I have here created a false dichotomy, that Paul does not even seem to contradict himself, since all he is saying is that his desire is to be clothed, in the fullness of time (i.e. at the Resurrection) with his resurrection body, but in the meantime he would rather be absent from the body and with the Lord. But this only makes sense if we assume the validity of the intermediate state, and it is precisely that assumption that I am questioning. Paul's statement in v. 8, therefore, cannot be made a proof text, and without it there is no reason to make this assumption in our interpretation of verses 1-4, an assumption that would in any case then create more problems to be resolved in the light of other Scriptures that offer no support for it or indeed contradict it. In view of this it seems to me unacceptable to make this assumption in our reading of v. 8 or to use this verse as the proof text for an idea that contradicts the Scriptural view of the nature of man.

Second, if there were indeed an intermediate state we should expect it to be taught in other Scriptures that deal with the subject of what happens at death. But on the hermeneutic principle that we should allow Scripture to interpret Scripture we face a significant problem here. The passage in which Paul deals most thoroughly with this whole issue is 1 Cor. 15, which is aimed precisely at correcting wrong teaching about what happens at death. If we are going to find anything in Scripture that can throw light on this we should expect it to be here. But in fact Paul says nothing to support the notion of an afterlife or intermediate state at all in this passage. It seems inconceivable to me that Paul should deal at such length with the subject of death and resurrection, in the face of incorrect teaching and ignorance among the Corinthians, and yet fail even to mention the intermediate state, *if* indeed there were such a state. Any good teacher, let alone an apostle,—to say nothing of the fact that this is God's revelation—would hardly have neglected to mention this important doctrine in such a context. Yet there is no mention of it. Paul says "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed" (v. 51). Of course, some have argued for soul sleep from this. But I do not believe Paul even hints at such an idea. He does not here, or in the entire passage, suggest that man has a soul that is detachable from his physical body and that survives death in such a disembodied state. His use of the word "sleep" here is merely a metaphor for death. The Greek word he uses, *κοιμάω*, was used metaphorically in this way to mean *to die* in any case.<sup>16</sup> Paul's failure to mention the intermediate state in this passage must be judged an appalling defect in his argument and in the discharge of his duty as a teacher, unless, of course, there is no intermediate state to be mentioned.

Third, there is a further argument from 1 Cor. 15. In vv. 16-18 Paul says, "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The term "fallen asleep" refers to death.<sup>17</sup> The thought here is that without the Resurrection there can be no salvation from sin. But if it were possible for man's soul to exist

16. Liddel and Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 821b.

17. J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1901), p. 351b.

in a disembodied state after death this would not make sense. Paul says that without the Resurrection the believer *perishes*, not that he exists in some disembodied state. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there were an intermediate state. How then does Paul's statement make sense? Without the Resurrection we *perish*. But the intermediate state is precisely an argument for the believer's deliverance at death into a state of disembodied blessedness in the presence of the Lord. That is to say it is a contradiction of Paul's teaching in v. 18. Paul has no place for this intermediate state of disembodiment. Without the Resurrection the dead in Christ perish. The doctrine of the intermediate state affirms, on the contrary, that without the Resurrection, i.e. that without experiencing any resurrection, the dead in Christ exist in a state of blessedness: disembodied but delivered from their sin—"made perfect in holiness" according to the Shorter Catechism. Paul *denies* this in v. 18.

Doubtless it will be argued against this interpretation that the statement "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" in v. 18 is dependent upon the preceding statement in v. 17, namely, "And if *Christ* be not raised, your faith is vain . . ." etc. In other words, Paul does not here deny the existence of an intermediate state but merely insists that without *Christ's* resurrection there can be no deliverance from sin. This is not inconsistent with the idea of an intermediate state prior to the resurrection, and therefore my argument falls to the ground. But this would be to miss my point. If it were possible for men to be made perfect in holiness and pass immediately into glory without the resurrection of the body—which is what the Westminster Catechism teaches—then Christ need not have been raised from the dead in order to achieve this form of deliverance. But Paul says the believer must *perish* without the Resurrection, not merely that his salvation is *incomplete*, which is, in effect, what the Catechism teaches (we must remember that the proof texts were added to the Confession and Catechisms after they were composed. The Assembly did not formulate its doctrine of the intermediate state in interaction with the pertinent texts of Scripture but merely rubber stamped a doctrine based on dualistic preconceptions about the nature of man with proof texts after that doctrine was formulated). There is, however, no place for a half-way stage in Paul's argument. The logic of his argument falls apart if it is, in fact, possible to be delivered into a state of disembodied moral perfection in glory in fellowship with God, however temporary or intermediate that state should be.

I fully grant, therefore, that v. 18 is dependent upon v. 17. But the logic underpinning the whole argument falls to pieces if it is even theoretically possible for man to achieve a state of disembodied moral perfection and glory in fellowship with God, since if that *were* possible Christ need not have been raised from the dead to secure it, irrespective of whether in fact he was raised. But Paul says this is not *possible*. He presents us with two alternatives. The dead do not rise, in which case those who are dead in Christ perish; or the dead do rise, in which case those who are dead in Christ do not perish—they are raised. But if there were an intermediate state, then there would be a third possibility, namely, that the dead in Christ do not rise, but exist in a disembodied form, delivered from their sin and made perfect in Christ in glory, a condition the accomplishment of which does not require Christ's bodily resurrection, but only his own spiritual transference to this disembodied state of glory. This is not on offer, however. It cannot fit into the logic of Paul's argument. If Christ is not raised, the dead in Christ are not merely not raised bodily, they are *dead in their sin*. That is to say, not even a disembodied state of glory and moral perfection is available through Christ, even though he died for their sin. The Resurrection is not merely the last stage of our redemption and glorification, the other stages of which can be had prior to the

Resurrection. Paul's argument will not tolerate such an idea. The Resurrection cannot be divorced from our redemption and glorification at death. We pass from death into *life* in its fullness, not into a state of disembodiment. In the Bible, when the breath of life departs from man he experiences *death* not life. If this were not so death would not be a curse, but the door to glory. Christ delivers us from sin and *from* its consequence, *death*; he does not deliver us *into* death. It was *sin*, disobedience, that delivered us into death.

A very pious lady once said to me when this subject came up: "Death is the most natural thing in the world. I am looking forward to it." This Christian lady was not looking forward to the Resurrection, despite Michael Kelley's claim that every Christian believer longs for the Resurrection. No, she was looking forward to the state of disembodied "glory" she believed awaited her. But a disembodied state, a state in which the breath of life has departed from man, is *death*, not life, however that state should be conceived. Death is *not* natural. It is completely *unnatural*, a perversion of God's creative purpose for mankind, God's curse on man's disobedience. It is not God's blessing or a condition of rest into which the believer is delivered by death; it is the condition of the curse *from* which we are delivered in Christ. Death is not a state of glory in any sense; it is not *life* in any sense. Of course Christ has overcome death and delivered us from it. But how? By his resurrection, which is the paradigm for our deliverance. Without this resurrection there is *no* salvation of *any* kind, not even an incomplete salvation in a disembodied form. Without the resurrection of Christ, who is the firstfruits, the pattern of our own resurrection, there is no redemption; we are *perished*. And if there is no resurrection we are perished even if we are, says Paul, *in Christ*, i.e. even though Christ has died for our sin. Christ's resurrection is the pattern, the paradigm. Without that resurrection it is not merely that we do not enjoy the full benefits of redemption or do not enjoy it in its final form; we have no redemption *at all* says Paul—we perish. But those who hold to an intermediate state do not accept this. They maintain there *is* redemption without the Resurrection, implicitly if not explicitly, in this state of disembodied "glory." Resurrection is not the substance but the decoration of our redemption in this perspective; the final touch or final form, but not the substance (though some seem to object to the idea of a *physical* resurrection at all). But Paul does not give us a two-stage salvation, a redemption experienced in two forms, a disembodied intermediate form and a final corporeal form. He says that without the Resurrection, which for those who hold to the intermediate state is only the final form of our redemption, there is no redemption of any kind, not merely an intermediate form of redemption. Without the Resurrection we perish.

The glory of our redemption in Christ is not consistent with the state of death, which is a curse for sin, and however much the state of death is decorated with pagan notions of the afterlife based on a dualistic understanding of man's nature such a state is not compatible with the biblical conception of life or salvation. Man is delivered in Christ *from* the grave, not *into* the grave. The condition of being dead is not the first instalment of our salvation; it is the curse we must all suffer for sin, *from* which we are delivered in Christ. The biblical conceptions of life, death, and death as the curse for man's disobedience, from which mankind must be delivered by Christ, is distorted by the theology of the intermediate state. Michael admits as much when he says "The promise of the gospel, then, rests upon the hope of the resurrection. Jesus' resurrection is the ground of our own hope of rising from the grave [i.e. death—SCP] and living forever." But he seems to miss the full import of this. If it is possible for the dead in Christ to enjoy deliverance from sin and moral perfection in glory in fellowship with God in a disembod-

ied state, then their redemption does not rest on Christ's resurrection from the dead, since this state of disembodied rest does not conform to the pattern of Christ's resurrection at all; it is different in kind and quality. Nor does it conform to the biblical conception of man's nature. In that case we must ask what kind of redemption this is.

Fourth, we are told in Heb. 11:39–40 that “these all [i.e. the Old Testament saints—SCP], having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better things for us, that they *without us should not be made perfect.*” The word translated “be made perfect” (τελειωθῶσιν) means in this context to be brought to perfection in an ethical and spiritual sense.<sup>18</sup> Paul states categorically that the Old Testament saints, and by implication all the saints who have died before us, will not achieve this state of moral and spiritual perfection without us. Yet it is just such a state of moral and spiritual perfection that the intermediate state posits—at least for Protestants—of the Old Testament saints, and the Christian saints also, *prior* to those who come after them. In other words, the intermediate state, at least as understood by Protestants (cf. Shorter Catechism A. 37), asserts precisely what this text denies.<sup>19</sup>

Fifth, my assertion that there is no intermediate state is based on texts (such as those discussed above and to follow) that teach there is no intervening state of disembodiment for man while he waits for history to be completed before the general Resurrection of dead on the Day of Judgement; that in fact, at death, men face the Judgement directly. In other words, at death we pass from this mortal life directly to the Resurrection and Judgement: “it is appointed unto men once to die, *but after this the judgement?*” (Heb. 9:27). In the light of this text how are we to view the idea of an intermediate state? If we must assume on the basis of this text that there is no intermediate state, as I maintain, what is left of the interpretation of 1 Cor. 5:1–8 that *does* assume such a state? Those who assume there is an intermediate state have more problems to solve than those who do not make this assumption. How are they to make sense of what seems to be a contradiction in Paul's words? And how are we to make sense of Heb. 9:27 and 11:39–40? The fact that they may not have noticed the problem does not mean it does not exist.

As I have already said, I have been sympathetic to the view put forward in my April editorial for many years. But I had always pulled back from it. The reason for this was that I could not reconcile 2 Cor. 5:8 with this view. I had the opinion that I could not accept it until I had an adequate explanation of 2 Cor. 5:8 that was consistent with it. More recently, however, I have changed my mind even though I still do not have a satisfactory explanation of 2 Cor. 5:8. What made me change my mind? I came to realise that in attaching such importance to that one text I was failing to accord equal importance to other texts, texts that in fact I now believe have a stronger claim as proof texts than 2 Cor. 5:8.

In particular I was obliged to reconsider the meaning and import of Heb. 9:27. This is at least as definite in its denial of an intermediate state as Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 5:8 seems to

be an affirmation of it. In fact, I believe Heb. 9:27 has far more weight behind it in terms of the witness of other Scriptures. 2 Cor. 5:8 is the only fly in my ointment so to speak, whereas if I accept the idea of an intermediate state I end up with more flies in the ointment. In that case what do we make of Heb. 9:27, and not only Heb. 9:27 but the arguments above regarding 1 Cor. 15.

If we adopt the biblical hermeneutic that Scripture must interpret Scripture (rather than letting Plato interpret Scripture), I am compelled to reject the intermediate state since there is considerable biblical evidence against it, whereas there is only 1 Cor. 5:8 standing against the rejection of it. In doing this I am simply trying to be honest about my lack of understanding of that one text and applying the confessional principles that “The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself” (WCF I.ix), that “All things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all” (WCF I.vii) and that “when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture, (which is not manifold, but one,) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly” (WCF I.ix). As far as the doubts of Presbyterians are concerned, therefore, far from my position being unconfessional, I have arrived at it by the application of those principles espoused by the Westminster Confession itself for resolving such difficulties. These principles are in my judgement sound and their use overrides any particular dogmatic conclusion arrived at by the Assembly on this point, since the Confession itself teaches that “All synods or councils since the apostles' time [and this includes the Westminster Assembly itself—SCP] whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are *not* to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both” (WCF XXXI.iv). It seems to me, therefore, that these should be the matters foremost in the minds of all Presbyterians, not whether I disagree with the Westminster Confession on some particular point. In fact, I believe my adherence to these confessional principles entitles me to claim confessional orthodoxy every bit as much as anyone who should disagree with me on this point, unless of course we are to adopt the wholly unconfessional principle that some Presbyterians adopt, namely that one may not teach anything that is contrary to the Westminster Confession even if it is *biblical*, because the Westminster Confession is the constitution of the Presbyterian church, not the Bible—a teaching that is actually professed by some Presbyterians. The Puritans who hammered out the Westminster Confession would doubtless turn in their graves at hearing this—or perhaps just undulate in their ethereal bliss. It is my belief, based on the above quotations from the Westminster Confession, that strict subscription to the Westminster standards as practised by many Presbyterian churches is, ironically, *unconfessional*.

If, then, we adopt the biblical and confessional principle that Scripture must interpret Scripture, it seems to me there is far more weight behind Heb. 9:27 than there is behind this one difficult text, namely 2 Cor. 5:8. In letting the clearer passages of Scripture direct my understanding of this issue I have come to the conclusion that although I have as yet no answer to the problem that 2 Cor. 5:8 throws up for my position, I am bound to reject the notion of an intermediate state. Not only that, but those who accept the idea of an intermediate state face even more serious problems. The problems facing my position are nowhere near as difficult as those facing that of my correspondents. I have only this answer for them: I do not know what Paul means in 2 Cor. 5:8. But what does the Bible mean by teaching in Heb. 9:27 that men pass at death from this mortal life straight to the Judgement? Why in 2 Cor. 5:1–4 does Paul teach that we shall not be disembodied? Why does Paul not give teaching on this intermediate state in 1 Cor. 15 where it would most

18. G. Abbott-Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 442.

19. Doubtless, Heb. 12:25 will be quoted against my position at this point. But this would be to misunderstand the text. Paul's argument in Heb. 12:18–24 does not address the issue of the intermediate state. The contrast intended is between the two covenants, represented by the two mountains, Sinai and Zion, *not* between this preset life and the intermediate state. To use Scripture in this way as a compendium of discrete (i.e. decontextualised) premisses for theological syllogisms based on presuppositions alien to the text and to the witness of Scripture as a whole is to twist the Scriptures and abandon any pretence of sound hermeneutics.



naturally be found? Why does he in that passage teach that without the Resurrection there is no deliverance from sin, when according to those who accept the intermediate state the dead souls of believers are already, though disembodied, and prior to the Resurrection, enjoying a blissful state of salvation in the presence of the Lord? And why are we taught in Heb. 11:39–40 that the saints who have died before us will not be made perfect without us, if they now enjoy precisely that state of moral and spiritual perfection in the intermediate state, as the Shorter Catechism teaches? These questions must be faced squarely by those who maintain the validity of an intermediate state.

Sixth, suppose I am wrong. What then? Well, what judgement does Heb. 9:27 refer to? Does it refer to a judgement antecedent to the Last Judgement, which takes place at the Resurrection? That is to say, is there a judgement immediately after death at the beginning of the intermediate state, the afterlife? If so what about the Judgement that takes place at the general Resurrection? Are we to suppose there are two Judgements? Hardly. The whole of Scripture is against this. This is not an inconsiderable problem for those who would accept the notion of an intermediate state. Indeed it is far more serious than the problem created by 2 Cor. 5:8 for my position.

The fact that the problems mentioned above may not have been faced squarely, or even recognised by many, does not mean that they do not exist. It means only that the prevalence of the Greek dualistic background to much theological speculation on this issue that has taken place in the past has hidden them. The more this issue is debated against a denial of that dualistic world-view, the more these problems will become apparent.

