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# EDITORIAL

## SOCIALISM AS IDOLATRY

by *Stephen C. Perks*

It seems that conformity is increasingly one of the idols of the age in which we live and that the church has also succumbed to this form of idol worship. This is sad since Britain traditionally was a society tolerant of differences, a society that even celebrated its differences. Yet at the same time as individualism has been abominated (sometimes legitimately, but often not so) and community stressed, what we have achieved is not community at all, but mere conformity. It seems to me that community cannot exclude individuality and that to try to achieve community by vilifying individuality only produces a conformist society devoid of true community.

Of course, we need both community and individuality. The one does not take precedence over the other. But there are sorts of good individualism and bad individualism and not all kinds of community are good communities.

My assessment of this is based on my experience, i.e. British society. Britain is a socialist State. I have many American friends who will respond to this by saying something such as “It’s getting that way in the USA too.” But I’m not convinced it is. The US government can be very totalitarian at times. But, and this is a big but, the people don’t like it on the whole (at least not the people I have met as opposed to the people who represent the USA in the media and politics etc.) and they resist it. Here, most people *want* to be ruled by a nanny State. They lap it up! The British government often seems less totalitarian than the US government (a fact explained, according to some Americans, by the underestimated Teutonic influence on American society and culture), but this masks a sad fact: namely, that this can seem so only because there is so little resistance to governmental totalitarianism in the UK; most people want a totalitarian government in Britain today. Britain used to prize its freedom. The British have happily given it away now and become slaves of the nanny State in return for government run “social security” programmes, i.e. the Welfare State. Of course, British totalitarianism is not of the Russian and Nazi kind. “Soft totalitarianism” I’ve heard it called. But the effect is the same.

But it seems to me that the creation of the ideal socialist community is actually achieved by the destruction of real community, because the State becomes a surrogate for everything. Family, welfare, jobs, everything becomes subordinate to the State, which becomes the replacement for the community that used to exist. This was community more of the Christian kind. The growth of socialism has gone hand in hand with the destruction of Christian society. But I do not believe that the new society that socialism is trying to create works; it is a pseudo-community. It vilifies the individualism of capitalism, but fails to recognise that capitalism was not the whole of society. It does not recognise the true community that was part of Christian society prior to the triumph of socialism. Socialism sees things only in terms of economics and politics. But capitalism was part of a social order that did not view everything in terms of economics and politics. Because socialism does see everything in terms of economics and politics (i.e. because it idolises these things and reduces everything to them rather than having them in their proper balance) it misses what really made the Christian community a true community, what

made it work. Christianity is to be dumped now (though doubtless it can still be exploited for voting purposes). Yet our sense and practice of community prior to the creation of the brave new socialist world came from our shared religious world-view. When Christianity was dominant even nonbelievers thought and acted like believers. Now, under the new world order of socialism, Christians think and act like non-Christians.

But along with the rise of this new State-run society individualism has not ceased, it has just been stripped of all the virtues and qualities that Christianity imparts to life. We now live in a godless State. Our community is godless, and our individualism is godless. But because man can only find his true meaning in God this means that community and individuality as they should exist are corrupted. We have conformity now much more than we used to, but not community, which is breaking down everywhere. Yet, although individualism is today vilified as capitalistic and selfish and socialism trumpeted as more caring and community oriented, we are more individuals than ever—witness the rise of a culture in which what counts more than anything is the individual and his self-fulfilment. Hence the breakdown of marriages and the breaking up of families. The “me first” culture is much more common now. People are much more motivated now by pure self-interest regardless of the consequences for others than they used to be when Christianity dominated our culture as the prevailing world-view.

The problem of course is not individualism, it is sin. But the church has seriously failed to preach the gospel in its fullness here. As a result things do not seem to be much better in the churches on the whole. Most churches are characterised by a strong sense of conformity and at the same time a rather weak sense of real community. If one does not conform to the prevailing ethos of the church one is not permitted to make a significant contribution to the life of the church since it is perceived that such would inevitably “rock the boat.” This ethos, however, is usually a kind of mindless respectability devoid of any rational foundation underpinning it as an attempt to work out a biblically informed culture. Even in the area of concern about “social issues” that Christians still consider relevant to the faith, there is little in the way of an attempt to develop a specifically Christian world-view as a foundation for human social action. Instead, the church follows the world by sanctifying its deeds with pious platitudes. Being “concerned” about social issues for many Christians means being a middle class socialist, or is considered equivalent with being Social Democrat in one’s politics (why are so many Christians in the UK mesmerised by the claim that “third way” politics is Christian?). The church seems to follow, quite mindlessly, the world, repeating its political and social shibboleths. And in the church, as in society at large, the socialist world-view has crowded out true community with mere social conformity.

