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EDITORIAL

THE CHURCH EFFEMINATE

by Stephen C. Perks

RECENTLY I was asked whether it would be correct to say that, in the history of the world, whole dynasties and indeed civilisations have foundered on the rock of homosexuality. My answer was that I would not put it this way. Of course I believe that homosexual practices are immoral, and forbidden by God's law. However, in Rom. 1:21–32 Paul puts it this way: Men turned away from serving God to serving the creature. As a consequence God gave them over to impure passions. Homosexuality is God's judgement on a society that has turned away from God and worships the creature rather than the Creator. Spiritual apostasy is the rock upon which cultures, including our own, founder, and homosexuality is God's judgement on that apostasy. This is why homosexuality was a common practice among the pagan cultures of antiquity, indeed is a common practice among most pagan cultures, including now our own increasingly neo-pagan culture. In short, the idea that the toleration of homosexuality is an evil that will lead to God's judgement is unbiblical because it puts the cart before the horse. It is the other way round. The prevalence of homosexuality in a culture is a sure sign that God has already executed or is in the process of executing his wrath upon society for its apostasy. The cause of this judgement is not the immoral practices of homosexuals (immoral though homosexual acts are); rather it is spiritual apostasy. The prevalence of homosexuality is the *effect*, not the cause of God's wrath being visited upon society. And in a Christian (or perhaps I should say "post-Christian") society this means, inevitably, that the prevalence of homosexuality in society is God's judgement on the *church* for her apostasy, her unfaithfulness to God, because judgement begins with the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

This is not a popular message with Christians. It is easy to point the finger at gross sin and immorality, but the church is much less willing to consider her own role in the social evils that blight our age. The spiritual apostasy that led to our present condition started in the church, and much of the debacle of modern society that Christians rightly lament can in some measure be traced to this apostasy of the church as the root cause. And even now the church refuses to take her responsibility for preserving society from such evil seriously and has abdicated her role as the prophetic mouthpiece of God to the nation.

Of course, this does not mean we should not challenge the gay lobby and work to establish biblical morality in our society. We must. But we must also get our priorities right, and I fear that the church has misdiagnosed this problem and got her priorities wrong. The church suffers from the homosexual blight as much as, perhaps more than (with the exception of the media and entertainment world), any other section of society. For most of this century the church has been seeking a female god to replace the God of the Bible. We have had ministers who have thought, acted and preached like women for many years now. The clergy in our age is, on the whole, characterised by effeminacy. The increasing number of homosexuals in the ministry is, I think, both a cause and effect

relationship related to this and at the same time a manifestation of God's judgment on the church. Often, of course, judgement works through cause and effect relationships, because the whole creation is God's work; it therefore functions according to his plan and will. The church has become thoroughly feminised by an effeminate clergy. Ministry today is directed primarily at women, and ministers have begun to think and act like women, so that Christianity has become what someone has called "lifeboat religion"—women and children first. And the world sees this well enough.

For example, I have been told on more than one occasion by priests and ministers that when they go out visiting members of their parishes if the man of the house comes to the door the first thing he will often say is "I'll go get the wife." Vicars and ministers are there to pamper to women and children, or so the world thinks, and this is simply because ministry in the church is so often directed primarily to women and children, not to men. Likewise, I have been told by clergy that now that women are increasingly present in the ranks of the clergy the nature of chapter meetings etc. has changed; now these meetings of the clergy are characterised much less by doctrinal matters and discussion revolves more around "relationship" issues (in other words the meetings have been taken over by a women's agenda). I have observed the same kind of thing in church meetings. If one brings up doctrinal issues or even serious issues about the mission of the church there is little interest. "There isn't time now. We'll deal with this another time" is the usual response, though seldom are such issues dealt with later either. But there is always enough time to consider trivial matters and in particular whether all our "relationships" need more work on them. And yet in most churches where I have experienced this kind of attitude I have not detected serious relationship problems troubling the church. However, there have often been and continue to be prodigious doctrinal problems and problems related to the church's understanding of its mission in the world troubling these churches, yet these are not even considered worthy of discussion in church leadership meetings. Church leaders will talk endlessly about "relationships" and the like but avoid doctrinal issues like the plague because these are deemed to cause division and hinder "relationships."

Now at root I believe this is a serious problem created by the feminisation of church leadership. The leadership agenda, which is a masculine agenda, has been replaced by a feminine agenda, which is a disaster for leadership. The church has abandoned the God of Scripture for the cosiness of a female type of deity who does not require church leaders to expound biblical doctrine or act with conviction according to God's word (both of which are perceived, often correctly, as causing division—Mt. 10:34ff.), but instead requires leaders simply to mother their congregations in a feminine way. This naturally produces effeminate clergymen and an effeminate church. But this is not merely an impersonal cause and effect relationship. God works through second causes in his creation to accomplish his will. An effeminate ministry and an effeminate church is God's answer to the church's determination to replace the God of Scripture with a female god; and this crusade against the God of the Bible has been, in its own way, as much a feature of evangelicalism as it has been of the outright liberalism that evangelicals claim to abominate yet so willingly imitate.

Not only is this a problem in the church now, but because it is in the church, society at large is now feminised and effeminate. We are ruled by women and men who think and act like women. But women do not make good rulers gener-

ally. In Margaret Thatcher we had a reverse situation, a woman who thought more like a man should think—but the exception does not nullify the rule. I am not making a party political point here, or endorsing any policies; because even then I believe this was all part of the judgmental situation. The world is turned upside down because men have turned it upside down by their rebellion against God. Jean-Marc Berthoud made this point well in his article “Humanism: Trust in Man—Ruin of the Nations,”¹ which I recommend in relation to this topic. We are now ruled by women and boys (Is. 3:4, 12).

But leadership is not feminine. Effeminate leaders do not rule well, either in the State or the church. It is vital that justice is tempered with mercy. But one cannot temper mercy with justice. When mercy is put before justice societies collapse into the idiotic situation we have today where criminals are set free and innocent people are condemned. For example, punishments meted out to motorists for inadvertently driving a little over the speed limit today, even where no danger is involved, are often more severe than punishments meted out to thieves.² And a parent can be punished for spanking a naughty child today, even where such punishment is carried out in a loving and disciplined environment and there is no danger to the child; yet one can murder one’s unborn children with impunity. The State even pays for these abortions by providing them on the National Health Service.

This, I believe, is ultimately the result of the feminisation of our culture. It is often thought that feminine rule is more compassionate, more caring. This is a myth that feminist ideology has worked into the popular perceptions of reality in our culture. On the contrary, the feminist culture is a violent culture, a culture that produces abortion on demand and at the same time the demand for the banning of fox hunting. A more perverse situation is hardly imaginable. Ultimately feminism is in practice inherently violent, inherently unstable, inherently perverse, inherently unjust, because it is all these things in principle, viz the rejection of God’s created order, and the consequences of a religious commitment will always work themselves out in practice. Feminism is now working out practically the consequences of its religious vision of society (and it is a religion).

The churches have failed to see this. They have embraced feminism vigorously, and as a consequence have become themselves a major avenue by which feminism has been able to influence our culture. The clergy were involved in feminising the faith and the church well before the feminist movement had become so conscious in the popular perception. And the feminisation of our culture is a major reason for its anarchy and violence. For instance, the result of the feminisation of society has been that men have lost their role in many respects. Feminism has defined men into nothing more than yobbos or effeminate. These are the two alternatives for men in the feminist perspective, though this might not be understood by many feminists, perhaps usually is not, because feminism is naïve and operates not on the basis of reason but on emotion; and this brings us again to the problem of female leadership and rule. Emotion does not lead or rule well. For the feminists, men are incapable rulers; women should rule.

Now we have the rule of women and effeminate men. The effect of putting the feminine virtues into the place of the masculine virtues and the masculine virtues in the place of the feminine virtues has been to overturn the created order. As a result justice is despised and mercy is turned into vice. Leadership is masculine, but it needs the tempering of the feminine virtues. When feminine virtues are in leadership the masculine virtues cannot function; masculinity is made redundant. This is one of the most serious problems facing our society. Feminism has rendered masculine leadership in the church and the nation obsolete, and we are now reaping the spiritual and social consequences of this. Justice is a casualty. Mercy ceases to be mercy and becomes indulgence of the worst vices. Violence, anarchy, disorder, and a dysfunctional society are the legacy of the feminisation of our society, because in this order neither the masculine nor the feminine virtues can play their proper role. The world is turned upside down. Even the “Bible believing” churches are numbed in their apostasy regarding this and many other matters in our society. We have an effeminate church, and an effeminate society, and therefore God’s answer has been an increasingly homosexual ministry and an increasingly homosexual society. This is God’s righteous judgement on our spiritual apostasy.

The answer is repentance: turning to God and turning away from our rebellion against the divine order of creation. The church must start this. Judgement begins with the church (1 Pet 4:17), and repentance must also. I do not believe we will solve the homosexual problem until we recognise its cause. It is God’s judgement on the apostasy of the nation. Leading the way to that apostasy was the church.

What I have said above is not meant to downplay the seriousness of the homosexual problem, nor its immorality. But we must recognise it as a manifestation of God’s judgement, as Paul teaches so clearly in Romans chapter one. The answer lies with tackling the root cause, while not leaving undone the other things. What is said here is not meant to encourage a lessening of Christian opposition to gay rights by any means; but it is meant to encourage a wider reading of the problem, because it is in this wider reading of the problem that we detect the cause, and hopefully, the solution to the problem.

Furthermore, this issue is not an isolated one. It is all part and parcel of the repaganisation of our society, a trend that the church in large measure has not only acquiesced in but sometimes actively encouraged by her myopic perception of the faith and her practical denial of its relevance for the whole of man’s life, including his societal relationships and responsibilities. While criticism is necessary and vital in the church’s prophetic task of bringing God’s word to bear upon our society, it is not enough. The church must also throw off her own acquiescence in the practice of secular humanism and practise the covenant life of the redeemed community instead if she is to have any effect on our culture. So far, the church, by and large, has shown herself unwilling even to contemplate the practice of this covenant life, and has contented herself with mere criticism at best (though not even criticism of secular humanism or its code of immorality is to be found among many clergymen). Therefore the judgment will continue unabated until the church once again begins living out as well as speaking forth the words of life to the society around her. Only then will she begin to manifest the kingdom of God; and only when the church begins to manifest the kingdom of God again will our society begin to be delivered from God’s judgement. C&S

1. *Christianity & Society*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (April 1999), pp. 24–28.

2. See the interesting article by Brian Lawrence, former Deputy Training Officer for Berkshire Magistrates, “The sorry state of the criminal justice system” in *Right Now!*, issue 25 (Oct.–Dec. 1999), p. 10f. for more information on this absurd situation. He has also written a book on this subject, *They Call It Justice* (Book Guild Limited, 1999, ISBN 1-85776-372-6), which I have not seen.

GISBERTUS VOETIUS: TOWARDS A REFORMED MARRIAGE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PIETY

by Joel R. Beeke

[This essay is abstracted from Carl R. Trueman and R. S. Clark, *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (1999) and reproduced by kind permission of the publisher, Paternoster Press. For a review of the book see p. 27f. in this issue of *Christianity & Society*.]

INTRODUCTION

GISBERTUS VOETIUS (1589–1676) represents the mature fruit of the so-called Dutch *Nadere Reformatie*—a primarily seventeenth and early eighteenth century movement that paralleled English Puritanism in both time and substance. Voetius was to the *Nadere Reformatie* (usually translated as the Dutch Second Reformation) what John Owen was to English Puritanism.¹ Though largely unknown and ignored by English-speaking scholarship,² Voetius is nearly as well-known to students of Dutch Post-Reformation orthodoxy as Owen is to students of English Puritanism.³ Nonetheless, little of

Voetius' Latin corpus has been translated into Dutch, and even less into English.⁴ This chapter aims to introduce Voetius to an English readership and to show how he wed a Reformed scholastic methodology to a heartfelt piety. Standing at the pinnacle of scholasticism immediately prior to its disintegration, Voetius illustrates how orthodox Reformed theologians used scholasticism as a methodology and challenges the old caricature of “dead orthodoxy.”

Born at Heusden, the Netherlands, to a prominent family of Westphalian descent and Reformed persuasion, he pursued theological studies at the University of Leiden from 1604 to 1611, during the very years when it was the focal point

1. For a summary of the *Nadere Reformatie* and a discussion of the term, *Nadere Reformatie*, see Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 383–412. Heartfelt appreciation is extended to Ray B. Lanning and Arthur Blok for translation assistance.

2. Space does not permit a discussion of Voetius' life and labours. The only major work on Voetius in English is Thomas Arthur McGahagan, “Cartesianism in the Netherlands, 1639–1676: The New Science and the Calvinist Counter-Reformation” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976). For articles on Voetius, see Johannes Van Oort, “Augustine's Influence on the Preaching of Gisbertus Voetius” in *Collectanea Augustiniana* 2, ed. Bernard Bruning, Mathijs Lamberigts, J. an Houten (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1990); Herman Hanko, “Gijsbert Voetius: Defender of Orthodoxy,” *Standard Bearer* 72 (15 February 1996), 229–32.

3. Secondary Dutch and German sources on Voetius include: Arnold Cornelius Duker, *Gisbertus Voetius*, 3 vols (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1897–1914), which remains the definitive biography, though it is of limited value due to its datedness and its lack of extended analysis of Voetius' teachings; H. A. Van Andel, *De zendingleer van Gisbertus Voetius* (Kampen: Kok 1912); Jan Anthony Crame, *De Theologische Faculteit te Utrecht den tijde van Voetius* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1932); Marinus Bouwman, *Voetius over het gezag der Synoden* (Amsterdam: S. J. Bakker, 1937); C. Steenblok, *Voetius en de Sabbat* (Hoorn, 1941); *idem*, *Gisbertus Voetius: Zijn leven en werken* (Gouda: Gereformeerde, 1976²); L. Janse, *Gisbertus Voetius, 1589–1676* (Utrecht: De Banier, 1971); A. de Groot, *Gisbertus Voetius: Godzaligheid te verbinden met de wetenschap* (Kampen: Kok, 1978); *idem*, “Gisbertus Voetius” in *Gestalten der Kirchengeschichte* 7

Orthodoxie und Pietismus, ed. Martin Greschat (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1982), 149–62; Willem van't Spijker, “Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676)” in *De Nadere Reformatie: Beschrijving van haar voornaamste vertegenwoordigers* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1986), 49–84; F. A. an Lieburg, *De Nadere Reformatie in Utrecht ten tijde van Voetius: Sporen in de Gereformeerde Kerkeraadscata* (Rotterdam: Lindenberg, 1989); Johannes Van Oort, “Augustinus, Voetius, und die Anfänge der Utrechter Universiteit” in *Signum Pietatis: Festgabe Für Cornelius Petrus Mayer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. A. Zumkeller (Würzburg: Auhustinus-Verlag, 1989); Johannes Van Oort et al., *De onbekende Voetius* (Kampen: Kok, 1989); W. J. van Asselt and E. Dekker (eds), *De scholastieke Voetius: Een luisteroefening aan de hand van Voetius' "Disputationes Selectae"* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1995); Cornelis Adrianus de Niet, “Voetius en de literatuur: Een korte verkenning,” *Documentatieblad* 19 (1995), 27–36.

4. Voetius' major writings include: *Selectarum disputationum theologiarum*, 5 vols (Amsterdam, 1648–69)—hereafter *SDT*; *Politicae ecclesiasticae*, 4 vols (Amsterdam, 1663–78)—hereafter *PE*; *Te asketika sive exercitia pietatis* (Gorinchem, 1654)—hereafter *EP*—now available in Dutch, Cornelis Adrianus de Niet (ed.), as *De Praktijk der Godzaligheid met inleiding, vertaling en commentaar*, 2 vols (Utrecht: De Banier, 1996). Additional Voetian treatises in Dutch include *Catechisatie over den catechismus der Remonstranten* (Utrecht, 1641); *Geestelijke Verlatingen* (Utrecht, 1646); *Proeve van de Kracht der Godzaligheid* (Utrecht, 1656); and a few sermons, letters, and short polemical extracts from Latin works. The only Voetian material in English is a small portion of volume 3 of *SDT* in *Reformed Dogmatics: Seventeenth-Century Reformed Theology Through the Writings of Wollebius, Voetius, and Turretin*, ed., and trans. John W. Beardslee III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 263–334.

of the Arminian crisis. He was particularly influenced by the Calvinist lectures of Franciscus Gomarus. He also attended lectures of James Arminius and other professors whose orthodoxy was called into question.⁵ He later wrote, “I shall be Gomarus’ grateful disciple to the end of my life.”⁶

Appointed lecturer in logic while a student at Leiden, he defended orthodox Reformed theology in his teaching. In terms of methodology, he leaned on the new, humanistic Aristotelianism of Leiden rather than on Ramism, which insisted on the purely instrumental and non-autonomous role of philosophy. He was convinced that the new Aristotelianism had absorbed everything of value in Ramism and consequently regarded the Ramist controversy as superfluous.⁷

Already in his Leiden years, Voetius showed a keen interest in a more pietist form of theology. He read Thomas à Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ* with deep appreciation. From that time on two elements strove for pre-eminence in his life and work: an intellectual Reformed scholasticism and a piety resembling the *devotio moderna* spirit.⁸

The temporary victory of the Arminians in 1610 had far-reaching consequences for Voetius. His mentor, Gomarus, was forced from the faculty, Arminians were hired, and Voetius’ own hopes for an academic career were dashed. For supporting Gomarus and opposing Arminius, he was put out of his dormitory and had to take up lodging with friends. After finishing his studies and returning to Heusden, he was not permitted to travel and accepted instead a pastoral call.

His hard work in combatting Romanism and Arminianism earned him an appointment to the international Synod of Dort (1618–19) despite his youth.⁹ Two items of interest surface in connection to Dort: First, his most prominent action was his able defence of Johannes Maccovius, whose supralapsarian conception of predestination was of a more logically rigid nature than that of most other delegates. Voetius appealed to the authority of William Ames, who had expressed confidence in Maccovius’ intentions, though he regretted some of his terminology. Interestingly, however, his later thought was marked by an attempt to reconcile the experiential piety of Ames and the neo-Aristotelianism of Maccovius.¹⁰ Second, he wrote appreciatively of close friendships established with a number of English delegates noted for their emphasis on Puritan theology and practice.¹¹

Later pamphlet wars against Roman Catholics and Arminians also raised his stature among the Reformed as a first-rate scholastic theologian. His work against the Arminian Daniel Tilenus influenced Grotius.¹² Even more impor-

tantly, his *Prove an de Cracht der Godsalichheydt* (1627; Proof of the Power of Godliness) and *Meditatie an de Ware Practijcke der Godsalichheydt of der goede Wercken* (1628; Meditation on the True Practice of Godliness or Good Works) established him as a writer of practical piety, who insisted on a converted life as the attestation of an orthodox faith. He was a vigorous controversialist. His debates with Samuel Maresius concerning virtually every theological issue of the day, lasted four decades until the two theologians united to battle the emergence of Cartesianism in the late 1660s.¹³ He was convinced that Cartesianism placed reason on a par with Scripture at the expense of faith, so that man becomes the measure of all things.¹⁴

He also opposed Johannes Cocceius, the Bremen-born theologian who taught at Franeker and Leiden, and whose covenant theology, in Voetius’ opinion, overemphasised the historical and contextual character of specific ages. He believed that Cocceius’ new approach to the Scriptures would undermine both Reformed dogmatics and practical Christianity.¹⁵

He resisted Jean de Labadie, whose preaching had been the source of spiritual revival in Swiss Reformed churches, for promoting notions of mystical subjectivism and of separation from the instituted church.¹⁶ He spoke out against the government when the rights of the church were at stake, rejecting Erastianism and demanding that the church be completely independent of the State and of all patronage.¹⁷

After an extensive pastoral ministry, he accepted a professorial post in the new Academy of Utrecht, where he taught for forty-two years until his death in 1676. His ideals were clearly set forth in his inaugural address, *De pietate cum scientia conjugenda* (On Piety Joined with Knowledge). Piety and knowledge are not to be separated. They are to promote each other’s welfare, for they are wedded together. The mind must assist the heart and life, and the heart and daily living ought to reinforce the mind.¹⁸ According to Voetius, any attempt to weaken the link between knowledge and piety by claiming an absolute autonomy of science and knowledge is unbridled libertinism. Therefore he regarded his task at Utrecht as to “practically treat of the solid and orthodox science of theology, which is by its nature practical.”¹⁹ He was appointed rector of the newly founded “Illustrious School” at Utrecht in 1636. The title of his sermon preached in the Cathedral Church of Utrecht was *Sermoen van de*

13. Doede Nauta, *Samuel Maresius* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1935).

14. See McGahagan, *passim*. See also Theo Verbeek, “From Learned Ignorance to Scepticism: Descartes and Calvinist Orthodoxy” in *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed., Richard H. Popkin and Ardo Vanderjagt (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

15. See H. B. Visser, *De Geschiedenis van den Sabbatstrijd onder de Gereformeerden in de Zeventiende Eeuw* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1939); Steenblok, *Voetius en de Sabbat*; Charles McCoy, “The Covenant Theology of Johannes Cocceius” (PhD diss., Tales, 1957). Cf. Jonathan Neil Gerstner, *The Thousand Generation Covenant: Dutch Reformed Covenant Theology and Group Identity in Colonial South Africa, 1652–1814* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 75–82; S. D. van Veen, “Gisbertus Voetius” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 12 (1912; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 220–1.

16. Cf. Cornelis Graafland, “De Nadere Reformatie en het Labadisme” in *De Nadere Reformatie en het Gereformeerd Pietisme* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1989), 275–346.

17. W. Robert Godfrey, “Calvin and Calvinism in the Netherlands” in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Sanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 112–13.

18. *EP*, 857.

19. *Ibid.*, 3.

5. McGahagan, 33–5.

6. *SDT*, 5:100.

7. *SDT*, 3:753.

8. Van’t Spijker, 49.

9. Unfortunately the journal he kept during the synod has been lost. We do know that Voetius was disappointed by the results of the synod in several practical areas. Voetius would later comment that the more the church conceded to the government, the less it could hope for in the way of serious reform from the government (*PE*, 3:559).

10. See John Hales, *Golden Remains of the Ever Memorable Mr. John Hales* (London, 1659), 159, and William Ames, *Opera* (Amsterdam, 1658), 9. See also Abraham Kuyper, *Johannes Maccovius* (Leiden: Donner, 1899), 82ff., 357ff.; Michael Bell, “Propter Potestatem, Scientiam, Ac Beneplacitum Dei: The Doctrine of the Object of Predestination in the Theology of Johannes Maccovius” (ThD Diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1986).

11. *SDT*, 2:408.

12. Hugo Grotius, *Briefwisseling an Hugo Grotius*, ed., B. L. Meulenbroek (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1940), 3:385–90.

nutticheyt der academiën en de scholen (Sermon on the Usefulness of Academies and Schools). His goal was to integrate the Utrecht church with the academy. The church should send her youth to this academy, and live in love and unity with all who were linked with the academy. On the other hand, the faculty should not only promote learning, but also piety, both in the public lectures and in the private lives of the professors. All human sciences must remain subordinate to the study of theology for the sake of the church.

In his lectures, Voetius focused particularly on systematic theology, ethics, and church polity. He also taught logic, metaphysics, and the Semitic languages: Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac. In his lectures on theology, he followed the Leiden *Synopsis purioris theologiae*, compiled by Leiden professors (1625), together with the dogmatic works of Gomarus, Maccovius, Ames, and, of course, Calvin's *Institutes* and Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*.