Steve asks where Christ ascended to. He says “There must be a location . . . where the resurrected, glorified Christ is now—mustn’t there?” Well, I confess that this raises a very difficult question. But can Steve tell me where Jesus is? Turn left just after Jupiter do we? Maybe he’s in the café at the end of the universe. I readily admit this is a difficult question for me to answer. But Steve cannot really answer this question any better than I can. If heaven is a place in the sense that Steve maintains, it is theoretically possible to travel there. This is the logical consequence of his position, if I have understood him correctly. I cannot answer his question. But I think he would have at least as much difficulty answering it himself if he were to be honest. The question creates as much of a problem for his position as it does for mine.

Michael Kelley says “Well, what is my point? What criticism am I supposed to be advancing from all this?” At this point in reading his letter my impression was that he is struggling to keep hold of the idea of an intermediate state on the basis of the texts he is interacting with. But the problem is, there is nothing much to hold on to in Scripture that cannot be just as well explained from my point of view. I felt that he never quite got to say what he meant, or at least to demonstrate it with an argument I found convincing. What he is saying seems so vague to me. We may get some vague idea of an afterlife from reading *between* the lines of Scripture with Plato’s spectacles on. But that is not a valid reading of the lines of Scripture itself.

Michael says that if he understood me correctly I “draw the same conclusion for the Christian as for the non-Christian in the matter of life and death, a conclusion that is . . . mistaken.” I cannot see how I did this. If by this what is meant is that for believers and non-believers alike there is no intermediate state, then obviously it is true. But it seems to me more is intended here. If I have understood him correctly he is saying that my view offers the believer no hope of an existence after death that is more blessed than that of the unbeliever. If this refers to an intermediate state it is of course true in one sense, although what in fact I offered was not an existence that was no different,

but rather no existence at all. But this point was made only when looked at from the point of view of the here and now, this life of mortality. To the living the dead do not exist as living souls. From the point of view of the one who dies this is far from being what I said. In fact, it is just this contrast that my position emphasises. My denial of the intermediate state means precisely that for those who have died there is an *immediate* contrast between the believer and the non-believer of the *fullest* and *most* consummate kind, since death brings them immediately to the general Resurrection and Judgement, at which point the believer enters not into a state of half-blessing in a disembodied existence, i.e. an afterlife of rest and waiting for the Resurrection, but into the full-blown redemption that awaits all believers in their glorious resurrection bodies. The non-believer also is raised and enters immediately into judgement with God, followed by eternal damnation. The contrast could not be greater. The contrast between the believer’s and the non-believer’s condition is certainly no greater in the supposed intermediate state. It is in fact far inferior.

The same point can be made about Allen Baird’s objection. He says: “What help is it to tell a dying Christian that they [*sic*] might not yet experience fellowship with Christ or the saints for millennia?” I did not say that believers would not experience fellowship with Christ for millennia. I said that at death men pass directly to the Judgement, and in the case of believers this obviously means into the full enjoyment of their redemption. They experience no period of waiting. This objection still assumes the experience of an intermediate state. In order to experience something one has to have objective existence. People who do not exist as living souls do not experience the passage of time. They do not experience anything *because* they do not exist as living souls. They do not wait for anything, i.e. experience the deprivation of their full redemption while they wait year upon year in a disembodied state for the resurrection of their bodies. Such waiting is a feature of the intermediate state, not of anything I said. I contend, in fact, that the comfort I offer to the dying believer, *because* I deny the intermediate state, is far *greater* than the comfort afforded by a spiritual disembodiment that offers only half of what is hoped for. It is Allen’s hapless believer who must spend millennia waiting for the consummation of his salvation, not the one who, in my schema, passes from this life at death straight to the Resurrection. My argument must be understood in terms of my presuppositions, not the presuppositions of those who hold to an intermediate state. There is no waiting for those who die. Waiting is something living souls experience, not the dead.

My denial of the intermediate state, therefore, by no means diminishes the contrast between the destiny of the believer and that of the non-believer. Rather, it gives this contrast the fullest expression possible. My point was that although for those who remain in this mortal life there is the experience of the passage of time prior to the Day of Judgement, for the dead person there is no such experience. There is no experience of succeeding days, years, ages, between death and the Resurrection. At death the believer passes from this mortal life into life eternal in the Resurrection. This is my answer to Michael Kelley’s point about Jesus’ statement: “I am the Resurrection and the Life” etc. Jesus said “I am the *resurrection* and the life” not “I am the *heaven* and the life.”

Now, it might be argued that this means the dead person leaves the realm of time altogether. Here we face a problem, the problem of understanding time. Modern man thinks he knows what time is. But time is a question that man has always struggled with. Since the invention of the clock we tend to think we have solved the problems that an understanding of time poses. But we have not. The invention of the clock has simply fooled us into thinking that we have understood time.

It is difficult to say that a man ceases to exist at death and leaves time altogether, since in a sense this is clearly not so. It takes time usually for decomposition to be completed, though cremation speeds up the process considerably. All the physical elements of a man's being remain initially, but eventually by some means or other they are scattered to the four winds. What we can say is that at death man ceases to exist *as a living soul*. The point of my editorial was to assert that at death man ceases to exist in time and space *as a living soul*. At death the breath of life departs from him. The intermediate state assumes that only his body dies, that as a living soul he continues in a disembodied form and experiences the passage of time in a state of either blessedness or misery. My denial of the intermediate state is not, therefore, a form of soul sleep, which I reject, since this presupposes just such a state of existence apart from the breath of life, i.e. that man has a soul that exists independently of the body after the breath of life has departed from him. It is this idea of the bipartite nature of man that I deny. When the breath of life departs from man he ceases to exist as a living soul.

To cease to exist in time and space as a living soul means that there is no experience of the passage of time, that there is, in fact, for the dead, no time to pass, because time is something that has reality for man only as a living soul. Since the dead person is no longer a living soul, time has no reality for him. The reality of death as experienced by man is that he passes straight from this mortal life immediately to the general Resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgement. There is no waiting because waiting is something that is experienced by the living.

I have come to the conclusion, therefore, that the concept of an intermediate state poses far more problems for Christian theology than it solves. It has been the source of all kinds of nonsense and heresy, for example the teaching on purgatory and Mary by the Roman Catholic Church. Nor can it be consistently argued from the Bible. Doubtless, if we assume its validity, we will be able to interpret certain texts in terms of it. These interpretations may seem to make sense on their own merits. But when they are assessed in the light of a more consistent systematic biblical theology and anthropology, i.e. when they are made to face the greater context of the whole system of doctrine taught in the Bible, they will be found wanting. The fact that this has not happened to any consider-

able degree yet is only testimony to the overriding influence of Greek dualism on the thinking of church theologians throughout the ages. In other words, the fact that these problems have not been noticed by many does not mean they do not exist. They will have to be dealt with eventually, even by the Reformed sects. But if we teach that there is no intermediate state such texts will simply be interpreted in line with this doctrine.

The one exception<sup>20</sup> to this that I have so far encountered is 2 Cor. 5:8. I must confess my ignorance at this point. But, for the reasons explained above, this problem cannot direct my overall thinking on this issue without creating much greater problems for my understanding of the Bible and the Christian message. To assume the validity of an intermediate state because of this one problem means, in effect, that I must begin to supplement the Bible with pagan ideas of the afterlife. This I reject as a valid hermeneutic. I reject the intermediate state and assert instead, therefore, the resurrection of the body as the Christian hope of life eternal in the world to come, a state into which the believer is delivered at death. *C&S*

20. I am not convinced that Phil. 1:23, which is taken to be similar in meaning to 2 Cor. 5:8, constitutes a significant problem for my understanding of this issue and that it cannot be consistently interpreted in terms of the view set forth above and in my April editorial. Regarding the parable of Dives and Lazarus S. D. F. Salmond writes: "To suppose it to be our Lord's object here to give a doctrine of the intermediate state, is entirely to misunderstand the parable. As is the case with the parable of the unjust steward which precedes it, the purpose of this discourse is a certain moral lesson; and that moral lesson is one touching the meaning of conduct in the present existence, the broad and simple lesson of the penalty of a selfish life. This is the real interest of the parable, to which everything else is subordinate. Our Lord's words about Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and the rich man in torment in Hades, occurring as they do in a parabolic discourse, and not belonging to the central purpose of the parable, cannot be charged with a distinct doctrinal meaning. If they teach anything on the subject of the interval between death and the resurrection, it is only the broad lesson that the Divine righteousness pursues men after death, and that the estimates of men here and the conditions of men here may be reversed by the moral decision of the hereafter" (*The Christian Doctrine of Immortality* [Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1907], p. 287).

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## Letters to the Editor

DEAR STEPHEN

In the April issue in the editorial you stated that Christian theology needs to do away with the idea of the intermediate state. I am writing to take this discussion further.

Before we get to the meat of the argument, I would like to point out some of the highly prejudicial language in your editorial: e.g. in paragraph 3 you say: ". . . the Bible does not teach that man is made of two different, essentially incompatible substances: body and soul." My objection is that traditional Christian anthropology does not posit that soul and body are "incompatible," but merely that they are two aspects of our nature.

Again in paragraph 7 you state: "The Bible does not teach that the eternal abode of the dead is a disembodied spiritual existence." Again I object that the very term "intermediate state" implies that this is not the final or eternal state of man. The very term, "intermediate" suggests otherwise. Christian

theology has always held to the resurrection of the body as the final state. You are erecting as straw man.

Throughout, you warn against the pagan view (paragraph 1) of the eternal state of the soul after death and rightly so, but simply because there are apparent similarities between Virgil and the "intermediate state" doctrine does not necessarily mean they are connected.

Your editorial raises the following exegetical and theological issues: First, your position implies denial of the soul as an aspect of our nature—the soul, in your view, becomes the animated body. That is the sum of the person. I would agree that it is sometimes used in that sense in Scripture. But a word does not have to have the same meaning in every passage. Thus on this basis when a man dies his breath leaves him and he ceases to be until the resurrection. If this is so what do you make of Jesus words in Mt. 10:28: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able

to kill both soul and body in hell.” This implies that there are two aspects to our nature. What do you say to Lk. 23:46: “Father into your hands I commit my spirit”—what did Jesus commit to His Father? Also for Stephen in Acts 7:59?

Secondly, your purpose is to deny the intermediate state. But Jesus’ words to the thief on the cross speak against this (Lk 23:43), and the Scripture shows the souls of the martyrs crying out to God in heaven (Rev. 6:9)—how can the dead be (even symbolically) doing this? Then, 2 Peter 2:9 says that the wicked are held for judgement. There is no need for this in your view. Next, Paul speaks about being absent from the body in 2 Cor 5:8 and then Phil 1:23. How can he be, in your view, as you state that we have no existence apart from our bodies? Finally, how can Jesus be said to “come with His saints” in 1 Thess. 3:13 if the saints are in their graves? This verse says that the saints are with Christ in heaven and then that he brings them with him at his return (1 Thess. 4:14).

Finally, your article says there is no “place” called heaven. Heaven, you say, is wherever the kingdom is manifested. My main objection to this is to simply ask: “where is Jesus today then?” If Jesus physically ascended (Acts 1), where did he ascend to? The constant answer of the NT is to “the right hand of the Father” (Acts 7:56; Heb 10:12 etc). There must be a location (and no I don’t know exactly where that is) where the resurrected, glorified Christ is now—mustn’t there? Moreover, the Bible speaks of heaven constantly as a place where God manifests his presence, rather as he did in the Tabernacle and Temples of the Old Covenant.

Furthermore, Heb. 9:12, 23-24, states that the earthly Tabernacle was a model of the heavenly reality where Christ has ascended. John’s Revelation speaks of this as a place, where angels and Cherubim dwell. Job 1 speaks of God calling the angels into his presence regularly.

While your position might appear attractive in that it clears away the whole question of the origin of the soul (traducianism v. creationism), I believe it raises more issues than it resolves. Yours in Christ our Lord,

Steve Hayhow

Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church, London

DEAR SIR

Your editorial in the last edition of *Christianity & Society* [Vol. IX, No. 2, April 1999] regarding the resurrection of the body was, to say the least, very interesting. As I am sure you are aware, it was also very controversial. Given the rigorous nature of your attempt to rid Christian anthropology of the spectre of Greek dualism, there does seem to be a consistency in the thesis that humans experience no sense of consciousness in the period between their death and the general resurrection. After all, if the traditional bipartite analysis of the human constitution requires rejection in favour of a more wholistic version, and if human consciousness is dependent upon (if not in some sense identical to) the animation of this constitution, it then follows that where there is no life, there is no consciousness either. However, foremost in the mind of every Presbyterian when confronted with this reasoning are Question and Answer 37 from the *Shorter Catechism* of the Westminster Assembly. “What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? The souls of believers are at death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.” But this is not only a question of *confessional orthodoxy*. Two more factors are involved. First, there is the more important matter of *Biblical exegesis* in the form of the obvious proof texts which the catechism quotes (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1; and Philip[p]ians 1:23). These three texts must be squarely faced by you. Second, there is the matter of *Christian comfort*. What help

is it to tell a dying Christian that they [*sic*] might not yet experience fellowship with Christ or the saints for millennia? Answers to these three issues would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Allen Baird

DEAR SIR

I would like, if I may, to offer a few comments by way of response to your editorial for April 1999. In general, your remarks made in support of Biblical and Christian doctrine concerning “The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting” were certainly appreciated, and, I might say, needed to be said. Your article offered an appropriate corrective to what has long been in Christian circles and thinking a misplaced belief that the goal of salvation in Christ is to “go to heaven.” This is seen by many, as you indicate, as what we may expect to happen to us when we die. Thus, the Biblical “hope” is construed (or misconstrued) as accomplished in a “disembodied ‘spiritual’ existence” or “afterlife” which we only enter into when we have left this world through death. This sort of thinking has been productive of much that is pernicious and false. As you further point out, it tends to foster a dualistic way of thinking. We set the “spiritual” side of man in opposition to his material, bodily side and conclude that only his “spiritual” side truly matters. This means, of course, that leaving this body behind in death becomes a worthy goal. And, if it must ultimately be let go of, then why regard our present life in the body as having any great purpose, either for us or for God? This, in turn, has helped to encourage a general disinterest in the things which pertain to God’s kingdom and purposes for the world more broadly. Instead of taking an interest in the kingdom and engaging the world on its behalf, many Christians withdraw into a “spiritual” ghetto and put their hope and trust in finally escaping this realm of existence.

All this, I grant, it is necessary to clarify and rebuke! However, in your argument to correct many of these sorts of misconceptions, you have, I believe, partially obscured the Biblical view of life and death—in particular, life and death for the Christian. Consequently I write this letter with the hope of offering some clarification to what I believe is the Biblical view on this issue. What I wish to say is far from exhaustive, but maybe it is a good place to start.

In John 11 we read the account of Jesus “raising” (or, perhaps, we should say “reviving”) Lazarus from the grave. When Jesus arrived at the grave site, and just prior to calling out Lazarus, we have the words which Jesus addressed to Martha, Lazarus’ sister: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, *even though he dies*; and whoever lives and believes in me will *never die*.” (italics mine) Astonishing words, these! Nowhere else in Scripture can we find the like, certainly not anywhere prior to the coming of Jesus into the world. Clearly, Jesus intended to ground the faith of his hearers not just in a great and immediate miracle, but in an act that will have implications well beyond the moment. Jesus, in the presence of death, pronounces himself to be the solution of it, a solution that demonstrates his power to reverse the effects of death, to defeat it as an ineluctable fact of human existence and to remove the dread of it in which the world has been fettered since the very beginning. It is no accident that this great miracle was performed by our Lord on the eve of his own death (and resurrection). Plainly, our Lord became a man in order to save more than man’s *soul*, rather, to save him in every sense of the word, body and soul or spirit alike. Salvation is about more than just an inner moral transformation; it is about being rescued from death, which your editorial rightly portrayed as the result of God’s curse on man’s sin.

In this text Jesus, we notice, attached a condition. He asked,

“Do you believe this?” These words imply that Jesus’ power to deliver from the bondage of death requires an act of faith on our part. He does not deliver us as a matter of course. In fact, those who do not believe remain under God’s curse, and ultimately will experience death in its full horror. But for those who believe, they can look forward to something else. Life! This life is the same life that Jesus himself achieves in his *resurrection*, that is, eternal life. The promise of the gospel, then, rests upon the hope of the resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection is the ground of our own hope of rising from the grace and of living forever. So much is true!