In falling prey to this kind of idolatry the church has abandoned her true mission. She has ceased to be the salt and light of society and is consequently in no small way responsible for the destruction of our society. She follows the world instead of leading it to the truth. The truth has become an embarrassment for the church. But judgement begins at the house of God. God has judged the church and the judgement is now moving into society at large. All that we need for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. And that is what has happened. The church has done nothing; she has fiddled while Rome burned.

The State has replaced God in our society and therefore it has become the institution that ultimately provides meaning for mankind. Because men inevitably look to their gods for meaning, modern society looks to the State to create community, to structure society and to provide meaning. But in doing

this the State has replaced community, and the culture of self has triumphed in a society where true community is in decline.

In contrast, in a Christian society community should flow from the meeting of people in common life, which requires a common faith, or at least the prevalence of this and its acceptance in society, even if not everyone accepts its religious basis. In other words, society requires a shared world-view, a shared set of presuppositions about the nature and meaning of life. Where this is absent there can be conformity but not real community. In the context of a shared world-view, however, individuality is not lost but given meaning. It does not exist on its own but in a context; it therefore partakes of the character-

istics of the world-view that dominates a society generally. In a Christian society this means that individuality finds meaning in terms of the truth, not in terms of some false idol, as it does today, be that idol money, fame, political power or whatever. Likewise, community finds its meaning in terms of the truth, not some idol, e.g. the State. Where the State replaces community and the individual as the meaning of life, or where anything else in the created order replaces God as the focus of life, whether communally or individually (i.e. where men engage in idolatry rather than worshipping the God of Scripture), man loses the true life he was meant to have, communally and individually, since his true life is found in God. C&S

# ALPHA AND THE OMEGAS?

by Peter Burden-Teh

## PART II

### 5. SCRIPTURE ALONE

FOLLOWING the introduction to Alpha and its omegas, in Part I, we can now begin a comparison between the Five Pillars of the Reformation (FPR) and Five Pillars of Alpha (FPA), showing how the latter is empathetic towards Roman Catholicism.

The FPR are a summary of the essential aspects of the Reformed confessions regarding the Rule of Faith, Life of Faith and Ground of Faith. The Rule of Faith is the Pillar of “Scripture Alone.” Of the Thirty-Nine Articles, Article VI is concerned with the authority of the Scriptures:

*Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation*

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

This Article rejects that our understanding of, and belief about, salvation comes from outside the Scriptures, e.g. the Church of Rome, human reason or mystical revelation.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) develops this Article in several different ways. Two key ways, for our present purpose, are that “the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life is either expressly set down in Scripture, or . . . may be deduced from the Scripture . . .” and that “by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages.”<sup>1</sup> This brings us to the issues I raised in section 4 of Part I of this series of articles, regarding Hill’s statement on providential preservation and Rushdoony’s comment on

inerrancy and infallibility. Although “inerrancy” is a nineteenth-century term, earlier forms of the term, such as “inerrability” and “inerrable” were being used. The framers of the Confessions also used the word “infallible” in other contexts—such as Papal infallibility—interchangeably with “inerrable.”

The issue, then as now, is one of unchangeable authority: Scripture Alone is authoritative, through its infallibility and inerrability, in the subjects of Christ, man and the world. To argue that this authority is outside the Scriptures is to accept that the Scriptures do not have authority and that authority is brought to the Scriptures. It has to be seen, as shown by Griffith Thomas, that the act of canonising the Scriptures is not equated with authority. For, as he says, “the authority is not that of a book, but of revelation; the revelation did not come to exist because of the Canonicity, but the Canonicity because of the revelation, and the Bible, as we have seen, is regarded as a revelation, because it is held to be the embodiment of the historic manifestation of the Redeemer and His Truth.”<sup>2</sup>

And yet, the issue of the canonicity of the Scriptures does not completely answer the question why this “authority was never (of) any doubt in the Church.” As Letis points out, “it was, in fact, ecclesiastical *use* that actually determined the *macro* canon (books) as well as the *micro* canon (the textual form of those books).”<sup>3</sup> He continues, quoting Parvis, that “the *textus receptus* is the text of the Church. It is that form of text which represents the sum total and the end product of all the textual decisions which were made by the Church and her fathers over a period of more than a thousand years.”<sup>4</sup>

2. W. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology* (Church Book Room Press, 1945) p. 108.

3. Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text* (The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, Philadelphia, USA, 1997a) p. 94; emphasis in original.

4. M. M. Parvis, “The Goals of New Testament Textual Studies,”

1. Westminster Confession of Faith. Chapter 1, Section 8.

This brings us to the second part of this Article concerning the books of the Old and New Testaments which form the canon of Scripture.