In 1664 he published *Exercitia et bibliotheca studiosi theologae* (The Exercises and Library of a Studious Theologian), a comprehensive 700-page introduction to theological literature and a four-year programme of theological study. Its theme is one with his overall vision: theology must be known and practised. Voetius' most academic works were published over a twenty-two-year span in his five volumes of selections from his theological debates, *Selectarum disputationum theologiarum* (1648–69). These volumes are the outgrowth of his famous Saturday seminars. These seminars took the following form: Voetius himself composed theses, especially touching on the pressing issues of the day, and appointed debaters who were instructed on how to defend them. Other students sought to challenge the debaters. The five volumes of these debates, similar to mediaeval debate texts, do not contain verbatim reports but the final redaction of the whole by Voetius himself. Reporting 358 debates, they are a prime example of the scholastic method of teaching practical Reformed theology.²⁰ In addition, Voetius published four volumes on church polity, *Politicae ecclesiasticae* (1663–76), which also grew out of the Saturday debates. He evidenced a working knowledge of all the literature on church government of his day, including polemical works and works dealing with the ancient creeds. More than any other major work, *Politicae ecclesiasticae* represents the ecclesiastical ideals of the Dutch Second Reformation. Together with these works, Voetius wrote his *Te asketika sive exercitia peitatis* (1654; "Ascetica" or the Exercises of Godliness), a detailed manual of piety in theory and practice. In all these works, Voetius revealed himself as a scholastic, practical theologian who did not fear conflict.

By the time of his death on 1 November 1676, dedicated Voetians were to be found in every university and ecclesiastical province of the Netherlands. He was mourned by thousands, especially by the Utrecht circle, and was buried in what is now the Roman Catholic cathedral of Utrecht.

VOETIUS' THEOLOGY

Voetius experienced no tension between detailed scholastic analysis and experiential warmth. From his perspective, theology, both systematic and practical, consistently sup-

ports his inner conviction that the marriage between Reformed scholasticism and Reformed piety is a happy one.²¹ Thus he cast all his theology and writing in a scholastic mould, intent on developing Reformed thought by careful analysis, detailed definition, thorough development of each theological concept, careful repudiation of every heresy, and logical organisation which was intended to show the relations among all the truths of Scripture. In his *Disputatio de theologia scholastica*, he defined scholasticism simply as a method of doing theology—a method first found in the four volumes of Peter Lombard's *Sententiae* and subsequently developed in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*.²² Notwithstanding the reference to mediaeval scholastics in his initial definition, Voetius asserts that the true (i.e. Reformed) scholastic method vastly differs from theirs in content though not in method. Echoing Renaissance objections, he charges the mediaeval scholastics with dwelling on "useless, vain, dangerous, absurd, and even blasphemous questions and problems." In line with Luther and Calvin, he argued that their knowledge of Scripture and theology was weak at best; consequently, their principles are based on human authority, which they often misread, be it Aristotle or the Fathers. They were too prone to mix theology and philosophy:

Most are guilty of confusion of categories, and continually attempt to demonstrate the mysteries of the faith by reason and natural light, or by philosophy and philosophical authority.²³

All of these faults made the mediaeval scholastics seriously defective in *praxis*, both in the exercise of piety and in the care of the church. They were "purely speculative doctors, men of the shadows," exalting reason at the expense of faith.²⁴

He insisted on the superiority of faith over reason in order to protect the purity of faith. Reason has lost its purity in the fall. Though reason remains a critical instrumental faculty, even after it is liberated through regeneration it remains imperfect, so that we ought not let it act as an autonomous judge but only as the servant of faith.²⁵ If reason were to be the judge of faith, would not all distinction between nature and grace be erased, and the scriptural insistence on regeneration be rendered meaningless? The principle of objectivity in matters of faith is not reason but the Holy Scriptures. Together with Scripture, we need a subjective principle to move us to receive the doctrines of faith, i.e. the illumination of the Spirit.²⁶ Also our reason needs to be illuminated, for though faith is superior to reason, faith itself involves the intellect as well as the will. Reason is critical, not as the principle of doctrinal truth, but as that faculty which is instrumental in exegeting such truths from Scripture and casting them into propositional form.²⁷

For Voetius, both theology and philosophy are to be continually subjected to the test of edification: Does whatever is being discussed contribute to the life of faith as revealed (1) in the Scriptures, (2) for the believer's salvation, and (3) for the welfare of the church? Both faith and reason must serve to promote genuine piety. He fully concurred

21. H. A. Van Andel, Zendingleer. For Voetius' approach to mission see *idem*, "The Missiology of Gisbertus Voetius: The First Comprehensive Protestant Theology of Missions," *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (1991), 79.

22. *SDT*, 1:13–4.

23. *Ibid.*, 1:23–4.

24. *Ibid.*, 1:24–6.

25. In heaven reason will be perfectly illuminated (*ibid.*, 1:2).

26. *SDT*, 1:4.

27. See McGahagan, 55–63.

20. W. J. Van Asselt, *Vera Philosophia cum sacra theologia nusquam pugnat: Een inleiding in de Gereformeerde Scholastiek* (Utrecht, 1995), 62.

with Calvin that all genuine knowledge of God is lacking where true piety is lacking.²⁸

Despite Voetius' criticism of the content of mediaeval scholasticism, he was fully aware that he stood in the scholastic tradition. Scholasticism as a methodology is profitable, even necessary, he argued, in order adequately to defend "hidden and divine things against those who oppose them." In fact, the mediaeval scholastics themselves ought to be studied in order to defend the Reformed faith against Roman Catholicism, since "in elenctic [polemical] theology adversaries must often be convinced by their own, domestic witnesses."²⁹ Moreover, the practical and experiential dimensions of theology can be enhanced by scholasticism, for, in the words of Johannes Hoornbeeck, who expressed the Voetian position poignantly, "There is no practice without theory."³⁰ Theory and practice must be distinguished but never separated. Theory, whether theological or philosophical, is itself a practical issue.

Thus, scholasticism and philosophy can coexist well with true theology. If rightly subjected to Scripture, the demands of faith, and the light of the Spirit, then scholastic methodology and theology, despite their dangers, bear good fruit. In fact, according to Voetius, one cannot be an able and learned theologian without making use of scholastic methodology, for the content of Scripture is, from both a religious and ethical perspective, reasonable truth. That is not to say that reason becomes the basis, law, or norm of what we should believe. We do not come to know the Trinity, sin, the incarnation, and the atonement by reason or natural revelation. We must receive what Scripture says by faith—faith which has its origin in the illumination of the Spirit. The secret of faith lies beyond the reach of reason.³¹ Thus, notwithstanding considerable deference shown to reason and to quotations from mediaeval scholastics throughout his corpus, Voetius' theology did not succumb to reason but remained in its genius a theology of revelation.

A brief perusal of the Voetian corpus confirms that his first love was for *theologia practica*—the practice or exercise of theology which procures a personal piety that glorifies God. By "practical theology," Voetius intended what we would call a theology of Christian experience rather than our current usage referring to the pastoral ministry of preaching, counselling, and teaching. For Voetius, no division of theology can be handled effectively without personal and practical application for daily living, nor have the Reformed ever aimed to do so:

Are Reformed theologians concerned over practical theology, and do they discuss it, or is their theology purely speculative?

Our reply: Affirmative to the first, and negative to the second, against the calumnies of the Remonstrants and the papists . . . The very light of the facts is enough to destroy this calumny, since the sermons of the more distinguished of our preachers and an almost infinite number of writings of the Reformers breathe pure practice, so that our theologians, like Socrates, may be said to have brought theology from heaven down to earth, or, better, to have raised it to heaven from the earth and scholastic dust.³²

All theology must be practical, being used to encourage the spiritual exercise of divine graces—particularly the graces of repentance, faith, hope, and love. All theology must be

rooted in faith. Faith consists of intellectual knowledge of truth, hearty assent to the truth, and childlike trust in the truth.³³ Though faith is often mysterious and incomprehensible in its operations, there is nothing uncertain about its sources or its effects. Its sources are the objective truth of Scripture and the subjective illumination of the Spirit. Its effects are affirmation of the Scriptures, sanctification, assurance of salvation, and perseverance—all of which, together with faith itself, are not conditions of salvation, but results of election. Faith is the terminus and effect of regeneration, not the cause or internal instrument of regeneration.³⁴

Rooted in election, faith works itself out in the progress of the elect from rebirth to conversion, justification, and perseverance, finding its termination in glorification.³⁵ To this experiential process from rebirth to glorification, Voetius, in typical Puritan fashion, devoted a great deal of energy and attention. These steps of grace, involving inward experience wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit which in turn will show itself outwardly in the believer's walk of life, form the heart of his *theologia practica*. His concern with the stages of inner experience, however, was never divorced from his more intellectual and scholastic understanding of faith. For Voetius, faith is both an explicit intellectual act and a supernaturally infused *habitus*. Faith is both intellectual and emotional, both dogmatic and personal, both a matter of mind and soul. His morphology of conversion was intended to conjoin the intellectual and emotional dimensions of faith; indeed, the concept of faith as intellectually dogmatic was reinforced, not annulled, by this morphology.³⁶

Voetius' scholastic and theological agenda was set by his emphasis on *theologia practica*. This agenda was fleshed out in three major areas through his writings: ethics (treated in *Selectarum disputationum theologiarum*, all five volumes, but especially volumes 3 and 4), piety (treated in *Te asketika sive exercitia pietatis*), and church polity (treated in his four volumes of *Politicae ecclesiasticae*, the work for which he became known).

1. Ethics

In volumes 3 and 4 of *Selectarum disputationum theologiarum*, Voetius used the Decalogue as his framework for debating a wide variety of ethical questions. He provided a clear rationale for doing so, arguing that ethics is a critical science that ought not to detract from systematic theology or apologetics; rather, it ought to assist systematics and other subjects in focusing on the practical exercises of the life of faith. For support, he pointed to William Perkins, whom he

33. *SDT*, 2:516. Voetius viewed the element of knowledge in faith as intellectual, historical faith that is not necessarily saving in its nature. In discussing the *saving* nature of knowledge, Voetius parts with Calvin and Olevianus and follows in the footsteps of Melancthon and Ursinus (see Joel R. Beeke, "Faith and Assurance in the Heidelberg Catechism and Its Primary Composers: A Fresh Look at the Kendall Thesis," *Calvin Theological Journal* 27 [1992], 45–7).

34. *SDT*, 2:442.

35. For Voetius' views on election, see Cornelis Graafland, *Van Calvijn tot Barth: Oorsprong en ontwikkeling van de leer der verkiezing in het Gereformeerd Protestantisme* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1987²), 223–31. Though a supralapsarian, Voetius fully supported the Canons of Dort which were largely set in an infralapsarian framework.

36. See McGahagan, 66–9.

37. On Voetius as an ethicist, see Steenblok, *Voetius en de Sabbat*, 9–46.

28. *Institutes*, 1.2.1 29. *SDT*, 1 [vi].

30. "Praxis nulla absque scientia est," *Theologiae practicae* (Utrecht, 1663), 1:85.

31. *SDT*, 1:3.

32. Beardslee, 268–9.

called the Homer of *theologia practica*, as well as William Ames, Jean Taffin, and Willem Teellinck. Besides, Voetius noted, the Particular Synod of North Holland (1645) requested the Leiden faculty to devote more attention in their lectures to “cases of conscience” (*casus conscientiae*), which included particular and practical applications of the Ten Commandments to various issues.³⁷

Voetius then raised and answered fifteen objections to focusing on *theologica practica* in an ethical setting.³⁸ He asserted that opposition is to be expected, for wherever Reformed ministers speak to the conscience and admonish against specific sins, such as Sabbath-profanation, drunkenness and carousing, theatre-attendance, mixed dancing, gambling, vain and immoral dress, illicit usury, worldly parties, etc., they will be charged with being pharisaical, legalistic, or anabaptistic.³⁹ These charged are altogether ungrounded, says Voetius, for wherever repentance and faith are dealt with scripturally and faithfully, practical guidelines for daily life and warnings against specific sins cannot be avoided. For preaching and teaching that does not touch on practical, daily living is not faithful to the primary doctrines of Scripture. Ethics is simply teaching people how to live out Reformed doctrine. When rightly presented, ethics is not a system of works-righteousness to earn salvation. It is a set of guidelines on how to live out of the righteousness of Christ—that righteousness which has saved and does save, but also compels a lifestyle of gratitude for so great a salvation. Reformed ethics calls the believer to live wholly unto God in every detail of life in order to glorify him for his gift of salvation.

In working out this system of ethics, Voetius naturally focused more on the law than the gospel. The gospel, however, is not neglected. Gospel means the good news of salvation in Christ alone; it is the joyful message of the New Covenant, but it comprehends the Old Testament as well. The conditions of the gospel are faith and repentance, but these conditions are fulfilled by God’s grace in Christ for us and in us. Strictly speaking, the gospel and its promises are absolute and unconditional. Receiving eternal life, however, involved more than the gospel. Salvation by the gospel will be evidenced by the keeping of the law out of gratitude to God. Voetius quoted Augustine with approval: “Our works do not precede us to justify us, but they follow our being justified.” Under “law” Voetius comprehends all edifying doctrine revealed by God in the Old and New Testaments. Here Voetius, as a student of Hebrew, correctly interprets the full meaning of Torah as “instruction” in living, a rule of life. Consequently, Psalm 1 and 119 speak of the law as *doctrina salutaris*—i.e. salutary, beneficial, edifying doctrine.

Voetius subsumed both law and gospel under the covenant of grace. Whereas Luther had taught law and gospel as standing in an *ordo salutis* relationship, i.e. first the law and then the gospel, both Bucer and Calvin, whom Voetius followed, carried this *ordo salutis* relationship a step further by developing the so-called third use of the law—hence, law, gospel, law. That is to say, the law drives me to Christ for salvation, and the gospel drives me back to the law to foster a grateful and moral life of sanctification.⁴⁰ Thus, the be-

liever lives practically and daily out of the covenant of grace, trusting in God’s covenantal promise of grace, and acknowledging his covenantal demand for wholehearted obedience to his law.

Thus for Voetius, faith must become visible. The Christian must strive to please the Lord in every circumstance and detail of his life. He serves a holy and precise God. A key word in Voetius’ vocabulary of the Christian life is “precision.” Voetius offers this definition: “We define ‘precision’ as the exact or perfect human action conforming to the law of God as taught by God, and genuinely accepted, intended, and desired by believers.”⁴¹ In other words, the believer desires to do nothing less or other than the will of God expressed in the law as a rule of life. Such “precision” compels the believer to live carefully, and to obey God exactly; or, in Paul’s phrase, “to walk circumspectly” (Eph. 5:15). If this means being ridiculed with false labels, so be it. It is more important to please God than man:

The labels of being a precisianist, a zealot, a pigheaded person have always been applied to Christians wherever they have refused to be lukewarm and compromising . . . We must not pay much attention when devotion is derided as superstition, puritanicalness, obstinacy, etc., in order to try to make us seem ludicrous.⁴²

Voetius does not deny that one can adhere to a precise form of piety out of legalism, hypocrisy, or superstition. All errant forms of precise living, however, should not detract from living in a biblically precise manner, being zealous for good works, with a heart that is earnestly devoted to the fear of God and a conscience that is intent on obeying his commandments. This kind of “precisianism” God regards as “heroic excellence of virtue.” Voetius proceeded, in a scholastic manner, to explain what biblical precisianism is. He lists all the synonyms in Scripture that promote precise living, defines them carefully, and concludes that precisianism is the outworking of internal holiness. In the inner recesses of the soul, the believer makes decisions *coram Deo*—decisions which demonstrate themselves by an outward lifestyle that reflects heartfelt obedience to the law.

Voetius cited numerous Scriptures, Reformed doctrinal standards, and a large number of Reformers and Puritans to support his case for precisianism. He concluded that Scripture and all sound Reformed confessions and divines “speak in unison that the outcry against real [biblical] precisianism lacks all foundation entirely.”⁴³

2. Ascetics

Voetius’ stress on the inner life of grace did not bring him into sympathy with either the mediaeval mystics or the modern enthusiasts. Even in his handbook on the godly life, *Te asketica sive exercitia pietatis*, in which he emphasised the need for habitual meditation, he declined to separate the contemplative and the active life. He insisted even here that his concern was with the “pragmatics” of the interior life.⁴⁴ Meditation, according to Voetius, did not lead to immediate knowledge nor to the experience of the essence of God; rather, mystic surrender is “the road to delirium and enthu-

38. Beardslee, 276–89.

39. *PE*, 4:680, 699.

40. See Joel R. Beeke and Ray B. Lanning, “Glad Obedience” in *Trust and Obey*, ed. J. Beeke (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), for the Reformed development of the third use of the law.

41. Beardslee, 317.

42. Cited in Van’t Spijker, 65; see *ibid.* 57–61.

43. *SDT*, 4:771.

44. *EP.*, 68.

siasm.”⁴⁵ The knowledge of God we receive by meditation is not irrational; rather, reflexive knowledge is an essential component in spiritual knowledge. Though others regarded prayer and devotion as acts of the will, Voetius insisted that even in these devotional means the intellect was deeply, concurrently involved.⁴⁶

Voetius understood “ascetics” to be the systematising of that part of theological doctrine which describes how genuine, biblical piety is to be experienced and practised. Hence much more than meditation is involved. Voetius deals with how to cultivate a continuous life of prayer, repentance, faith, and conversion; how to approach and attend and reflect on the Lord’s Supper; how to pray and give thanks, both at stated times and extemporaneously. He dwells in depth on several facets of conversion: contrition, reconciliation, and renewal. He discusses spiritual sorrow and joy, various difficulties in the life of faith, and a host of cases of conscience.⁴⁷

In each branch and topic of “ascetics,” Voetius pursues a scholastic method. He provides definitions, arranges concepts in a positive and negative sense, answers objections, poses potential questions and provides detailed answers. Throughout he quotes a seemingly endless number of authors—including numerous mediaeval Roman Catholic mystics.⁴⁸ Though one might now think that the thoroughness of his method dampens its liveliness, and perhaps even tends to reduce subjective experience to objective analysable data, it appears that those in the Dutch Second Reformation found a great deal of help there for their spiritual pilgrimage.

3. Church Polity

Voetius’ massive four-volume *Politicae ecclesiasticae*, edited from his Saturday debates on church government, is divided into three major sections: The first consists of debates relating to ecclesiastical matters and actions; the second section concentrates on persons in the church, including pastors, elders, deacons, church members, women, and martyrs; the final section deals with the duties of the church. Voetius delves deeply into the issue of Roman Catholic and Protestant unity, addressing the boundaries of tolerance and the freedom of prophesy.

For Voetius, as for Calvin, the authority of the church is not autonomous, but derived from Scripture:

[Ecclesiastical authority] is *anypenthumos*, but it is required to supply its reasons, in dogmatizing, in imposing laws, in polity. It does not immediately and directly oblige in conscience, but only hypothetically, that is to say, as much as and insofar as the act of its exercise agrees, either formally and explicitly or reductively and implicitly, with the prescriptions of the Sacred Word.⁴⁹

Because the authority of the church is grounded in Scripture, Voetius felt justified, as did Calvin, in attributing to the

45. *Ibid.* 73. Cf. Izaak Boot, *De Allegorische Uitlegging van Het Hooglied Voornamelijk in Neaderland* (Woerden: Zuijderduijn, 1971), 155–63.

46. *EP*, 23.

47. For an excellent overview of this work, see the introduction and detailed table of contents in Gisbertus Voetius, *De Praktijk der Godzaligheid*.

48. E.g. de Niet’s detailed table of contents of Voetius’ work reveals sixty-four citations of various authors, and cites Bonaventura more than any other author (five times); Augustine and Gerson are cited three times; Calvin only once.

49. *PE*, 1:122.

institutional church a central role in the definition of dogma and in the exercise of Christian discipline. The power of the church, however, must be defined rightly:

[The church is] ministerial, not dominating or autocratic. If it abuses its power, proposing belief or action outside of and against the word of God, it is to be treated in the manner of parents, heroes, teachers, kings and princes commanding such things. Read Acts 4 and 5, and Daniel 3 and 6, where the authority and order instituted by God are recognized, but their abuse is condemned.⁵⁰

The source of the church’s authority is not in itself, nor is its goal its own maintenance. Its goal is the glory of God and the salvation of its own members. In Voetian ecclesiology the church is not defined in terms of any of its institutions, but only as a gathering of believers for the purpose of mutually edifying one another in matters pertaining to salvation.⁵¹ Voetius followed Martin Bucer’s emphasis that care for the church must be motivated by the moral ideal of the living church building itself up in love in order to glorify God.⁵² His goal was to bring about a further reformation of the church and its members through bringing the Dutch nation under the biblically loving, firm, and practical discipline of the church—i.e. discipline not only through admonition and censure but also and especially through preaching.

For Voetius all ecclesiastical authority must be subservient to Christ. The litmus test of a church is whether Christ would be able to exercise his lordship through his Word. Consequently, we are not surprised to find embedded in Voetius’ treatise on church government a compendium on homiletics, in which he detailed his thoughts about preaching.⁵³ Preaching should expound God’s Word clearly and practically, taking into account the current needs of the congregation. Voetius supported the consecutive exposition of chapters and books of the Bible, but stopped short of prescribing one method of preaching as mandatory for all occasions. He criticised the lectionary system as falling short of declaring the whole counsel of God.

Even in dealing with church polity, Voetius’ scholastic methodology and practical piety were consistently bound up. Throughout this massive work he used the scholastic method, amassing literally thousands of quotations from hundreds of sources to affirm his points. Christiaan Sepp has rightly noted that the wealth of knowledge contained in these volumes is almost limitless.

CONCLUSION

The life and work of Gisbertus Voetius affirms the thesis of Richard Muller that post-Reformation orthodoxy often disagreed with the content of mediaeval scholasticism, but advantageously used its organisational structure. As the seventeenth century wore on, many Reformed theologians, including Voetius, increasingly relied on scholastic methodology to sustain the vigorous polemics in which they were engaged against Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, and the new philosophical challenges of Cartesianism. Though Reformed scholastic orthodoxy stands in some methodological discontinuity with Calvin, it retains strong affinities

50. *Ibid.* 3:247–8.

52. Van’t Spijker, 75–6.

51. 1:12.

53. *PE*, 1:598–631.

with Reformation teaching; indeed, the Reformation is incomplete without its confessional and theological codification.⁵⁴ It cannot be denied that Voetius and seventeenth-century Reformed scholasticism discussed issues which at times moved beyond the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*,⁵⁵ yet it is a serious error, as Jonathan Gerstner has noted, to confuse this weakness “with the broader Reformed effort to build a consistent theological system and thus miss the remarkable and real progress of seventeenth-century Reformed theology.”⁵⁶

Voetius has been underestimated as a Reformed scholastic and experiential theologian in the Netherlands and throughout Europe, and even more so by British and North American scholarship. Though not a creator of a new theology, he was a competent systematiser who influenced thousands. His teaching also attracted many Presbyterian Scots and nonconformist English students.⁵⁷ To many of his students, his theology became a programme. His ideals were formulated into what became known (contrary to his wishes) as “the Voetians” or “the Voetian party.”⁵⁸ With their powerful combination of orthodox doctrine and vital piety, the Voetians were far more successful at reaching the common people than the Cocceians.⁵⁹

54. R. A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); *idem*, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989–). Cf. Martin I. Klauber, “Continuity and Discontinuity in post-Reformation Reformed Theology: An Evaluation of the Muller Thesis,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 (1990) 467; Willem J. Van asselt, “Herwaardering van de gereformeerde scholastiek,” *Kerkijd* 7 (1995), 1–12.

55. McGahagan, 56.

56. *Thousand Generation Covenant*, 70.

57. Keith Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism*, 359.

58. This was fostered in part by Voetius’ recommendation of *gezelschappen*—i.e. conventicles or organised group meetings of the godly for the purpose of cultivating personal faith and spiritual edification. Gradually, these gatherings, usually identified as Voetian, tended to become *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*—small churches within the territorial church (cf. Martin H. Prozesky, “The Emergence of Dutch Pietism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 28 [1977], 29–37; Beeke, *Assurance of Faith*, 407–8n).