Before I say more about the resurrection, however, I would first like to draw your readers’ attention again to Jesus’ words in John 11, and especially to the word “life.” Resurrection and life go together, are inseparable from one another, but life and resurrection are not precisely the same thing. I say this, not with respect to Jesus, but with respect to man. This can be better understood if we ponder Jesus’ words in the next sentence. In the first place, Jesus said, “He who believes in me will live, even though (or ‘even if’) he dies . . .” Now this phrase could be construed as a reference to a future event, in other words, to the general resurrection of the dead at the end of history. Ultimately, of course, it cannot be dissociated from that event. After all, did not Martha, in v. 24, confess just that point? So Jesus might be thought to be speaking to that fact. However, I do not believe that that is precisely what he meant. It otherwise fails to make sense in the context. Why, after Martha had just confessed her belief in the resurrection at the last day, does Jesus repeat to her what she already knows? Of course, Jesus would want her, as he would want anyone, to understand that it is not just a matter of believing in the resurrection at the last day *per se*; it is fundamental that they should believe *in him* as the one who makes it possible through his own life, death and resurrection. But Jesus, it seems to me, is repositioning the resurrection as a future event by describing its power as “life” as not just available to us in the future but in the present. In other words, he is changing the whole meaning of life and death for the believer, not only for the future but for the present as well. Under the curse for man in Adam death is the end of life. But for the believer, Jesus is saying that this is no longer the case. Death is not the end of life, for “He who believes in me will live, *even though he dies!*” That this is not merely a reference to living “again” can be seen from the second part of Jesus’ statement, “and whoever lives and believes in me *will never die.*” The power of life in the resurrection is not something that first takes place in the resurrection at the end of history, but it begins to take hold in us at the moment of belief. While not denying Martha’s confession of the resurrection on the last day, Jesus, I believe, is saying that you do not need to wait until then for it become a fact of your experience. What is more, and this is the most amazing part, Jesus is saying that death no longer, for those who believe in him, has the power to cancel life.

Next let us turn to the apostle Paul and, in the first place, let us consider his words to Timothy. Paul writes: “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:9f.). As Jesus, in John’s account, spoke of “life” in association with “resurrection,” so Paul speaks of “life and immortality.” Clearly, for Paul, the new life that is available through Christ is more than merely “being alive.” It is life of a different order, on a different plane. It is equated with immortality. To have life is to have immortality. The question is, when does this “life” begin for the believer? Does Paul view it as something that only becomes available in the future, at the moment of the resurrection, or does it become ours in the present at the moment of receiving

the gospel? There is good reason to believe that it begins in the present and not merely in the future. But let us look at another text.

In Romans 8:10 Paul writes: “But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet *the Spirit is life* because of righteousness” (italics mine). Some versions read, “your spirit is alive because of righteousness.” However, I believe that this is a mistranslation. It is not a reference to the human *spirit*, but to the Holy Spirit. Paul makes it clear that the life of the believer is connected to the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is the power of life in the believer. This gift of the Spirit is made available to us in this present life. Thus, though the “body is dead,” that is, subject to death and decay, yet because of the believer’s connection to the Spirit life is not destroyed. In fact, life reigns precisely in the context of death. Paul uses the word “body,” intentionally I believe, to emphasise that death can only have, at the present, an effect upon the body. But the *man* in Christ (call it the “soul,” or whatever you will!) is not thereby destroyed. Of course, in time, the body, too, is to be included in the life that is made available to man in Christ through the Spirit. Thus, Paul continues in v. 11: “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will *also* give life to your *mortal bodies* through his Spirit, who lives in you” (italics mine). Again, Paul uses the word “bodies” intentionally to emphasise that it, too (*also*), will be included in the “life” which you have even at this moment “through his Spirit, who lives in you.” So life doesn’t begin at the resurrection, but it begins with the indwelling of the Spirit. At the same time, it certainly comes to its culmination at that time, for the body, too, will then participate in it.

Well, what is my point? What criticism am I supposed to be advancing from all this? Your editorial made a number of remarks in which either I misunderstand what you meant or else you intended to draw the same conclusion for the Christian as for the non-Christian in the matter of life and death, a conclusion that, in my judgement, is, in part, mistaken. Or, at least, it could be seen to lead to a wrong inference regarding what death means for the believer in Christ, and what it means for the wicked who die outside of Christ. For example, you stated that “the Bible does not teach an idea of the afterlife as a disembodied ‘spiritual’ existence where men and women are freed from the corrupting physical bodies that have tarnished the divine spark that is their soul.” The problem here is for us to disentangle two statements. The latter portion, which begins “where men and women are freed . . .” is less objectionable. Indeed, if we look on death as a “salvation” from matter and our physical nature, then we are not thinking Biblically. Rather, our thinking is more in keeping with pagan asceticism. However, if we use this grave error of thinking to suggest that the Christian death has the same ending for us as it does the non-Christian, then I think we are not looking at the Scripture carefully.

Again, you comment: “The state of death is a state that God has chosen in his wisdom to say very little about beyond the fact that it is a curse.” In one sense, this is true. No descriptions are given to us in any great detail about the experience of the condition of death itself. But this remark lends the impression that God had very little to tell us about the removal of death as a curse, how it is achieved, or how it becomes available to us is Christ “who brought life and immortality to light.” And all of this for the present as well as the future! Of course, you deserve credit for your mention of the final resurrection, a glorious event and the longing of every true believer in Christ. Indeed, it is obvious that this is the burden of your article! But you seem to suggest that if we die before that event, then death has the same meaning for us, the same impact upon us, as it does for the covenant breaker. This, I believe, is to forget that

“life” no longer has the same meaning for us as it does for the non-believer. Being “in Christ” we are removed from being “in Adam.” “In Christ” life is on an altogether different plane of reality. This reality becomes ours through the Spirit who lives in us at the present. Is the Spirit removed from us at the moment of our dying in the flesh? I do not think so, and I doubt that you do either. Of course, the body must, for a time, still undergo the corruption of death and decay. And over against this experience there stands the promise of the resurrection when we shall have our “bodies” back not simply in a corruptible state but in an incorruptible and glorious state. But before that great event we may rejoice that life is ours in Christ with whom even now we are raised up. While this presents to us a mystery, nevertheless, we should not fail to grasp its essential truth.

Does this mean, then, that we ought to entertain the notion of some sort of “intermediate state” after death? Well, yes, I think we should. Of course, an “intermediate state” is just that—an intermediate state and nothing more. It is not the final form of our redemption and should not, therefore, be looked upon as the goal of our redemption. The resurrection, when the complete man shall stand again upon the earth, an earth which itself must be transformed from its present subjection to vanity, is the goal. But, if we die before that time we should be confident that we shall not be separated from Christ who, Scripture declares, is presently, and for the moment, in heaven where he occupies the throne of creation and rules over all God’s creation order, whether things in heaven or things on earth.

Death, even for the Christian, is an enemy. Indeed, says Paul, it is the last enemy to be overcome (1 Cor. 15:26). And we should never be satisfied with anything less than the final triumph over death. We should certainly never be tempted to regard death *per se* as a gain for us in any sense. But, if we should have to die, we should rejoice in the knowledge that “to be absent from the body, is to be at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). I do not profess to know what this means for us as an experience, but it certainly should indicate that death has ceased to have for us the terror and finality it has for the sons of Adam. And if death has ceased to hold us in its tyrannous grip, then we should embrace life both for now as well as for the future, because life—life in Christ—is the victory we have over death. “I tell you the truth, he who believes *has* everlasting life” (John 6:47).

Sincerely  
Michael Kelley

Dear Sir

Your editorial “The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting” was so good, for the most part, that I could not help using it as teaching material. Indeed, an analysis of the residual paganism that lingers on in much of Christianity at the popular level is long overdue.

It cannot be overrated what the long-term effect of false doctrine is. In this particular case, the popular view of “heaven” is about as consistent with New Testament teaching on eternal life and the hereafter as a cactus is like a cauliflower. After all, who wants to spend eternity floating about on a cloud strumming a harp? No wonder a young teenage neighbour of mine frankly told me that she didn’t believe in heaven! Odd as it may sound, she still believed in hell! The popular view even disagrees with itself on one point at least, viz. do the saved in heaven know what goes on down here on earth? According to one view, expressed in a ditty called *Tell Mother I’ll be There*, they know nothing, and have to be told by God, hence the refrain from which it takes its name. The other view has them being able to see what happens on earth, and a woman journalist related how at one point she worried about what her grandmother thought of what she was doing while looking down from up in the sky.

Clearly they can’t both be right; on the basis of a future resurrection being the believer’s hope neither can be right!

As for the question, “what is heaven?” it is a matter of observable fact that in many languages, including the Biblical languages, the same word means both *sky* and *heaven*. Two examples of where *shamayim* in the Old Testament has to be understood as the sky (i.e. the atmospheric heaven) are Josh. 8:20 and Judges 20:40. Clearly there is no way the smoke from both the respective burning cities could have gone up more than about 100 feet, and that is a generous estimate! Two other remarks are in order. In dealing with the creation of man you could have noted that the Hebrew expression *nephesh hayyah* used in Gen. 2:7, and translated as “living soul” in the A.V., is also used in Gen. 1:20 to refer to sea creatures and in 1:24 with reference to land animals. This may come as a surprise to those who tend to rely on the A.V. translation to maintain that man has some distinct part of him that survives death!

Second, in dealing with the matter of Saul and the witch of Endor the comparison you made with the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration is scripturally insupportable. Elijah, so we read, was taken up to heaven without dying, which is what the account in 2 Kings 2:11 suggests. Moses, on the other hand, died (Dt. 34:5ff.). From Jude 9 it may be deduced that Moses was afterwards resurrected and taken to heaven, though that verse is somewhat obscure in meaning. By contrast, nothing is said about Samuel being either translated without seeing death or even about him being resurrected; all we read is that he died, and that he was buried in his own city of Ramah (1 Sam. 28:3a).

In that case, who is the “Samuel” mentioned in vv. 12, 15 and 20? The background to this incident provides clues. In v. 3b we read how Saul had expelled all mediums and wizards from Israel; somehow this woman (maybe others) had escaped the purge. Saul, faced with the Philistine invasion, is scared (v. 5b) and then tries to inquire of the Lord, only to get no answer “either by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets” (v. 6). His reaction to this is then to seek a message by the very agencies that he had previously sought to rid Israel of, means that God had forbidden (v. 7; see Lev. 20:6, 27; Dt. 19:10–12)!

Now if God had refused to answer Saul’s enquiries by the means that he had ordained, is it likely that he would do so by means that he had solemnly forbidden on pain of death for those who practise them? The other factor to be considered is the observed effect on Saul of what “Samuel” said. The king is said to have fallen “full length on the ground” and that “there was no strength in him” (v. 20). Although the immediate cause is given as the king having not eaten in the last 24 hours, the message of doom would inevitably aggravate this. Nor must 1 Chron. 10:13, 14, with its comment of Saul’s death in the battle next day be ignored. This passage is quite emphatic that Saul “consulted a medium, seeking guidance, and did not seek guidance from the Lord.”

Now if, as you say, attempts to contact the dead result in communion with demons, then it must follow that the “Samuel” in this incident must have been a demon masquerading as Samuel. As for why the demon is called Samuel, the explanation is simple: we have here the literary device called *the language of appearance*. Other scriptural examples of this are Gen. 19:1, 10, 12, 15; Josh 5:13ff.; and Dan. 9:21. Naturally, the context will tell us if this figure of speech is being used. This, along with the other factors I have adduced, was clearly in the mind of the translators of the Geneva Bible; of John Brown of Haddington when he made the annotations that make up his Self-interpreting Bible; and of large numbers of lesser men and women who have seen in this incident an example of spiritism.

Yours faithfully  
Barry Gowland

# JOHN MILTON'S ANATOMY OF PARLIAMENT

by Colin Wright

## PART II (concluded)

### Introduction

In his recent volume,<sup>1</sup> *Savior or Servant?*, David Hall provided us with an extremely interesting survey of Christian involvement in politics through the centuries. But while he was prepared to discuss the views of virtually everyone with a tentative attachment to the Christian faith, from Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego through to Karl Barth, he was strangely silent about the Cromwellian era. The names of Oliver Cromwell and John Milton are not even mentioned in passing. And though in a section dealing with “Puritans and Government (1600–1650)” he does look at William Ames and Samuel Rutherford’s *Lex Rex*, he quickly moves on to a much fuller discussion of the views of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. In addition, Hall left out a whole body of continental Christian political thinking from that era, a group of thinkers now dubbed the *Monarchomachs*—from their insistence upon the subjection of kings and rulers to the sanctions of the law.

What can possibly account for such a glaring omission in the otherwise laudable work of a genuinely Christian scholar? The reasons are not obvious and it would be unfair to speculate where certainty cannot be attained. However, Hall’s response to the Miltonian/Cromwellian mindset is not unusual. Neither Milton nor Cromwell fit the accepted pattern; they are viewed to some extent or other as mavericks, outsiders, unorthodox. And so, rather than study what they really said, most Christians—and historians—have been content to go along with the prejudiced criticisms of their actions in the Commonwealth and to ignore their justification for those actions.

Milton’s political theory is as sophisticated as any, and it justly demands our attention, particularly those of us who claim to be interested in, and concerned about, a truly Christian reformation of politics and political theory. Our essay cannot possibly go into all the intricacies of Milton’s ideas. We hope merely to raise both awareness of and interest in his work.

The following paragraphs will, hopefully, shed light on what we consider to be some of the foundational ideas in

Milton’s political thinking. I do not intend to address the problems of his practical involvement in political life; merely to explain the undergirding ideas that governed his outlook on what political life is and ought to be, especially in its reference to England—a nation, he would claim, that had had special and favourable Christian political influences for more than a millennium. This is well encapsulated<sup>2</sup> in his great rhetorical question: “God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in His Church, even to the reforming of Reformation itself; what does He then but reveal Himself to His servants and, as His manner is, first to His Englishmen?”

### *Liberty and the man of virtue*

The *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was published in February 1648/9,<sup>3</sup> only two weeks after the execution of Charles. Milton always gave out the reason for its publication as being to reconcile the minds of the populace to a *fait accompli*, rather than an attempt to justify what had been done. Yet we find here a vigorous and extensive discussion of the rationale for such an unusual deed, and an even more vigorous attack upon the Presbyterian party for having opposed it. Indeed, we wonder how anything but an acceptable reason for what had taken place could provide the kind of pacifying effect Milton intended. Perhaps this is all he had in mind in his explanation however.

For his services to the nation in this respect Milton was, the following month, appointed Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council of State.

But Milton’s tract is far more than a defence of regicide. A scholar of Milton’s intellectual stature could hardly pen such a defence without undergirding it with the most sure Scriptural and rational foundations. Implicit in these foundations would be the vision of a truly Christian life and a truly Christian society. Fundamental to these is a truly Christian view of government, and in working out this idea Milton delineated a precise place in his thought for Parlia-

2. *Areopagitica*.

3. In the seventeenth century the year ended in what we would regard as March of the following year. Thus February, 1648 for Milton would now be regarded as February, 1649. We will generally follow the modern dating.

1. David W. Hall, *Savior or Servant? Putting Government in its Place* (Oak Ridge, Tennessee: Kuyper Institute, 1996), reviewed in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (January 1997).

ment. Not, however, that he ever envisaged anything other than a return to, or perhaps better, a development and reprimatization of an institution that had in one form or another served the English people for a thousand years or more.

Thus Milton begins with the moral integrity of the individual and not with the legal niceties of the parliamentary institution. For him the whole point of the debate centred around, and was founded on, the idea of personal liberty. Tyranny is bad not simply because it can be costly, painful or irksome but because it prevents men from being the creatures God intended them to be:

If men within themselves would be governed by reason, and not generally give up their understanding to a double tyranny, of custom from without, and blind affections within; they would discern the better what it is to favour and uphold the tyrant of a nation. But being slaves within doors, no wonder that they strive so much to have the public state conformably governed to the inward vicious rule by which they govern themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Moral responsibility requires moral freedom. Men must be free to make their own decisions and to live with the consequences. Albeit, this freedom really means a freedom to live under the eye of God, to live out a life that is in keeping with the dictates of God's written Word and the rational nature with which man is endowed. Liberty is not mere licence; it is a moral condition that has, and requires, a sympathetic culture: "None can love freedom heartily, but good men; the rest love not freedom, but licence, which never hath more scope, or more indulgence, than under tyrants."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, liberty is inimical to tyranny:

Hence it is that tyrants are not oft offended, nor stand much in doubt of bad men, as being all naturally servile; but in whom virtue and true worth most is eminent, them they fear in earnest, as by right their masters . . . neither do bad men hate tyrants, but have been always readiest, with the falsified names of Loyalty and Obedience, to colour over their base compliances.<sup>6</sup>

Milton hated servility with a passion. His bitter recriminations against the Presbyterian party were not based on their opposing beliefs but on their being turncoats, men who had professed a cause and then abandoned it when it suited their interests—men whose profession of a righteous cause had been shown to be hollow. For them he reserved his most scathing denunciations:

Nor let any man be deluded by either the ignorance or the notorious hypocrisy and self-repugnance of our dancing divines, who have the conscience and the boldness to come with Scripture in their mouths, glossed and fitted for their turns with a double contradictory sense, transforming the sacred verity of God to an idol with two faces, looking at once two several ways; and with the same quotations to charge others, which in the same case they made to justify themselves.<sup>7</sup>

And just as he could expose the shallowness of their convictions with his left hand, so he would unmask the baseness of their carnal lusts with his right:

Because you have thrown off your Prelate Lord,  
And with stiff Vows renounc'd his Liturgie  
To seize the widow'd whore Pluralitie  
From them whose sin ye envi'd, not abhor'd . . .<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, it was their *character* that inflamed Milton's wrath, not their siding with the Royalists. They lacked *virtue*. This word has lost much of its earlier meaning; it is little more than a synonym for moral goodness.<sup>9</sup> For Milton's generation it signified far more: moral excellence and moral courage, manliness, a sense of honour, fortitude and reliability and, perhaps supremely, moral control and steadfastness. These men had exhibited none of these characteristics; their early professions of a cause had been abandoned in favour of the carnal pursuits of power and money; whereas they had once denounced pluralities and over-bearing power-mad clerics, they now sought the same things for themselves. *New presbyter is but old priest writ large*. This disgusted Milton. These men were not in control of themselves; they exhibited none of that working of the Spirit of God in their lives that Paul called *egocracy*: temperance (AV), self-control or self-government. They were more like animals than genuine men, swept along by the base desires of the flesh rather than living by noble principle.