*Of the Names and Number of the Canonical Books*

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The First Book of Esdras, The Second Book of Esdras, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, Ecclesiastes, or Preacher, Cantica, or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

And the other books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life, and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine. Such are these following:

The Third Book of Esdras, The Fourth Book of Esdras, The Book of Tobias, The Book of Judith, The rest of the Book of Esther, The Book of Wisdom, Jesus the Son of Sirach, Baruch the Prophet, The Song of the Three Children, The Story of Susanna, Of Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasses, The First Book of Maccabees, The Second Book of Maccabees.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account them for Canonical.

Now as at the Reformation, there are three canons of Scripture: Judaism; Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy (the latter not accepting Baruch and the Books of Maccabees); and Protestantism. The Council of Trent (1545–63) and the Synod of Jerusalem (1672) established the canons of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches respectively. Following the prevalent contact between Reformed and Jewish scholars,<sup>5</sup> at the time of the Reformation, and the former's desire for the Church to return to the Scriptures of Christ and the Early Church, the Reformation followed the canon of Judaism, but with Roman Catholic terminology such as 1 and 2 Esdras, which are Ezra and Nehemiah. The Antiochian/Syrian church, as part of the early Church, used solely the Hebrew canon in the Peshitta translation.

This second part of Article VI is derived from the Confession of Wurtemberg and inserted in the "Thirty-Eight Articles" of 1563. This explains the difference between the Lutheran position on this Article, regarding the Apocrypha, and the WCF which states that it must not "be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings." However, if there is a relationship between the canons and the texts of Scripture, then the Protestant canons of Scripture have been weakened through the acceptance of texts outside of the *textus receptus*. Now, as at the Reformation, "[T]he real battle for the Bible is not an academic affair for scholars, denominations, and committees. It is the battle over whether God's subjects as His creatures will submit to His authoritative, and, therefore, inspired and infallible revelation in His Word."<sup>6</sup>

With this as a brief introduction to Scripture Alone and Article VI, we now turn to the question of Alpha's position on this issue: Scripture Not Alone.

*Studia Evangelica* 6 (1973) p. 406, as quoted in Theodore Letis, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

5. G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery Of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester University Press, 1983).

6. Andrew Sandlin, "The Word of the Sovereign is the True Battle for the Bible," *Keeping Our Sacred Trust*, Chalcedon Symposium Series, Number One (Chalcedon Foundation, USA. 1999) p. 22.

*Gumbel and F. J. Hort*

In the second chapter of *Questions of Life*, entitled "Who is Jesus?," Gumbel tries to demonstrate that becoming a Christian is "not a blind leap of faith, but a step of faith based on firm historical evidence."<sup>7</sup> He then uses a comparison between historical documents and New Testament manuscripts, regarding the earliest copy and number of copies, to show the "wealth of material" as evidence of who is Jesus. With respect to New Testament manuscripts, Gumbel states that F. J. Hort was "one of the greatest textual critics ever."<sup>8</sup>

When I have discussed Alpha, regarding Gumbel and Hort, the responses have been "Hort who?" or "Hort so what" or even "Why are we arguing about Hort when people in the parish have not even heard of Christ." But we do need to argue about Hort so that people can hear of the Christ. Is Hort's position on the New Testament manuscripts a consequence of his being "one of the greatest textual critics ever"? No. In a recent English libel court case, the defeated litigant was described by the judge as being "beyond question able and intelligent" but the litigant "had distorted, misrepresented or manipulated the evidence to conform with his own preconceptions."<sup>9</sup>

I am making no comparison between the political views of Hort and Irving, but, what I am saying, is that having a critical and intelligent mind does not of itself necessitate a quest for truth, and, can be used to manipulate "evidence to conform to one's preconceptions." Hear the words of the textual critic Dean Burgon on Hort: "they [Westcott and Hort] exalt B [Vaticanus] and Aleph [Sinaiticus] . . . because in their own opinions those copies [of the New Testament manuscripts] are the best. They weave ingenious webs, and invent subtle theories, because their paradox of a few [manuscripts] against the many [manuscripts] requires ingenuity and subtlety for its support."<sup>10</sup>

What are the preconceptions of Hort? Hort's entire contention, from early in life, was to denigrate and devalue "that vile *Textus Receptus*."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Evangelicals who accept the *Textus Receptus* "seem to [him] perverted rather than untrue. There are, [he fears] still more serious differences between us on the subject of authority, and especially the authority of the Bible."<sup>12</sup> This authority of the Bible, as held by evangelicals, he viewed as "the common orthodox heresy: Inspiration."<sup>13</sup> Hort also saw them as perverted because of his belief in sacerdotalism and the commonality between Mary-worship and Jesus-worship:<sup>14</sup> "The pure Romish view seems to me nearer and more likely to lead to truth than the evangelical."<sup>15</sup>

But a textual critic such as John Wenham, who still accepts restoration and not preservation of the Scriptures, is coming to terms with Hort's textual theory and says that

It may well be that textual criticism's need is to give up its trust in B and Aleph—and to search for the most primitive form of the

7. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life* (Kingsway Publications, 1995), p. 23. 8. *Ibid.* p. 26. 9. *The Times*, 12. 4. 2000. p. 1.