Through his two important offices as professor and preacher, Voetius made Utrecht a stronghold of orthodoxy.⁶⁰ His writings disseminated his thought throughout and beyond the Netherlands. His influence was so widespread at the university that it was frequently called the *Academia Voetiana*.⁶¹ Several factors, however, curtailed Voetius influence on succeeding generations, not the least of which were his wordy tomes and his often laborious Latin. Then too, his students carried his ideals further than their teacher; their excess contributed to the ultimate disintegration of both Reformed scholasticism and the Dutch Second Reformation. Furthermore, the increasing secularisation of the Dutch people influenced the leading *Nadere Reformatie* divines of subsequent generations to abandon Voetius’ vision for reforming all of society; instead, they focused largely on his emphasis on internal piety. By the eighteenth century, the Dutch Second Reformation had become reminiscent of the *Devotio Moderna* in its emphasis on thorough separation from the unredeemed world, though there were notable exceptions, such as Wilhelmus à Brakel—who, though primarily a Voetian theologian, sought to combine the best of Voetius, Cocceius, and Herman Witsius. Brakel’s famous work, *De Redelijke Godsdienst*, recently translated into English as *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*,⁶² did much to keep alive in the Netherlands throughout the centuries that balance of systematic and experiential theology which John Murray has aptly called “intelligent piety.”⁶³ C&S

59. See Gerstner, *Thousand Generation Covenant*, chaps 2, 5, and 9 for how this was borne out in the Dutch South African colonists.

60. F. G. M. Broeyer, “William III and the Church in Utrecht after the French Occupation,” in *Church, Change and Revolution*, ed., J. Van den Berg and P. G. Hofstijzer (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 180.

61. Godfrey, 112.

62. 4 vols, trans. Bartel Elshout (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992–5).

63. F. Ernest Stoeffler also notes Voetius’ influence on F. A. Lampe and German Pietism, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 170.

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CANNIBALISM AND HUMAN SACRIFICE VINDICATED?^{†1}

by Thomas Schirrmacher

PART I

1. Common human knowledge

As far as many are concerned it goes without saying that cannibalism is widespread among so-called primitive people, that early human beings, Teutons and Aztecs similarly fed upon those of their own species, and that cannibalism still exists today. The charge of cannibalism against foreigners is universal and goes back to antiquity.

Of course the charge of cannibalism is not in itself any proof of its existence. Thus, for instance, the African explorer and missionary David Livingstone discovered that almost all blacks were convinced that whites were man-eaters,² a charge that the first explorers of the River Gambia had countered as early as 1455.³ Similarly, the first Christians were suspected by the Romans of being cannibals,⁴ as were the Irish by the Roman historian Strabo and the Scythians by the Greek historian Herodotus.⁵ There are

[†] Translated from the German by Peter Beale.

1. Reprint of "Ehrenrettung von Kannibalismus und Menschenopfer? 1. Teil," *Factum* 6/1994: pp. 46–50 and "Ehrenrettung von Kannibalismus und Menschenopfer? 2. Teil," *Factum* 7 and 8/1994: pp. 36–41. This contribution represents a thoroughgoing revision of my partly retracted article "Die Kannibalen: Mythen der Wissenschaft 1," *Factum* 5/1988: pp. 184–188.

2. Cf. David Livingstone, *The Last Journal of David Livingstone in Central Africa from 1865 to his Death*, ed. Horace Waller, vol. 2 (London: John Murray).

3. Charles Verlinden, Eberhard Schmitt (ed.), *Die mittelalterlichen Ursprünge der europäischen Expansion*, Dokumente zur Geschichte der europäischen Expansion 1 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1986), pp. 300–303.

4. Cf. Friedrich Schwenn, *Die Menschenopfer bei den Griechen und Römern*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 15/3 (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1915), pp. 193–195; Hans Dieter Stöver, *Christenverfolgung im Römischen Reich: Ihr Hintergründe und Folgen* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1982), p. 86 *et passim*. Cf. also the examples below of ethnologists bracketing together cannibalism and the Lord's Supper, thereby indirectly removing blame from antiquity.

5. Cf. the examples given by Erwin Frank. "Sie fressen Menschen, wie ihr scheußliches Aussehen beweist . . ." ("They eat human beings, as their hideous appearance indicates . . ."): Kritische Überlegungen zu Zeugen und Quellen der Menschenfresserei," pp. 199–224 in: Hans Peter Duerr (ed.), *Authentizität und Betrug in der Ethnologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp. 200–203.

numerous other teachings and assumptions concerning cannibalism, and it is even suggested that cannibalism and war might have accelerated the extinction of peoples involved in them.⁶

But what is cannibalism? The *Taschenwörterbuch der Ethnologie* [*Pocket Dictionary of Ethnology*] defines "cannibalism" thus: "Ritual consumption of human flesh. Sometimes, but very seldom, cannibalism appears to have been practised with the sole aim of providing sustenance, whether from necessity (cannibalism through hunger) or inclination (sometimes called 'gastronomic cannibalism')." ⁷

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states further:

Cannibalism, also called anthropophagy, is the eating of human flesh by men. The term is derived from a Spanish form of the language of the Carib, a West Indies tribe who were well-known for their practice of cannibalism. A widespread custom going back into early human history, it has been found among peoples on most continents.

Though many early accounts of cannibalism probably were exaggerated or in error, cannibalism is still practiced [*sic*] in interior New Guinea. It prevailed until recently in parts of West and Central Africa, Melanesia (especially Fiji), Australia, among the Maoris of New Zealand, in some of the islands of Polynesia, among tribes of Sumatra, and in various tribes of North and South America.⁸

Thus the ethnological understanding of cannibalism is not individual cases such as occur from time to time following an accident, when the surviving victims eat the bodies of their dead companions. Still more infrequent are cases in which the victim has actually been murdered for that

6. Contrary to this e.g. Herbert Tischner (ed.), *Völkerkunde*, Das Fischer Lexicon 13 (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1959), p. 282.

7. Michel Panoff, Michel Perrin, *Taschenwörterbuch der Ethnologie* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1982²), p. 155.

8. "Cannibalism," p. 511f. in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. II (of 30 vols) (Chicago/London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1982¹⁵) (9th Edition).

purpose, as was the case in a spectacular trial in England in 1884.⁹

The knowledge of what cannibalism is, and the belief that it is practised by “primitive” tribes throughout the world, is taken for granted by our society. In the scientific field, too, cannibalism seems not to be questioned. Scientific surveys both ancient¹⁰ and modern¹¹ verify the worldwide incidence of this phenomenon.

2. *Is cannibalism a myth?*

When, in 1979, the New York professor of anthropology William Arens in his book, *The Man-Eating Myth*, presented the public with his view that there had never been such a thing as habitual cannibalism, it seemed at first that this was the untenable opinion of an outsider.

Since then anthropologists and ethnologists have been changing sides in ever increasing numbers, as shown last month in an investigative article in the US journal *Science*. But the debate about consumption of one’s own kind continues. “I believe Arens is right,” declared the anthropologist Lyle Steadman of Arizona State University, suggesting the reason why the scholar continued to be opposed by those in his own discipline: “He is a real danger to a whole number of anthropologists.”¹²

Arens had been asked by his students whether he could not sometimes go into more interesting subjects, such as witchcraft or cannibalism.

Consequently, in preparing for a lecture, I turned to the study of man-eaters, which was eventually transformed into this study of the myth of man-eating. I mention this to make it clear to readers that, like themselves, when I began to think about the subject I was already of the opinion that cannibalism in the past and present was a fairly common phenomenon. The essay which follows is the result of a conversion process.¹³

9. A.W. Brian Simpson, *Cannibalism and the Common Law: The Story of the Tragic Last Voyage of the Mignotte and the Strange Legal Proceedings to Which it Gave Rise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

10. E.g. Richard Andree, *Die Anthropologie: Eine ethnographische Studie* (Leipzig: Verlag von Veit, 1887); P. Bergemann, *Die Verbreitung der Anthropologie über die Erde und Ermittlung einiger Wesenszüge dieses Brauches: Eine ethnographisch-ethnologische Studie* (Bunzlau: G. Kreuschmer, 1893); Rudolf S. Steinmetz, “Endokannibalismus,” *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 26/NF16 (1896), pp. 1–60; Ewald Volhard, *Kannibalismus*, Studien zur Kulturkunde 5 (Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder, 1939) (although he has the remarkable theory that cannibalism stems from “identification with the plants” [p. 485]); as well as from the years 1884/1887 (see Erwin Frank . . . y se lo comen: *Kritische Studie der Schriftquellen zum Kannibalismus der panosprachiger Indianer Ost-Perus und Brasiliens*, Mundus Reihe Ethnologie 7 (Bonn: Mundus, 1987) XXVIII), or from the year 1939 (see Annegret Nippa, “Nahrung,” pp. 145–149 in Bernhard Streck [ed.], *Wörterbuch der Ethnologie* [Cologne: Du Mont Buchverlag, 1987], p. 146).

11. E.g. Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Reay Tannahill, *Fleisch und Blut: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Kannibalismus* (Munich: W. Goldmann, 1979); Christian Spiel, *Menschen essen Menschen: Die Welt der Kannibalen* (Munich: C. Bertelsmann, 1972); Garry Hogg, *Cannibalism and Human Sacrifice* (London: Robert Hale, 1958); cf. also Ioan M. Lewis, *Schamanen, Hexer, Kannibalen: die Realität des Religiösen* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1989), esp. pp. 93–104; and from the year 1983 P. Brown, D. Tuzin (ed.), *The Ethnography of Cannibalism* (Washington, 1983).

12. “Kannibalismus Zäher Mythos,” *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg) 28/1986, pp. 154–156.

13. William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. v.

Arens’ thesis could not be expressed more plainly: “I am dubious about the actual existence of this act as an accepted practice for any time or place. Recourse to cannibalism under survival conditions or as a rare instance of antisocial behavior is not denied for any culture.”¹⁴

Thus Arens does not rule out the possibility that under certain unusual circumstances humans have eaten human flesh. This is something which he considers possible in any culture. But he fundamentally denies that there are proven incidences of habitual cannibalism, i.e. cannibalism which might have been accepted as an integral part of religion, culture, warfare or social custom. As a scientist, moreover, he points out that no anthropologist can ever confirm that a practice has never taken place. He can only confirm that there is no proof of its occurrence. And this is also the case with cannibalism.¹⁵ As far as he is concerned all the evidence is inconclusive, so that cannibalism remains unproven. In the light of the fact that thousands of scientists have assumed and continue to assume that there is thousand-fold evidence of cannibalism, this is a very far-reaching thesis to put forward.

Arens sees cannibalism as a myth which in almost all cultures has provided an excuse for blaming other peoples. It is to be found in the case of Herodotus with regard to the barbarians, and similarly Columbus with regard to the Indians, the Spaniards with regard to the Aztecs, colonialists with regard to the “natives” and the latter with regard to whites. Almost everywhere cannibalism constitutes the high point of the moral reprehensibility of the enemy. It gives grounds for a mixture of hatred and fear.

As early as 1874 the African explorer, anthropologist and prominent missionary *David Livingstone* came to a similar conclusion concerning Africa. He travelled through large parts of Africa, among other things in order to find evidence of cannibalism. To his surprise he discovered that there was no evidence which would stand up in a Scottish court, but that on the other hand the blacks were convinced that white men were cannibals.¹⁶ However, Livingstone was the only missionary to hold this view.¹⁷

Arens has made an exhaustive survey of the sources of cannibalism:

This conclusion is based on the fact that, excluding survival conditions, I have been unable to uncover adequate documenta-

14. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 180f.

16. David Livingstone, *The Last Journal of David Livingstone . . .*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 98 and elsewhere; cf. William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *op. cit.*, pp. 85–87, and “Kannibalismus Zäher Mythos,” *Der Spiegel*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

17. As a modern evangelical counterexample to Livingstone the account of the missionary Don Richardson (also the subject of a film), *Das Friedenskind* (“The Peace Child”), *Wandlung einer Dschungelkultur grausamer Tücke in Neuguinea* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1979) is often put forward. Without wishing to doubt the existence of cannibalism in the tribe where Richardson was a missionary, this must be treated with some reservation. Don Richardson, who is known to me personally and whose foundational book *Eternity in Their Hearts* I was responsible for publishing through the same publishing house, does believe the tribe successfully evangelised by him to have been formerly cannibalistic, but has not been an eye-witness to cannibalism, and does not refer to any eye-witnesses, but portrays cannibalism as something which had ceased before his time. Typical are p. 170f, where he records how astonished he was, in a society which he thought to be characterised entirely by headhunting and man-eating, to become acquainted with the peaceful implement of a child of peace.

tion of cannibalism as a custom in any form for any society. Rumors, suspicions, fears and accusations abound, but no satisfactory first-hand accounts. Learned essays by professionals are unending, but the sustaining ethnography is lacking. The argument that a critical re-examination is both a necessary and a profitable exercise is based on the premise that cannibalism by definition is an observable phenomenon.¹⁸

3. Nobel Prize winners “offside”

It should be pointed out here that the fact that different peoples accuse each other of cannibalism is no argument against the existence of cannibalism. A worldwide phenomenon¹⁹ can naturally also be used as a worldwide accusation. Back in 1932 a specialist was able to write:

. . . though the present range of the practice is somewhat restricted, it was much more widespread within even recent times, and there is every probability that all races have, at one period or another, passed through a cannibalistic stage, which survived occasionally in ritual or in folk custom, or was remembered in legend or folk tale.²⁰

Even those many examples where the charge of cannibalism is falsely laid mean nothing. Many nations also accuse one another of murder. Does that disprove the existence of murder and genocide?

In Germany *Der Spiegel* has taken upon itself the rôle of spokesman for those who deny the existence of cannibalism:

It would be “beneath his dignity” to involve himself in scientific controversy, angrily stated the American doctor D. Carleton Gadjusek, who had received a Nobel Prize in 1976 for his work on kuru, a brain disease occurring in New Guinea. Gadjusek claimed that the virus, which caused fits of shaking, was located in the victim’s brain, and was transmitted through cannibalistic eating habits. Gadjusek had come across the allegedly cannibalistic roots of this disease in the 1950s among the Fore, a tribe native to the mountains of New Guinea. 20 years later, in 1977, *Science* published photographs from Gadjusek’s Nobel Prize dissertation, which were intended to confirm his thesis of systematic consumption of human flesh on the Pacific island. One of the pictures portrayed a victim of this fatal shaking disease. The photo also showed members of the Fore tribe preparing a large amount of meat for a meal. According to the conclusion stated on the caption, the kuru victim would end up in the hungry stomach of his comrades. The US doctor reacted angrily to scholars who questioned his claim, stating that “the whole of Australia” knew that the Fore were cannibals. Anthropologists who criticized his theory were accused by him of being bound to their desks. If they “got up off their behinds and went to New Guinea,” he brusquely informed the doubters, they would be able to find evidence of ritual cannibalism “in hundreds of cases.” However, those explorers who followed the Nobel Prize winner’s advice came back empty-handed. Lyle Seaman, for example, stayed with the Fore for two years. He was constantly hearing reports of cannibalistic eating rituals, but none of them was reliable. At the end the results drawn by the scientist from his investigations were unequivocal: “There is no trace of man-eating in New Guinea.” Gadjusek’s own proofs also showed themselves to be untenable. The Fore men in the *Science* photo who were sitting in front of a mountain

of meat were in fact, as the doctor had to admit when questioned, feasting on a pig. On the other hand Gadjusek would not on any account produce authentic photos of a cannibal feast. The reason he gave for his strict ban on this was that members of the tribe would be discriminated against on account of the explosive nature of the material. Since Gadjusek’s reports of the alleged cannibalistic practices of the Fore first appeared scientists from numerous countries have made the very difficult journey to research in the mountains of New Guinea. It is astonishing enough that, as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* ironically remarked, not one of them concluded his field studies by becoming a meal. It is clear that the idea that human beings could eat their own kind not only in cases of necessity, but as a matter of routine, is universally held as an ineradicable legend about those uncivilised, barbarian “others.”²¹

4. The researches of Erwin Frank an example

In 1987 Erwin Frank presented an investigation of sources on the subject of cannibalism in a specific region for the first time in the German language.²² Frank investigates the sources for the accusation of cannibalism with regard to 14 or 16 peoples of all kinds of languages. He traces every scientific or popular assertion back into the sources, until there is a source which names no other, or even a source which itself turns out to be an eyewitness account. It would take us too long to go over the individual examples. Frank comes across eyewitnesses who were still in Europe at the time of the alleged incident, earwitnesses who had heard reports in languages which they had never learned, and most of all misinterpretations. Thus it was evident to him that many rituals were the drinking of the cremated ashes of the dead or interment in pots. Both these might have led eyewitnesses to believe they were seeing cannibalism. Frank categorises 5 of the 60 resulting sources as unquestionable. But they refer only to these practices. He categorises 25 sources as totally worthless, while the remaining range between “uncertain” and “extremely doubtful.”²³

Frank further accuses the explorers and missionaries of always only finding what they had already determined to find.²⁴ In conclusion Frank emphasises: “We must hold on to the fact that with regard to both exocannibalism and endocannibalistic consumption of meat there is only one credible eyewitness account, and only two or three dubious indirect indications of the existence of the latter practice (self-accusation of those involved).”²⁵

In explanation of these facts he writes:

Cannibals who in the light of concrete experience over a period of time turned out to be non-cannibalistic were then more likely to be given as an example of the healthy effect of the contact of

21. “Kannibalismus Zäher Mythos,” *Der Spiegel*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

22. Erwin Frank, . . . *y se lo comen*, *op. cit.* 23. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

24. Frank further concludes that cannibalism, if he came to be convinced of it, would not be a matter of dishonour (*ibid.*, p. 166). He is thus free of any suspicion, even now in reversing his conclusion, of wishing to save the honour of the people he is investigating, although this motive still keeps coming to the surface. It would have been good to have a comprehensive consideration of the international discussion. Also, although in 1979 Arens’ work was only available in manuscript, it would by 1987 have been possible to quote extensively from it, cf. *ibid.*, p. xxviii. Again, it would have been useful to discover whether Frank was the student extensively referred to by William Arens (*The Man-Eating Myth*, *op. cit.*, p. 173f), who with his finals dissertation stood by his professor in the face of sharp criticism. Although I am familiar with the Bonn Ethnological Seminary, where Frank studied, I have not so far been able to ascertain this.

25. Erwin Frank, . . . *y se lo comen*, *op. cit.*, p. 180f.

18. William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

19. Cf. Paula Brown, “Cannibalism,” pp. 60–62 in Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), vol. 3; J.A. MacCulloch, “Cannibalism,” pp. 194–209 in James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), vol. 6.

20. J.A. MacCulloch, “Cannibalism,” *op. cit.*, p. 194.

these “savages” with their Christian conquerors than evidence that cannibals did not exist. Cannibalism remained an assured element of the generally accepted “knowledge” irrespective of any contemporary experience of an individual case. As a logical possibility cannibalism is . . . too compelling to allow space for the hypothesis that the certainty with which we usually regard this practice as an existing (or formerly existing) behaviour pattern of other peoples might lack a basis in fact. But it is possibly the very powerful appeal of cannibalism as a logical alternative to non-cannibalism, which cannot actually be proved . . . which has made it into a universal theme of not only European fantasy, into an ideal metaphor for being “different,” a negative self-definition.²⁶

In a later article in the anthology *Authentizität und Betrug in der Ethnologie* [*Authenticity and Deception in Ethnology*] Frank, in a similar way to W. Arens although with completely different arguments, substantiated his thesis that so far no indubitably historical sources of cannibalism have been produced,²⁷ referring to Latin American scientists who had for a long time maintained this thesis. In this Frank again goes over the question of which rituals were misinterpreted as cannibalism by outsiders. It is well-known that these included the Lord’s Supper of the first Christians, which many Romans could not understand in any other way. In addition he refers to the political aspect of the accusation of cannibalism. Was not the horror of cannibalism the reason for many a crusade and many a colonial war? He asks: “How many peoples of Central and South America probably owe their reputation of once having been man-eaters . . . to the well-known fact that the Spanish crown allowed their overseas governors to engage in hunting free Indians as slaves *only* if these were cannibals?”²⁸

5. *Vindication of cannibalism?*

It is certainly salutary if those cases can be revealed in which peoples of this earth have been unjustly charged with cannibalism. It must be questioned, however, whether such examples go so far as to prove that there was never any such thing as habitual cannibalism.

It is also evident in too many places that the criticism of Arens and Frank is essentially linked with their view of Christian mission. Since a majority of the sources stems from the writing of Christian missionaries, and it was taken as read that in many places cannibalism was driven back by Christian influence, the battle against the credibility of the countless sources is predominantly a battle against Christianity.²⁹

It is puzzling that the aforementioned ethnologists and many of their colleagues above all reproach others, in particular Christians and missionaries, for rejecting cannibalism lock, stock and barrel. Instead they try to explain cannibalism, and in so doing to excuse it. As far as they are

concerned cannibalism has nothing to do with murder, and no mention is made of the human rights of the victim. It is made out as if the only men to be eaten were those who had already died of themselves, although in most cases of cannibalism the victims are killed, or rather murdered, for the sole purpose of eating them.

Hans Helfritz writes, for instance: “Cannibalism, which of all people the cruel Spanish conquerors described as ‘most extremely horrible’ and regarded as the consequence of the Indians’ heathenism, has long been radically divested by modern psychology of its horror and incomprehensibility.”³⁰

Just in order that another religion should not be criticised, it is also absolutely excluded that cannibalism should be called into question. Thus Nigel Davies writes about another researcher: “Ewald Volhard stresses that if there was any such thing as non-ritual cannibalism, then it was an inferior type of ritual man-eating. Therefore such a practice cannot be condemned out of hand without at the same time damning the religion whose rituals were based on it.”³¹

Also typical are the vast variety of attempts to explain cannibalism. Michael Harner was right to point out that the Aztec human sacrifices are the focus of interest, while the parallel incidence of cannibalism is seldom mentioned or investigated.³² It is well-known that the hearts of the victims were cut out and sacrificed to the sun god. It is less well-known what happened to the rest of the body. On the basis of contemporary Spanish sources Harner comes to the conclusion that as a rule arms and legs were eaten.³³

But the explanation which Michael Harner has to offer for Aztec cannibalism is both terrible and wrong. Harner, who has made himself a name as an ethnologist,³⁴ has formulated the thesis that human sacrifices are the consequence of population density and lack of protein because of the absence of domestic animals.³⁵ This is typically evolutionary.

On the other hand it seems that it is thought to be a good thing that cannibalism is in the process of dying out. Christianity is attacked because of its anti-cannibalistic attitude.

30. Hans Helfritz, *Amerika: Inka, Maya und Atzeken* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1979), p. 259 (on the cannibalism of the ancient Indian tribes in the Cauca Valley, in what is now Colombia).

31. Nigel Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer: Glaube, Liebe und Verzweiflung in der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1981), p. 192f, referring to Ewald Volhard, *Kannibalismus* (Stuttgart: Stricker und Schröder, 1951).

32. Michael Harner, “The Ecological Basis for Aztec Sacrifice,” *Ethnology* 4 (1977), pp. 117–135.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

34. Especially through his book on the Jivaro, their head-hunting and their famous shrunken heads: Michael J. Harner, *The Jivaro* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973); cf. Nigel Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer, op. cit.*, pp. 313–316.

35. Michael Harner, “The Ecological Basis for Aztec Sacrifice,” *op. cit.* His thesis is supported by: Marvin Harris, *Kannibalen und Könige: Aufstieg und Niedergang der Menschheitskulturen* (Frankfurt, 1978), pp. 153–159 (in English: Marvin Harris, *Cannibals and Kings* [New York: Random House, 1977]). His thesis is rejected by: B.R. Ortiz de Montellano, “Aztec Cannibalism: An Ecological Necessity?,” *Science* 200 (1978), pp. 611–617; M. Sahlins, “Reply to Marvin Harris,” *New York Review of Books* 28 (1979), June: p. 52f.; Nigel B. Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer, op. cit.*, pp. 9, 262–267; G.W. Conrad, A.A. Demarest, *Religion and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 165–170; Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Divine Hunger, op. cit.*, pp. 15–20; W. Haberland, “Das Hochtal von Mexico,” pp. 19–86 in *Glanz und Untergang des Alten Mexico: Die Azteken und ihre Vorläufer* (Mainz, 1986), here pp. 80–82.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 190f.