Milton's fundamental vision of the genuine man was that of the responsible man. For to have genuine moral self-control implies that man must be free of all subservience to other men in regards to the manner of his life. It must be a self-conscious, self-determined, response to God's laws alone. There could be no intermediary; man is the servant of God and takes his directions for holy living from no other. Subservience to appetite, too, was equally demeaning and indicative of an inferior quality of character. As he was to ask in his great tract against censorship, the *Areopagitica*: "If every action, which is good or evil in man at ripe years, were to be under pittance and prescription and compulsion, what were virtue but a name, what praise could then be due to well-doing, what grammercy to be sober, just or continent?"

Thus his view of government was always going to be radically different from that of Hobbes, or Filmer or the Presbyterians. For them government meant, primarily, the *control of others*; for Milton it meant, primarily, the *control of self*. The opening paragraphs of the *Tenure* are crucial to an understanding of the way Milton thought about government.

It was from this starting point—the nature of man and his place in creation—that Milton developed his ideas of the place of civil government in the world. I do not mean by this that he developed those ideas *merely* as a logical corollary of his view of man. Indeed, he did not. He always sought to ground his views in Scripture; but there can be no doubt that

8. The opening lines of his poem, *On the new forcers of conscience under the Long Parliament*. Until the introduction of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners under Sir Robert Peel in 1833 the Church of England consisted of more or less autonomous trusts that were financed from tithes and the rents from land. Appointment to a parish cure was generally in the hands of local nobility and it was not unusual for these to be granted as favours rather than for spiritual reasons. Thus a man might hold the income from a number of such "livings" simultaneously. It seems a significant number of the "presbyterians"—really mild episcopalians—carried on the practice they had formerly denounced once the bishops had been ousted.

9. Much like the word *gentle*, which used to mean *noble, honourable*; as in *gentleman*.

4. *Tenure*, p. 190. Page references to the *Tenure* will be from the Yale edition of the *Complete Prose Works*, vol. 3.

5. *Tenure*, p. 190. 6. *Ibid.* 7. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

his view of the nature of man—made in God’s image—was bound to influence, if not direct, his emerging political theory.

*The origin of the State*

If Milton laid such stress on the liberty of the individual he would have to derive a theory of the origin and nature of civil government that was in keeping with this liberty.

To what extent his idea of the origin of government is speculative is debatable. In the *Tenure* his delineation is put forward with some passion and force:

No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were borne free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey: and that they liv’d so. Till from the root of *Adam’s* transgression, falling among themselves to doe wrong and violence, and foreseeing that such courses must needs tend to the destruction of them all, they agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and joyntly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement. Hence came Citties, Townes and Commonwealths.<sup>10</sup>

Milton reiterated this in his *Defensio*: “Men at first united into civil societies, that they might live safely, and enjoy their liberty, without being wronged or oppressed.”<sup>11</sup>

Does this mean that it is a purely human invention as far as Milton is concerned? I do not think we can load his language with that much meaning. In the very next clause of this same sentence he says something similar about the original founding of churches: “and that they might live religiously, and according to the doctrine of Christianity, they united themselves into churches.”<sup>12</sup>

Unlike our thinking, Milton’s was permeated with the religious dimension. For him there was no clear divide between God at work and man at work. If God instituted the church or the state then it would be through human agency one way or another. No one, on the basis of this last statement has accused Milton of owning a merely human origin of the church; so why should they suppose he owned a merely human origin of the State, especially as he amply rejected such a view? In a more philosophical terminology, the factual realisation of actual political institutions in history does not invalidate the argument that such a realisation must take place within the context of divinely pre-ordained structural laws for political institutions, albeit in a sin-ridden and thus faltering way.

This gathering into defensive communities was followed by the appointment of a policing force to restrain internal order and external defence:

And because no faith in all was found sufficiently binding, they saw it needfull to ordaine som authoritie, that might restrain by force and punishment what was violated against peace and common right. This autoritie and power of self-defence and preservation being originally and naturally in every one of them, and unitedly in them all, for ease, for order, and least each man should be his own partial judge, they communicated and deriv’d

either to one, whom for the eminence of his wisdom and integritie they chose above the rest, or to more then one whom they thought of equal deserving: the first was call’d a King; the other Magistrates.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose was clear: to provide a united front against aggression from within and without the community, to prevent unjust feuding, and to provide an impartial judgement on contending parties. These “rulers” were, he believed, chosen in terms of their special wisdom and integrity. What’s more, unlike the later Social Contract theorists, Milton denied any alienation of power in the appointment of this authority.

Not to be thir Lords and Maisters (though afterward those names in som places were giv’n voluntarily to such as had been Authors of inestimable good to the people) but, to be thir Deputies and Commissioners, to execute, by vertue of thir intrusted power, that justice which else every man by the bond of nature and of Cov’nant must have executed for himself, and for one another. And to him that shall consider well why among free Persons, one man by civil right should beare authority and jurisdiction over another, no other end or reason can be imaginable.<sup>14</sup>

There are a number of essential features here of Milton’s theory of the State’s function: Firstly, the kings or magistrates are not masters but servants and commissioners of the people. Secondly, their function is clearly defined and delimited as the exercise of delegated (entrusted) power for a specific purpose and no more. Thirdly, this power by right remains the power of the individuals who granted it.<sup>15</sup> (Milton would later argue that in the event of the breakdown of just government, the citizen was at liberty, indeed under duty, to redress injustices himself. There was a place—though rare—for taking the law into one’s own hands. He argued his case from reason and Scripture, but this would be outside our present remit to pursue). Fourthly, any other arrangement, whereby the king or magistrates had a right to issue commands simply by virtue of their office was contrary to any genuine idea of political liberty. A fifth is implied but not stated. Indeed it is implied by all that Milton writes about the rise of the State in the *Tenure*. It is that such appointments would mean that a *general representative council of the people* would have met to decide on such appointments. Milton regarded these councils as *parliaments* in fact even though they were not so in name.

Milton proceeds to describe the next stage in the evolution of civil government. The failure of some to rule as they ought led to a further curbing of the scope of the magistrate’s remit. The people decide to define for themselves precisely what laws they will be governed by; it is no longer to be left to the magistrate’s discretion.

These for a while govern’d well, and with much equity decided all things at thir own arbitrement: till the temptation of such a power left absolute in thir hands, perverted them at length to injustice and partialitie. Then did they who now by tryal had found the danger and inconveniences of committing arbitrary power to any, invent Laws either fram’d, or consented to by all, that should

13. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

14. *Ibid.*

10. *Tenure*, p. 198.

11. Milton, *A Defence of the People of England (Defensio pro Populo Anglicano)*. In *Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 63.

12. *Defence*, p. 63.

15. “The power of Kings and Magistrates is nothing else, but what is only derivative, transferr’d and committed to their trust from the People, to the Common Good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be taken from them, without a violation of thir natural birthright” (*ibid.*, p. 202).



confine and limit the authority of whom they chose to govern them: that so man, of whose failing they had proof, might no more rule over them, but law and reason abstracted as much as might be from personal errors and frailties. *While as the Magistrate was set above the people, so the Law was set above the Magistrate.*<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the rule of law meant, as it still should, we believe, not so much that the people are governed by fixed laws rather than personal commands of the ruler, but much more that the ruler himself is limited in ruling by the laws that the people have given him. So that as Milton truly says, *While as the Magistrate was set above the people, so the Law was set above the Magistrate.*

The modern constitutional state is almost complete; all that remains is to ensure that the ruler, king or magistrate, is put under formal restraint, *as a condition of his tenure of office*, to do no other than execute the people's laws for them:

When this would not serve, but that the Law was either not executed, or misapply'd, they were constrained from that time, the onely remedy left them, to put conditions and take Oaths from all Kings and Magistrates at thir first instalment to doe impartial justice by Law: who upon those termes and no other, receav'd Allegiance from the people, that is to say, bond or Covenant to obey them in execution of those Lawes which they the people had themselves made, or assented to. And this oftimes with express warning, that if the King or Magistrate prov'd unfaithfull to his trust, the people would be disingag'd.<sup>17</sup>

Was Milton propounding a fanciful dream, a myth? To what extent did he believe that history evolved precisely as he related it? It was not a subject he discussed in any depth but a few pointers are available. To begin with, the asseveration with which he begins the description must be taken seriously, i.e. "No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny . . . etc." This is about as categorical as one can get. To Milton at least, this was a well-known and incontrovertible fact. This may, of course, account for the fact that he gives little if any documentary evidence for his assertion. Then again, we have to look at the way in which Milton normally put forward an argument. Reading his prose works through we find that there is always a strong disposition for close argument based upon reason and facts, especially historical facts. Though Milton could use Scripture as well as the next Puritan, he was prone to a much more elaborate use of historical evidence than his contemporaries. It is extremely unlikely that he would have abandoned this rigorous line in favour of a dogmatic and speculative argument, especially as he was fully aware that he was writing in an almost life-and-death situation, not composing an academic exercise. His enemies—and particularly the Presbyterians after they read this tract!—would conduct a diligent search into every turn of his argument.

Strange it is that though Milton is widely recognised as a republican radical, his arguments in political theory as well as theology are deeply embedded in historical precedent and tradition. Granted, his historical arguments are as often as not derided but we would maintain that their cogency can only be denied if the assumption is first made that previous generations always understood their actions with the same degree of self-consciousness that Milton enjoyed. In reading Milton today we have to distinguish, on the one hand, between the principles he claimed have

always governed British political culture and, on the other hand, the seeming contradiction of the historical facts. This is particularly clear in the example Milton raises of the acceptance of William the Conqueror. Milton is at pains to point out that William only obtained the crown of England in return for a promise to uphold the traditional laws of England. Twice was he presented with this condition before he was eventually crowned at St Albans. Milton's argument is valid: Even in 1066 England had a "parliament" that was custodian of its laws and which could—at least constitutionally—make or break a king. William submitted to the "ordeal" probably more as a matter of discretion than principle, but this does not hide the fact that Milton's analysis of the constitutional position was correct.

In this analysis Milton was not alone, and neither was Britain. In his study he had not neglected to research the continental history and found himself in agreement with a number of historians, particularly the French. He writes:

They added also Counselors and Parlements, nor to be onely at his beck, but with him or without him, at set times, or at all times, when any danger threatn'd to have care of the public safety. Therefore saith *Claudius Sesell* a French Statesman, *The Parliament was set as a bridle to the King.*<sup>18</sup>

#### *Milton's view of laws and law-making*

In the area of law and law-making Milton's views are highly interesting and need to be explored. As we have explained, Milton held to the idea that the English had, as a people, established or enacted their own laws, and that they had done it on the whole with one eye (at least) on the Law of God. Despite corruptions brought in by the Norman Conquest—what he called their "gibberish laws"—the laws of England were by and large both Scripturally based and enacted with the consent and active participation of the English people. In this Milton sought to defend both the freedom of the individual and the nation. For laws could never be imposed on a free people by very definition. God alone could be the source of law. Milton's concept of freedom as personal maturity meant that man if free could never be directed in his actions or beliefs by the coercion of other men. Something of the idealist or utopian naturally suggests itself by the manner in which Milton expressed his views on this score. Nevertheless, when seen in the context of the real state of affairs in which he was debating, his views were not nearly so radical. It has to be remembered, if we are to understand what Milton is getting at, that he was debating within an historical context where large sections of the community—first the Episcopalians and then the Presbyterians (and in New England the Congregationalists)—were on a determined course to cast the shadow of prescription over even the minutiae of life. Milton's seemingly utopian vision must be read in the light of his Christian presuppositions—always implicit but rarely explicit or self-conscious. Milton's "utopia" of a free people always presupposes a Christian culture and a Christian mindset in the populace. Thus, in effect, law was never a matter of individual interpretation, never simply the right of private determination. Nowhere did Milton express this so clearly than in his denunciation of the right of the Stuart kings to enact even the best laws on their own authority.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 199f., my emphasis.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

18. *Ibid.*

Law in a Free Nation hath bin ever public reason, the enacted reason of a parliament; which he [Charles] denying to enact, denies to govern us by that which ought to be our Law; interposing his own privat reason, which to us is no Law.<sup>19</sup>

Law must always be a public affair. Its enactment, to be valid or meaningful in a free nation, demands the full consent and participation of the public. It cannot be imposed on them from above by a mere man. Parliament, thus, for Milton was the only way that genuine laws could be made in a free society. And since Britain *was* a free nation, it could not endure to submit “to be ty’d and chain’d to the conscience, judgement, and reason of one Man.”<sup>20</sup>

The abandonment of Milton’s vision of Parliament in our own day, and its assumption of the “prerogatives” it once denied the Stuarts at the cost of so much blood and suffering has born its true fruit. How can that be called a free people which is daily organised in every minutia of its ordinary business like some two-year-old? How much freedom is left—in the Miltonian sense—if the government, now ensconced in the House of Commons, daily instructs us on the need to brush our teeth regularly, insists on our taking the most absurd safety precautions (some of which have actually been proved to cost life), has determined which foods we shall and shall not buy, and even determined that we shall not have any but *straight* cucumbers on our tables? In the recent decision of the House of Commons to sign up to the European treaty to abandon the death penalty in any and every form (barring its own murderous acts of bombing Serbia) they have not only rejected God’s Law but have finally proved that they no longer represent the people of Britain either.<sup>21</sup>

Law, too, for Milton—even when enacted by the people—can never be the product of mere human reason or desire. Fundamental to any law making must be the principle of justice. And justice for Milton, we must understand, always meant God’s standard of justice. In the *Tenure* he expressed this most forcefully when he insisted that “Not mortal man, or his imperious will, but Justice is the onely true sovran and supreme Majesty upon earth.”<sup>22</sup>

### Conclusion

This has been an all too brief perusal of the wealth of detail in Milton’s political vision. We had hoped to cover all his major works but this has proved impossible.

The knowledgeable reader will realise that even in what we have said we have gone very much against the grain of so much Christian understanding of Milton and even more against the researches of modern academia. We remain totally unrepentant. Our express wish is that the reader will take down the great volumes of John Milton and study them for himself, and come to his own conclusions.

The first volume is his *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* written in 1649 to justify the execution of a scoundrel king. It was followed shortly after by *Eikonoklastes*, an answer to a

royalist tract, *Eikon Basilike*, that sought to demonise the regicides and beatify Charles Stuart.

When the Leyden professor Salmasius accepted Stuart money to attack the regicides in Europe Milton was commissioned to reply, and produced his now-famous, but all-too little read, *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (“Defence of the English People”) in 1651. (This book was written in Latin rather than English because it was meant to be available to all across Europe and not for home consumption). Three years later he published his *Second Defence (Defensio Secunda pro Populo Anglicano)* and on the eve of the Restoration bravely entered the fray again—though now completely blind—with *A Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*. While wholeheartedly recommending these volumes we would caution the reader about abridgements. Milton is often published in abridged form and this is useless for those who wish to understand what he had to say. The *Complete Prose Works* published by Yale University Press in the 1960s, though no longer in print, is the best source currently available. A very good edition of the complete *Tenure* and a new translation of the whole of the first *Defensio* is now available from Cambridge University Press in their excellent *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* series.

### Postscript

Britain is facing a political crisis. The future for most people seems to be a choice between becoming an independent but irrelevant third world nation on the edge of civilisation and becoming lost in the looming United States of Europe. The heat is on, as the new Nimrods of Brussels forge ahead with their plans to build a new Babel, that will outstrip the biblical prototype in its tyrannical hold over the lives and thoughts of its subjects.