10. W. MacLean, *The Providential Preservation of the Greek Text of the New Testament* (Gisborne, N.Z.: Westminster Standard Publications, 3rd ed., 1977), p. 14, as quoted in Theodore Letis, *A New Hearing For The Authorised Version* (The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, Philadelphia, USA, 2nd ed., 1997), p. 5.

11. F. J. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Hort* (Macmillan Press, 1896), Vol. I, p. 211. 12. *Ibid.*, p. 400. 13. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

14. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 50f. 15. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 77.

Byzantine text. For those of us who have been brought up on Hort's theory, this will demand a complete intellectual somersault. Or, to put it more accurately, it will demand that we stand on our heads to read our textual apparatus! It will mean that the most despised symbol "Byz" (the reading of the majority of Byzantine manuscripts) becomes a symbol of great respect, and that the most honoured symbols B and Aleph become symbols of grave suspicion.<sup>16</sup>

Returning to Gumbel, his remark on Hort is of unequivocal acceptance, since there is no qualifying statement. So, why is Gumbel referring to Hort?

Gumbel uses Hort as an authority. He quotes him: "in the variety and fulness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings."<sup>17</sup> But the issue of canonicity arises from Gumbel's quotation of Hort. Hort's distinction between New Testament and ancient prose writings has to be questioned. What of Hort's and Westcott's sympathy towards Origen, with his wide canon of Scripture and Platonic Christian Philosophy? What of Hort's close friend and fellow translator of the Revised Version Bible, Westcott, and his belief that "theologically the book [the New Testament Apocryphal *Shepherd of Hermas*] is of the highest value, as shewing in what way Christianity was endangered by the influence of Jewish principles as distinguished from Jewish forms."<sup>18</sup> As if taking up the argument of Hort and Westcott, Bentley states that

We are forced to ask now what precisely is the force of describing Scripture as canonical. Is, for example, the story of the woman taken in adultery, which was not in the original manuscripts and represents one of many later additions to them [note the counter-arguments of Dean Burgon.<sup>19</sup>—PBT], still to be regarded as "canonical"? And does its value reside in its canonical status or in its own intrinsic authority and power? How is it superior to Barnabas and Hermas which *are* in Codex Sinaiticus?<sup>20</sup>

An appeal to Hort and his position on the New Testament manuscripts and ancient prose writings leads implicitly to the question of the Canon of Scripture.

#### *Gumbel and textual criticism*

In his case to establish the validity of who Jesus is, Gumbel refers to "the science of textual criticism": "we can know very accurately through the science of textual criticism, what the New Testament writers wrote."<sup>21</sup> On this uncritical acceptance of the science of textual criticism, Gumbel continues without explanation that "essentially, the more texts we have the less doubt there is about the original."<sup>22</sup>

However, if more manuscripts provide certainty about the original manuscript, then a translation such as the New International Version, which Gumbel uses, should not have footnotes explaining the variations within the multitude of manuscripts. But, "if one would compare the texts of Nestle, Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf, Merk and the American

Bible Society, the variants would be overwhelming."<sup>23</sup> And on this issue of footnotes, Letis says that "in the modern versions, they seem to be questioning the authenticity of every other verse with comments such as 'not found in some ancient manuscripts' or 'some manuscripts add,' without offering any explanation as to the value of these optional readings, or the various manuscripts they come from."<sup>24</sup> Why is it, when the New International Version footnotes Mark 16:9 with the comment that "The most reliable early manuscripts omit Mark 16:9–20," it neglects to say that of the approximately 5,487 Greek manuscripts available only three manuscripts omit the passage? Of those three manuscripts, two are the favoured manuscripts of Hort and Westcott: B (Codex Vaticanus) and Aleph (Codex Sinaiticus).<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, it is said that "the science of textual criticism" does not affect the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith. But as Letis points out

John 1:18 provides a good example of the kind of confusion that results from conflicting translations. The A.V. (and the KJ21) reads

"No man hath seen God at any time; *The Only Begotten Son*, Which is in the bosom of the Father; He hath declared Him."