27. Erwin Frank, “Sie fressen Menschen, wie ihr scheußliches Aussehen beweist . . .,” *op. cit.*

28. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

29. Roger M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective* (New York: CBS Publishing Japan, 1981²), p. 154, criticises Arens’ position, appealing to the eye-witness account by his great-grandfather, also an ethnologist, of a cannibal feast in the islands of Fiji. Arens’ view is also rejected by Ioan M. Lewis, *Schamanen, Hexen, Kannibalen, op. cit.*, p. 100f, although in many cases he does not regard the accusation of cannibalism as being historically tenable, and is cautious because he was himself once thought to be a cannibal (*ibid.*, p. 94).

But it is generally not mentioned that it was this very attitude which caused the retreat of cannibalism.

We find a typical example as long ago as 1932 in J. A. MacCulloch. In dealing with the question of why cannibalism has declined in many places, he discusses every possible theory,³⁶ mentions “the presence of a higher civilization, and especially of a higher religion”,³⁷ refers to the fact that Islam brought an end to cannibalism in North and East Africa, and only at the end, almost in passing, states that: “Christianity, together with other European civilizing influences, has also put an end to it in many parts of S. America, in New Zealand, and many islands of the South Seas, once hotbeds of cannibalism, as well as in large tracts of the African continent.”³⁸

In line with this there is little in the way of memories of cannibalism. In 1977 in New Guinea Queen Elizabeth II received a framework of skulls (an “ariba”) which came from the Goariba Islands, “the only place of which it is known that missionaries there fell victim to cannibals. In 1901 the pastor James Chalmers, his assistant preacher and eleven young Papuan converts were slain.”³⁹ The Queen accepted the present without protest,⁴⁰ and presented the framework with its two human skulls to the British Museum in London.⁴¹ There was never any mention of the fact that this object was clear evidence of murder.

The intervention of the missionaries against cannibalism, human sacrifice and headhunting was in those days considered to be an intervention in support of human rights. Nowadays it is regarded by so-called human rights organisations as being a violation of human rights. Then the rights of the victim were considered most important, now it is the rights of the perpetrator.

Some authors even want to turn things on their head. Thus we read the following in a book by a journalist and an ethnologist, which is striking in its hatred for Christian mission:

In any case, it was missions which began the process of cultural decline in the primitive peoples . . . This is true not only in the breaking of their ancestral chain of succession . . . but also in their prohibition of headhunting and cannibalism, a prohibition which to us too seems obvious and humane. But even the prohibition of the inhuman can have effects which are themselves inhuman. Thus in 1950 in her book *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* the well-known American anthropologist Margaret Mead reported concerning the Mundugumor, a Papuan tribe of New Guinea, that the prohibition of head-hunting and cannibalism had completely destroyed the essential character of the life of the tribe, “like a watch with a broken spring.” Thus the incomprehensible nature of such a prohibition for the cannibals and head-hunters stems not only from their own imagination as if someone suddenly forbade us to slaughter and eat pigs and cattle but also from their own experience of us white people.⁴²

So forbidding the slaughter of cattle would be the same as forbidding the slaughter of human beings! What do these

ethnologists actually think about the victims? In any case, it was established a long time ago that Mead’s researches were nothing but wishful thinking. Mead found what she wanted to find, and in so doing completely misunderstood the harsh reality of the tribe she was studying.⁴³

Accordingly the authors agree with the decision of an Australian judge who acquitted headhunters, when they pointed out to him that there was no difference between tribal feuds and the wars of the western world.⁴⁴ How right they are! And since the authors would probably condemn any war of aggression, they ought also condemn and punish tribal feuds. Will the next thing be the justification of murder before a court, by reference to the existence of wars? Would the authors also have been minded to maintain National Socialism in existence, because the Nazi culture would be destroyed if they were forbidden to kill Jews and other opponents? A culture which makes murder essential to its existence will, according to biblical teaching, inevitably die. “For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Mt. 26:52).

But back to the book we have chosen as our example:

It was, however, only in the nineteenth century that the inhabitants of the Fiji archipelago gained the dubious reputation of being particularly terrible cannibals. This reputation was spread by missionaries, who were not exactly delighted by the persistent resistance of the islanders to the scarcely convincing examples of Christian “gentleness and tolerance.” However we know also, dating from the year 1847, the statement of an old Fijian chief that the bloody wars and constant cannibalism were recent, and had not been known to such an extent in the time of his youth. The sacril cannibalism of ancient times had turned, as a result of the campaigns to eradicate the tribes, into unrestrained man-eating that was the observation and conclusion of contemporaries on the spot.⁴⁵

What sort of argument is that? Nineteenth century cannibalism was not so bad, because earlier it was not so widespread and had a religious basis! Not only that, but an example like this contradicts the evolutionary view of cannibalism. Cannibalism is not necessarily the early stage of a culture, but can also take shape only at a much later stage.

There was also human sacrifice and cannibalism after the Second World War.⁴⁶ In New Guinea the cannibalism described by Fredrik Barth⁴⁷ did not come to an end until Australian police patrols occupied the inaccessible areas in the interior of the islands in 1964.⁴⁸

6. *Cannibalism in the Old Testament?*

In this connection every Bible-believing Christian will naturally be interested in the question of whether cannibalism is known to the Old Testament, or at least whether it speaks of such peoples. The answer to this question is surprising:

(1) Cannibalism is known to the Old Testament. But nowhere is another nation blamed for this cannibalism, as we have discovered throughout history. It is always the

36. J.A. MacCulloch, “Cannibalism,” *op. cit.*, p. 206.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. Nigel Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer*, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

40. In contrast to this, right up to the present century missionaries were still profoundly shocked by such phenomena. A classic example of this is Wilson S. Naylor, *Daybreak in the Dark Continent*, The Forward Mission Study Course (New York: Laymen’s Missionary Movement, 1908), p. 90f. (human sacrifice) and p. 92f. (cannibalism).

41. Nigel Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer*, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

42. Peter Baumann, Helmut Uhlig, *Kein Platz für “wilde” Menschen: Das Schicksal der letzten Naturvölker* (Vienna: Molden, 1974), p. 220.

43. Thus especially Derek Freeman, *Liebe ohne Aggression: Margaret Meads Legende von der Friedfertigkeit der Naturvölker* (Munich, 1983).

44. *Ibid.*, p. 220f.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

46. Nigel Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer*, *op. cit.*, pp. 312–323.

47. Fredrik Barth, *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea* (Newhaven [USA]: Yale University Press, 1975).

48. Thus Nigel Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer*, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

nation of the Jews itself which is the target. The Old Testament does not need to ascribe to other nations things which they have not done or at least reject.

(2) Cannibalism is never regarded as normal or right, but is always seen as the worst kind of transgression. This is the view even of apostate kings:

In Lev. 26:29 (see vv. 27–29) and Dt. 28:53 and 57 (see vv. 53–57) one of the high points of God's judgment on the people's transgression of the law is declared to be that women will eat the flesh of their own children. The fulfilment of both declarations is to be found in Lam. 2:20 and 4:10 and in 2 Kings 6:28f. (see vv. 25–30). Here, too, it is only a matter of mothers eating their children in the course of a dramatic famine. In 2 Kings 6:25–30 even the king, who himself does not keep the law, is terrified when he learns of it. In Ezk. 5:10 we are told that as a judgment "the fathers shall eat the sons" and "the sons shall eat their fathers," which could however also be understood as a general description of mutual killing. In Jer. 19:9 similarly there is a general description: "And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege . . ."

In Ezk. 36:13f we read about Israel restored by the Spirit: "Thus saith the Lord God: Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God." It is not clear whether the text is to be understood figuratively or not. In any case, here as always in the Old Testament cannibalism is linked to those belonging to its own people. This is significant in the light of the previously described situation where cannibalism was always an accusation made by one nation against another.

So in the Old Testament cannibalism is not tolerated, but features as one of the principal characteristics of a perverse society. It is always the people themselves who are involved in such transgression in circumstances of most severe famine. It is typical of the Old Testament, which condemns other nations in the sharpest terms and places them under the judgment of God, that it directs the charge of cannibalism, and we do not mean cannibalism that is encouraged and approved, only against its own people.⁴⁹

7. Sources for evidence of cannibalism

Astrid Wendt, in the first part of her Tübingen ethnological dissertation on the historical sources for cannibalism in Brazil,⁵⁰ examines the portrayal of the ritual cannibalism of the Brazilian Indians in Italian, Portuguese, German, English and Dutch sources from the period from 1500 to 1654. The writer brings out clearly the varying interests of the different European nations, but (rightly) considers the numerous records of and references to cannibalism to be fundamentally credible.

Particularly interesting is the second part of the study, dealing with allegorical portrayals of America in carvings, atlases and travelogues of the same period, with illustrations

49. For further study, cf. the commentaries of Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch in their series of commentaries on the relevant texts.

50. Astrid Wendt, *Kannibalismus in Brasilien: Eine Analyse europäischer Reiseberichte und Amerika-Darstellungen für die Zeit zwischen 1500 und 1654*, Europäische Hochschulschriften XIX B (Ethnologie) 15 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989).

reproduced in a comprehensive appendix. It is evident that the portrayal of cannibalism was part of the archetypal European portrayal of America.

Compared with the excellent portrayal of the actual material, the introduction and conclusion, which deal with the problem of cannibalism in general, seem to me to be weak, only referring to what every ethnologist must and does know about cannibalism. (Incidentally, to assume a "relationship in terms of ideas" between cannibalism and Eucharist,⁵¹ without going into it any further, seems to me to be somewhat out of place.)

Wendt's final verdict entirely contradicts that of Arens and Frank:⁵²

The fact that ritual cannibalism is mentioned and in some cases described in detail by all the writers, whatever their nationality, status, or relationship to the indigenous people, leads to the conclusion that this sort of anthropophagy did indeed exist. This is all the more probable when even those authors whose aim it was to portray the way of life of the Brazilians as an example to be followed (even for Europeans) describe cannibalistic rites of this sort.⁵³

The most significant German source is undoubtedly the account of 1556–1557 by Hans Staden,⁵⁴ who gives an eyewitness description "in sensational richness of detail of the events which eventually reached their climax in the consumption of the slain."⁵⁵ So it is that D. Forsyth made use of Staden as a powerful argument against William Arens, and produced a detailed rejection of Arens' criticism of Staden.⁵⁶

Staden, a peasant from Hessen⁵⁷ who was born between 1525 and 1528, served under Portuguese and Spaniards throughout the world. In about 1553 in Brazil he was captured by the Tupinamba. Before being ransomed over a year later by some Frenchmen, he had the opportunity to witness at first hand every aspect of the ritual of cannibalism. All attempts to discredit this witness⁵⁸ may be regarded as having failed.⁵⁹ In addition, Astrid Wendt has pointed out that Staden, although a convinced Protestant, was not in the position of a spiritual or colonial leader (he was, after all, a German peasant) who had an interest in portraying the Indians in a particularly negative light.⁶⁰ On the contrary, he was surprised by the kind treatment he received as a prisoner:

51. *Ibid.*, p. 6. Also Ioan M. Lewis, *Schamanen, Hexer, Kannibalen*, *op. cit.*, p. 101f. sees in ritual cannibalism "a special form of communion" (*ibid.*, p. 101), like that to be found in the eucharist.

52. The discussion of William Arens and his pupils consists unfortunately only of remarks made in passing (*ibid.*, pp. 79, 219) and brief disparaging comments. Here one might have expected a thorough discussion of the matter. Wendt does, however, counter Arens by appealing to Donald W. Forsyth, "Three Cheers for Hans Staden: The Case for Brazilian Cannibalism," *Ethnohistory* 32 (1985) 1, pp. 17–36.

53. Astrid Wendt, *Kannibalismus in Brasilien*, *op. cit.*, p. 152. (On pp. 227–230 there is an excellent table setting out what details of cannibalistic rites have been recorded from which sources between 1500 and 1654.)

54. Hans Staden, *Brasilien: Die wahrhaftige Historie der wilden, nackten, grimmigen Menschenfresser-Leute* (Tübingen: G. Faber, 1982).

55. Astrid Wendt, *Kannibalismus in Brasilien*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

56. Donald W. Forsyth, "Three Cheers for Hans Staden," *op. cit.*

57. Cf. Astrid Wendt, *Kannibalismus in Brasilien*, *op. cit.*, p. 74f.

58. Especially William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *op. cit.*, p. 25f.

59. Cf. especially D. Forsyth, "Three Cheers for Hans Staden," *op. cit.*; cf. Astrid Wendt, *Kannibalismus in Brasilien*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–81.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

First he had to submit to the ritual which was required of him as a future human sacrifice. It was only by feigning toothache that he succeeded in escaping the jaws of death. This prevented him from eating, and made him too skinny to be worth putting in the cookpot. He went on to make some shrewd predictions, and in this way attained the status of a tribal oracle, and from then on was too valuable to be killed.⁶¹

8. *Cannibalism and evolution: cannibalism in pre-humans and early humans*

Anyone venturing to say anything about cannibalism will also be required to say something about the cannibalism of the alleged pre-humans and early humans.⁶² Cannibalism in pre- and early humans or the links between animal and human is, for many, something which goes without saying.⁶³ Yet all the discoveries can either only verify the fact that those of the same species died or were killed, or else that the flesh of those who had just been killed was cut off. The prominent prehistorian and evolutionary scholar K. J. Narr emphatically rejects these assertions:

These findings have in part been connected with cannibalism; but such an assumption can neither be directly deduced from the findings, nor be supported by ethnological analogies taken from cultures which are in some way structurally comparable . . . And other putative instances of man-eating are at best ambiguous. That applies not least to findings relating to “Australopithecines,” to whom at the same time cannibalism and a “particular interest in the skull” were ascribed, although it is more likely that the smashing up and distribution of skeletal parts was the work of predatory and scavenging animals. Cannibalism as a “distinguishing” characteristic of early man which elevates him above the animals together with the consequent anthropological conclusions about the removal of inhibitions etc. remains, despite its constant repetition, a conjecture without any real foundation.⁶⁴

He goes on to explain in detail the most often quoted discoveries:

The question of cannibalism is linked with that of intentional killing; but “intra-species killing” does not constitute proof of anthropophagy. The discovery of Chukutien, where Peking Man was found, cannot be regarded as evidence, because there it was almost entirely skull-tops which were discovered (four of them in

a stratum which contains almost nothing else: there seems to be no secular explanation of their being set down there). If it was a matter of remains of a meal, then the victims must have been consumed elsewhere and their skulls brought later to this store-place: the assumption of cannibalism in this case is arbitrary and unnecessary. The incompleteness of the skeletons, a feature which is mentioned with enthusiasm in respect of other sites, can be ascribed to the activities of predatory or scavenging animals; and the fairly frequent occurrence of individual skulls or parts of skulls can be explained either in this way or by other reasons for their being deposited. (The best evidence is a skull from a cave in Italy, which lay inside a circle of stones and bones.) The most ancient showpiece of Old Stone Age man-eating is the discoveries made in Krapina (Croatia), where fragments of skulls and other bones together with the remains of animals lay, partly burned and randomly distributed, in the stratum, something which can be entirely explained by digging-up of graves, biting into pieces by scavenging animals, penetration into new excavation strata, and the like.⁶⁵

In parentheses Narr adds the real reason for the attempt to discover cannibalism in evolutionary precursors to man: “It is basically older than the discoveries and essentially relies upon an outdated evolutionary reconstruction of the history of civilization.”⁶⁶

Here we might draw attention to the real problem, which is that Narr merely substitutes another evolutionary reconstruction for the old one, whereas I see in this problem a general criticism of any attempt at evolutionary reconstruction. The quest for primitive man, occupying a lower level of culture, provided fruitful ground for every rumour of cannibalism. By going on to assume that the “primitive” tribes of the world occupied the same level as pre-humans and early humans, it was possible with the aid of ethnological investigations to reconstruct the everyday scene of early man. (This gains popular expression in such sensational reports as “With the Stone Age men of Brazil.”) It was a short step from this to the cannibalism of pre-humans and early humans. Even if this comparison was only openly shared by a few, its results are still often encountered at an unconscious level.

In fact, however, there is not only no proof of the evolution of mankind, but also no special connection between the evolution of man and cannibalism. J. A. MacCulloch points out that “the worst forms of cannibalism”⁶⁷ are to be found not among the people on the lowest cultural level, but among people “with a certain amount of culture.”⁶⁸ *C&S*

61. Nigel Davies, *Opfertod und Menschenopfer*, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

62. Critical of this is William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth*, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–136; Erwin Frank, “‘Sie fressen Menschen, wie ihr scheußliches Aussehen beweist...’” *op. cit.*, p. 205f.

63. E.g. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 1034 declares the cannibalism of *homo erectus*; *ibid.*, vol. 14, p. 985 the cannibalism of the neolithic and paleolithic ages.

64. K. J. Narr, “Beiträge der Urgeschichte zur Kenntnis der Menschennatur,” pp. 3–62 in Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Vogler (ed.), *Kulturanthropologie, Neue Anthropologie 4* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag and Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag, 1973), this quotation p. 32.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*; cf. also the critique of cannibalism in Cro-Magnon Man in H. Helmut, “Kannibalismus in Paläoanthropologie und Ethnologie,” *Ethnographisch-Archäologische Zeitschrift* (1968) 5, pp. 101–119, this quotation p. 101f., and Gunther Pilz, Hugo Moesch, *Der Mensch und die Graugans* (Frankfurt: Umschau Verlag, 1975), p. 159f.

67. J. A. MacCulloch, “Cannibalism,” *op. cit.*, p. 205.

68. *Ibid.*

SPARE PART SURGERY RIGHT OR WRONG?

by Colin Wright

In a recent newsletter I received, the editor raised the issue of the morality of spare part surgery, i.e. surgical transplants of human organs. Although unable to offer sufficient evidence to warrant his usual practice of requiring his beliefs to be adhered to by others on pain of excommunication, he nevertheless was quite adamant that such practices, including blood transfusions, were unbiblical. In a later edition he backtracked slightly, allowing blood transfusions, on the principle that blood is a renewable resource in the human body unlike, say, a kidney.

His argument against transplants boiled down to this: Our bodies are not our own, they were given us by God and remain his property; we may not do with them as we will. That we may not do with them as we will means that we may not alienate them or parts of them.

Now, I have a number of problems with the current practice of surgical transplants. The subject is fraught with difficulty, not least because there is no direct clear evidence in Scripture about such practices. Neither pre-Christian Jews or Gentiles practised such arts, and the early church does not appear to have even contemplated the possibility—if the New Testament is anything to go by. What's more, the practice is of such recent origin that the church has no tradition of dealing with the issue. To make matters worse, the church is no longer in any fit state spiritually to know where to begin dealing with it either.

If, then, we are to seek a biblical answer to the problem, it must be purely in terms of general principles of morality and justice. I hope to consider some of these in this essay.

First, however, I want to look at the issue negatively—to expose what seem to me to be quite *unbiblical* motives in the type of argument our afore-mentioned anonymous (and so he shall remain) writer has proposed.

To begin with, it is not a Scriptural argument but an *ad hominem* argument that the writer puts forward. That is, he is arguing his case on grounds of reason and not of Scripture warrant. Westminster buffs will quickly respond that not only what is “expressly set down in Scripture” must guide our actions, but also what “by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture” (Chapter I, section VI). Granted. My point is that the writer's conclusion is not a *necessary* consequence of his premiss. We are not at liberty to use this procedure to justify any and every vague (or even clear) *inference* from Scripture statements. Even seeming logical *implications*¹ are dangerous and sometimes invalid. Thomas Aquinas justified the burning of heretics on such a logical

implication: If those who commit murder—destroying men's bodies—ought to be executed, how much more those who commit the far worse sin of destroying men's souls by infecting them with heresy? No doubt many of our readers will be able to find logical fallacies here, but Aquinas did not see any—and he was no mean logician. How careful ought we to be therefore in drawing logical conclusions from Scripture that later generations will see to be shot full of holes! The key word in the Westminster standards is the word *necessary*.

Taking the view that a single contradictory instance is sufficient to disprove a theory, we need only point to the two very trivial cases of everyday flouting of this principle: we cut our hair and we trim our toe-nails. We could go even further. To remove an appendix is to destroy part of this body that is not “ours” but God's. Ok, so it saves our life; but since when is our life more important than maintaining God's law, or what we purport to be God's law? Does not this example clearly demonstrate that such a blanket law could never work? Grant this as an “exception” to the rule and the way is open for a host of other “exceptions.” Suddenly all principle is gone out the window. Do we not, in fact, operate on a much more complex level in most of life's situations than this writer is suggesting? And where could one possibly find *any* Scripture support for the practice of shaving off the male beard?

Consider, too, the following logical corollary of granting an exception here: If it is justifiable to remove part of my body to save my life, how much more is it justified to remove part of my body to save another's.

But there seems to me to be a much more sinister process of reasoning going on here. It is noticeable that the debate is being conducted solely in terms of how the action of organ donation affects the “holiness” of the donor. The reason that is always given in my experience is just this: I must not give my organs because it would compromise my righteousness. It takes absolutely no account of the consequences of the act for others, particularly the recipients of such organs. To our mind this spells only one thing: pharisaism. We do not mean to suggest by this any conscious evil motive but rather that the principle itself on which such thinking operates is one that is

1. I use the words *infer* and *imply* advisedly. They are often confused. We often infer things from conversation that are not implied. In logic implication is a conclusion that *must* follow from the truth of the premises. Given the premises, the conclusion, the implication, *cannot* be otherwise. When a politician insists he is being candid we often *infer* he has something to hide, but this is not a logical *implication* of his claim.

implicit in the pharisaic attitude to life. The intent of such a spirit is to protect oneself, to consider only oneself, by seeking to keep the regulations stipulated, whatever the consequences for others.

Now, I am convinced there is strong support in Scripture for opposing such an attitude; for taking the position that morality is governed as much by the spirit as by the letter. Positivised laws can never extend to every possible situation. Indeed, as I pointed out in my article “The Foundations of a Christian Theory of Human Action” (*Christianity & Society*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, January 1998) most human action is governed by application of principles rather than response to positive regulation. There is a sense—and only a sense!—in which ethical response is always situational² or contextual. There is an early example of this in Scripture in the account of Rahab’s hiding the Israelite spies in Jericho. That Rahab lied through her teeth regarding their whereabouts simply cannot be denied. That she did the right thing in this is patently evident from the fact that she was granted such high status in the nation of Israel and that she was commended by St James for a faith that works.³

Consider, too, that this obsession with one’s own personal holiness is precisely what inhibited both the priest and the Levite from helping the man waylaid on the Jericho road (Lk 10:29–37). The man was “half-dead.” To these two “holy” men perhaps he appeared dead already. In any case he was likely to die on them and leave them having touched a dead body. As “committed Bible-believers” the last thing they would want to do would be to become unclean. Touching a dead body would put them out of society for a week or more. They would be unable to go into the Temple or to the synagogue. They would be involved in costly sacrifices and time-consuming rites. But above all, they would be *unclean*. See Lev. 21:1–11 but especially Num. 19:11–22. “Obedience to God’s law” was more important than the dying man in their estimation. They could not see that in a fallen world we do not always have the option of a simple right or wrong based on obedience to a clear-cut regulation. At this point obedience to God meant loving their neighbour more than it meant avoiding uncleanness. Compassion is to be a higher principle of action than regulatory correctness. Thus their “obedience” was not to God’s law but to a distorted parody of it.