Christians, for various reasons, look to the future with foreboding. A Christian culture that took nearly two millennia to build is rapidly crumbling before their eyes. The life of a once proud nation is being transformed out of all recognition. Denying our past, we press towards the all-embracing socialist nightmare of the Eurocrats. Our history, our culture, our institutions, even our borders<sup>23</sup>—defended so ably and so long by a noble line of heroes—are being dismantled stone by stone until we disappear without trace into the faceless void of Paneuropa.

And if the people be conquered and reshaped then so must its Parliament.<sup>24</sup> For the English Parliament is no mere centre of statist power—it is the “Commons of England met in parliament (discussion).”

Institutions change; they must, or they die. Parliament has changed. Over the centuries it has been moulded by events and ideas, sometimes for the good, sometimes for the

19. *Eikonoklastes*, p. 360. Page references to *Eikonoklastes* will be from the Yale edition of the *Complete Prose Works*, vol. 3.

20. *Eikonoklastes*, p. 359.

21. The overwhelming majority of the British electorate have always been, and still are, committed to capital punishment. On this and a number of other issues including Europe, parliamentary majorities have ignored the people they are supposed to represent.

22. *Tenure*, p. 237.

23. There are plans to break up Britain and continental countries into “regions” that cut across current national boundaries, thus effectively destroying the national identities. See esp. Christopher Booker’s excellent article “How Brussels Plans to Carve up the Kingdom” in the *Sunday Times*, 4th May, 1997. This satanic and reactionary policy is a parody of both the *Pax Romana* and the later, ostensibly Christian, *Holy Roman Empire* of Charlemagne. It is more in keeping with the policies of the great eastern leaders of the Assyrian and Babylonian pagan empires.

24. When one former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer first entered Parliament he expressed to a colleague the conviction and hope that, within his lifetime, the House of Commons would become but a local office of a European state. He had entirely misunderstood the nature of that institution: it is not the government of Britain but the meeting of the people.

worse. But it has always stood—to a greater or lesser extent—as the symbol and representative of the English people. It has always reflected the people’s character. It is, or ought to be, not the government of Britain but the assembling of the people of Britain themselves in council.

The character of Parliament as the people themselves met in council is rapidly being eroded. It has been so for nearly two centuries now. It has faced this trial in the past,

particularly in the seventeenth century. But in that encounter—with the statist messianism of the Stuarts—the people fought back and won the day. Milton was part of that fight, taking the part of one who fought with the pen rather than the sword. His literary struggle for the cause of the liberty of the people of Britain and their representation in and as Parliament is well worth studying as we face equally, if not more deadly, testing times ahead. *C&S*

# HOW I BECAME A CREATIONIST

by *A. J. Monty White*

In this article I want to relate how I came to be a creationist and how I got involved in speaking and writing about creation and evolution. Although this was not a long pilgrimage, it was a fairly difficult one. The main reason for this was that at the time of this pilgrimage there was no one I knew to whom I could turn for satisfactory answers to the many questions I had about creation and evolution.

Like many other Christians, I have had my fair share of problems in my Christian walk. As soon as I became a Christian, I went home and told my parents about my conversion. Their reaction was one of violent opposition. They rejected me and my Christianity and I felt very much alone. Then, four months later, I failed my first year university examinations. The reason for this was quite simple: I had spent a lot of my time at university investigating the claims of Christianity rather than revising what I had been taught in the lecture theatres and laboratory classes about chemistry, physics and mathematics. I was devastated by this failure. Apart from O-level Latin, these were the first examinations that I had ever failed. I remember thinking that my earthly father had rejected me and now it seemed that my heavenly father had done so as well. Nothing, however, could have been further from the truth. There is an oft-quoted verse of Scripture in the book of Romans which says “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28). This verse was a great help and comfort to me at that time as I clung on to it. However, it was many years before I saw that failing those examinations was for my good and that God would use it for his glory.

Amazingly, the university authorities allowed me to return to Aberystwyth to repeat physics and mathematics. Apparently I had passed the chemistry so well that they thought it would be a waste of my time to repeat that subject as well. However, I had to choose another science subject to study along with physics and mathematics. After discussing this with my tutor, I decided that I would study geology. At the time I knew absolutely nothing about this subject, except that it was to do with the study of rocks.

*Evolution—the bedrock of modern geology*

The first geology lecture I attended was given by Professor Alan Wood, then Head of Department. He gave a talk about the evolution of life on earth. He started off by telling us that chemicals which are the building blocks of living cells had originated on the earth by the action of sunlight on the gases in the atmosphere that existed on the earth several thousand million years ago. He explained how these chemicals had come together and formed a self-replicating chemical and that this evolved into a living cell. Single cells learned that they had a better chance of survival if there were many of them together and thus multicellular organisms evolved. Under the influence of natural selection the fit survived. Multicellular invertebrates grew spinal cords and changed into fish; fish changed into amphibians; amphibians changed into reptiles; reptiles changed into mammals and finally humans evolved. Professor Wood was at pains to point out that the human species was not the end. At the end of his lecture, he suggested that in a few hundred million years time, whatever was the most advanced creature on the earth at the time would find fossilised remains of humans and say, or perhaps by means of telepathy communicate with one another by thought, “How primitive!”

I went away thinking a great deal about what Professor Wood had said in this lecture. How could I reconcile its contents with what the Scriptures taught in the early chapters of Genesis about the creation and the early history of the earth? Also, what about the future? I could excuse Professor Wood for not believing in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the question that haunted me was, “Is the human race still evolving?”

*Theistic Evolution—A Compromise Position*

I decided to ask my Christian friends about creation and evolution. I must say that I was amazed at their response: they all told me to believe in evolution and interpret the early chapters of Genesis accordingly. Such a belief is called *theistic evolution*—in other words, you believe that evolution

has occurred and that God has controlled the processes. One Christian friend in particular shocked me by his replies to the questions I had about this matter, for he had strong Protestant beliefs and would go literally to the stake for the literal interpretation of some Scriptures, for example that Jesus is the *only* mediator between God and people (1 Tim. 2:5). Yet here he was telling me that the early chapters of Genesis could be interpreted as myths, allegories, legends and parables. Other Christians to whom I turned for help (for example, the pastor and the older members of the church I then attended) told me not to worry about this issue—all I had to do was believe that God was the Creator and that I should not worry about *how* he accomplished it.

Initially, I was not satisfied with the theistic evolutionary interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis that my friends gave me. I thought that they were doing these chapters a great disservice by not affording them a literal interpretation. But the more I discussed this matter with my learned friends, the more I realised that *all* of them believed in theistic evolution. At that time (1964/65) I knew no-one who gave a literal interpretation to the early chapters of Genesis. Eventually I, too, became a theistic evolutionist.

I enjoyed geology and within two years I had studied the subject to pass degree standard. As I have already said, I was a theistic evolutionist—I believed that evolution had occurred and God had controlled the processes. I never got into detailed arguments answering such questions as, “Who was Adam?” or “How long were the days in Genesis chapter one?” As far as I was concerned, it did not matter. God had made everything, including people, and he had used evolutionary processes. The days, Adam and everything else in the early chapters of Genesis were purely figurative.

I obtained an honours degree in chemistry in 1967 and I decided to continue with my study of chemistry by carrying out research in the field of gas kinetics in order to obtain a PhD. In January 1969, in the middle of my doctorate programme, I got married. I had met Irene in Christmas 1965 and we had courted for just over three years. During that time we had discussed with each other every major doctrine in order to ensure that we were “equally yoked”—something we both considered important. Although I had always told Irene that I was a theistic evolutionist, it transpired that she did not really believe me—she thought that I was only saying that in order for her to argue in favour of special creation. This was a ploy that I often used with her in order to discuss our beliefs: I would often take an opposite view in order for her to argue in favour of the orthodox view.

#### *Genesis—historical or mythical*

It was Irene who was responsible for getting me to accept a literal interpretation of Genesis. This did not happen overnight: it took over two years. When we were first married we lived a few miles north of Aberystwyth in a place called Ynys Las, which overlooks the Dovey estuary. One day Irene remarked that she thought that God was wonderful in making the scenery around our home so beautiful. I replied by telling her that I believed that all the scenery was the result of geological processes starting with mud being laid down in the Ordovician Period millions of years ago, and ending up with the Dovey estuary being gouged out by a glacier during the last ice age, a few thousand years ago. My wife did not like this interpretation and so we started arguing. Every time she

argued for a literal interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis, I told her that she did so because she was ignorant, knowing nothing of geology *or science for that matter!*

After a few weeks, Irene tried a different ploy. I came home one evening and she immediately asked me if I believed in Jesus Christ. I told her that this was a silly question to ask because she knew very well that I believed in him! She then asked me if I believed that I could have real, abundant, everlasting life in Christ. I answered in the affirmative and asked her where such stupid questions were leading. She then asked me if I believed in death. Again I answered in the affirmative. Irene then asked me where I thought death comes from. I remember answering that every living creature eventually reaches a point where it cannot replace all the worn out bits and pieces and so it dies. She then told me that I was wrong, for there was a verse which taught quite clearly that “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). She then pointed out that I believed that three things in this verse were real: Christ, life and death; but that, illogically, I did not believe in a real Adam.

#### *Who was Adam?*

Like all theistic evolutionists, I had problems answering the question, “Who was Adam?” I did not know whether to believe that the story of Adam was mythical, to teach us that the human race is sinful, or whether to believe that Adam was a man (or even a group of men) into whom God breathed his spirit so that the human race is endowed with a spiritual nature. Yet here was my wife showing me a verse from the New Testament that seemed to teach that Adam was a real historical person, and by implication that he was the one who was responsible for our dying. I remember thinking that if I had to believe in a real Adam, then I would be forced to believe in a real Eve, a literal Garden of Eden, a literal six days of creation and so on. I thought “That is impossible. In order to believe in all that I would have to commit intellectual suicide!”

As I have already said, at that time, there was no-one whom I knew who interpreted the early chapters of Genesis literally. However, this question of who Adam was really bugged me. In order to try to answer this question I read the New Testament to see what the attitude of the characters in, and the writers of, the New Testament towards the early chapters of Genesis was. I soon began to realise that in the New Testament all the events that are recorded in the early chapters of Genesis—the creation, Adam, Eve, the Fall, Noah, the Flood and so on—were accepted as literal and historical. There was absolutely nothing in the New Testament about their being mythical, allegorical, legendary or even evolutionary.

I saw, for example, that the Lord Jesus Christ accepted the early chapters of Genesis as being literal and historical by his reference to the creation of Adam and Eve and the events surrounding their sinning (Mk 10:1-12) and also by his reference to Noah and the Flood (Mt. 24:37-39 and Lk. 17:26-27). I was amazed at how many times the apostle Paul compares and contrasts the Lord Jesus Christ with Adam—there are whole sections of his letters to the Romans (see chapter 5), Corinthians (see 1 Cor. chapter 15) and Timothy (see 1 Tim. chapter 2) where this is the case. From these passages alone, it is obvious to see that a belief in a literal

Adam is absolutely crucial to the plan of salvation. If Adam did not fall from his original perfect state, then there is no sin, and hence Christ died for nothing. It also follows that if universal death through Adam's sin is a myth, then so is the doctrine of the Resurrection, and if this were so then as Paul points out in 1 Cor. 15, our preaching and faith would also be in vain.

As I read the New Testament, I also saw that Luke accepted a literal historical Adam in his account of the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ recorded in Lk. 3:23-38. Furthermore, the beloved disciple John accepted the historicity of the story of Cain's killing his brother Abel (1 Jn 3:12) and the apostle Peter showed his belief in a literal universal Flood (2 Pet. 3:6).

If Jesus, John, Luke, Peter and Paul all interpreted the early chapters of Genesis in a literal way, then what was stopping my doing the same? The simple answer to this question was "evolution." Apart from my wife, *everyone* I knew believed in evolution. At that time I knew of no educated person who questioned evolution, let alone any who did not believe in it. The question that confronted me at that time was, Is it possible not to believe in evolution?

#### *Creation confession*

In April 1969, Irene and I attended an open meeting at Shotton Baptist Church where we had married some three months earlier. During the service, I read Genesis chapter one and the first few verses of chapter two to the congregation and told them that although I believed that this is how God had created everything, I did not understand it and I asked them to pray for me that I would have a greater understanding about creation. I also promised them that I would return and tell them about it when I knew the answers to the many problems I had with this passage of Scripture. It was exactly two years later that I returned to that church with those answers. I was surprised at what I had discovered during that interval.

In those two years, I came to the conclusion that it was possible to reject the idea of evolution and accept the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis without committing intellectual suicide. I did not reach this conclusion hastily. I was extremely busy pursuing my research: first in gas kinetics for which I was awarded a PhD in 1970; and then in the study of the electrical and optical properties of organic semiconductors.

However, I made time to pursue three main areas concerning the creation/evolution controversy: chemical evolution; the fossil record; and dating methods. I did this by reading my old geology lecture notes and by reading evolutionary text books. Remember, at that time I was totally unaware of any creationist and I did not know of the existence of any anti-evolution/pro-creation book or article. It may therefore come as a shock to many to realise that I became a creationist by reading about evolution!

#### *Problems with chemical evolution*

Let me share briefly with you some of the reasons that persuaded me to become a creationist. The first area that I looked at was chemical evolution. I was amazed at the naivety of the statements that were being made by the chemical evolutionists. They were purporting to have proved

that life originated by chance on the prebiotic earth, and they were pointing to the results of their own laboratory experiments in support of such conclusions. Yet their experiments were designed not by chance, but by intelligent scientists. What in fact they were saying was, "If I can synthesise life here in my laboratory, then I will have proved that no intelligence was needed to create life in the beginning, and I will also have proved that it originated by chance."

In the famous Miller experiment conducted in 1953, a mixture of amino acids was produced by passing an electric discharge through a mixture of ammonia, hydrogen, methane and water vapour. Since that time, various mixtures of amino acids, sugars and nucleic acid bases have been produced in similar experiments. As these chemicals are the building blocks of living systems, it is argued that such experiments prove beyond doubt that life could have been produced by chance on the earth. Yet these experiments prove nothing about the origin of life for a variety of reasons.

First, because such experiments have been designed by intelligent scientists they have nothing at all to do with chance.

Second, in Miller's experiment, for example, amino acids were produced only because they were removed from the experiment as soon as they were formed. Had they been left in the apparatus they would have been destroyed by the same electrical discharge that caused them to be synthesised.

Third, the amino acids produced in all such experiments are formed in the right-handed as well as the left-handed forms, whereas living systems contain *only* left-handed amino acids. Fourth, had oxygen been present in the mixture of gases, amino acids would not form in such experiments. This point is extremely important because the evidence from geology indicates that the earth's atmosphere has always contained oxygen. Therefore the mixture of gases in such experiments does not mimic the composition of the earth's atmosphere. This means that the experiments have absolutely nothing at all to do with what may or may not have happened on the so-called pre-biotic earth.

#### *Evolution—the fossils say "No"*

The second area that I looked at was the fossil record—that is the remains of life-forms that are trapped in the sedimentary rocks.

I soon realised that the fossil record did not show the gradual evolution of one life-form into another as predicted, and demanded, by evolution. The missing links are called just that because they are still missing. None have ever been found. There are gaps in the fossil record at all the major breaks: fish to amphibian; amphibians to reptiles; and reptiles to mammals.

Furthermore, I realised that no fossil remains of any creature linking humans to ape-like ancestors had ever been discovered—ape-men are a figment of the imagination of the artists who draw them for the books in which they appear. I was also disturbed to read about the famous Piltdown forgery when a deliberate hoax had been perpetrated in order to make part of a modern human skull and the jaw bone of an orang-utan appear to be the fossilised remains of a half ape half human creature. If the evolutionists have the evidence for the evolution of apes into humans, why fake it?

### *Evolution dating*

The third scientific area that I looked at was dating. How do we know that a rock is such and such an age? As a chemist, I could see that the accuracy of any dating method relied on a number of assumptions; some of these were unprovable, and others were unknowable. For example, in order to determine the age of a rock by radiometric dating we must know three things:

- (i) the present concentrations of daughter elements in the rock;
- (ii) the original concentrations of daughter elements in that rock; and
- (iii) the rate of the decay of the parent into the daughter element.

Now in most cases it is possible to measure accurately the present concentrations of the parent and daughter elements in the rock. However, it is not always possible to know the original concentrations of those elements. Sometimes it is *assumed* that there was no daughter element present when the rock was formed, but there is *no way of knowing this*—it is just an assumption. Although we can usually measure the present rate of decay of the parent into the daughter element, we have no way of knowing if this has been a constant throughout time.