The italicised portion of the verse is rendered in the following different ways by some modern versions:

N.I.V. and T.E.V. "The only Son" ["begotten" omitted]

N.A.S.V. "The Only Begotten God?" [Polytheism?]

N.E.B. "God's Only Son" ["begotten" omitted and "God" added]

Which is correct?<sup>26</sup>

Letis provides a detailed and technical response to the question in *The Ecclesiastical Text*.<sup>27</sup> G. W. and D. E. Anderson, editorial consultants for the Trinitarian Bible Society, have commented that

the Traditional Text of the New Testament has virtually no place in the New International Version. Instead the New International Version reproduces many of the doctrinal errors and problems inherent in the United Bible Society's text . . . The New International Version, again on the basis of the Alexandrian texts, weakens another passage (i.e. Rom. 14:10b, 12) which teaches the deity of Christ . . . Not only is the doctrine of the person of Christ affected by the New International Version, but Christ's virgin birth is weakened in the text (i.e. Luke 2:23) of the New International Version.<sup>28</sup>

These brief examples demonstrate how textual criticism and translation can affect essential doctrine. So the appeal to "the science of textual criticism" not only leads to uncertainty about the Scriptures, through divine preservation, but also to uncertainty as to who Jesus is.

#### *Gumbel and the Second Vatican Council*

In his presentation of the Christian faith, Gumbel moves on from "Who Jesus Is" to explain "Why and How I Should Read My Bible." Having given, mainly through

16. John Wenham, *op. cit.* p. 187.

17. Nicky Gumbel, *op. cit.* p. 26.

18. James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai* (Orbis, 1985), p. 174.

19. John Burgon, *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (George Bell and Sons, 1896).

20. James Bentley, *op. cit.* p. 175; emphasis in original.

21. Nicky Gumbel, *op. cit.* p. 24.

22. *Ibid.*

23. David Fuller (Ed), *Counterfeit or Genuine?* (Grand Rapids International Publications, USA, 1978), p. 210.

24. Theodore Letis, *A New Hearing For The Authorised Version*, p. 31.

25. *Ibid.* p. 32.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

27. Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*.

28. G. W. & D. E. Anderson, *New International Version* (Trinitarian Bible Society), p. 17–18.

anecdotes, his three reasons for why the Bible should be read, he explains how the “Bible is a manual for life.” This explanation includes the Baconian position on the separation of theology and science. (I will develop this in “Grace Alone.”) He then argues for the “high view of the inspiration of the Bible . . . held almost universally by the worldwide church down the ages.”<sup>29</sup> As proof for this Gumbel refers to “the Roman Catholic official view [of the Scriptures that] is enshrined in Vatican II”<sup>30</sup> and then quotes from an unnamed Second Vatican Council document. Gumbel says that

The Scriptures “written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit . . . have God as their author . . .” Therefore they must be acknowledged as being “without error.” This also, until the last century, was the view of all Protestant churches throughout the world . . .<sup>31</sup>

On the face of it, the quote from the Vatican II document appears innocuous. However, it is open to conjecture as to why Gumbel could not refer to a Protestant church that holds to the Scriptures as being “without error.” Is it because to accept the Bible as inerrant would make Gumbel a fundamentalist? Presumably it is better to be an empathetic Vatican II Roman Catholic than a Protestant fundamentalist.

It is also open to conjecture as to why Gumbel selectively quotes from the Vatican II document and misrepresents the Church of Rome’s position on the Scriptures. One of the intentions of the Second Vatican Council was to restate the position of the 1546 Council of Trent. This forms part of the opening statement of the Vatican II “Dei Verbum” document and I quote from the appropriate sections:

*Preface*

. . . Therefore, following in the footsteps of the Council of Trent and of the First Vatican Council, this present council wishes to set forth authentic doctrine on divine revelation and how it is handed on, so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe, by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love.

Chapter 2. *Handing on Divine Revelation*

9 . . . Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence [ref: Council of Trent, Session 4, Article 10].

10. Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church . . .

11 . . . Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and *without error* that truth which God wanted put into sacred writing *for the sake of salvation*.<sup>32</sup>

What this document is stating is that the books of Scripture teach without error only that which is true concerning salvation and, conversely, outside of salvation the books of Scripture contain errors. But this is not what Gumbel is implying through his quotes from Vatican II. It has to be asked whether he is deliberately misquoting or showing grave carelessness for a trained barrister.