A much broader concern than simply our own “holiness” must be part of any genuinely biblical answer to the current dilemma over spare part surgery. As we said above, it seems exceedingly incongruous to us that one can calmly ask a surgeon to remove one’s appendix and toss it in the flames to save one’s life while being unwillingly to ask the same surgeon to remove a kidney⁴ and implant it in another to save the recipient’s life.

It seems to me that many Christians, in looking for a solution to this problem, begin with trying to find a Scriptural *regulation*, or at least a regulation that can be logically deduced

2. One of the most fascinating books to deal with the essence of sin and righteousness is Peter Abelard’s *Ethics*. Abelard (1079–1142) isolated *intention* as the essence of right and wrong. Though he overstates his case somewhat—probably due to the circumstances in which he was writing—he has nevertheless provided a penetrating analysis of the nature of sin.

3. There is no better commentary on Rahab’s actions and their justice than Gary North’s *In Defense of Biblical Bribery*, Appendix 5 of R. J. Rushdoony’s *Institutes of Biblical Law*.

4. It is a well-known fact that humans have an amount of kidney that is considerable overkill in design terms. We only need about 5% for adequate functioning. This is backup with a vengeance!

from Scripture. I would contend, however, that where we need to start our enquiry is with a recognition of the two great *principles* of holy living.⁵ The first is: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” The second is, said our Master, like unto it: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” These two great principles do not direct us to any action specifically, but provide us with a foundational paradigm or structure by which all our actions must be governed and directed. Any action that is not founded upon, that is not an instantiation of, these two basic principles, is not an act of obedience to God, whatever the regulatory evidence might suggest. These principles also enable us to establish *priorities* in our evaluation of the best course of action. The former principle is often easy to fake. It is even easier to delude ourselves that we are not faking it, by the application of a sizeable dose of religious talk and ecclesiastical ritual. The latter is not so easy to fake and is not even attempted very often. At best we can get away with it by appearing to be concerned about our neighbours’ “souls” and endlessly praying for their conversion.

Let us restate our opponents syllogism⁶ for further consideration: *Our bodies are not our own, they were given us by God and remain his property; we may not do with them as we will. That we may not do with them as we will means that we may not alienate them or parts of them.*

That they are not our own but God’s, we readily grant. His, indeed, they are by right of creation *and* redemption. But does it really follow that alienating them—or at least parts of them—mean that we are doing with them as we will rather than as God wills? This is not at all clear. Does the idea of stewardship *ipso facto* mean that alienation of what we are stewards of is outlawed?

Think about our money, our homes, our cars, our books. We are stewards of these things too. Yet we have no problem reconciling our stewardship under God of these things with parting with them. In fact, even as stewards of them we are satisfied that at times the only thing we can do with them is put them on the scrap heap. Logically, it does *not* follow that stewardship of something means we must always keep it to ourselves. Sometimes it does of course: we may not alienate our wife or children, for example—also God-given gifts. Rather, I would argue, the *primary* purpose of stewardship is the use of the owner’s property for his own purposes and his own ends, not those of the steward. The steward’s function is to distribute those goods on the owner’s behalf and on the owner’s terms. We need to ask what these terms are in regard to our bodies as owned by God.

If God does give us anything on the understanding that we *must* keep it to ourselves then fair enough. In that case

5. I deliberately avoid here using the word *law* because the Hebrew word *torah* suggests far more than the English *law*. The former contains the ideas of instruction, guidance, advice, while the latter is usually associated with prescription or regulation only.

6. Syllogisms were one of the great discoveries of Aristotle. They run thus:

Major premise: All men are mortal.

Minor premise: Socrates is a man.

Conclusion (implication): Socrates is mortal.

This does not work in reverse (asserting the consequent) as most evolutionists blithely suppose:

Major premise: All men are mortal. (If evolution is true the facts would be thus and thus)

Minor premise: Socrates is mortal. (The facts are thus and thus)

Conclusion: Socrates is a man. (Evolution is true)

Socrates could be my dog, who knows. (The facts could be the result of creation)

alienating it would be sinful. But we have to ask whether God has *in fact* given us our bodies on those terms? It does not seem that he has done so.

Firstly, the very fact that this stewardship syllogism is used to defend the anti-surgery position strongly refutes it. If there were clear evidence that God has forbidden the use of our bodies in this way then the syllogistic approach would be wholly redundant. It is used so widely and so forcefully simply because there is no direct evidence in Scripture that God forbids such a use of the body. No passage can be pointed to—in my opinion—that insists we must not only be stewards of our bodies but *sole possessors* of them and their benefits.

Secondly, I would argue that the primary purpose of stewardship being the “use of the owner’s property for his own purposes and his own ends” entails that in general we must regard our bodies as given into our stewardship for the benefit of others rather than ourselves. If this is so, we need to ask what these “benefits to others” in regard to our bodies could possibly be. It certainly does not mean that the body is at the complete disposal of our neighbour. The use of our bodies must be guided by the principles of Scripture and not the conclusions of some abstract syllogistic reasoning. For example, one might suppose that providing male sperm to a childless woman could be put on the same ethical footing as providing her with a pint of blood. No doubt compassion and concern for others could be used to justify either act equally. Indeed, instances seem to suggest that the pain and tragedy of childlessness far outweigh the physical problems that require a blood transfusion (at least to a woman’s mind) and might thus call for priority in our compassionate response. But the human male procreative ability is confined by Scripture to within the family bond. It is not merely the natural (as opposed to artificial) act of insemination that Scripture regulates, but *the whole procreative function*.⁷ Thus, even artificial insemination with the sperm of a male other than the husband amounts to a violation of the Seventh Commandment.

Thirdly, I think there is a good deal of Scripture that supports this view of stewardship and I will come to a consideration of it shortly.

The self-centred approach is but a brand of *nominalism*⁸ that in many ways infects the Church as much as the world. And our culture—perhaps in the New World even more than the Old—in particular has become highly nominalistic as a result of the Enlightenment. The concept of freedom too, though a valuable concept, has become seriously infected by it as a cursory glance at the literature will show. The Many have triumphed over the One; either that or people swing

7. Failure to recognise this lies at the heart of the bafflement of modern Western society that Christianity takes adultery so seriously. Stripped of its relation to the creational structures of marriage and family the physical act does indeed offer little reason to regard it in any moral context. But the powerful response to betrayal in this regard, even where a couple do not recognise the formal nature of wedlock and family, exhibits all too clearly that we cannot altogether escape the creational structures in which we function.

8. There are varieties of nominalism as of anything else philosophical, but the idea behind all of them is that universals are a product of the human thought processes and do not actually exist in reality. That is, groupings or categories that we give to things (horse, dog, cat, human) are *merely names* we assign them and do not relate to real differences in creation. Nominalism regards the individual as having priority over the group; it is (speaking very generally) often therefore more interested than realism (its opposite) in ideas such as liberty but not so concerned with community. Modern Western culture is highly nominalist in this sense and only holds society together by and large by means of a powerful exercise of statist might.

towards a totalitarian or at least interventionist political unity as the only understandable one. And this individualism is strikingly in tune with the spirit of evolutionary thought with its struggle of each against all. Adam Smith both anticipated and encapsulated the biological theory in his sociological one. For Smith the goal to national prosperity was along the path of self-interest.⁹ Everyone pursuing their own goals for their own purposes would redound to the greatest advantage of all.¹⁰ Nowhere in the church is this more clearly seen than in the mangled versions of the Communion Service, both Protestant and Catholic. The fundamental idea of a common meal has been totally excised from it. In the Protestant free churches I have attended for five decades, as well as Anglican and Catholic ones, the first act of every communicant is to switch off all contact with other people. It has become a highly God-centred mystical rite¹¹ that requires the exclusion of everyone else present, at least in thought. It bears no relation to the original supper instituted in the Upper Room, let alone the Passover feast of which it is the Christian continuation. It is entirely in the spirit of the priest and the Levite on the Jericho road, and a flat denial of that very fellowship it is meant to embody. No wonder then that if we are to be as “spiritual” in our social relations as we are at church, we must relate everything to our own personal holiness without consideration of others.

If we turn to a more positive approach the first thing that becomes clear is that Scripture has nothing to say directly about organ transplants, any more than it has about the motor car, electricity or toothpaste. This is not surprising. It never was intended to be a statute book that had rules and regulations to cover every eventuality. God expects us to act like human beings, not bureaucrats. And certainly not like horses, which need to be directed at every turn and never left to their own judgement—Psalm 32:9. Like the horse or mule of the Psalm, the bureaucrat only acts according to orders, never according to understanding. Thus Scripture makes room for the skilful application of its own general principles of equity and wisdom.

How does this reasoning differ from the *ad hominem* approach we rejected above? I think in one very important respect. Firstly, that approach attempts by pure logic to reason to a position for which it admits there is neither direct warrant nor principle in Scripture. Its conclusion is the end link in a chain of reasoning. My position seeks to uncover the true meaning of the general principles of Scripture for concrete instances. In this task the final conclusion never hangs out on a limb like the conclusion of a syllogism; it must always be seen to be in accord with the principle which undergirds it. It must be the very principle itself *instantiated*. Whether such an instantiation of principle can be found in Scripture for transplants remains another question, and my attempt to find one is obviously open to review, though I do not think the principle itself can be.

9. That I am highly critical of Adam Smith’s Enlightenment natural law nominalism should not be taken to mean that I am opposed to the ends of personal freedom and limited State interference in life that he advocated. And even if I can admire the almost-Christian social goals to which he aspired, I cannot endorse the anti-Christian foundations of his argument.

10. Man must “pursue his own interests in his own way upon the liberal plan of equality, liberty and justice.” However, Smith’s concept of self-interest was much more workable than it could be today given the much more Christian ethos of the nation at that time.

11. The medievals recognised this when they called it *hocus-focus*, derived from the Latin *Hoc est meum corpus* (This is my body).

As we have intimated above the great principle of Scripture with regard to our social relations is “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:18). Jesus enunciated this in the form of the Golden Rule: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets” (Mt. 7:12). Clearly, this in and of itself does not justify transplants but at least it is foundational to whatever our reaction to our neighbour’s plight might be in the sense that regard for his condition is a primary aspect of the law. Jesus, in fact, made it plain that right relations with our neighbour are far more important than even required religious practices (Mt. 5:23–26). Righteousness is both God-oriented and neighbour-oriented. A failure to be neighbour-oriented is a failure to be God-oriented, because God has insisted that it must be so.

This neighbour-oriented ethical approach points, I believe, to the rightness of transplants, especially in the light of certain biblical passages I shall now have to look at. The first is a single verse in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. In speaking of their love for him, Paul reminds them: “I bear you record that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me” (Gal. 4:15). It was not possible, but their willingness was commended. It seems highly incongruous to me to suppose that Paul would have commended a practice that was—even hypothetically, or syllogistically—at serious odds with his clear theological stance that we are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19–20). It would be as if to say, “As long as the technology to carry out this ethical task was not available the willingness to do it is highly commendable, but once the technology becomes available, the practice must be denounced as against all ethical right-mindedness.” Where, too, would that leave the evidently biblical principle that willingness is as acceptable to God as the deed (2 Cor. 8:12)?

Perhaps not so specific, but in the same tone, are the constant injunctions for married couples to be at each other’s disposal. In the first instance, this is clearly expressed even in regard to sexual rights over the other (1 Cor. 7:3–5), but it has far wider implications, too. Paul’s injunctions to husbands in particular are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. Now this does not refer to the depth of emotional feeling that Jesus has for Christians but to the length he was prepared to go for them: he gave himself.

Further, Paul stipulates that they are to love their wives as their own bodies. By what logic can a husband remove a bodily organ to save his own life, then, and not be prepared or justified in doing the same for his wife (let alone strangers)? How can the former be regarded as a justifiable act of self-preservation against the clearly defined principle that one’s body is not one’s own to take bits out of, while the latter—performing the same act on behalf of someone else—is biblically unjustified?

This brings us to the crunch group of passages. Ones in fact from which it even seems possible to draw a syllogistic inference¹² from the greater to the lesser. I refer to giving not simply a part of one’s body but the whole of it. Can we not legitimately say that, if I am justified in giving my life for others, how much more am I justified in giving my kidney to another? By itself, I do not think so. I do not like logical inferences as the sole support of a practice. But here, it seems to me, the logical conclusion is fully in keeping with deeper and clearer biblical guidelines about the way in which consid-

eration for others is to be a major thrust of our ethical responses.

Biblically, I would argue, giving one’s life for others is justified. Indeed, it is highly commended, and at the end of the day, the supreme proof of human love—see Rom. 5:7. We have documentary evidence of mothers-to-be (even in this self-centred age) who have knowingly and after careful consideration refused life-saving medical treatment in order that their unborn child might live. How does this comport, we have to ask, with another mother being denied the moral right to donate to her delivered child one of her kidneys to save its life? I cannot but think that there is a clear moral inconsistency here. And it lies in the fact that in the latter case morality is being viewed in an abstract and self-centred concern for self-righteousness rather than as a regulative principle for our treatment of our neighbour.

The principle we are opposing drains life of its best qualities. It reduces us to mere bureaucrats, concerned only with self-preservation and following the rules of the game. It has no real involvement in the human community, in the drama of human need and suffering. It must stand contemptuous of the sacrifices of self that life demands of all of us. It cannot condone the risks to life and limb, great or small, that men undertake on a daily basis to provide for their families. It is easy to be complacent about these when one’s most dangerous activity is ascending the three steps to the pulpit. But millions take their life into their own hands daily in their ordinary avocations, quite visibly so in industry, mining, and fishing. The story of David’s friends risking their lives to get him a drink from Bethlehem’s well (2 Sam. 23:14–17) does not inspire in most breasts the disdain reserved for those who have contempt for God’s good gifts but rather admiration for an exhilarating moral deed. This view is inimical to my mind to the whole ethos of Scripture that finds its fullest and most clear delineation in the One who was prepared to give all for his enemies not against the terms of the moral code but as the highest expression of it.

There are, as I suggested, problems with transplant surgery from an ethical perspective. The greatest one has to do with removing organs from the deceased. Unfortunately this has to be done very soon after death. Currently, I do not feel confident that the medical profession either has a clear definition and understanding of when that point is reached or that it gives much thought to it. An octogenarian with days or weeks to live may be the victim of a misplaced compassion for a dying three-year old who needs a kidney transplant. To be blunt, I do not trust the medical profession, and I do not carry a donor card. I am prepared to donate my organs *after* death, but I am not prepared to risk murder to do it.

Hopefully, in any case, this whole debate will become outdated soon. New research indicates that regeneration of organs is a highly probable option for the not-too-distant future. Recent reports even suggest that moderate and regular red wine intake can induce liver regeneration. Cell processes investigated in lizards may have successfully isolated inhibitors that currently prevent human limb regeneration. No doubt, this raises all sorts of other ethical problems related to scientific research. But that must wait for another day and another essay.

Hopefully, too, this essay will induce some responses. I offer these thoughts as mere exploratory musings on a topic fraught with difficulty but filled with urgency. The insights of others, especially with medical expertise, would be very welcome. *C&S*

12. Inference, not implication.

CHRISTIANS IN A NEW MILLENNIUM: THE ELEVENTH CENTURY REVOLUTION

by Nick Needham

MILLENNIAL fever is not confined to twentieth century man. In Western Europe, the end of the world was seriously expected at midnight on December 31st, the year 999. What Europe experienced instead was a new millennium and a massive realignment of spiritual and political forces, which has been compared to the Reformation for its impact on society. It is this eleventh century revolution we intend to look at here.

PRELUDE

After the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire and the Norse invasions in the 9th and 10th centuries, and before the eleventh-century revolution, Western Europe saw the beginnings of a revival of a strong Christian culture. This sprang from a partnership between the monasteries, which had preserved the values of the Carolingian Renaissance, and the Western monarchies. The most important of these monarchies was in Germany. By 900, Charlemagne's Empire in Germany had almost broken up into six tribal states—Saxony, Thuringia, Franconia, Lorraine, Swabia and Bavaria. However, the invading Magyar peoples from Asia forced a fresh unity on Germany. To protect themselves, the Germans banded together under a new king, Henry I (919–36), who inflicted on the Magyars their first great defeat at the battle of Riade (in Thuringia) in 933. Henry's son, Otto the Great (936–73), revived the Carolingian ideal of the Holy Roman Empire, fighting successful wars against Magyars, Norsemen and Slavs, and making Germany into a great national power. Like Charlemagne, Otto also invaded Italy to rescue the lands of the papacy from Lombard aggression. As a reward, pope John XII (955–64) crowned Otto as Holy Roman emperor in Rome in 962.

One of Otto's most effective instruments in rebuilding the Holy Roman Empire was the German Church. Otto saw himself as the spiritual as well as political head of the Empire—the "sacred kingship" ideal of Charlemagne—and he made great use of bishops in his government, setting them in positions of power as secular lords (counts, dukes, princes). There were two reasons why Otto did this. First,

bishops had received a good education in the monasteries, unlike most lay people, so they could act as intelligent servants of royal policy, reading written instructions and sending back written reports. Second, bishops were celibate—they had no children (or no legitimate children). When a bishop died, he had no son to inherit the land over which Otto had set him; Otto could therefore appoint a man of his own choice as the new count, duke or prince. This practice went hand-in-hand with Otto's choosing who would be bishop (not just choosing a bishop to be a duke, but choosing the man who would be the bishop).

This control of the clergy by the secular authorities was a widespread development all over Western Christendom. It was a consequence of the social system known as feudalism. The seeds of *feudalism* had been sown by the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West in the 5th century. With the disappearance of a strong central government, people had to look to a powerful local lord for protection against violence and injustice; in return for this protection, people would promise their services to the lord, becoming his "vassals" (servants bound to their lord by oath). Since the lord's power was based on the amount of land he owned, land became all-important in the feudal system.

In eighth century France, Charles Martel drew the social arrangements of feudalism into the Frankish political structure. Keenly aware of the Spanish Muslim threat to his Frankish kingdom, Martel created a permanent class of armed warriors on horseback ("knights") to keep the fearsome Muslim cavalry in check. Martel gave land to the knights as a royal "grant" (in Latin, *feudum*—hence *feudalism*), on condition that the knights swore an oath of personal loyalty to the Frankish king and promised to render him military service. So the chief knights became the king's vassals, and developed into a powerful military and land-owning aristocracy. These great nobles would then make smaller grants of their land to lesser lords, who swore loyalty and promised service to the great noble; the lesser lords then made even smaller grants of *their* land to others, who swore loyalty to the lesser lord—and so on. When a person swore the oath of feudal loyalty to his superior, he would bow his head and clasp his hands together. This action passed over

into the religious practice of the West as the posture for prayer; with bowed head and clasped hands, a human being acknowledged God as his supreme feudal lord. At the bottom of this “chain of loyalty” were the peasants; the poorest class in medieval society, they worked on the land as farm-labourers. The peasants were ruled over by the local knight who owned the land (the “manor”), which was organised around his manor house (a large castle-like dwelling).

This social structure of “land and loyalty” made a deep impact on the church. The local landowner would build the local church on his own land at his own expense; so the church’s land and land-based property (e.g. the manse) belonged to the clergy only by grant from the local lord. Naturally enough, the lord saw it as his right to choose who would occupy the local church and its land as priest or bishop. The feudal system therefore swept away the ancient tradition of the clergy being elected by the votes of church members, and bishops being elected by clergy and people together. When a king (who was of course a layman) appointed (“invested”) the man of his choosing as a bishop (or an abbot), this was called “lay investiture.” It took place through a ceremony in which the king bestowed on a bishop or abbot his ring and staff, the symbols of spiritual office, and the bishop or abbot swore an oath of personal loyalty to the king as his lord. This practice of lay investiture was soon to cause controversy so fierce that it almost tore Western Europe apart.

THE CLUNIAC REVIVAL

In the partnership between monastery and monarchy which rebuilt Western Europe after the Norse invasions, one monastery in particular led the movement for establishing Christian values in society—the monastery of Cluny in south-eastern France. Founded in 909 by William the Pious, duke of Aquitaine, Cluny was led by a series of great abbots: Odo (abbot 927–42), Maieul (943–94), Odilo (994–1049), Hugh the Great (1049–1109) and Peter the Venerable (1122–57). Cluny’s role in restoring the vigour and purity of the Western monasteries, and in helping to shape a new Christian West, has been described as the “Cluniac revival.”

Abbot Odo was the real inspiration behind the Cluniac revival. He deliberately established “daughter” monasteries from Cluny. In 931, pope John XI (931–35) gave Cluny the right to control the other monasteries it had founded. This meant that these monasteries did not have abbots of their own; they only had “priors,” normally second-in-command to an abbot. The priors of the Cluniac monasteries were personally appointed by Odo, and took a vow of obedience to the abbot of Cluny. So a great network of Cluniac monasteries spread across France and Germany, all under the central direction of Cluny—there were a thousand Cluniac monasteries by the year 1100. This organisation of monasteries was called the *Cluniac order*. The idea of a monastic order was something new in Christian history. Before the Cluniac revival, all monasteries had simply been part of a general monastic movement. Cluny introduced the new concept of a special organisation of monasteries, bound together by particular ideals, with a single leader at the top. (The idea never caught on in the East.) Other monastic reform movements which sprang up under the influence of

the Cluniac revival were the Camaldolese order (founded 1012), the Carthusians (1084), and the Cistercians (1098).

The main thrust of the Cluniac revival was to reform and purify existing monasteries, and establish new and better ones. Central to this Cluniac vision of reformed monastic life was the Cluniac liturgy. A Cluniac monk devoted almost the whole of his day to services of worship, and Cluniacs constructed and decorated their monastic churches with awesome beauty and magnificence, to make worship as glorious an experience as possible. The Cluniac reformers were also committed to the Benedictine rule, the most widely used code for monastic life in the West. By the tenth century, most Western monasteries had become very ill-disciplined, ignoring the Benedictine rule in practice; by the eleventh century, through the impact of the Cluniac revival, strict obedience to the Benedictine rule had become widespread throughout Western Europe. Cluny also produced one of the greatest Christian poets of the Middle Ages, Bernard of Cluny (active 1140’s), who wrote the poetic masterpiece, *De Contemptu Mundi* (“Concerning Contempt for the World”), from which English hymn writers have taken several English hymns about heaven.

From its very foundation, Cluny enjoyed freedom from all secular or political control—unusual in the age of feudalism. In 999, it also received from pope Gregory V (996–99) freedom from episcopal authority (control by bishops). Cluny was subject only to the pope. However, until the reform of the papacy in the mid-eleventh century, the papacy was itself corrupt and powerless. That meant that the abbots of Cluny were free to pursue their own policies, without interference from popes or kings. The abbots of Cluny, rather than the popes, were the central figures in the Christian life of Western Europe until Hildebrand became pope in 1073.

Despite Cluny’s freedom from political control, there grew up a strong alliance between the Cluniac monks and the secular rulers (duke, prince, king, emperor). Indeed, the Cluniac revival itself helped to spread Christian ideals to the ruling classes, because part of the Cluniac policy was to take the sons of the aristocracy into Cluniac monasteries to give them a solid Christian education. An especially powerful partnership grew up between Cluny and the *kings* of Western Christendom. The abbots of Cluny believed that the best hope of making Europe into a truly Christian society lay in strong Christian monarchies being established, which could then govern society according to Christian ideals.

What did the kings get out of the Cluniac movement? Four things, chiefly:

(a) Strong support for the ideal of “sacred kingship.” The Cluniacs encouraged the view of kingship that Charlemagne had represented: the king was a spiritual figure whose power came directly from Christ; he was equal to the priest; he had a duty to regulate the affairs of the Church. Such an exalted view obviously strengthened the king’s position in society, surrounding monarchy with the heavenly sanctions of religion.

(b) A supply of well-trained civil servants. Men trained in Cluniac monasteries (especially bishops) often became government officials, carrying out political, economic and diplomatic functions (see previous section).