Of course, the proof of dating methods should be that different methods of dating should give the same age for the same rock sample. I was, however, amazed to read in scientific journals of different methods of dating giving different ages for the same rock sample. Often the authors of the article were endeavouring to discover why there were such discrepancies. I was also surprised to read that in the majority of cases the age from the fossil content of the rock was accepted as the most accurate age. I saw that there was circular reasoning here: the age of the rock was determined from the age of the fossil, which is determined from evolution; but the proof of evolution is the age of the rocks in which the fossil is found. In conclusion, I saw that the basis for dating rocks is evolution and the only proof of evolution is the age of the rock in which the fossils are found. The main evidence for evolution is therefore the assumption of evolution.

### *Creation—intellectually acceptable*

During this time, therefore, I began to realise that the idea of evolution was at best a hypothesis, and that it had not been proved. I became convinced (and still am convinced) that people believe in evolution because they choose to do so—it has nothing at all to do with the evidence. Evolution is not a fact, as so many bigots maintain. There is not a shred of real evidence for the evolution of life on earth.

It was now April 1971, and not only had I rejected the idea of evolution, I had also reached the conclusion that perhaps the early chapters of Genesis could be accepted as being literally and historically true. I did not have all the answers (who has?), but I did find a number of things of significance. First of all I realised that it made sense from the laws of thermodynamics to believe that in the beginning God created. I also realised from modern day observations and the evidence from the fossil record that plants and animals reproduce after their own kind as stated in Genesis chapter one. I had doubts about the accuracy of dating methods and began to question the vast age given for the age of the earth.

I began to think that perhaps some of the sedimentary rocks and the fossils that they contain could be explained in terms of the result of a world-wide catastrophic flood as described in the early chapters of Genesis.

However, two very significant events happened in my life in April 1971. The first was that through the post one morning I received a copy of *The Genesis Flood\** by Professors Henry Morris and John Whitcomb. As soon as I began to read this book I realised that there were others who had come to the same conclusions as I had, although they had, of course, discovered far more problems with, and had found far more arguments against, evolution than I had at that time. This book therefore confirmed and strengthened my new-found beliefs about creation and evolution and it was a great help to me.

The other significant event which happened to me in that month was that I was invited to speak to the young people at Shotton Baptist Church. This was the church where two years previously I had told the congregation something of the problem I was having with the creation/evolution issue at that time and had asked them to pray for me. I had promised that one day I would return to tell them how I had resolved this question to my own satisfaction. I therefore took the opportunity of speaking to the young people to share with them a little of what I had discovered about the problems with evolution and what the Bible taught about God's creating all things.

### *Effects of proclaiming creation*

Imagine my surprise when about three quarters of the way through my talk one of the young girls began to cry. My wife took her out of the meeting and asked her what was the matter. She was surprised to hear that this young girl was afraid that the Lord would return for her that night, as she was not right with God. The Holy Spirit was at work in her life convicting her of her sin. My wife then explained the way of salvation to her—that she could become right with God by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and that her sins could be forgiven if she trusted in his sacrificial death at Calvary. That night that young girl experienced the joy of sins forgiven. I had no idea that telling people that the idea of evolution was a lie and that God had created all things could have such an effect on a person's life!

At that time I was pursuing an academic career at the university at Aberystwyth. However, 18 months later I was appointed to an administrative post at the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology (UWIST) in Cardiff. A few months after moving to South Wales, I was approached to see if I would speak about the creation/evolution issue at an Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church in a town which is about 30 miles from Cardiff and which is situated at the head of one of the South Wales valleys. Apparently, the authority of the Bible was being undermined by a number of young people in the church who were insistent that evolution had occurred and because of this they insisted that you could not trust the early chapters of the Bible. The young people were also arguing that if you could

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\* Dr David Watts sent me this book. He and I shared digs and then a flat when we were students together at Aberystwyth. David is now Reader in Biomaterial Science at the University of Manchester. He has also served as Chairman of the Biblical Creation Society.

not trust the early chapters of the Bible, then you could not trust the later ones.

It was on a cold wet, windy February night in the winter of 1973 that I stood up to address a packed church. I spoke for about 20 minutes and simply told the congregation that there was no proof of evolution. I explained the problems associated with chemical evolution; I told them that there were no transitional fossils; and I informed them that dating methods were based on unprovable assumptions. I then suggested that it made scientific sense to believe that in the beginning God created and that there was much in the early chapters of Genesis that made scientific sense—for example, that plants and animals reproduce after their own kind.

I then asked for questions. I was overwhelmed by the response, for I stood there for the next two hours answering questions from that congregation. I could tell that the young people were at first openly hostile to anyone questioning the validity of evolution. But gradually, I could see that they were changing their minds as I showed them that there was no proof for their dearly held theory. They then started asking me about the early chapters of Genesis. It was at that meeting that I first had to answer the now familiar questions such as: How long are the days in Genesis one? What did I think about the Gap Theory—the idea that there is a long interval of time between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2? Where did Cain get his wife? Is it possible to get all the races from one pair of humans? Was the Flood at the time of Noah local or world-wide? What about dinosaurs? After the time of questions, I recall that we sang a hymn. Then the Pastor asked me if I would like to say a few words to round the evening off! By now I was full of what the Welsh call *hwyl* and I told the

congregation that what we needed in our country was for the Lord to raise up people to write and speak on the subject of creation and evolution from a creationist point of view. I said that we needed pamphlets, newsletters, articles, books, slide presentations, exhibitions, audio cassettes and so on—all telling the message that God is the Creator of all things. From the loud “amens” in the congregation, I concluded that they agreed with what I said. Later that night, as I lay in bed thinking about what had happened in that church with all those questions that were asked of me, I believed the Lord was calling to start writing and speaking on this subject.

My initial reaction to the prompting of the Lord was: “Who me, Lord?” However, over the next few years opportunities came my way to go to churches all over the UK to speak about why I believe in creation. Furthermore, I started a *Creation News Sheet*, which eventually had a world-wide distribution of several thousand. I was also approached by editors of Christian magazines and journals and asked to write articles about creation. One or two people also began to encourage me to write a more substantial work. This I did, and *What About Origins?* was published in 1978. This was so well received, that it encouraged me to continue to speak and write about the creation/evolution issue.

I hope that you have enjoyed reading about how I became a creationist. With hindsight, I can see that when I failed my end of first year examinations at university, God did work in all things for my good, as promised in Rom. 8:28. Had I not failed those examinations, I would never have studied geology; I would never have started questioning what the Bible teaches about creation; and I would never have been used by the Lord in this area. C&S

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# Any Questions

## DOOYEWEERD MADE EASY

by Colin Wright

*Thanks for your excellent introductory article to Dooyeweerd's Christian philosophy in the recent Christianity & Society [Vol. IX, No. 1, January 1999]. It was most helpful. I must admit to having had a somewhat sceptical view of Dooyeweerd, not because of Van Til and Frame, but primarily because of the criticisms of Clark and Nash. They claim, (1) that Dooyeweerd's choice of and relation between the various modal spheres is arbitrary, (2) that Dooyeweerd makes an unbiblical dichotomy between "religion" i.e. pre-theoretical thought, and the "faith-sphere," and (3) that Dooyeweerd limits the truths of theology-proper to its own small "sphere" when it should be allowed a more universal significance.*

*One matter I would like to ask you myself, however. You made it clear in your essay that, for Dooyeweerd, such social structures as the family, church, and state, are not created by man and therefore cannot be erased by man, but are rather a necessary part of the creation by God, and are there to be discovered and developed. I had never thought of this before. Does this mean that even in these days of anti-marriage and anti-family attitudes, our society will find out that, despite itself, it will never be able to shake these ordinances off? Or does it mean that society will seek to alter them into something different, something more "humanist," as it is doing with the Sabbath and adoption and education already? Is your point simply that non-Christian, or anti-Christian, social structures are doomed to failure in practice, just as non-Christian thinking is doomed to absurdity in principle, because it is not in harmony with or based upon the natural i.e. God-ordained, order?*

MANY thanks for your kind words about my Dooyeweerd article. I have had more response about this than all previous articles put together. Fortunately, too, it has all been positive. There is a lot of bad feeling about Dooyeweerd in our circles, much of it unfortunately justified. Certain groups have used it as a justification for introducing the most awful ideas into their "Christianity." They have prompted Gary North to say, "When they are not Barthians, Dooyeweerdians are social antinomians." I don't think the generalisation in this condemnation is fair, but it does express a genuine element of truth. As far as I have been able to determine, it is not what Dooyeweerd himself taught and I don't see why he should be pilloried for other men's sins.

I have not read either Nash's or Clark's critiques of Dooyeweerd; not because I don't want to but because my purse is limited. In fact I have found negative critiques very useful in coming to a clear understanding of Dooyeweerd, so the more I can get the better.

If your conclusions from reading them are correct, however, I am very disappointed. Indeed I find their claim quite extraordinary in the light of my own reading of the *New Critique*. To say that the modes or aspects are "arbitrary" is totally unwarranted. I wonder how such serious and respectable scholars can make such mistakes. Now, I accept that they might disagree with Dooyeweerd's modal theory, they might disagree with the conclusions he draws from it, and they might disagree with the validity of his method of isolating the aspects. But to say that it was arbitrary is really not on.

Of course, I cannot at this time tell if you have rightly understood Nash's and Clark's criticisms but it is certainly the case that others have made such a criticisms. Take, for example, Vern Poythress in his *Philosophy, Science and the Sovereignty of God*. He opens Appendix 3 with the remark: "I have been troubled by the apparent arbitrariness of Dooyeweerd's list of fifteen aspects. Why these and only these? Why in this particular order? Dooyeweerd makes no attempt to build up to the aspects by argument, but simply hands them over full-grown on the first page of the *New Critique*."

I have to ask, Did he ever read past the first page of the *New Critique*? I suspect he didn't get much farther in any case. Did he never read Volume 2 of the *New Critique*? Even a cursory glance at the first chapter of 54 closely-reasoned pages would be sufficient to show that Dooyeweerd took his task of isolating them very seriously indeed as a matter of scientific principle. As I said, they might not agree with Dooyeweerd's method but to accuse him of not having one is just not fair, and at first glance looks dishonest.

The second point you make, concerning the faith sphere, has always been a problem and can hardly be resolved here. Many people within and without the circles of Dooyeweerdian philosophy are in profound disagreement with him on this issue. Some of them have cogent argument to put forward. Many people, however, automatically assume (as I did for some time) that the faith aspect is related solely to religion, whereas it is concerned with the idea of "certainty" and "belief," a much broader issue. This is not helped by the fact that faith and belief are no longer viewed as synonyms, the word faith having been elevated to some super-realm of religion and spirituality while belief must bear the burden of a more secular task (a Nature-Grace



dichotomy?). And many more, even of the highest intellectual calibre, persist in thinking of the aspects as the *what* of human experience rather than the *how*. We cannot emphasize often enough or forcefully enough that they are *abstractions*, and not the things or events of concrete empirical reality itself. In addition Dooyeweerd saw this aspect, the last in the line of fifteen, as having a special relationship to religion and the supra-temporal ego. This presented him with a number of problems that his critics have been quick to exploit. I have problems of my own with him here; nevertheless I believe he is, by and large, on the right track, and that improvement not abandonment is called for.

But if faith includes “religious” belief it is certainly not limited to it. Dooyeweerd believed, following Abraham Kuyper, that the faith function was an integral aspect of man’s existence *qua* man. To have faith is not a luxury appendage to the lives of some people only. Indeed, each and every man, in everything he thinks and does, in everything he experiences, functions in the faith aspect. Augustine made this very clear over fifteen centuries ago when he delivered his *Credo ut intelligam* (“I believe *in order that* I may understand”). In the eleventh century the great theologian-philosopher Anselm developed this idea in both the theological and epistemological areas. “This very thing I assuredly affirm,” he said, “that he who does not believe, cannot understand. *For he who does not believe can have no experience, and he who has no experience cannot understand.*” That is, says Anselm, there is a chain in our process of understanding. Firstly, we cannot understand anything unless we have some experience of it. We understand what colours are if we have fairly normal eyesight but it is *impossible* to explain colours to a blind person. Secondly, we cannot experience anything without belief in some form. To experience colours is to believe that they are there. To see a lamp-post is to experience it. Seeing it is believing it is there. We can experience it even more vividly by walking into it. It would be foolhardy, I would suggest along with Anselm, to suppose one could do this and have no certainty of its existence (unless one was a member of the Church of Christ Scientist, of course). Thus the old philosophical chestnut, “Which comes first, belief or knowledge?” is a *pseudo*-question. The act of knowing is an act of believing also. For Dooyeweerd, the act is never one of either this or that type but an act of the self, or ego or central I-ness in which the self *actually functions* in *all* the aspects integrally.

Having said that, some acts are qualified as specifically religious, and in these faith plays a *leading*, though never a solitary, role. Take, for instance, the reading of a passage of Scripture, say the 23rd Psalm. This reading is in a unique way an act of faith, unlike, say, the reading of Eliot’s *Wasteland*. It is distinguished from the reading of all other books by the fact that here we have a special and unique text that is God-breathed (Gk: *theopneustos*). For the regenerate, to read the Psalm is to exercise a special act of believing and trusting in the living God. For the unregenerate, to read the Psalm is to take precisely the opposite stance: to positively refuse credence and trust to God. Neither is neutral in the realm of faith; they both function in it. The problem with the unbeliever is not that he is unable to believe but that he is unwilling to do so. He is not metaphysically incapable of believing but rather ethically so, as Dooyeweerd’s opponent Van Til would say. If he was constitutionally incapable of believing how could his unbelief be accounted his condem-

nation? To say that a man does not function in the faith aspect here would be like saying a man does not function in the ethical aspect because he does not honour his parents.

However reading this Psalm is impossible without functioning in all the other aspects of human experience, albeit we do so implicitly. To mention just a few as examples: In the numerical aspect we grasp the plurality of the letters, words and verses. In the spatial we grasp it in the space it occupies on the paper. In the psychical (feeling) aspect our emotions are aroused in a positive/good or negative/evil way. In the logical aspect we experience the rational structure of the arguments; in the lingual aspect, the use of metaphor as symbolic meaning; in the aesthetical aspect, the beauty and harmony of the religious ideas as well as their lingual expression. In each aspect, too, there are analogies of the other aspects. For instance, in the psychical aspect we experience the Psalm as a short one. We do not understand short here in its original spatial sense however. For we could, by making the print much bigger, fill more column inches than a regular size Psalm 119. We feel it to be short in relation to others, whatever the print size. But I am digressing. Let me quote the excellent summary of the well-known scholar, James H. Olthuis, who has explained it far better than I ever could:

The *sui generis* quality of faith as a function also makes faith impervious to any and all efforts to reduce it to feeling, thinking, or imagining. Taking this more seriously would help us, I believe, to break through the impasse of the traditional discussions about the rationality or irrationality of faith. As one mode of being, faith is faith and as such it expresses at its core a character which is not properly touched by the question of whether it is rational or irrational. However, in a concrete human act of faith, even though the faith mode of functioning dominates and gives the act its special quality as an act of faith, all the other ways of human functioning are indissolubly present. It is in terms of such full human acts of faith that it is relevant to ask the secondary questions about faith, such as whether the act is rational or not and whether it is emotionally grounded or not. Thus, although good reasons are not the ground of faith, an act of faith ought to make rational sense to the believer. But it also becomes understandable that faith in God may be right even if, at this moment or at this juncture, it makes little rational sense to me. At the same time, the unity of a human act with its impetus for coherence makes clear that believing without good reasons is an uncomfortable and tenuous undertaking.

Likewise, although good feelings are not the content of faith, an act of faith ought to include and induce appropriate feelings. Dooyeweerd’s model is able to explain how my faith in God can be genuine and real even if my feelings about it are mixed or negative. At the same time it also explains why an experience of faith that is not grounded and reciprocated in our feelings is thin, inadequate, and tension-creating. (“Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith,” in *The Legacy of Herman Dooyeweerd*)

On the third point, Dooyeweerd does try to distinguish between a scientific theology and Christian dogma. I think he is correct in this. Theology is a reflection on Scripture (and other things!) and not Scripture itself. That is why we disagree about it among ourselves! Also, this error of equating all our reflections on Scripture with Scripture itself leads to a divisive spirit and an intellectual snobbery in the church. We cannot enforce on fellow believers as a test of their orthodoxy what are merely (!) our own personal reflections on God’s Word. Thus while we can insist from Scripture that Jesus is both God and man it would be intolerable to

require anyone to subscribe to the Nicene *language* (i.e. person, substance, etc) as a test of their orthodoxy. I am amazed that so many otherwise mature Christians do not appreciate this. In a recent case you will know that along with other Reconstructionists I have been accused of being a dishonest blasphemer engaged in gross sin who ought to be excommunicated from the Christian church. And this simply on the ground that we do not hold to *their* view of the relation of *ekklesia* (church) to *basileia* (kingdom)! Obviously either of us, or both of us, could be wrong, but neither denies either the actuality of the biblical ideas or their significance. They are perfectly in order to criticise views they disagree with; indeed they have a bounden duty to do so, as we do. In this way we should come to a better and clearer understanding of the faith. Indeed, it may be that it is simply a matter of our *perspective* on the truth rather than one of error on either side. Surely reading a document is as open to various perspectives—given our human as well as our sinful limitations—as looking at a mountain from different angles. Each perspective (even with or in spite of its sin-tainted expression) can add to the total picture of our understanding. But the argument is a *family* argument, to be conducted within the family (the church) not between some who are regarded as insiders and some who are regarded as outsiders.