Commenting on the problem of inerrancy during the Council, a senior Jesuit, James Cramsey, has said that:

29. Nicky Gumbel, *op. cit.* p. 74. 30. *Ibid.* 31. *Ibid.*  
32. “Dei Verbum,” *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* ([http://www.va/archive/ar\\_en.htm](http://www.va/archive/ar_en.htm)) (emphasis added).

as far as inspiration was concerned, the document (*Dei Verbum*) moved away from a one-view of divine authorship of scripture, and emphasised the role of the author . . . At the same time, the stress on the human authorship of the scriptural books opened the way for a new formulation of inerrancy . . . in what was an intervention, Cardinal Koenig argued that, far from being defensive about the errors in the Bible, the Church should view them positively as revealing the genuine humanity of God’s Word . . . Again modern methods of interpretation are given conciliar approval.<sup>33</sup>

Although there were other controversies during the Third Session of the Vatican Council on the “Constitution on Divine Revelation,” the Council accepted “*Dei Verbum*,” with its “modern methods of interpretation” and limited inerrancy, by 2344 to 6 votes.<sup>34</sup>

Leaving aside the issues of Roman Catholicism’s “sacred tradition” and canon and text of Scripture, limited inerrancy proposes that we accept the Bible as inerrant regarding faith and salvation, but errant as to history and science. This separates faith and history into supposedly neat and isolated compartments. But can such a separation occur and on what basis? Who decides what is faith and what is history? How are “historical events,” such as the Fall, to be scientifically verified and interpreted as to faith and salvation? Faith and history cannot be separated into neat compartments for they are inter-dependent. Inerrancy has as much to do with history (and science etc.) as with interpretation.

*Gumbel, Roman Catholicism and Scripture Not Alone*

With the position of Hort there is an implicit extension of the New Testament canon. As this extension includes the *Shepherd of Hermas* credence given to Roman Catholicism’s pardon through penance. Acceptance of “the science of textual criticism,” following the work of Hort, benefits the continuing struggle of the Counter-Reformation to replace the Byzantine/traditional text form of the New Testament. (Note the work and testimony of a converted Roman Catholic priest, Dr Hugh Farrell, and “Rome and the R.S.V.”<sup>35</sup>)

Gumbel is quoted as saying that “the Catholic religion is just another denomination of the Christian faith, and [he] is happy with anything that calls itself Trinitarian. He has read Vatican II and can find nothing wrong with it.”<sup>36</sup> If Gumbel has read Vatican II and can find nothing wrong with it, then, as with the Vatican II Council, he has accepted not only limited inerrancy, but also Roman Catholicism’s sacred tradition, canon of Scripture and the Vulgate text.<sup>37</sup>

6. GRACE ALONE

With the implicit or consequential denial of Scripture Alone as the Rule of Faith, it is to be expected that there will be consequences for the Life of Faith. For the Reformers, the Life of Faith included Grace Alone, Faith Alone and Christ Alone.

33. James Crampsey, “Scripture and the Church,” *The Month*, Dec. 1985, p. 421.  
34. R. Witgen, *The Rhine flows into the Tiber* (Augustine Publishing Co., 1978), p. 183.  
35. David Cloud (Ed), *For Love Of The Bible* (Canada: Way of Life Literature, 1995, 3rd. ed.) p. 207f.  
36. N. Richardson, *Vanguard*, Jan. 1997, p. 31.  
37. Chapter 2, Section 22, of “*Dei Verbum*” states “. . . and she

In today's church climate, there is much emphasis on the love and grace of God. But this is all one sided, for there are two sides to the issue of grace, as shown by the Reformers' statement on Grace Alone. This Pillar of the Reformation is taught in Articles IX and X of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

*Of Original or Birth Sin*

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk: but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of everyman that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, *Φρόνημα σαρκός*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Laws of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptised, yet the Apostle doth confess that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.

*Of Free-Will*

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working in us, when we have that good will.

In Article IX, the Reformers deal with the meaning, extent, result, condemnation and permanence of original sin. It is pertinent to note that in Article X free-will is not mentioned but assumed. In view of this, a more helpful title would be "The Need of Grace." This Article deals with spiritual helplessness, the primary working of grace and the continuous working of divine grace. For the Reformers, and for us, the unmerited and undeserved grace of God only comes into its wonder and power when seen against the object of its action—the utter unworthiness and total depravity of man through original and actual sins.

Even in its brevity, Article IX, in stating that "Original sin . . . is the fault and corruption . . . of the offspring of Adam," links original sin to Adam and his offspring. Although in this Article there is no direct mention of how Adam was created, Article VI states that "whatsoever is not read therein [i.e. in Holy Scripture], nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man." The Reformers proved from the Scriptures that Adam was the first created person and that through his fall original sin came into the world. In contrast to the brevity of Article IX with no reference to the creation of Adam, the Westminster Confession of Faith is explicit on the "Fall of Man" and "Creation." Chapter 4 and Section 1 of the WCF, "Of Creation," states that "It pleased God . . . to create, or make of nothing, the world . . . in the space of six days, and all very good." There are six sections in chapter 6, "Of the fall of Man," where mention is made of "our first parents, being seduced by . . . Satan . . . fell from their original righteousness . . . [and] the guilt of this sin was imputed . . . conveyed to all their posterity. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."