(c) An army from the huge lands owned by the monasteries. Those who lived on these lands were obliged to give military service to the king.

(d) Efficient monasteries where Cluniac monks honoured God and prayed for society.

THE “CLEANSING OF THE PAPACY”

While Otto the Great and his successors were rebuilding the Holy Roman Empire, the papacy was in a state of almost hopeless moral and spiritual degradation. It had become a political pawn in the hands of the Roman aristocracy, who fought over who should “own” the papacy. Things reached crisis point in 1044. There was a violent rebellion in Rome against pope Benedict IX (1032–45), a scandalously immoral man. Another pope, Sylvester III, briefly ascended the papal throne in 1045, but Benedict’s political allies then managed to put Benedict back in power. Benedict, however, tired of being pope, sold the papacy to a third candidate, Gregory VI—but Benedict later changed his mind and reclaimed the papacy. So when the Holy Roman emperor Henry III (1039–56) arrived in Rome in 1046 so that the pope could officially crown him emperor, he found three rival popes!

Henry III was the most striking product of the Cluniac revival. He was the perfect Cluniac king: holy and pure in his personal life, just and wise as a ruler, and a dedicated Christian reformer of church and society. Henry called a synod at Sutri, a small town just north of Rome; the synod deposed all three popes. Henry himself then placed a good German bishop on the papal throne—pope Clement II (1046–47). This act of Henry is known as “the cleansing of the papacy.” Acting as a “sacred king,” the Holy Roman emperor lifted the papacy out of its pit of spiritual corruption and put it in the hands of a party of committed reformers. The most important of these reformers were:

Humbert of Moyenmoutier (d. 1061), a scholar who in 1050 became bishop of Silva Candida, one of Rome’s suburban churches. Usually known as “cardinal Humbert,” he was a reformer gifted with a bold confidence in the righteousness of his cause which heroically swept aside every obstacle (or, alternatively, he was a troublemaker cursed with a ruthless pig-headed arrogance which crushed everyone who dared to disagree with him—it depends which histories you read). Humbert’s place in Church history is assured, as he was the one who excommunicated patriarch Cerularius of Constantinople in 1054, thus creating the permanent schism between Eastern and Western Christianity.

Peter Damiani (1007–72), a Camaldolese monk and, from 1057, bishop of Ostia on the Italian coast, another of Rome’s suburban churches. Damiani was famous for his personal sanctity and outspoken criticisms of immorality among the clergy. His many writings—theological treatises, sermons, lives of saints, letters, poems—are a perfect mirror of the age and society in which he lived. He was the man chiefly responsible for making popular the practice of “self-flagellation” (whipping or scourging oneself). This practice already existed in Western Christendom. Damiani, however, was the man who shaped flagellation into an orderly system. The flagellant would scourge himself with a leather thong on his bare back while chanting the Psalms; Damiani defended the practice against critics, arguing that it was a voluntary imitation of the sufferings of Jesus. Self-flagellation became very popular in the West, especially among monks, and particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth Centuries.

Humbert and Damiani were important, but the man who came to dominate the reform movement which the “cleansing of the papacy” had initiated was a native of Tuscany (north-western Italy), a former chaplain of pope Gregory VI, called *Hildebrand* (1023–85). The reform movement takes its name from him: the *Hildebrandine reform*.

THE HILDEBRANDINE REFORM

The cleansing of the papacy by Henry III at the synod of Sutri created a series of reforming popes: Clement II (1046–47), Damasus II (1048), Leo IX (1049–54), Victor II (1055–57), Stephen IX (1057–58), Nicholas II (1059–61) and Alexander II (1061–73). Of these, Leo IX was the most effective. Leo travelled about Western Europe, promoting reform with unbounded boldness and energy, and introduced committed reformers into the papal court as his chief advisors, including Humbert, Damiani and Hildebrand himself.

The reformers had two main aims:

(i) *The reformation of the papacy itself*. The Hildebrandine reformers wanted to make the papal court in Rome into a truly Christian institution which practised the highest moral standards: a spiritual example to the rest of the church. To achieve this, they wanted to free the papacy from political control by the Roman aristocracy. The more radical of the reformers, like Humbert and Hildebrand, wanted to make the papacy independent even of the Holy Roman emperor. They were reviving the old Western view of church-State relations: the church must be independent of the State so that it can pursue its own spiritual purposes. But along with this, they also elevated the claims of the papacy to more soaring heights than ever before. For the Hildebrandine reformers, the pope was the infallible successor of the apostle Peter, standing in Peter’s place (Peter’s “vicar”), sanctified by Peter’s merits, almost a reincarnation of Peter (when Hildebrand became pope, he said, “I am Peter’s vicar; he now lives in my body”), and exercising absolute apostolic authority over all other bishops and churches—and indeed secular governments—throughout the entire world. The papacy as the Protestant Reformers knew it, and as we know it today, came to birth through the Hildebrandine reform movement.

(ii) *The purification of the Western Church from “simony” and sexual immorality among the clergy*. “Simony” means buying or selling a position of authority in the church, e.g. a bishopric. This was a common abuse; kings often sold bishoprics, and pope Benedict IX had sold the papacy itself to pope Gregory VI. As for sexual immorality among the clergy, for the Hildebrandine reformers this did not just mean clergymen living with concubines, or committing adultery and fornication; it also meant clergymen getting married. The reformers insisted on the celibacy of the clergy. This was partly a desire to take the high ascetic ideals of the monastery into the Church at large: a priest, like a monk, should be “married to Christ,” free of the worldly distractions of marriage and family, totally devoted to the kingdom of God. It was also partly a desire to stop clergymen having sons who would then inherit their father’s priesthood or bishopric like a piece of property, without regard to the spiritual fitness of the son.

The Hildebrandine reform movement made slow and hard-fought progress in the church. The reformers purified the papal court from abuses, and took over the crucial

positions of power. They secured a great victory in 1059 at the Lateran council in Rome. Here, the reformers succeeded in placing the election of the pope exclusively in the hands of the “cardinal” clergy of Rome. These were clergy who belonged to the immediate staff of the pope—seven bishops, 28 priests and 18 deacons. The cardinal bishops were in charge of Rome’s suburban churches; to them the Lateran council now granted the power of choosing a new pope. They were then to present their candidate to the cardinal priests and deacons, who either confirmed or rejected their choice. This reform liberated the papacy from political control: neither the Roman aristocracy nor the Holy Roman emperor were to have any more say in who became pope. (The emperor Henry IV did not protest, because he was only nine years old at the time, and the Holy Roman Empire was divided between different factions of nobles.) However, what if an emperor tried to use force to secure the election of a pope of his own choosing? To guard against this possibility, the reformers made an alliance with the Normans of southern Italy, led by Robert Guiscard. In return for official papal recognition of the land he had conquered, Guiscard promised to use his Norman army to support lawful elections to the papacy.

The Lateran council of 1059 also passed strict new laws about the celibacy of the clergy. This incidentally removed an ancient and painful thorn from the papacy’s side by leading to the final triumph of the church of Rome over the church of Milan. The Milanese had for long maintained a spirit of independence against the papacy, rooted in Milan’s historic fame as the church of Ambrose, one of the greatest fathers of the West. Up till now, Milan had championed the right of the clergy to marry; by the sweeping use of his authority as a papal ambassador, Peter Damiani forced the Milanese to submit to the new order of absolute celibacy for all clergy.

In 1073, at the age of 50, Hildebrand himself was elected pope, and took the name Gregory VII. He had been the guiding hand behind the reforming popes. Now, by the overwhelming popular choice of the entire people of Rome, it was his own turn to sit on the papal throne. Judged by the impact he made on church and society, he was perhaps the greatest of all the popes in history. What kind of man was Hildebrand? Physically he was not very impressive: a short man with a rather weak voice. But he had shining, piercing eyes; his friend Peter Damiani called him a “holy Satan.” He possessed a dominating force of will, an all-consuming devotion to justice and righteousness, and a burning zeal for the purity and reformation of the Church. At the same time, he was remarkably broad-minded and tolerant of various doctrinal disagreements which he did not think important in the church’s life. He had an amazing ability to get his friends and allies to do what he wanted them to do. He also had a supreme talent for dividing opinion about himself into violent extremes of adoration and hatred; people either admired Hildebrand intensely as a heaven-sent spiritual hero, or detested him bitterly as an ambitious power-mad schemer.

Hildebrand saw life in military terms as a raging conflict between light and darkness. The chief agents of darkness were the secular rulers—the counts, dukes, princes and kings. They were nothing but glorified thugs, murderers dressed up in robes and crowns, children of Cain and Satan who oppressed the poor and filled the earth with injustice.

To bring about justice, the agents of light—the church, headed by the papacy—must take control of these evil rulers and force them to serve the cause of God. Only in this way could the righteous establish a truly Christian society. Hildebrand had a deep, heartfelt sympathy for the poor, “Christ’s poor ones,” and saw himself as their special protector against the oppression of the powerful. His negative view of kingship was a complete break with the Cluniac tradition which saw the christian king as the brightest hope of creating a society based on Christian beliefs and values. However, in Hildebrand’s thinking, it was not the Christian king, but the papacy itself which was God’s appointed agent for establishing his kingdom on earth.

It was around this time that Western Christianity began to speak of Christians on earth as “the church militant,” contrasted with those now in heaven as “the church triumphant.” Previously it had been the custom to think of Christians on earth as “the pilgrim church” and those in heaven as “the church at rest.” This change from the “pilgrim” to the “warrior” image reflects the new world-conquering aggression and self-confidence which the Hildebrandine reform movement brought to the Church.

Soon after becoming pope, Hildebrand published in 1075 a statement known as the *dictatus papae* (“papal decree”) which outlined his view of the papacy. Here are some of its claims:

1. The Roman Church was founded by God alone.
2. Only the Roman pope is rightly called universal.
3. The pope alone can depose and reinstate bishops.
9. The pope is the only one whose feet all princes must kiss.
12. The pope may depose emperors.
16. No council may be called ecumenical without the pope’s authority.
19. The pope may be judged by no-one.
22. The Roman Church has never erred, and (as Scripture testifies) it shall never err, to all eternity.
23. The Roman pope, if properly ordained according to church law, is sanctified by the merits of Saint Peter.
26. He who is not in conformity with the Roman Church should not be considered a Catholic.

Not all of this was new in what it claimed; other popes, especially since the cleansing of the papacy in 1046, had said similar things. But the whole tone of the *dictatus papae* was new—its grand, sweeping, universal, self-confident assertiveness. And what was definitely new was Hildebrand’s fierce, unbending resolve to put it all into practice.

THE INVESTITURE CONTROVERSY

As pope, Hildebrand was determined to destroy the political power that secular rulers exercised over church affairs. The reformers had freed the papacy itself, but other problems remained. The point at which Hildebrand chose to strike was the practice of “lay investiture.” As we saw earlier, this was the action by which a king would “invest” or appoint a man of his own choosing as a bishop or abbot. The land over which bishops and abbots ruled was important to the Western kings for its economic and military resources. So they felt they had the right to make sure that suitable men were in charge of these lands. Hildebrand saw it differently: the appointment of bishops and abbots by secular rulers was

an unholy violation of the church's independence from State control. Hildebrand particularly objected to the ceremony in which a king bestowed on a bishop or abbot his ring and staff, the symbols of their spiritual office. This implied that bishops and abbots owed their spiritual authority to the king—which is indeed what Western kings believed, holding as they did to the “sacred kingship” ideal. In 1075, Hildebrand decreed that the Holy Roman emperor, Henry IV, must cease from the practice of lay investiture. He picked on the Holy Roman emperor because he was the most important of the Western monarchs, claiming to represent the authority of a reborn Roman Empire; Hildebrand knew if he could defeat him, he could defeat anyone. The battle between the “papalist” and “imperialist” vision of Western Christendom had begun.

Hildebrand's foe, emperor Henry IV (1065–1105), was one of the most naturally gifted rulers and soldiers ever to wear the crown of the Holy Roman Empire. His moral character, however, was a cause of scandal to his contemporaries; his adulteries alienated the devout, and his tyranny outraged lovers of political freedom. Henry had been involved in a civil war with his own German nobles for many years; it was only in 1075, at the age of 25, that he managed to establish his own power over the whole of Germany. The German church had strongly supported Henry in the civil war against his nobles. German bishops, inspired by the Cluniac ideal, wanted to see a powerful Christian monarchy created in Germany as the basis for a Christian society, and despite Henry's obvious faults the church backed him as the best hope of strong, stable government. So when Hildebrand issued his challenge to Henry, the German bishops at first supported the emperor. Henry defied Hildebrand's demand to cease from investiture, and appointed a new archbishop of Milan. When Hildebrand protested, Henry called a council at Worms (western-central Germany) in January 1076. Here most of the German bishops joined in condemning Hildebrand and rejecting him as pope. Henry was trying to assert his authority as emperor over the pope, just as his father Henry III had done in 1046 at the synod of Sutri when he had “cleansed” the papacy. It was Henry III's cleansing of the papacy which had put the Hildebrandine reformers in power; now, Henry IV thought it was time to cleanse the papacy again—by getting rid of Hildebrand. Henry sent an official letter to Hildebrand from the council of Worms which shows what Henry thought of this new pope:

To Hildebrand, not pope but a false monk. How dare you, who have won your power by deceit, flattery, bribery and force, stretch forth your hand against the Lord's anointed, despising the command of the true pope, Saint Peter: “Fear God, honour the king” (1 Peter 2:17)? You do not fear God, and you dishonour me whom He has appointed. Condemned by the voice of all our bishops, leave the apostolic throne and let someone else sit there, someone who will preach the sound doctrine of Saint Peter and not use religion as a cloak for violence. I, Henry, king by the grace of God, with all my bishops, say to you—Come down, come down from the papal throne, and be damned through all ages!

Hildebrand's response to this threatening letter came like a bolt of lightning. He excommunicated Henry and released all Henry's subjects from their oath of feudal loyalty to him. Henry's closest allies, the German bishops, afraid for their own position, obeyed Hildebrand and refused all further cooperation with the emperor. So at one stroke, Henry lost two-thirds of his army which came from church lands.

Henry's German nobles seized this chance to rebel again, and at a council in Tribur (just north of Worms) in October 1076 they suspended Henry from his imperial office. With no effective army, Henry was powerless. The nobles also invited Hildebrand to come to another council to be held in 1077 at Augsburg (southern Germany). It looked as if they would elect a new emperor to replace Henry, and that Hildebrand would preside over the election. The Holy Roman emperor, the most exalted king in Western Europe, had been toppled from his throne simply by the word of the pope.

Henry was desperate. With his family and a few loyal supporters, he journeyed down into Italy. He found Hildebrand at Canossa in the north, in a castle with Hugh the Great, the abbot of Cluny. Hildebrand had taken refuge in the castle of Canossa, protected by his wealthy and powerful friend the countess of Tuscany, because he feared that Henry would take military action against him. However, the emperor came without an army. For three days in January 1077, Henry stood outside the castle gate with his wife and children, barefoot in the freezing snow, crying out to Hildebrand that he had repented, pleading for mercy. Inside the castle, Hugh the Great of Cluny interceded with Hildebrand on Henry's behalf. Hugh was as opposed to lay investiture as Hildebrand was, but he was also a gentler, more moderate person who wanted to see friendly cooperation between church and State. As abbot of Cluny, Hugh was also a highly respected figure in the church, whom Hildebrand could not afford to ignore.

Henry's action had placed Hildebrand in a difficult position. As a priest, it was his duty to accept Henry's repentance and restore him to church membership. Yet if Hildebrand did this, Henry would regain all his power in Germany—and then probably use it to destroy Hildebrand. So for three days Hildebrand hesitated, as Henry outside the castle and Hugh inside begged him to show pity. Finally, Hildebrand's priestly conscience gave way. He allowed Henry into the castle. Weeping, the young emperor promised to obey the pope's demands to cease from the practice of lay investiture. Hildebrand received him back into the church. From one point of view, it was the ultimate scene of the church triumphing over the State: the Holy Roman emperor, the supreme ruler of the Western world, lay prostrate at the feet of the pope, crying for mercy. However, Hildebrand must surely have guessed that the emperor's tears of repentance were also the ultimate act of kingly hypocrisy and insincerity.

Hildebrand's forgiveness restored Henry's power in Germany, because it gave him back his army from church lands. When Henry returned to Germany, a new civil war broke out. Henry's foes elected Rudolf of Swabia as emperor. The German bishops supported Henry against the rebellious nobles. Both Henry and Rudolf looked to Hildebrand for support; for three years Hildebrand wavered between them, as the war raged. At last in March 1080, provoked by a high-handed demand from Henry that Hildebrand must excommunicate Rudolf, the pope came down on Rudolf's side and excommunicated Henry again. This time, however, the German bishops stayed loyal to Henry; they did not recognise Rudolf's claim to the throne, and saw Henry as the only hope for peace and stability in Germany. Henry called a council at Brixen (northern Italy) in June which deposed Hildebrand from the papacy, and appointed archbishop

Guibert of Ravenna in his place. In October Henry won the civil war when Rudolf was killed in battle. The victorious emperor invaded Italy in 1081, conquered the north, and finally in 1084 captured Rome itself. Hildebrand locked himself away in the Roman castle of Sant' Angelo. Henry placed the archbishop of Ravenna on the papal throne as pope Clement III; Clement then crowned Henry as Holy Roman emperor. Robert Guiscard and his Normans rescued Hildebrand from Sant' Angelo, but they wrecked Rome in the process, committing appalling outrages. Hildebrand went with his dubious Norman allies into exile, to Salerno in southern Italy, and died there in 1085. His last words were: "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile."

THE END OF THE INVESTITURE CONFLICT

It looked as if Henry IV had won. But the struggle for the independence of the church did not die with Hildebrand. For some time there continued to be two rival popes, one in Rome chosen by Henry, the other in exile chosen by the reformers loyal to Hildebrand's ideals. However, the great reforming pope Urban II (1088–99), a fervent disciple of Hildebrand, soon won most of Western Europe to his cause by sheer moral force of character, brilliant diplomacy, and his masterminding of the first Crusade. The emperor's rival pope lost control of Rome in 1096. The papacy was now firmly in the hands of Hildebrand's followers.

The struggle over lay investiture between the Hildebrandine reformers and the secular rulers continued under pope Urban II and his successor Paschal II (1099–1118). Paschal

was so committed to the spiritual independence of the church from State control that in 1110 he offered an astonishing proposal to the new emperor Henry V (1106–25). If the emperor would give up all pretence of investing bishops with their spiritual authority, Paschal would surrender all the church's secular possessions in the Holy Roman Empire to the emperor; bishops would live in simple apostolic poverty. This proposal was not to the liking of most German bishops, and Paschal had to withdraw it. However the distinction Paschal had made between the spiritual and secular aspects of investiture provided the key to the final settlement of the controversy in 1122. At Worms in western Germany that year, pope Calixtus II (1119–24) and emperor Henry V agreed on two points:

(i) The emperor would invest a bishop or abbot with his authority over the *land* that went with his office.

(ii) The bishop's spiritual superior (his archbishop) would invest him with his *spiritual* authority over the church—the emperor would no longer confer the ring and staff.

This agreement had already taken effect in France in 1106 and in England in 1107; it meant that a new bishop had to be acceptable both to the State and to the church. The treaty between Henry V and pope Calixtus in 1122, establishing the same policy for the Holy Roman Empire, was called the "Concordat of Worms." Such a compromise between papalism and imperialism would have disappointed Hildebrand, but it secured for the church a lot more independence than it had enjoyed before. It also dealt a crushing blow to the "sacred kingship" ideal that bishops owed their spiritual office to the king. The new Western Christian Europe, with the papacy as its acknowledged spiritual head, had taken shape. *C&S*

Book Reviews

PROTESTANT SCHOLASTICISM: ESSAYS IN REASSESSMENT

EDITED BY CARL R. TRUEMAN AND R. S. CLARK

Paternoster Press, 1999, paperback, 344 + xix pages,
including Select Bibliography and Subject and Name
Indices, ISBN 0-85364-853-0

DICTIONARY OF LATIN AND GREEK THEOLOGICAL TERMS DRAWN PRINCIPALLY FROM PROTESTANT SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY BY RICHARD A. MULLER

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, ISBN 0-85364-680-5/Grand
Rapids: Baker Books, ISBN 0-8010-2064-6, 1985, paper-
back, 340 pages including Index to Key Terms

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN C. PERKS

THE traditional perception of the relationship between the theology of the early Magisterial Reformers such as Luther and Calvin and their successors, e.g. Beza and Francis Turretin,

has been one in which the latter are thought to have corrupted the theology the Reformation by returning to a form of scholastic theology and rationalism. This putative reversion to scholastic methodology has been seen as a break with the pristine theology of Luther and Calvin. "Taking its cue from Schleiermacher, liberalism reacted against Protestant scholasticism. Scholasticism was the attempt to adapt the Reformation to the demands of the academy in terms of a precritical world-view. As such, it constituted something of a threat to post-Kantian theology because it was a competing explanation of history and reality which did not depend upon the phenomenal-noumenal distinction for its starting point and yet was not anti-intellectual obscurantism. As every undergraduate theology student knows, post-Kantian theology won the battle, set the trajectories for future debate, and thus wrote the history. Just as the Renaissance tagged the Middle Ages 'dark', modernity labelled orthodoxy 'dead'" (p. xii). Modern examples of this type of approach to the development of Reformed orthodoxy are Basil Hall's "Calvin against the Calvinists" and R. T. Kendal's *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (p. xiii). This understanding of post-Reformation Reformed theology, however, has in recent years been subjected to an exposé by a

number of scholars who have demonstrated its inadequacy and the artificial division it has built upon. Foremost among these scholars who have led the way in this reassessment are David C. Steinmetz and Richard A. Muller, both of whom contribute essays to this collection: “The Scholastic Calvin” (pp. 16–30) and “The Use and Abuse of a Document: Beza’s *Tabula Praedestinationis*, The Bolsec Controversy, and the Origins of Reformed Orthodoxy” (pp. 33–61) respectively.

Protestant Scholasticism contains essays by eighteen different scholars on aspects of and personalities in the Reformation and post-Reformation dogmatic tradition. The underpinning idea is the need for a reassessment of the model of discontinuity between the Reformers and their heirs that has gained credence in the academic world. These articles demonstrate that the scholastic method was not alien to the Reformation despite Luther’s renunciation of it. Indeed, D. V. N. Bagchi argues in “Sic et Non: Luther and Scholasticism” (pp. 4–15) that “in [his] later years Luther frequently returned to scholastic ways of arguing” (p. 11). Luther’s attitude to scholasticism was “equivocal” but he retained a special place for it in a wider context: “The ostentatious rejection of scholastic methods was a luxury he [Luther] could afford when concentrating on the key issues of the gospel, and when the cause of the gospel and the humanist cause seemed identical, especially in the aftermath of the Leipzig Disputation. But whenever he attempted a more sustained presentation of his views it became necessary to use scholastic distinctions . . . it is possible to say that Luther’s own writings contained within them the seeds of Protestant scholasticism, seeds that could easily be propagated in more favourable soil” (p. 15).

Likewise, in “The Scholastic Calvin” (pp. 16–30), David C. Steinmetz concludes that “the relationship of Calvin to scholasticism is a good deal more complicated than [sic] we might first have thought. If we raise only the limited question of Calvin’s attitude towards scholasticism we can say that Calvin despised it, respected it, borrowed from it, misrepresented it, and emulated it . . . If, however, we focus on Calvin’s understanding of the nature of the church, we find that he regarded it as a school of faith in which all the laity were called to exercise their theological responsibility before God. It could be argued . . . that Calvin’s reconception of theology as a school theology for the church represents a democratization and expansion of the scholastic ideal” (p. 30). The Reformers thus used both scholastic and humanist methods in their theology.