This is what Dooyeweerd was getting at: the failure to recognise that in our sinful condition our (theoretical) reflections on what God has said cannot be identified with what he has said. All human reflection is *tentative* in its conclusions, to some extent or other. Sometimes we get close, but the ramifications of identifying the two are enormous and quite destructive. I think John Peck's phraseology is excellent and I have made it my own now. It is that Scripture is the only *irreducible dogma*. Theological systems (or parts of systems) must always be open to question and improvement. The dogma of Scripture never so. And indeed, as Christians, by the time we come to reflect on God's word, we have *already* believed it and accepted it, have we not?

At the heart of the error lies the basic humanistic Western idea that the only genuine knowledge is that of *knowledge by theoretical concepts*. So Scripture becomes meaningless until we extract from it and order it *theoretically*—systematically, scientifically—in our theological systems. We refuse to let God speak in his own words. It seems his words mean little or nothing without our re-ordering of them. So when you go to theological seminary you are taught *one* theoretical system as *The Truth*. You will never in this way come to an understanding of how your's, or anybody else's, system is/was constructed, what the principles of construction are, or what the limits of a system are. (In fact you will be taught that your system has no limits—it is the infallible truth.) Nor will you be able to account for any process of development in history in our understanding of Scripture. You will end up with an ossified system that is anachronistic and to all intents and purposes irrelevant to your culture. How can you witness in this way? How confess the faith to a lost world? Is repentance that we preach merely that of leaving off “dope and flesh” or do we need to tell men that in everything they do and say and think they need to *change their mind* (*metanoia*)? To do this, do we not have to tell them what Scripture has to say to the way *they* think and act, and not to the way that Tudor or Stuart man thought and acted? And is this not why man's training for the task of leadership in the church (as well as the world in general) is *family* based (1 Timothy 3:4–5) and not

seminary based? He must know his times from within his times and not from the ivory towers of an academic institution, particularly when that institution has succumbed to the humanistic dogma of knowing by (theoretical) concepts.

On the issue of societal structures Dooyeweerd says little that is specific about the consequences of distorting these structures in history. He was more concerned with emphasising the fact that they *were* God designed, God-ordained rather than mere historical, and thus historically relative, human creations. Nevertheless he often stated that they could not be ignored with impunity. There will be consequences. I can only say that I think the attempts to do without marriage, as in our society, will be disastrous. God has constructed us for a certain way of living. Family and marriage are not bonuses for our lives but part and parcel of what we *are*. To deprive a child of a family is as bad as to deprive him of arms or legs. We not only don't but *cannot* function as human beings without this institution. The morality of human sexuality is integrally bound up with the way we are structurally created. Thus God could have made a moral law that revolved around bigamy rather than monogamy. But this would not have been just a simple matter of changing the rules; man himself would have been built differently. Thus every attempt to live in violation of these laws is not simply a matter of disobedience to God's law; it involves a radical bifurcation between what we are and how we try to act. Everything becomes out of kilter. Try running a car on flat tyres, or at 60 mph in reverse; the vehicle is just not built for these things and although it seems possible for a while to get away with such absurd behaviour, it will eventually take its toll—even if the traffic police don't get you first for breaking the “rules.” Rushdoony has documented somewhere the physical and mental problems that afflict the long-term singles as a class (obviously not every individual in the same way or to the same extent).

No, I don't believe it's simply the case that “non-Christian social structures are doomed to failure” as you ask; in a sense the creational structures cannot be avoided. For instance, a report a few years ago detailed the disillusionment in Israel with the kibbutzim by the generation born into them. The pioneers had willingly gone down an unbiblical path and brought their children up in that system, only to find that the children rebelled against the idea. In Western cultures, most of those who abandon marriage for cohabitation are living to all intents and purposes as families. There really is no other long-term, stable way of getting through life. And every attempt to rebel will incur a toll on humanity frightful in its proportions. The problem is that unbelievers will not know the source of their problems; the church alone knows the truth and must issue a call to repentance or change of mind at this point. Right now however the church seems oblivious to the problem itself, for she does not understand that we are fitted into these structure as the very basis of our being and not simply members of them as we might be of a social club. And while society can withstand the strain of a few deviant individuals it cannot in my view stand the strain of a significant minority—let alone majority—being deviant. Since our culture is quite unique in the way it is abandoning family life I do not think we yet know the full consequences or are able to predict them. Also, failure to uphold the normative standards of human experience are quite different from the non-normative aspects. Jump off a 100 storey building any number of times and you

always get the same result: scraped off the pavement like goo. But God seems to deal with breaking norms in a less predictable way. How can you account for the tremendous growth of wonderful technology in such a godless age? OK so there's a Christian heritage—common grace. But why does God continue it so long after Christianity is all but gone from the culture? And how can it take effect in booming cultures like the far east? Then again, there are times when he forgives and times when he punishes; he refused to withdraw his punishment of Judaea despite Josiah's reforms

and Jeremiah's prayers but sent Jonah to bring about Nineveh's repentance so that they could be spared, even though they never sought it. I don't think there is a "scientific" law that will enable us to predict these things as in mathematical sciences. In the fifth century God wiped out North Africa despite the fact there was a strong church there. A thousand years later he sent his word to heal a Europe that had apostatised and whose population was infected by over 50% with STD. So how can we tell which way he will "jump" with our Europe? Or even America? *C&S*

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# RELIGION OF WORKS IN ARCHITECTURE

by Alan Wilson

THERE is a large housing complex near the Yorkhill hospital in Glasgow, which was built during the country's post-war optimism. When my son was ill in hospital I used to drive past this haunting impersonal beehive of optimism! It struck me back then and ever since that here was "the ruined blueprint of a great idea"; the thwarted plans of proud men.

Architecture is one discipline where the failure of humanistic salvation is visually evident. And it demonstrates how the religion of works manifests itself in every cultural activity; that it is not just a theological issue. Building houses and designing them *is* a religious activity. And no other art form has been so plagued with messianic dreams than architectural design, especially in the twentieth century. The architectural historian Henry Russell Hitchcock admits to the humanistic idealism that governed the early twentieth-century architects: "We were thoroughly of the opinion that if you had good architecture the lives of people would be improved; that architecture would improve people, and people improve architecture until perfectibility would descend on us like the Holy Ghost, and we would be happy ever after." Only foolish deceived sinners could believe such a lie. This was the same proud dream of deceived sinners in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11).

Architecture has failed to reform mankind just as politics, economics, art and education have failed. None of these cultural activities can regenerate sinners or bring true happiness to a sinful culture. Only God can give new life and until then man remains spiritually dead; no amount of environmental improvements will be able to change that fallen human nature. And to think that the arrangement of walls, roofs, windows and doors can make us more loving is the utmost stupidity.

In fact, because the motivation behind much of twentieth-century architecture has been salvational, like our politics, God has judged these utopian plans. In his providence these architectural dreams have only made things

worse. The secular plans of the Bauhaus, the *de style* and the International style resulted in Beehive housing projects of the worst kind. The housing complex in Glasgow is just one of its failures. There, human pride lies in visual ruins with the decayed and vandalised walls; crumbling concrete with spray-paint graffiti written by gangs of thuggish youths. It is such an irony that this landscape of urban despair is the result of socialistic ideals spouted by visionary architects. Le Corbusier, the greatest of these socialist high-priests with a drawing-board thought he was creating the ideal community environment. It should not surprise us that he was your typical twentieth-century intellectual hypocrite—disliking children in real life but constantly blabbing on about "community."

God did not honour this man's pride and all his easily-led followers: their legacy has been a concrete jungle of monotonously regular buildings unfit for the joy of living. Rather, isolation and loneliness haunt this architecture of despair, and ironically it is the "working class" who have suffered, living out their existence in such ugly surroundings. (You can be sure these architects didn't reside in their own secular temples.) These are our modern towers of Babel found in every big city all over the world, striving to realise the same old communistic vision; towers designed without any thought for God. And because of this intellectual atheism, these terrible broken-down housing schemes have been given over to alienation—not community. In many ways God has judged our secular society by giving us such designers, just as he has judged them by ruining their utopian architectural plans. The urge to "create a name for themselves" was what motivated the builders of Babel thousands of years ago and it was what motivated the architects of modernist housing design—proving that "there is nothing new under the sun." What both forgot was the truth of Solomon's wisdom: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it" (Ps. 127). *C&S*

# Book Reviews

CREATING A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW:  
ABRAHAM KUYPER'S LECTURES ON CALVINISM  
BY PETER S. HESLAM

Paternoster Press, 1998, ISBN 0-85364-889-1/Eerdmans,  
ISBN 0-8028-4326-3, paperback, 300 pages including  
bibliography and index

ABRAHAM KUYPER: A CENTENNIAL READER  
EDITED BY JAMES D. BRATT

Paternoster Press, 1998, ISBN 0-85364-922-7/Eerdmans,  
ISBN 0-8028-4321-2, paperback, 498 pages including  
selected bibliography

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REVIEWED BY JOHN PECK

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ABRAHAM KUYPER was a remarkable man: in the words of the cover blurb he was “theologian, politician, journalist, university founder, and seminal thinker.” Exactly a century ago last year, Abraham Kuyper delivered his Stone Lectures at Princeton Seminary. They were delivered by invitation of B. B. Warfield, himself a giant in his own right. They were an unashamed apologia, a virtual manifesto, for Calvinism, reinterpreted for the needs of the end of the nineteenth century in a way that many people in the UK would find totally unexpected (as indeed some in Holland did then).

At last the achievements of this remarkable man are becoming a matter of wider interest in this country. Peter Heslam has here provided an extended commentary on these lectures with perceptive and discriminating sympathy. Six of the chapters deal with the subjects of each of the lectures; three more of them are devoted to Kuyper's own life and background, and the circumstances of his lecturing in America.

Calvinism is still generally thought of as a *religious* movement particularly marked by an apparently fatalistic doctrine of predestination and by an austere and fairly joyless lifestyle. The lectures were designed to give an alternative understanding. In his first lecture Kuyper begins with Calvin's starting-point: the unconditional sovereignty of God over every aspect and department of human life. But then he goes on to argue from that for Calvinism as the *philosophy* of a distinctively Christian world-view. This term, and indeed, the concept, had not long come into currency in the German as *Weltanschauung*. In this respect he is the foremost among the pioneers for such a concept as applied to biblical Christianity. This doctrine of divine sovereignty implied in particular that no aspect of human culture, even its religion or morality, could usurp sovereignty over any other.

The germ of that is found in Calvin's insistence that the State and the church were independent of each other under

God. Kuyper extended this kind of thinking in the following four lectures on Calvinism and religion, then politics, science, and art. The final lecture was about Calvinism as a force in future human history.

Peter Heslam steers us through the cut and thrust of Kuyper's arguments with an expert touch. The book is not simply a commentary on the lectures; it takes us into the history, personality, cultural environment of the speaker and of the ideas and arguments he propounds. As a result we are incidentally given some striking insights into the intellectual climate of the period, not only in Holland, but also in the rest of Europe, including Britain, and, since the lectures were aimed at an American audience, of America as well. I doubt if anybody would read this book without discovering *something* that he had not known or realised before. To those of us, like myself, who came at this kind of thinking through more recent writers such as Kalsbeek's *Contours of a Christian Philosophy*, or Hebden Taylor's *The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State*, or the aesthetics of Seerveld, this can be an exciting exploration of it in its formative period before Dooyeweerd's magisterial systematisation of it in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.

The writer is not uncritical of Kuyper; the weakness of his arguments is occasionally demonstrated, and occasions when he appears to be disingenuous are faithfully commented on.

Some aspects of Kuyper's thinking engage the modern reader's interest because in many respects he is so *prophetic*; he interprets the pre-1914 culture in terms that seem uncannily appropriate to the present day. For instance, he makes reference to an anti-rationality which would be equally applicable to our present “New Age” movement. His argument for a distinctively Christian science is based on the principle that the scientific enterprise takes form and direction from its cultural presuppositions. This anticipates what people like Kuhn and Polanyi have been spelling out for half a century.

Interesting, too, is the fact that philosophically the weakest of the lectures is on Calvinism and the Arts. Here, Kuyper is unable to spell out the antithesis between a Christian and non-Christian aesthetic; rather he confines himself to painting, and points to some significant characteristics in the seventeenth-century Dutch school as derived from a Calvinistic vision. I suspect that this is because Calvinism naturally thinks of God's sovereignty in juridical analogies of *law* and *power*. There isn't much sense of a slain Lamb in the midst of Calvin's throne. The way that art functions is more easily amenable to ethical and emotional analogies, of which Kuyper, reacting to his age, was deeply suspicious. So the notion, for instance, of art as liberating the imagination and emotions from sin's distortions, restrictions, prejudices—for new possibilities—had no place. And it has to be said that until very recently, with the work of Seerveld and Rookmaaker, this has been an almost unexplored area of neo-Calvinistic research. In the non-verbal, apparently non-rational area of music, the effects of this are still particularly

noticeable. Furthermore, Kuyper's unexamined reference to ideas like Beauty and the Sublime leaves him, ironically, trapped in nineteenth-century romanticism. The weakness persists in the work of Dooyeweerd, his systematising disciple.

You don't have to read Kuyper's Stone Lectures to enjoy this book, but it helps. You will certainly want to afterwards. (The publication details are on p. 9 of Peter Helsam's book). The style is beautifully readable, well indexed, copiously and informatively footnoted, and divided by illuminating headings, with a useful summary conclusion to each chapter (indeed, there is also a chapter entitled "Conclusion," which itself has a conclusion!). There is a useful bibliography (It's a pity that the cited updated version of Walsh and Middleton's *The Transforming Vision* [IVP 1984] doesn't have the latter's superbly detailed classified bibliography. It's still a treasure after fourteen years). Dutch citations are normally translated in the main text, though not always in the footnotes. The typeface is clear and open, with virtually no misprints.

In the interests of the same celebration, a companion volume (coming from USA's Calvin College) is also available: an anthology of extracts from Kuyper's writings. Almost all of these have never before been Englished. Since, to echo Cicero, there are many to be sure who do not altogether understand Dutch, this is an outstanding service. It means unfortunately that there are no extracts from his warmly devotional *Work of the Holy Spirit* or his philosophically rigorous *Principles (Encyclopedia) of Sacred Theology*, which are already available in English. Hopefully it will create a new demand for these works. It is done in an exceptionally lucid English translation, and in the same pleasantly readable format. An index would have been a vast asset, but there is a useful and fairly up to date select bibliography. *C&S*

L'ECOLE ET LA FAMILLE CONTRE L'UTOPIE—LES  
ANNALES D'UN COMBAT  
BY JEAN-MARC BERTHOUD

Lausanne, L'Age D'Homme, 1997, 327 pages, paperback,  
FS40.00, ISBN 2-8251-1073-6

Reviewed by Colin Wright

In this volume Jean-Marc has brought together a number of pieces written over the past two decades for the journal of the *Association of Christian Parents of Vaud*. They relate by and large to the perennial questions of school and family, though there is a broad range of material here that warrants our attention.

There is no doubt that Jean-Marc Berthoud is one of the most acute Christian thinkers on the continent at this time. Periodically we are privileged to have his work published in *Christianity & Society* but he has yet to find an English publisher for any of his books. This is a great shame. He deserves to be much better known among those Reformed circles especially who are concerned with the application of Christian principles to all of life. It is our hope that this volume—*The School and the Family versus Utopia*—will find an English or American publisher with vision, and so the broader readership it deserves.

Berthoud's learning is breath-taking in its breadth and depth. He has read widely, as his quotations and footnotes show. He has immersed himself in the current state of continental thinking on social and educational issues, but is equally conversant in the historical literature of these subjects. We were impressed especially by the manner in which he has been able

to assimilate and combine the best of the thinking of leading Christian scholars such as R. J. Rushdoony and Herman Dooyeweerd without slavishly following them. But more importantly his writing here reveals that his scholarship is far from shallow; he has meditated deeply on what he has read and made it his own. He offers us what previous generations rightly referred to as the "ripe fruits of a profound study." He gives us something to really think about, something to get our teeth into. What is both surprising and welcome is the way in which the author proceeds by enunciating principles rather than arguing pragmatically from so-called facts. His exposition of even the most practical themes and contemporary issues displays a determination to be guided at all times by an attitude that is supremely biblical and principled.