(Church of Rome) has always given a place of honour . . . especially [to] the Latin translation known as the Vulgate."

But even with this explicitness there is at present in the USA a continuing controversy about the WCF's original explanation of Chapter 4, "Of Creation," regarding the term "in the space of six days." Writing about this controversy, Kenneth Gentry says that

it appears to Six-Day Creation advocates that the "problem" with the phrase "in the space of six days" arises not from any ambiguity in the Confession, nor from the original convictions of the divines. But rather the "problem" arises at least in part from recent concerns (since the late 1800s) that Christians must recognize the enormous time frames demanded by natural revelation brought to us in modern geology. In other words . . . The Confession's language is not the problem, but rather the Confession's theology."<sup>38</sup>

And here we come to the nub of the issue. It is not that theistic evolutionists do not accept the original intentions of the Reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, on the literalness of language of the "six days," but rather object to the literalness of the theology of the "six days." Integral to this theology is the inter-relationship between the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of salvation: creationism, original sin and grace. In the Anglican Church, with the Thirty-Nine Articles, disingenuous ways are also found to re-interpret and thereby affirm Articles IX and X.

*Gumbel and evolution*

In *Searching Issues* Gumbel presents a comparison and summary between creationism and theistic evolutionism. It would appear that Gumbel is ambivalent: "whatever view one takes, it is clear that there is not necessarily a conflict between Science and Scripture."<sup>39</sup> But it soon becomes apparent that the ambivalence is loaded: "the main point of Genesis 1 is not to answer the questions 'How?' and 'When?' (the scientific questions), but the questions 'Why?' and 'Who?' (the theological questions)."<sup>40</sup> Gumbel uses this phrasing of science and theology in *Questions of Life*, on page 73, so there is a connection between *Questions of Life* and *Searching Issues*. I am using this citation in *Searching Issues* because it is the fuller reference.

At the close of the chapter on science and theology in *Searching Issues* Gumbel recommends two books:<sup>41</sup> John Polkinghorne's *One World*<sup>42</sup> and Roger Forster's and Paul Marston's *Reason and Faith*.<sup>43</sup> All three writers adhere to the position of theistic evolution; the latter two writers openly call themselves "evolutionary creationists."<sup>44</sup> As with Gumbel's comment that he has read the Second Vatican Council documents and can find nothing wrong with them, so we have to accept on a "like-for-like" basis that the same applies to his recommendation of *One World* and *Reason and Faith*. In fact, it is more than a "like-for-like" basis as there are similarities between *Questions of Life* and *Reason and Faith* in terms of the structure and content of the apologetics.

38. Kenneth Gentry, "In the Space of Six Pages: On Breaking the Confession with the Rod of Iron," *Chalcedon Report*, April 2000, p. 20 (emphasis in original).

39. Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues* (Kingsway Publications, 1994) p. 102.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues*, p. 108.

42. John Polkinghorne, *One World: the interaction of science and theology* (SPCK, 1986).

43. Roger Forster and Paul Marston, *Reason and Faith*.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 296–7.

Gumbel does not explicitly state his acceptance of “theistic evolution.” But the Baconian separation between science and theology<sup>45</sup> and approval of Polking-horne, Forster and Marston implies a denial of creationism. And the denial of creationism implies the denial of original sin and the necessity of grace.

#### *Original Sin and Evolution*

How is the acceptance of evolution related to a denial of original sin? Although both books recommended by Gumbel espouse theistic evolution, Polkinghorne is obtuse in his comments on this issue. As an aside to his historical review of the Enlightenment and the Evangelical Revival, Polkinghorne writes that “their [i.e. Wesley’s and other great Evangelical Revival preachers’] preaching of human sinfulness may have been unhealthily guilt-ridden but it took a more realistic view of the flawed condition of mankind than that provided by optimistic ideas of human perfectibility.”<sup>46</sup> This is as close as Polkinghorne publicly gets to the issues of evolution and original sin. Although an Arminian, Wesley accepted original sin. The term “unhealthily guilt-ridden” must refer to Polkinghorne’s view of original sin. Whereas Polkinghorne is obtuse in his comments, Forster and Marston provide acute comments on original sin and evolution.