Subsequent articles deal with how Reformed scholasticism developed in various Protestant theologians. The book is split into five sections: (1) Luther and Calvin, (2) Early Reformed Orthodoxy, (3) The British Connection—containing articles on William Perkins, John Hales, Richard Baxter and Scottish Reformed scholasticism, (4) High Orthodoxy to Enlightenment, and (5) The Rise of Lutheran Orthodoxy. Besides those mentioned above there are articles on Peter Martyr Vermigli, Girolamo Zanchi, Ursinus, Caspar Olevian, Andreas Hyperius, Episcopius and van Limborch, Gisbertus Voetius, Francis Turretin, Jean-Alphonse Turretin and Jacob Vernet, Melancthon and Johann Gerhard.

This collection of essays shows up the problems and failings of the Kendal type theory and gives a good picture of the development of Reformed dogmatics from the early Reformation to the decline of Reformed Orthodoxy in Geneva under Jean-Alphonse Turretin and Jacob Vernet. I found the book very informative and stimulating. Students of Reformed theology will not be disappointed with *Protestant Scholasticism*. It whetted my appetite for further study and the inclusion of a good bibliography will make this effort easier. The editors conclude their Introduction with the following words: “It is hoped . . . that this collection will help to stimulate further

research and debate on the issues it confronts and also that it will go some way to sending an unequivocal signal to the scholarly world at large, and to those committed to the unhistorical presuppositions of the old dogmatic approaches in particular that, to use the words of another protest, ‘the times they are a-changing’—if indeed they have not changed already” (p. xix). Indeed! As the proverb says: “The first to plead his cause seems just, until another comes and examines him” (Pr. 18:17). This book is an excellent re-examination of the subject.

For an example of the kind of essay included in this collection see the article “Gisbertus Voetius: Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety,” which is reproduced from *Protestant Scholasticism* in this issue of *C&S* (pp. 4–10) by kind permission of the publisher, Paternoster Press. All in all this was a very worthwhile and instructive read. I recommend it to anyone interested in the subject.

Also published by Paternoster, in conjunction with Baker Books, is Richard A. Muller’s *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*. I cannot speak too highly of this book. It is an excellent tool for anyone interested in Reformation theology. “Dictionary” is really the wrong term for it however. It is more like a small encyclopaedia. Most of the entries are more in the nature of small essays than mere definitions. I had a job putting the book down when I first got it. Each article I read led me to others and stimulated my thinking and desire to know more, and this in turn led me to look up things in other books. Every time I picked the book up to consult it on one thing I found myself consulting it and various other books on numerous other things as well in what kept turning into new avenues of interest and study. This is a marvelous book. It deserves a sewn, hardback binding, though the perfect binding and page size of this paperback make it robust enough for repeated use in the context of study (i.e. constant reference). This is not a new publication. It was originally published in 1985. It comes highly recommended by a number of scholars and I can do no more than add my hearty amen to D. F. Wright’s comment that “Good reference works are worth their weight in gold. This is a welcome addition to their ranks . . . This is a tool whose immense usefulness will not be limited to the Latinless of the world” (back cover). *C&S*

THE IMPULSE OF POWER—FORMATIVE IDEALS OF WESTERN CIVILISATION

By MICHAEL W. KELLEY

Spring Lake Park: Contra Mundum, 1998
309 pages + bibliography and indices,
paperback, \$19, ISBN 0-9637768-1-9

MEDIEVAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE WESTERN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION 400–1400

By MARCIA L. COLISH

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997
359 pages + bibliography and indices,
hardback, £30, ISBN 0-300-07142-6

REVIEWED BY COLIN WRIGHT

THERE can be no doubt that Western civilisation has been one of the great wonders of world history. The advances made in every area of life—whether intellectual, social, political or religious—have been phenomenal. That such a phenomenon should attract the interest of scholars and laymen alike can hardly be gainsaid. And despite the constant grumbling and

dissatisfaction we are in the habit of expressing about our plight, even the humblest Western man has a standard of living that would have been the envy of kings not a few centuries ago. Nevertheless, the twentieth century and the last few decades of the nineteenth century saw the rise of a determined move on the part of an influential minority not only to cast doubt on its worth but to destroy it completely. Concomitant with this movement has been a rapid decline in the standards of human conduct even while maintaining an outward veneer of respectability. The twentieth century—without doubt the wealthiest and most technologically advanced time in history by far—was also the most brutal, with an estimated 100 million souls perishing through man-inflicted violence. And this not the doing of ordinary criminal activity but the stated policy and act of recognised government.

Kelley's third book, *The Impulse of Power*, is an analysis of the rise and progress of this civilisation from a specifically biblical viewpoint. In his preface he asks that we consider a number of key questions concerning the relation of Christianity to history in general, and to the history of the West in particular:

—What is the meaning of Christ for history?

—Does Christ have any meaning for the unfolding of man's cultural mission?

—How do we understand Western culture in the light of Christ, since Western culture is hardly thinkable without considering that Christianity was essential to its formation and development?

Regular readers of our pages will not be surprised then that Kelley begins his thesis by quoting Berkhof's Christian definition of history to the effect that it is "the terrain on which man's cultural mission is realized; along with this it is also the terrain of his self-realization."

Unfortunately the concept of a cultural mission has now largely disappeared from the Christian church. Christianity has become pietistic: that is, it is concerned only with issues that relate to an afterlife; it has no bearing upon the issues of time and history, of cultural development and progress. The world for this style of thinking has become a sinking ship, and polishing the brass on it a futile exercise.

But Kelley cannot accept such an *escapist* mentality. For him, time and history are the stage upon which man is meant to play his part, to act out his *raison d'être* before the theatre of heaven. And, Macbeth to the contrary, he does not "strut" nor "fret" in the enactment of "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." His life is *purposive*, as is all history; it is all part of the great masterplan of Divine Providence. He says: "All that pertains to the Christian faith has Christ, and all that that title means, at its centre. We as Christians ought not simply to confess Jesus Christ, but that Jesus is the Christ, the one anointed to be the heir of all creation. Christ bespeaks not simply the person of Jesus, but his kingdom and lordship of the whole earth as well. It is the term that designates his replacement of Adam as the head of the human race . . . Not only is Christ the meaning of history, but nothing and no one else possibly can be. And if of history, then he is the meaning of man's cultural mission as well."

We might reasonably expect that as Kelley launches into the meat of his book, then, he will give us an analysis of the part Christianity has played in developing Western culture. But he doesn't; at least directly. Instead he proceeds to an analysis of Western man-in-general, and this by and large means the analysis of a good deal of non-Christian cultural thinking. So what is Kelley about? The title of the work reflects his purpose with precision. For Kelley, Christianity is not about how to get off the stage—to use Macbeth's metaphor—but how to act properly on it in accordance with the Great Playwright's directions. He recognises the solidarity of humankind as the

entity God placed at the head of creation at the beginning of time with the task of unfolding his purposes *within* creation and *within* time. This is based on what is called in many circles the Cultural Mandate, based upon the instructions to the first pair in Genesis 2:26–28. Man's disobedience cannot possibly annul that programme set for him by his Maker. Doubtless he may try to shake it off, but fulfil it he will. It is to this impulse to cultural formation that Kelley refers in his phrase, *the impulse of power*. Man cannot avoid, however much he may seek to stifle, the impulse to develop historically. Sinfulness, he argues, has often led to formative ideals that are meant by man to be inimical to this purpose. And it is in an analysis of these ideals of cultural formation in Western culture that Kelley so brilliantly engages. The field is vast, and Kelley has wisely, and expertly, chosen a brief selection of three major themes upon which to expend his labours. In Part One, entitled "Ancient Man: The First Enlightenment," he reviews the legacy of ancient Greece and its profound impact upon Western culture. He begins with a detailed exposition of the place of Homer in that tradition. This is a fascinating study in itself, and almost worth the price of the whole book. As he shows in the following chapter dealing with Plato's agenda, Plato can only be truly understood in the light of his reaction to Homer and Homer's hold over Greek education and thinking.

Part Two is about "Medieval Man: The Great Synthesis." Here Kelley engages the period from the rise of Christianity to the advent of the "New Paganism," as he styles it, of the Renaissance and later Humanism. This is perhaps the most significant aspect of the study, for it seeks to assess the manner in which Christianity introduced a whole new dimension to Western culture. However, and in line with the tack Kelley generally takes in this volume, we do not get the sort of panegyric we might be led to expect from an author out to further the claims of Christianity to a central place in our discussions of culture. His chapter titles are revealing: "The Monastic Retreat," "The Growth of Hierarchy," "The University and Scholasticism." All three deal with negative aspects of the influence of the Christian faith. But they are extremely important, particularly the first. By monasticism Kelley must not be understood, however, to mean simply the building of monasteries and the withdrawal into them from surrounding society. Rather he is targeting the underlying philosophy (or religion) of abandonment of time and history as having any meaning. This was not originally a Christian concept but a pagan one, and one which Christianity unfortunately early embraced as its own, to its own cost. For instance, when Augustine upon his conversion to Christianity promptly set about creating a college of like-minded souls eager to withdraw from secular pursuits to engage in a full-time study and contemplation of the divine, he was merely aping an already popular practice of his Roman culture. Within the Christian community the practice was the vanguard of a much broader movement to denigrate "real life," to regard it as unworthy of the true Christian and the ideals to which he should strive. "Far from being a biblical attitude," claims Kelley, "this was a humanistic gospel of salvation by meritorious accomplishment and an assertion of a religion of self-will in opposition to the grace of God. At the same time, it evidenced a perverse ingratitude toward the Creator and Lord of all life, including that of the body." Though monasticism as an institution did not effectively survive the Reformation in the sixteenth century, its spirit lives on, and in far more subtle and perverse ways that are difficult to track down and destroy. Kelley's analysis is an important contribution to the current debate over the future of our culture. The abysmal failure of Christianity to speak to our culture must surely go down in history as one of the great mysteries of all time. In the Old World the abandonment of

Christianity has inevitably led to an excision of its elements from our culture and this is understandable if unacceptable. But the power of the monastic spirit is vividly portrayed in Kelley's own American culture where almost half the population claims to be "born again." There Christianity is a flourishing religion compared with our older civilisation in Europe. Yet its influence on public policy is virtually non-existent except in the quadrennial appeal of Presidential candidates to their Sunday School teaching abilities. I have been led to understand that the reason there is no political party that openly calls itself Christian in the USA is that it would lose all credibility, even among Christians.

The third part of Kelley's work is a first-rate exposition of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In better days we were taught the rudiments of their meaning and outlook on life. Sadly, British schools now regard a study of the nasty things Hitler got up to in 1939–45 as the only history their charges need to know. Strangely, Kelley finishes his task at the Romantic era, concluding that, "With Romanticism, Western civilisation has arrived at the present stage of the impulse to power." I would have expected a final chapter on the rise of the post-modernist mentality. But Kelley's definition of Romanticism is much broader than is normally assumed. For him, its essence lies in an abstract principle that drives the post-modernist also: "Man cannot truly be himself unless he achieves a total freedom from all external and traditional institutions and authorities, from all dogmas of truth and knowledge, ethics and religion."

Kelley paints with this broad brush throughout this remarkable work. This is not a criticism. It is a plea to listen carefully to what he has to say. He is dealing with broad principles, and a cursory reading of his text will deny the reader a true understanding of what he is trying to say.

As an exposition of how our culture came to be what it is, of the part Christianity played in it and the reasons for the vicious contemporary attacks upon it, the reader of this review cannot do better than give Kelley's work a thorough and engaging study. In many ways I found it evocative of two of the great works already to hand. The first is Augustine's *City of God*. Like the bishop's magnum opus, it is a defence of the need for a Christian perspective on, and an explanation of, Western history. Just as Augustine had to counter the attacks of the pagans to the effect that Christianity was destroying Western culture, so Kelley has countered the modern pagans in their insistence that Christianity is inimical to any worthwhile culture. In many ways too it mirrors the classic study of Charles Norris Cochrane of much later times, his *Christianity and Classical Culture* (1940). Like Cochrane, Kelley is keen to understand the interrelationships between Christianity and other western intellectual traditions. Like Cochrane too, he has produced a remarkable volume that will stand the test of time. We ignore it at our peril. Written in a style that is at once profound and yet clear, *The Impulse of Power* is intelligible to the reasonably-educated layman and an extremely useful analysis for the serious student.

Now we come to the second volume under consideration. Like Kelley's masterpiece, it purports to analyse the Western intellectual tradition. The title itself is hugely appealing and evokes vistas of profound reflection on that tradition. But here unfortunately the similarity ends. There are some very clear dissimilarities, not to Kelley's advantage. Marcia Colish's volume is much larger and much better produced. It has superior typesetting, is cloth bound and has a finely illustrated dust wrapper. It is also published by one of the most prestigious publishers in the West and has reviews that Kelley would give his right arm for. And it costs twice as much. But in respect of

content Kelley's contribution is by far the superior offering. Indeed Colish's work can hardly be called a contribution to our understanding of the foundations of the Western intellectual tradition at all. Reading it was a great disappointment and an exceeding bore. In fact, I never finished it (something I try to do with all books I review, however bad). It is a long and often rambling account of historical goings-on that obviously reflect well on the author's ability to master the surface contents of Western history. But it miserably fails to account for how those goings-on impacted upon the intellectual tradition. It does not seem to offer any analysis or insight at all. Where it does seek to explain the thinking of an epoch it is highly suspect too. Take the case of Augustine of Hippo. Colish maintains that as the result of his anti-Pelagian battle Augustine changed his theology in the matter of free-will; he went from believing in it to denying it. Nothing could be further from the truth or more easy to disprove. Augustine himself countered this argument vigorously in his own lifetime as it was put forward by the Pelagians themselves. They accused him of renouncing his position in his earlier *On the Free Determination of the Will*, a position they claimed to follow. His answer, in his *Retractations*—a book Colish praises and has presumably read—is that the Pelagians had torn his argument out of its anti-Manichean context and completely misunderstood it. They might have been forgiven their mistake; Colish has no excuse. Equally disappointing about this volume is its lack of footnotes. There are a few endnotes but they are derisory, and far from adequate for a book with such pretensions. A concluding bibliography gives somewhat more useful help to further study but again I find it significant that the one volume that ought to have figured highly here but is not so much as mentioned is Gordon Leff's *Medieval Thought from Augustine to Occam*. Leff's book, of course, is precisely what Colish's book ought to have been. We recommend the reader to refer to it if he wants to understand the contributions of the mediaeval period to our intellectual tradition. Even better, read Kelley. *C&S*

Letters to the Editor

DEAR STEPHEN

I was fascinated by the discussion in the last issue of *C&S* on baptism. Partly because it's fairly evident that all of us don't quite know what to do about children! As you know I am a Baptist by conviction; and one thing is apparent to me, viz that on the present lines of thought the argument has run its course. No point in going through it all again, citing Bible texts and theological arguments; just refer to the books: Jeremias' *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, and R. E. O. White's *The Biblical Doctrine of Initiation*. It seems to me that we need to shift the debate to the question: what, fundamentally, is the church? Is the church *essentially* a community bound by a covenant, within which the Spirit works, or is it essentially a fellowship of the Spirit, who initiates the covenant bond? The first view has the apparent value of giving us a continuity with the people of God under the Old Testament; the second seems to recognise the fact that the New Testament people of God are not a nation characterised by law, but what sociologists would now call a "voluntary association." Objections that this is pure Arminianism shows a misunderstanding; historically the Baptist tradition has been strongly Calvinistic. Infant baptism depends on the fact that parents can enter into a covenant

relationship for others (so we can enter a child's name for a place in a school); believer's baptism depends on the fact that no-one can be born of the Spirit for someone else (in Scripture, the Spirit always carries connotations of God's power *experienced*).

It is also important to recognise the reasons behind the two types of conviction. Paedobaptists rightly recognise the fact that no man is an island; to be a Christian involves one inevitably in the social entities (family, community, nation, race) of which we are a part. Willy nilly, others gain or lose by what we are. That is an important factor against the intense individualism (almost solipsism) of our present Western world. There is such a thing as a Christian nation, community, family; and we all share in the fall of the human race.

But how that is implemented is another matter. Baptists witnessed the terrible decline of Anglican Christianity into little more than a folk-religion whereby nominal Christianity becomes institutionalised and maintained by an initiation rite. They naturally clung the more tenaciously to their convictions that "God has no grandchildren," and every generation has to be initiated into the Kingdom through personal faith. Notice that this is not a problem where the church is a minority movement; but we do still hope for a Christian national life, don't we?

Naturally and inevitably baptism (seen as a "sacrament"—sorry about this word, Steve; I mean it merely in its ancient sense of a rite of open commitment, like enlistment in the army) logically precedes receiving the Lord's Supper. (Paedobaptists often endeavour to recognise the need for personal faith by some kind of "confirmation"—but having baptism without personal confession sets an unfortunate precedent!).

Along with many other Baptist parents, we became aware that though our children don't inherit a Christian faith, they do absorb it, and this needs to be recognised. The problem is that absorption is not the same as covenant commitment, even though the spiritual life of faith in Christ is real enough. That kind of commitment—including the implications of being a member of Christ's church—has to be engaged in rather as the old Anglican tradition used to say of marriage: "soberly, discreetly, and in the fear of God." It is, of course anomalous; but God has not granted us a tidy life! In a culture where symbolic behaviour is fragmented and rarely understood, it is likely that God is not entirely satisfied with the sacramental life of any of our churches.

In our church we try to recognise this situation by establishing a practice whereby children who wish to participate at the Lord's Table as believers before their baptism may receive the elements from their parents. This, we felt, would enable believing children to share in the fellowship of the Table, would also preserve the "logic" of keeping the Lord's Table as normally for those who are fully confessing members of Christ's body, and also reflect the "priestly" functions of parents in the family. In such debates, it seems to me that we have to avoid a number of sins. One is the idolatry which makes doctrine or church practice the criterion for accepting people as "real" Christians in place of trust in Jesus as Lord of life. Another is yielding to the temptation to impugn the intelligence or good faith of Christians of a different conviction. And a third is failure to learn from those with whom we disagree. Even heresy usually lives off the energy of neglected truth.

Blessings,
John Peck

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: I am very much in agreement with your view that the debate on baptism has run its course, and with your view that the debate needs to move on, which was why I tried to move it on in my review of Michael Kimmitt's booklet.

I'm not convinced by your statement that none of us know what to do about our children. I think we need to take the covenantal argument seriously, and *consistently*, and I'm not convinced at all that paedobaptists on the whole do this, and I suspect this may have a lot to do with why paedobaptist arguments are so unconvincing to Baptists. As I said in my response to Michael Kimmitt's letter, it is not the arguments for paedobaptism *per se* that I disagree with. What troubles me is the fact that it seems the theological principles underpinning these arguments are not really believed by most paedobaptists. As the saying goes "Don't tell me, show me!" Paedobaptists have been mouthing off for centuries about their superior covenant theology, but the plain fact is that it doesn't really mean much at all, and their practice, as a general rule, is little different from that of Baptists. Paedobaptists have wet baptisms and dry confirmations. Baptists have dry baptisms and wet confirmations. That's about all the difference amounts to *practically*—i.e. in terms of the way it affects the everyday lives of the children involved.

This is why I believe the real factor to be considered is the covenant practice of the family rather than the mere use of a rite, which is often quite meaningless (not that the rite itself is meaningless, but that it is made meaningless when parents neglect the reality it signifies). If baptism really is the New Testament equivalent of circumcision, paedobaptists must contend with Paul's argument in Rom. 2:25–29. If the circumcision of a Jew who did not practise the covenant was counted by God as uncircumcision, and the uncircumcision of a Gentile who did practise the covenant was counted by God as circumcision, then the same goes for baptism. Those paedobaptists who make a show of their commitment to paedobaptism and then abandon their children to secular humanist schools to be brought up to see the world and all things in it from a godless perspective have no real right to claim the privileges of baptism for their children. Likewise, Baptists who do not baptise their children yet bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, give them a covenantal education etc., will have fulfilled the responsibilities of the covenant incumbent upon those who baptise their children. In such a case God will consider their children's unbaptism as baptism and they will be blessed with the privileges of the covenant. It is the reality that the rite signifies that is important. Without a life in conformity with the reality signified by the rite, the rite itself is useless. Yet still we have paedobaptist ministers who will condemn Baptists for not baptising their children and refuse them communion, because, they say, Baptists are sinning in not baptising their children, while giving communion to paedobaptists who blithely abandon their children to a secular humanist education. Something seems to me to be seriously wrong with this kind of theology. I am not saying that communion should be withheld from those who send their children to humanist schools. But is not the Baptist who brings his children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord the one who practises the covenant, and the paedobaptist who abandons his children to a secular humanist education the one who does not practise the covenant? Why then should the Baptist be refused communion? While the present situation continues, where most Christians do not seriously consider their covenant responsibilities for the upbringing and education of their children, I see no point in pursuing the debate over baptism.

But, this particular debate grew not out of discussion over baptism *per se*, but paedocommunion, because it is here, I think, that the real attitude of most paedobaptists to the covenant is revealed. What is revealed by their anti-paedocommunion stance is their lack of covenantal thinking at all. I suspect many paedobaptists have not thought their covenant theology out for themselves but rather just accepted it as their own tradition,

uncritically (the tendency to idolise tradition is as strong among the Reformed as it is among other Christians). In this respect, though I disagree with their position, I have more respect for Baptists who have thought through their position. I do not think they sin when they do not baptise their children. I merely disagree with their theological reasoning. But there again, they are not the ones going on endlessly about the covenant; and on the practical level they do not see how the covenant makes any difference to the lives of paedobaptists on the whole. Paedobaptists claim to see their children as members of the church; but they seldom seem to treat them as members of the church. Their children are treated much like the children of Baptists in church, i.e. they are seen as not able to participate fully in the life of the church, and therefore denied communion. Neither do Baptists see the paedobaptist claims being lived up to in the way children are brought up. I am not saying that paedobaptist parents have failed because they are not perfect (who is?). But their so-called covenant theology hardly seems to lead them to *attempt* to live out the covenant in the way they treat their children in the church or in the education they provide. There is really no difference between the plight of Baptist children and baptised children that does not in the end boil down to mere words that the children don't understand in any case. So, my question to the paedobaptist is, So what? When all the covenant talk is over, there is not much difference in covenant practice between the Baptist and the paedobaptist.

Now, in times past when our culture was predominantly Christian and the Christian world-view was pervasive in society, this issue was less clear. A hundred years ago one was likely to get broadly, though certainly not perfectly, a Christian education no matter what kind of school one went to in this country.¹ Christian in the sense that the overriding world-view was Christian. This is not the case today. The antithesis is much more clearly defined. And yet one would not think so by the way Christians behave. On the whole, at the level of covenant practice the paedobaptist churches have shown themselves to be anything but covenantal in their theology (of course there are some exceptions, but not many). And it is on this level that one's covenantal commitments count, not merely at a theoretical level.

I think this is where the debate needs to go. I have no interest in regurgitating the Baptist/paedobaptist debate, only in extending the covenant principles on which paedobaptism is based to the whole of life, rather than stopping at the mere practice of a rite. I think this does have significant implications and brings us into a whole new area where there is the possibility of very great progress—and where there is the possibility of such progress it is a great pity that we do not pursue the possibilities, since then we fail, in a very real sense, to leave a godly intellectual, moral and cultural inheritance for our children (cf. Pr. 13:22). This is why I addressed this issue in

1. It is a misconception encouraged by socialist ideology that prior to the advent of State education the vast majority of the working class were uneducated ignoramuses. The level of education provided by private fee-paying and charitable schools for the majority of the working classes in Victorian England prior to the 1870 Education Act was above the world average by *today's* standards. A comparison of contemporary popular literature with that of the nineteenth century suggests if anything that general standards of literacy are now lower than they were in the nineteenth century, despite the fact that more money is now being spent on education by the State than at any other time in our history. The State did not create an education system so much as take over an exceptionally successful private system of schooling that already existed, which was created by a Christian society. For more on this see E. G. West, *Education and the Industrial Revolution* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1975) and *idem, Education and the State* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, [1965] 1994).

my review of Michael Kimmitt's booklet. As I said, we really do not need another book on paedobaptism; what we need to see is paedobaptists living out the theology of the covenant practically, and this, it seems to me, leads us to the consideration of paedocommunion and, particularly in our present circumstances, the education of our children.