The volume is divided into three main sections, dealing with "The Family," "The School" and "The Foundations of Society." In addition there are numerous useful and thought-provoking appendices. For the purposes of this review we will concentrate our remarks on Part One.

In his opening sentence he draws our attention at once to the heart of his missionary agenda and to his radical critique of the contemporary church's problem: "The declaration of the Word of God suffers right now from a denial of any biblical perspective on those very institutions that are essential to man's social existence." Granted, he says, we have come a long way in sorting out our ideas in ecclesiology and soteriology, and have even made a brave attempt to address some of the moral and spiritual aspects of family life. Nevertheless, we have for a long time now abandoned any thought of addressing a wide range of issues touching on the family, from any specifically biblical standpoint. Among these he lists the economic, the political and juridical aspects of family life.

More importantly, and an issue he discusses in Part One in no small detail, is the internal structure of the family, its cardinal role in society, and the implications of its proper or improper functioning. For Berthoud, the Bible makes it very clear that the family is not the result merely of the historical evolution of human society. It is not changeable with the times or structured relative to a particular form of culture. The family is a divinely-instituted way of life, indeed the only way of life. It is a structure that God not only built into human history for man's good, but one which he built into the very structure of man as man. Berthoud is at pains in these pages to point out the consequences, oftentimes painful and always harmful, that come from abandoning God's order in society.

Family life, as Berthoud clearly tells us, is under attack right now. There is a war on. The shattering of marital and family bonds, the denial of marriage as the only morally acceptable form of cohabitation is distressing enough from a Christian point of view. But the issue goes deeper. Berthoud calls it *La Guerre Contre La Vie*—The War Against Life. To destroy the family is to destroy society, for there cannot be society without the structure that God has ordained for it. Under demonic guidance modern man is prepared to die before submitting to God's ordinances; he would rather commit societal suicide than see it prosper under biblical order. Read Proverbs 8:36. One of the most rewarding aspects of Berthoud's analysis of the structure of the family is the Christological analogy: Christ and his church bride mirror the relationship between husband and wife. Berthoud throws some useful and instructive light on this theme, one that has often been treated but rarely with such understanding and biblical good sense.

We have only one negative point to make about this volume: it lacks an index. It is a work of substantial scholarship that will be a standard text for serious minded Christians for years ahead. The lack of any index will frustrate many a reader

in days to come, and greatly detract from its inherent value. Nevertheless, to those who can struggle with Berthoud's clear French we would recommend this volume without reserve. It is available from him at Librairie La Proue, Escaliers du Marché 17, CH-1003 Lausanne, Switzerland. Tel/Fax: (021) 3120159. C&S

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CREATION AND CHANGE

BY DOUGLAS F. KELLY

Mentor, Christian Focus, Fearn, Scotland, 1997,  
272 pages, £8.99, \$15.99, ISBN 1-85792-283-2 (distributed  
in the USA by Spring Arbor Distributors, 10885 Textile  
Road, Belleville, Michigan 48111, Tel. 800 395 4340)

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REVIEWED BY A. J. MONTY WHITE

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DOUGLAS KELLY is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina and he has managed to write a very interesting and enjoyable book. Books about creation are usually written by scientists who have "dabbled" in theology. *Creation and Change* is, however, written by a theologian who is curious about science! The book is, in the author's own words "a theologian's attempt to think through the relationship of the first two chapters of Genesis to the real world as described by various disciplines of modern science." In the reviewer's opinion, the author succeeds in his attempt.

*Creation and Change* is basically a treatise against theistic evolution. It tackles the issue in two ways. First of all, the author considers carefully what Genesis One and Two actually teach (that is, creation not evolution). He does this by answering the usual questions associated with the interpretation of these opening chapters of the Bible: Are they to be interpreted as history? (Answer: Yes!) Are the days in Genesis One to be interpreted literally? (Answer: Yes!) Is there a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2? (Answer: No!) Does Genesis One teach creation? (Answer: Yes!) Does Genesis One teach evolution? (Answer: No!)

Secondly, the author looks at the scientific arguments that can be used against the idea of evolution. Professor Kelly does an excellent job of showing that living systems could not have evolved naturalistically out of nothing and that the fossil record does not provide the evidence for the evolution of life on earth. He also provides evidence that there are weaknesses in the underlying assumptions of the methods that are used to show that the earth is some four and a half thousand million years old. He also produces evidence to show that the age of the earth should be measured in thousands rather than thousands of millions of years.

It is a pity that Professor Kelly accepts Barry Setterfield's idea that the speed of light has slowed down since the creation as this has now been shown by creationists to be false. This is perhaps the weakest section of *Creation and Change* and unfortunately may cause some to reject out of hand the other excellent scientific data and arguments that Professor Kelly amasses against the dogma of evolution.

*Creation and Change* is well written and has an interesting format. Each chapter is divided into three sections: the first is the written text; then there is a technical section for those who want to study the subject of the chapter more thoroughly; finally, there are a series of questions which the reader can use as a self-test to ensure that he has understood the subject matter

of the chapter. *Creation and Change* is also well-referenced, with a select bibliography, a Scripture index, a persons (sic) index, and a subject index.

In the reviewer's opinion, Professor Kelly does a good hatchet job on the idea of theistic evolution—a persuasion the reviewer once held. All theistic evolutionists have particular problems when trying to answer the question: Who was Adam? The theistic evolutionist is at a loss to answer this simple question. If a group of ape-like creatures evolved into humans, then which one of them was Adam? Which one of them was Eve? When Adam sinned, what became of the others? Did they sin as well? Did they have human souls/spirits? How can it be said that "in Adam all die" if we accept the evolution of humans? What about the people who lived before Adam—Adam's mum and dad, for example? Did they have souls/spirits? How was Adam the first man (as the Bible teaches) if he had a dad? How can an ape-like creature evolve into a human which has dominion over every other living creature that has been created?

Those with an interest in applying the laws of God to modern society will find much in *Creation and Change* to interest them. Some of the questions posed by Professor Kelly will be of particular interest. For example, How has the humanistic viewpoint of man as an evolved creature affected the way in which people are treated politically? (p. 40). What are the two major differences between biblical Christianity and secular Naturalism? (p. 135). Discuss "the dominion mandate" and human culture. (p. 235). Did the Sabbath pertain only to the Jews or to others? Why, or why not? (p. 252)

The reviewer can imagine each one of these questions providing enough thought for an article, if not a book! C&S

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JEAN CALVIN ET LE LIVRE IMPRIMÉ

BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS GILMONT

Geneva, Droz SA, 1997, 414 pages, paperback,  
FS 40.80, ISBN 2-600-00205-7

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REVIEWED BY ROBERT NEZ\*

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In 1545, before he had become all-powerful in Geneva, Calvin was preparing to pillory one of his *bêtes noires*, Pierre Caroli—a doctor of theology and a one-time Reformer who had returned to Catholicism—by using one of his most effective weapons: the satirical pamphlet. His friends and co-workers Farel and Viret sent him their papers on the matter.

At the beginning of July Calvin decided to withdraw for a couple of days to write the said pamphlet with his secretary Nicolas Des Gallars on his brother Antoine's farm. But just as they were about to set off, he discovered he couldn't put his hands on Farel's notes! "Somebody's pinched them!" Calvin exclaimed. At least, that's what he believed: "It caused me such indignation," he said, "that I had to stay in bed the following morning." Eventually, Calvin and Des Gallars set out for Sacconnex, but the onset of nightfall forced them to stop at an

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\*Editor's note: This review first appeared in the Swiss-French magazine *24 Heures* in January 1998. It was translated into English by Colin Wright for *Christianity & Society* and has been approved by the author, Robert Nez. We felt our readers' attention should be drawn to this interesting study published by Droz, publishers of the new Latin edition of Calvin's works. Droz have a web site from where their books can be ordered: [www.librairie-droz.ch](http://www.librairie-droz.ch).

inn, where they got bitten by fleas! When they arrived at the farm they rested for a couple of hours before starting work. Calvin was in full flow. “I was so worked up that once I got started,” he wrote, “I raced through it without difficulty until it was finished.”

In a day or two, the Reformer had finished his pamphlet; an octavo of about one hundred pages, around seventeen thousand words.

This anecdote is related by Jean-François Gilmont—professor at Louvaine University and eminent specialist in the history of sixteenth-century books—in the early pages of his *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* [John Calvin and the Printed Word]. And he tells us at this stage that *system* was not a primary concern for the author of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. “But if the system in his papers was not faultless, the same could not be said of his mind. He had enough information about Caroli stored in memory to attack him through a hundred pages.”

Such speed of composition and intellectual power went hand in hand with an emotionalism that always played “a preponderant role in his writing.” When “worry or some great anxiety” upset him, he calmed himself by eating “more voraciously than was wise,” which caused the troubles he later had with his stomach and with indigestion.

In a style whose clarity and power have been emphasised by every historian of the French language, and which today might be considered overpowering, Calvin “mass-produced” sermons (on Sunday and during the week), theological lectures, commentaries on Scripture, a collection of psalms, a catechism, pamphlets by the score, as well as a copious correspondence. An important part of Gilmont’s study is taken up with the nature and pace of this production process, with the editorial strategies he implemented (the “diplomatic” art of the dedications for example), with his disputes with the printers and the Genevese authorities. “Haste and impatience constitute a backcloth to all his activity.”

Calvin worked at home, in the rue des Chanoines, mainly in his “office,” that’s to say his study, where he drafted his correspondence. But he also dictated a lot, either in the dining room or in his bedroom. He rose early, waking about 5 or 6 o’clock. “He had a weak constitution and slept very little. Most of the time he was forced to keep warm in bed, from where most of his books were dictated . . .” Théodore Beza informs us. An intensely intellectual and diplomatic strain thus marked Calvin’s life, who died in 1564 at the age of 55. This trait probably accounts for a concern for detail which distinguished him from his contemporaries. He was impatience itself when it came to deadlines. The Reformer was fully conversant with the world of books, especially so with the part already being played by the great fair of Frankfurt in the dissemination of books across Europe. He was concerned with correction, spelling, and even publicity. He was assiduous in distributing books and actively involved with the printers among whom he became increasingly influential and listened to.

Calvin was a significant author as well as an avid and well-informed reader (the contents of his library are well-known). He exercised quite naturally the role of chief censor in the town, even to the point of controlling the printing process, in spite of resistance from the Council and a section of the populace. In principle every book had to have a permit, awarded by the Council, before being printed, on top of which a similar inspection for morality and theological conformity had to be carried out by the ministers.

This rule was not always respected, which led to disputes, short prison sentences, fines, and at times the destruction of unsold copies. Gilmont has some pertinent pages on this issue that one should read. In general terms, the historian tells us, the

oversight of the pastors proved more effective than the civil power. This was certainly true as far as Calvin was concerned; the censor was no less active or “successful” than the polemicist. But could it have been otherwise? *C&S*

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PHILIP SCHAFF (1819–1892):  
PORTRAIT OF AN IMMIGRANT THEOLOGIAN

BY GARY PRANGER

Swiss American Historical Society Publications  
(Peter Lang Publishing Company, 1997), 305 pages  
including index, £28.00, ISBN: 0-8204-2847-7

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REVIEWED BY STEPHEN J. HAYHOW

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THE great Reformed church historian of the nineteenth century, Philip Schaff, is still remembered for his multi-volume history of the church, not to mention his monumental *The Creeds of Christendom* which are both still in print. His name endures through his editorial work for the Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopaedia*, his translation of Lang’s commentary and his work for the *Post-Nicene Fathers* series.

As far as biographies of Schaff go, the first was written by his son, David. Since that time there has been nothing attempted—not until Pranger’s work. This is a strange and disappointing omission for such a key figure.

Schaff was born in Switzerland, educated in Germany and taught for most of his career in the United States, first at Mercersburg and then at Union Seminary, New York. In Germany his teachers included arch-liberals F. C. Baur and Ewald, but also the great evangelicals like Hengstenburg. He emulated the renowned historian Neander, and was profoundly influenced by, but not uncritical of, Hegel. He was promoted by the great German preacher Krummacher, which led to his immigration to the United States. Schaff was destined, in the providence of God, to be a theologian and a church historian.

Schaff moved in elevated circles, and broad circles too. He also loved travel, making frequent trips back to Europe throughout his lifetime. Thus he became the friend of d’Aubigne, Gausson and Godet. He dined with kings, and met numerous heads of church and state.

His teaching career began at the seminary of the German church at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania. There he participated with John Williamson Nevin, author of the *Mystical Presence*, in formulating what became the Mercersburg theology, a blend of liturgical, Reformed sacramentalism and ecclesio-centric piety. Against the popular revivalism of an emerging fundamentalism, Schaff and Nevin took refuge in the historic church. Pranger leaves the reader with the impression that Nevin ended up teetering on the edge of joining Rome. Other things I have heard and read suggest that he passed through such a phase, but emerged a confirmed Protestant.

Philip Schaff is both an example and a warning. He is to be emulated and avoided. He was evangelical and Reformed, but he was part of the vanguard that diluted the evangelical and reformed faith. In vigorously and strenuously promoting the faith, he played his part in its demise. He was the solution and the problem at the same time. While he called the church back to her historic past, his embrace was so wide that he courted error.

Schaff’s weakness and strength was that he was eclectic. He

refused to be confined to the Reformation, as if the Reformation was the beginning and the end, the last word in history. Schaff saw the Reformation set against the brilliant backdrop of the medieval church, in spite of all her corruption, abuses and maladies. He saw the medieval church as a church in need of reformation, and the Reformation as the reform she so badly needed. This is the positive side of his scholarship. The down side was his over-favourable treatment of the nineteenth century liberals and liberalism.

Schaff's eclecticism spread wide. Rather than see liberalism as a fatal error, damaging to the church and to the souls of men, he chose to see it as a challenge to be faced and learned from. Schaff was averse to heresy trials. While not particularly liberal in his own views, he tolerated liberals, without embracing liberalism. And so we read that he defended Charles Augustus Briggs at his heresy trial. There was room for men like Briggs in Schaff's PCUSA.

For Schaff liberalism's error was another view to be considered, studied or opposed, but not to be chased out of the church. And here was the problem: liberalism needed to be chased out of the church. Liberalism was the gangrene that was eating away at the PCUSA, and Schaff did not stand against it nearly as strongly as he could and should have done. The outcome of this sort of thinking? The PCUSA today, with its syncretistic, pro-everything-ism.

Schaff stood for a moderate sort of Calvinism, rather than the hard-core old Princetonian sort. While a friend of Charles Hodge, he stood with Briggs against old Princeton. He was for latitude where the Princetonians were for exactness and truth. Schaff's Calvinism, was light on predestination, uncomfortable with reprobation and favourable to universal atonement, even flirting with a "larger hope" for those who had never heard the gospel. Schaff was neo-evangelical before there were neo-evangelicals. He is typical of the downgrade that North has chronicled in *Crossed Fingers*.

Criticism and warnings aside, Schaff rightly earned his place as a truly great church historian. Pranger spends a fair amount of time explaining Schaff's unique view of the meaning and significance of church history. For Schaff, church history is the centre of history. The history of the church is the centre of what is going on in history. Church history was not another stream in history, but the central current that determines the flow of the whole, secular and ecclesiastical together.

Pranger observes that Schaff's philosophy of history (p. 212) was deeply influenced by Hegelian idealism (p. 212), despite his criticisms of Hegel and the Hegelians. Thus the main theme is development and progress, but a development with the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ at its centre. Thus he saw everything converging upon Christ as its meaning (p. 201). Unfortunately, this idea also blunted his ability to criticise modernism. Schaff combined this developmental view with a post-millennial vision of a glorious future for the church, as the church is the centre of history (p. 205). He said that the highest culture was Christian culture (p. 223). The history of the church is organic, as the church grows through history. There were eleven elements to his philosophy:

Firstly, the development of the church is internal and external. Secondly, it is organic, but thirdly, each new stage grows out of the previous stages necessary to its being. Fourthly, progress is made as extremes collide, but, fifthly, the middle way is the truth. Sixth and seventh, each stage bears its diseases and deformities. Eighthly, new stages emerge through reformations and revolutions, where ninthly, great personalities walk the stage. Tenthly the movement is always forward, and finally that movement is from east to west, the path of the sun.

Schaff is one of those figures from whom we can learn so

such. So much that is good and wholesome and provoking. But at the same time, he is a warning, a personification of the trends and motions of his time, which conceived many of our modern struggles and problems. In many ways, this is what we all are; the main point must always be that we learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses. C&S

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