Although many, both Baptist and paedobaptist, do not know what to do with their children, or at least give that impression, I don't think it is the case that everyone is in this position. Some have very definite ideas about what they think we should do with our children, but the church on the whole does not want to listen because it is just that much easier to ignore the issues. Here's an interesting fact. I know a number of Christian home schooling families. They virtually all agree that when non-believers ask where their children go to school and they hear that they are home schooled the response is usually one of interest, and quite positive. The greatest opposition and criticism to home schooling (sometimes quite vehement) comes from Christians. Why? I suspect most Christians know the answer to this, even if they don't want to admit it. I cannot think of an issue relating to the practise of the Christian life in the modern world that has been handed to us on a plate quite like this one has. If the church on the whole were to start practising the covenant at this point rather than just talking about it, I believe, in our present circumstances, this would transform the church's witness to the world. This is one of the areas where the Christian has the ability to make a significant difference, and on the whole this golden opportunity has been thrown away. My appeal is to Christians of all denominations to take the covenant seriously and to start trying to live it out consistently. Perfection is impossible, and I am not arguing that the church has sinned because she has failed, nor that individual parents have sinned because they have failed. The sin comes in when Christians refuse to try, and when the church refuses to try, and I think this is the condition of the church in large measure today—she has abandoned the covenant. Commitment to the practise the covenant with God's help is surely the essence of living the Christian life.—SCP. *C&S*

DEAR SIR,

Michael Kimmitt's letter does indeed raise some questions—not that that is a bad thing! However, it would be interesting to know where he found any Scriptural foundation for affusion or aspersion (pouring or sprinkling) as the biblical mode of baptism. Given that we have simply taken the Greek word cluster (*baptizo/baptismos*), and just given it an English spelling, confusion could not fail to arise!

When it comes to the mode of baptism the New Testament is very clear. It is impossible to read passages like Rom. 6:4ff. and Col. 2:12 without asking: what mode of baptism fits the language used by the apostle? How can you bury someone just by putting a handful of earth onto him? Both passages speak of being buried with Christ in baptism; since burial involves putting the person out of sight, covered by what he is buried in, it must follow that only total immersion can fit this.

In similar vein, though in a different way, are two other passages, viz. 1 Cor. 10:2 and 1 Pet. 3:20, 21. These two see baptism as prefigured by distinct historical events. In the first, it is the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites; in the second we find the Noachian Deluge as a comparison. The Red Sea was deep enough to drown Pharaoh's chariotry (Ex. 14:26–28; cf. Heb. 11:29); as for the Deluge we read that “all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens” (Gen. 7:19, NASB.) were covered by its waters, with the added remarks lower down to the effect that every living thing outside the ark perished.

Such historical imagery only makes sense in this context if baptism involves total immersion; mere pouring or sprinkling would imply that Pharaoh's army merely got their feet wet, or that the Noachian Deluge was just a local cloudburst!

As for the subjects of baptism, the paedobaptist position suffers from the following weaknesses. One is its failure to recognise that while there is indeed continuity between the Old and New Testament churches there is also discontinuity! The Old Testament church was theoretically coterminous with the political entity known as Israel, with its twelve tribes; the New Testament church, by contrast, is an international body, living more like a diaspora, "scattered throughout" where they live (1 Pet. 1:1), living as "aliens and strangers" (2:11) in those selfsame geographical areas. In such a situation it was not uncommon for religiously divided homes to exist—usually it was the wife who was the believer (3:1) but sometimes it might be the husband (1 Cor. 7:12). This could not fail to have some effect on the religious attachments of any children of such a household.

Another mistake is to insist on counting by twentieth century Western standards; one forgets that in those days it was usually only the adult males who tended to be counted! In the accounts given of the feeding of the 5,000 Matthew says that the figure didn't include women and children (14:21); Mark mentions 5,000 men (6:44), as do Luke (9:14) and John (6:10); in all four references the writers specifically use *andres*—men, in the sense of males as opposed to females, grown-ups as opposed to children, as making up the 5,000.

Once again, referring back to the Romans passage (6:3), it is obvious that the baptised person was expected to know and understand the significance of the sacrament! One has then to ask: what can a tiny baby know of the significance of baptism?

As to why infant baptism arose in the first place, a look at church history reveals why. For the first few centuries adult baptism was the norm, and that by immersion. Although as early as the *Didaché* (early second century) there is a reference to pouring as an acceptable mode of baptism, it was only if immersion was impracticable! In fact, in the early post-biblical centuries it was regarded as such a serious step that many candidates put off being baptised until on their deathbed. This arose from the curious notion that there was no forgiveness for post-baptismal sin. Possibly this grew out of the idea that denial of the faith was beyond forgiveness, and was logically extended to include all form of sin.

During the post-Nicene period attitudes changed; baptism came to be regarded as being absolutely essential for salvation, and therefore something to be administered as soon as possible! In short, instead of being a response of the candidate's personal faith, and a sign of his already having been regenerated, it became the actual means of regeneration! To die unbaptised, even as a baby, was, logically, to die in sin, and thus be doomed to ever-lasting damnation. Revulsion against the idea of a tiny baby being consigned to the flames of hell for want of a few drops of water being sprinkled on its head and a formula being pronounced over it led eventually to the notion of Limbo as the destiny of unbaptised infants, though this was a later development.

With the Reformation the various mainstream Protestant churches rejected the grosser side of paedobaptism; at least, I do not know of any important Protestant creed that holds to the absurd and unbiblical notions that Romanism surrounded infant baptism with. But it soon occurred to the more thoroughgoing to insist that if the unreformed religion was to be challenged on one point it was open to challenge on all points. In this case, who was to be baptised, and in what manner?

Now to one of the crunch questions: what is the religion of the unbaptised child? The answer, surely, is determined by the

child's own expression of religious allegiance! It is no inaccuracy to describe the unbaptised children of Christian parents as Christians; after all, they are taken to church each week, they are (one hopes!) instructed in the things of God, and, most important of all, they want to learn more. But their Christian experience is in accordance with their years. Similarly, if the child comes from a non-Christian (or only nominally Christian) home, but, perhaps at the invitation of one of his/her Christian peers, or by whatever means under God this takes place, they come to find attending church something to look forward to, and even start showing signs of the grace of God in their lives, it is again quite correct to describe them as Christians, even if they have not as yet been baptised.

Regarding child communion, this "instinctive reaction" is again understandable. After all, does the participant understand what he/she is taking part in? And here, although as I have pointed out earlier, my sympathies are with believers' baptism, and that by immersion, I can understand his feeling that unbaptised children "are in a sort of ecclesiastical limbo" at between 8–12 years of age. They can understand the significance of the Lord's Supper—at least, most can, or should be able to if brought up in Christian homes; and yet they are excluded. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of which I am a member, this matter came up at world church level. Apparently, in North America some children who were not yet baptised, and would not expect to be baptised for a few years, were, and with the permission and even encouragement of their parents, being allowed to take part in the communion service! An exchange of letters in our church paper revealed divisions not merely between pulpit and pew but also in the pews. Naturally, when the matter came to be discussed at top level there was strong opposition indeed to the idea of unbaptised children taking part in the Communion service; one minister even went so far as to assert that a child who was old enough and committed enough to take part in the Lord's Supper was old enough and committed enough to be baptised in anticipation of taking part in the Communion! Perhaps he may have forgotten that while even quite young children may have little difficulty in recognising the significance of the Communion service it is another matter with much of the other doctrinal baggage that identifies a particular denomination—especially one with clear-cut beliefs. It also goes to illustrate the risks involved with what is called "Open Communion"; a baptistic church, holding to believers' baptism, could find paedobaptists wanting to take part in their Communion service, or even people who had not been baptised to begin with! As far as the former are concerned, since they are most likely to be Christians of a sort they will be welcomed; the latter would seem logically to be a different matter. But the logic of Open Communion leads to the taking part of anyone who wishes to take part, and that on the basis of the text "Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup". Only known and open sin is a recognised bar to taking part (1 Cor. 5:11).

I cannot truthfully say that this represents all that can be said, and this letter might well be a bit on the long side! Nevertheless, I hope it makes a useful contribution to the debate.

Yours faithfully,
Barry Gowland

ASSOCIATE EDITOR'S RESPONSE: Your letter seems to be about two issues, though they are not clearly distinguished in what you write: firstly, whether the Scriptures require a particular mode of baptism (i.e. immersion or sprinkling) and whether children should be baptised. And although I hold (and have done so for all but the first ten years of my Christian experience)

to the orthodox Reformed paedobaptist view I do not wish to go into a lengthy reply to you on either of these issues. They are more than adequately covered by Calvin in Book Four of his *Institutes* and in considerable detail *contra* the baptist position in John Flavel's *Vindiciae Legis et Foederis*. From the way in which you attack the paedobaptist position it is clear you have not acquainted yourself with what that position involves, particularly its covenantal nature.

However, your letter does raise a considerable number of interesting issues that I feel it would be profitable to discuss here; issues that are highly relevant to our current situation. These involve the way in which we interpret the Scriptures, our response to differences of opinion as to what the Scriptures say, and our attitude to those who differ from us.

Firstly, it will be necessary to clear the ground by providing some sort of response to the way in which you have used Scripture to defend the immersionist position. Let me say at the start that I fully endorse your criticism of our practice of simply transliterating words like *baptizo*. I myself have drawn attention to this problem more than once in these pages. It seems to me that much of our debate in the church is over the considerable number of such words in our English translation. I could of course accept an etymological answer to the problem but I do not believe it is that simple to get one. Neither do I believe your attempt to do so is successful.

You say: "When it comes to the mode of baptism the New Testament is very clear." But is not this a severe case of *petitio principii*—begging the question? If it was "very clear," as you insist, how do you account for the fact that there is so much division of opinion about what that mode is? You could of course argue that your opponents had misunderstood the Scriptures. This would be fine if it was a matter of a few individuals, but you would be arguing that virtually the whole of the Reformers and their descendants have misunderstood the Scriptures. A strange notion considering your doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. Understand that I am not saying here that either position on baptism is right: simply that your notion of clarity is highly questionable. Herein is the *real* theological problem. Until you settle this problem you are simply talking at cross-purposes with your opponents on this issue.

This point is extremely important. You have raised an issue here that needs facing by large swathes of the Reformed community. Though they do not often so explicitly use your notion of clarity they nevertheless use it extensively in principle. And because they too cannot possibly raise any serious answer to the question of the differences that do exist over the interpretation of Scripture they resort to the only one possible: their opponents are being dishonest, and are refusing to see what Scripture says because they do not want to. Their opponents are thus seen as sinful rather than mistaken. It is now not uncommon among both baptists and paedobaptists to regard their opponents as engaged in sinful and wilful opposition to Scripture. And this practice is used over a wide range of issues. Rather than debating our differences we simply anathematise one another and become even more entrenched in our own perceptions of things. Even when we are right this cannot be healthy, let alone acceptable behaviour. This is why I cannot accept your idea of the clarity of Scripture. It is a dead end, theologically and intellectually.

In raising this question, however, you have raised implicitly a much more important one: why is it that people who are evidently both seriously and sincerely committed to the Scriptures differ so widely on what they mean? As I said above, I cannot accept the "All my opponents are wilfully sinful" answer. Neither, you may think strange, can I accept the answer that the Scriptures lack clarity. What the Reformers

often referred to as *the perspicuity of Scripture* I strongly adhere to.¹ This seems to me to leave only one other solution, namely, that we begin from different presuppositions. We come to Scripture with our minds made up about the way in which we are to read them. This in itself I believe is inevitable. Some presuppositions are necessary. The real problem we face however is understanding what our presuppositions are and examining them in the light of Scripture and, not least, in earnest debate among ourselves. In this we express, as much as in the Lord's Supper, our true communion or fellowship as the Body of Christ. Here we recognise our mutual dependence as so beautifully expressed by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian church, chapter 12. Whatever the outcome of such debate for each of us personally, whatever we each individually decide is to be our commitment, we nevertheless need this process of mutual exchange to arrive at any justifiable and credible theology. It is in my estimation the height of impertinence to suppose that we can dispense with all traditions but our own. As if the Presbyterian cannot learn anything from the Pentecostal, the Pentecostal from the Presbyterian, or any other tradition. To deny this is to deny any meaningful Christian philosophy of history, and smacks of the exclusivism the prophets so often had to denounce in Israel.

In the light of the sort of criticisms we get at the Kuyper Foundation about our fairly united stance on this issue, it needs to be pointed out that this does not imply any relativism of truth or abandonment of a vigorous intellectual defence of what we believe to be biblical teaching. It is as far removed from post-modernism as light is from darkness. But what it does insist upon is that we exercise humility in regard to our own abilities and that we recognise that other Christians have also trodden the same path as us but come to different conclusions. This does not mean that both are right or that the difference is unimportant. It does mean that *at least one* of us is wrong. It could mean that *both* of us are wrong. But we insist the only way to find out is by argument across the divide within the church, by accepting that both sides have made a reasonable attempt to understand Scripture within the light they have. The debate must of necessity then concentrate on exposing and re-examining the presuppositions of those attempts.

Allow me to address some of the arguments you have raised in support of immersion. I do this not to defend paedobaptism but to show how, coming to Scripture with such a view, you have all too quickly assumed positions of interpretation that are both illogical and misguided. I am trying not to be censorious in this. It is something we all do to some extent or another. In one sense a conservatism is essential: we cannot afford to be forever questioning everything we believe. There has to be some resistance to change. However psychologically justified this might be however, we are too prone to go the next step and seek justification for our view even where it cannot be found. We see things in the light of our current outlook on things. No doubt inherent sinfulness lies at the root of all such excess, but this does not warrant charges of wilfulness but rather of being mistaken or wrong.

1. The clarity of Scripture means that it does not possess any hidden or arcane meaning. With Scripture as with MS Windows (hopefully), What You See Is What You Get. But this is not at all the same as saying that I can immediately grasp Scripture's meaning without reflection and due allowance for my own sinfully prejudiced nature, any more than I can understand Windows without some sort of introduction into *how* it works. Even the Apostle Peter remarked that in Paul's writings there were things difficult to fathom (2 Peter 3:15–16). They require some gained skill before interpreting—those who twisted their meaning lacked learning (Gk: *amatheis*) and stability (Gk: *asteriktoi*), that is, direction and principle.

You bring forward a number of Scripture passages to support immersion. The first is burial. You say, “How can you bury someone just by putting a handful of earth onto him? Both passages speak of being buried with Christ in baptism; since burial involves putting the person out of sight, covered by what he is buried in, it must follow that only total immersion can fit this.”

This highlights one of the problems I refer to. And it is carefully masked by an apparent appeal to logic. The fact is you are interpreting the word “bury” in a way that just does not fit the facts of the time. You are interpreting it in terms of *our* culture not Paul’s. Six feet under is a modern idea—a very modern idea—that came into being for health reasons, following the discovery last century that below six feet a human or animal body that was seriously diseased would be contained. The Jews, like most if not all peoples I have read about, never buried their dead at all in our sense; they packed them away neatly in some form of burial chamber. The *housed* them! So the analogy just does not fit.

Interestingly, and as I am sure you are aware, in modern Western burial services the interment does not include filling in the ground on top of the coffin; this is done rather unceremoniously after the mourners have left the scene. Yet we still refer to what the mourners do as burying their dead. We definitely do not refer to what the gravediggers do by filling in the grave as burying. Furthermore, at most interments the final act of filling in (baptising in your analogy) is done when the next of kin sprinkles a handful of earth on the coffin. This is regarded by all as *the* act of burial. No-one stands around after discussing the etymology of the word “bury.” The deed is effectively completed in this act, whatever the dictionary might say. I am not seeking to justify anything by this other than a more careful analysis of the way in which we use language and therefore a more considered way in which to read and understand the Scriptures.

You then add: “In similar vein, though in a different way, are two other passages, viz. 1 Cor. 10:2 and 1 Pet. 3:20, 21. These two see baptism as prefigured by distinct historical events. In the first, it is the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites . . . The Red Sea was deep enough to drown Pharaoh’s chariotry (Ex. 14:26–28; cf. Heb. 11:29).” I think you are hoist on your own petard here. The Israelites *never* went into the water at all. Baptised without so much as getting the soles of their Doc Martens wet! Unfortunately you have read *into* the Scriptures here not *out* of them; because it was the Israelites and *not* the Egyptians (as you claim) that are spoken of as being baptised. You proceed: “. . . in the second we find the Noachian Deluge as a comparison.” But again you are reading far too much into Peter’s passage. You relate it to those who perished but the Scripture does not. It relates our baptism to what water did for *Noah*. As he was saved—literally—by water, so we are saved by water. All I want to point out from this significant passage at this stage however is that Noah too did not so much as get his feet wet in the stuff. He floated on top of it in a boat for six weeks. You just cannot draw a “This means immersion” argument from this passage, or indeed anything quite so simplistic.

Allow me to look at one last passage of Scripture from which you draw adult only baptism. It is Rom. 6:3. You say: “. . . it is obvious that the baptised person was expected to know and understand the significance of the sacrament! One has then to ask: what can a tiny baby know of the significance of baptism?” Again you appeal to the clarity of Scripture by stating that your interpretation of it is “obvious.” This is question-begging. What is obvious is that your view is not obvious. If it were, so many would not believe that this passage obviously means something else! You are not addressing the real issue.

Next, you castigate paedobaptists for their view of the Old Testament: “One is its [the paedobaptist position’s] failure to recognise that while there is indeed continuity between the Old and New Testament churches there is also discontinuity.” I don’t know of any paedobaptists who have failed to recognise the discontinuities. They might not be the discontinuities you recognise but they do recognise serious discontinuities. Again I have to ask whether you are entering into real dialogue with those whose position you disagree with, whether you have really studied what they have to say.

I will address one last issue raised by you. Just as you have assumed a clarity of Scripture that cannot be sustained, so also you have assumed a clarity of history. Your view of church history mirrors your view of Scripture. But it is equally question-begging because you do not address the prior issue of why your interpretation of history is not only correct but clearly visible for all to see. I for one deny that many of the points you raise from history in defence of your position are anything other than your reading into history your own prior theological commitments. You have assumed the reasons for the introduction of infant baptism, not proved them. You have simply imposed your baptist view on the facts. Let me recount an incident that took place in our church not so long ago that illustrates this: I was contending that the Puritans were far from modest partakers of alcoholic beverages. This was vehemently denied by other members of the group. But, I said, we have the documentary proof, above all the order lists they submitted to the vintners on the occasion of weddings, for instance. But these lists *must* be fake, my antagonists argued, and they must be fake for a very good reason: the Puritans were holy men. Now you will see from this that even “clear” documentary evidence of historical fact is quite useless if we come to a theological discussion with an insistence that our position cannot possibly be wrong. I think your prior commitment to baptist views has resulted in your having fallen into this—very common—trap.

You even suppose at one point that infant baptism is virtually synonymous with sprinkling. But some sects immersed infants—as some still do. Some like Augustine, at a time you reckon to have been anti-immersionist, were immersed. You have drawn a pretty picture of the development of a practice of which you disapprove; my reply is that you have not addressed the facts of history by doing so, but simply raised a straw man.

What does all this mean? That paedobaptism is biblical and the baptist position unbiblical? No. I have not even attempted to prove the paedobaptist position, nor do I intend doing so. That is not what this reply is about. What I believe I have done however is to show that the arguments you raise for the baptist position are untenable. Now you can do a number of things with this. On the one hand, you could go looking for other evidence for your position. You could tighten up your argument and replace your eisegesis with exegesis. You could end up with an argument for your position that is biblically coherent. You will have learnt something from the process of debate without abandoning either your honour or your beliefs. You might at last even convince others, including myself, that the Scriptures *clearly* teach your view! At the least, this debate has focussed *my* attention on the issues again, and I have felt the need to rethink and clarify *my* understanding of certain passages of Scripture. Such debate is fruitful even if no-one changes sides. On the other hand, there is the option of changing sides in the debate in your search for the truth, whether that was intended for a better baptist position or not. This too is to your advantage and not to your dishonour. Recall the example John Owen sets in his conversion from Presbyterian to Congregationalist: “The controversy between Independency and Presbytery was young also, nor, by me clearly understood,

especially as stated on the congregational side . . . Only, being unacquainted with the congregational way, I professed myself to own the other party, not knowing but that my principles were suited to their judgement and profession, having looked very little farther into those affairs than I was led by an opposition to Episcopacy and ceremonies. Upon a review of what I had there asserted, I found that my principles were far more suited to what is the judgement and practice of the congregational men than those of the presbyterian.”² Owen read John Cotton’s Congregationalist book *The Keys of the Kingdom* with a view to refuting it. He ended up convinced by its argument. In fact, he claims his previous understanding of what Congregationalism taught was seriously flawed. He had been arguing against a position that he did not understand. Indeed, he admits that he did not understand what Presbyterianism stood for either, for he did not so much change his ecclesiastical doctrine as give it another name. He admits that he was a Congregationalist all along, that his “principles were far more suited to what is the judgement and practice of the congregational men than those of the presbyterian.” And this from a future Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University!

There is a third option; you could come from your researches with an entirely new position that had not been seen before. Consider Martin Luther’s discovery of the doctrine of *Justification by Faith*. Nothing quite like this had been propounded in fifteen hundred years. The same texts had been studied and quoted all that time but their true import was never really understood with such clarity until he came along. Not that he discovered something intrinsically new, something that did not already exist in Scripture, but he did make a new discovery.

As I stated earlier, my purpose in this reply to your letter has not been to counter its arguments (which are well catered for in the standard literature) but to exemplify certain characteristics of the modern manner of tackling theological differences. I believe that in our modern climate especially, this is far more important for the health of the church than the issue of the mode of baptism. That debate is only a symptom of the malaise in the church and will cure itself under better circumstances. But those better circumstances will only be achieved if, as a Body, we learn to debate rather than anathematise and argue rather than vilify. It will not do to keep questioning people’s integrity when they disagree with us, by referring to the evident meaning of Scripture. They do not take this stain on their character lightly, and it more often than not backfires, simply hardening their attitude of opposition.

At the Kuyper Foundation we are passionately committed both to the essential features of the so-called Reformed Faith and to the principle of the Church Argumentative (as Perks has happily named it). That is, while holding to the uniqueness of Scripture as God-breathed and infallible, and to the truth therein as absolute truth; we nevertheless hold that only Scripture is the irreducible dogma of the church and all human statements are open to debate (including Nicaea and Chalcedon), both in terms of the possibility (even probability) of error and of relativity to times.³ It will not do to accuse us, as some have done, of thus abandoning absolute truth in favour of a post-modernist relativism (something we abhor), or of

2. *A Review of the True Nature of Schism* (1657) in the *Works of John Owen*, Vol. 13, p. 222f. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967).

3. I do not, for instance, believe that the Greek philosophical language of Nicaea is adequate any longer. And although I differ significantly from James Jordan on a number of major issues, in ecclesiology particularly, some of his ideas for making the Westminster Confession more biblical in its view of God I find very attractive and a significant advance on the work of the Assembly.

implying that we are unscrupulous crypto-papists because we read Thomas Aquinas, or that we are obtuse and dishonest because we hold to a different ecclesiology, or that we are blaspheming Malignants because we will not subscribe to the Solemn League and Covenant. Our pages are open to debate, on the understanding that Scripture rules over all as the supreme standard by which all the works and words of men are to be judged.

We welcome and appreciate your continued interest in, and support of, our work, Barry, and trust that nothing we have said—in a reply that is hardly uncritical!—will suggest otherwise. Your letters are always welcome and engender both debate and reflection truly within the spirit of our purpose for being.—CW. C&S

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