Forster and Marston begin building their case for the acceptance of evolution in the chapter entitled “Should Genesis be taken literally?” They lead the reader through particular interpretations of Christian writers on creation and become misrepresentative of people, for example Francis Schaeffer, whom they say accepted a non-literal evolutionary interpretation of Genesis 1. (Schaeffer did accept a literal and non-evolutionary interpretation of Genesis 1.<sup>47</sup>) Continuing their case, they develop “God’s use of language” with reference to Genesis 1. In dealing with the theological issues they state that

Though many of his ideas [Augustine’s “idea that all babies are born inheriting the guilt of Adam”] were adopted by the Calvinism of the Reformation, they have been decisively rejected by many spiritual movements in church history, e.g. the Wesleyan and Finneyan evangelical revivals. Our own reasons for firmly rejecting such ideas are biblical, and in no way depend on the question of whether we all descend from one human pair [Forster and Marston refer the reader here to the Appendix in their book *God’s Strategy in Human History*]. Those who accept, then, the Augustinian/Calvinist doctrine that we inherit guilt because we were “in Adam” when he as an individual sinned, would logically

45. A concise rejection of Baconianism (Francis Bacon 1561–1626) is provided by Greg Bahnsen in *Van Til’s Apologetics: Readings and Analysis* (P&R Publishing, USA, 1998, p. 36). “The truths of the Bible stand or fall as an entire system. The apologist does not separate the ‘earthly’ (observational) teachings and claims of the Bible from its ‘heavenly’ (theological) teachings and claims, as though the former were in principle subject to verification, while the latter require a step of faith [Note: as does Baconianism—PBT]. Apologists who defend the historical ‘facts’ reported in the Bible in order to lay a foundation for claiming that the Bible is likewise reliable in its theological ‘interpretation’ of those facts engage in notoriously fallacious reasoning—as well as getting stranded behind ‘Lessing’s ditch’ (between the accidental details of history and the universal truth of religion).”

46. John Polkinghorne, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

47. Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1973) p. 28. *No Final Conflict* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1975) p. 21, 34, 35 and 43.

find in this a good reason to insist on a literal Adam. To those of us who, for theological reasons unconnected with science, believe their doctrine mistaken, it can form no such basis of belief.<sup>48</sup>

First, it must be said that Forster and Marston are misrepresenting church history. Although I cannot find any direct reference to Finney’s views on original sin, Wesley clearly accepted and believed in original sin.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, on the basis of their presupposition they have separated faith from history and theology from science. If these are “unconnected” then there is no connection between the “How?” and the “Why?” relationship, between science and theology. They would deny this, as it leads to atheistic empiricism. Since there has to be some form of relationship between theology and science, they cannot say that their denial of original sin is “for theological reasons unconnected with science.”

However, their science of evolutionary creationism has made a connection and impinged on their theology. Accepting that “Adam” and “Eve” were either the first Cro-Magnons or the first Neolithics,<sup>50</sup> Forster and Marston state that “Adam and Eve were born into previous hominid families with a small mutation of genetic code, causing significant physical differences, associated also with a new cultural relationship with God.”<sup>51</sup> Let us note that from an evolutionary perspective they not only accept that “Eve” did not come from “Adam,” but that there was a new cultural, and not a religious/spiritual, relationship. Again this is evidence of their science impinging on their theology. Furthermore, their science impinges on their theology when they consider the Fall:

After his [“Adam’s”] moral failure, the culture [“a rudimentary language, some power of conceptualisation, musical and artistic sense, toolmaking ability . . .”] he brought them [Cro-Magnons or Neolithics] was actually inclusive of the guilt of sin, and their experience became that of Paul in Romans 7:9–10.<sup>52</sup>

Here the “moral failure” of “Adam” is externalised into the culture of the Cro-Magnons or Neolithics and not internalised and imputed as a “fault and corruption of the nature of every man” (Article IX). Therefore, contrary to what they allege, Forster and Marston have superimposed their evolutionary scientism onto their theology, and in accepting evolution they have rejected the doctrine of original sin.

And how does this relate to a denial of grace? Underlying the whole system of Forster and Marston is a basic assumption that “nothing in Scripture suggests that there is some kind of

48. Forster and Marston, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

49. “Wesleyans affirm the total corruption of the first man and woman through disobedience, in full agreement with the tradition of the Reformers and especially that of Calvin . . . In the ‘Minutes’ of his 1745 conference Wesley replied to the question as to where he came to very edge of Calvinism by saying, ‘(1) In ascribing all good to the grace of God. (2) In denying all natural free-will, and all power antecedent to grace. And, (3) In excluding all merit from man; even for what he has or does by the Grace of God.’ Any understanding of the Wesleyan doctrine of salvation must take into account Wesleyans’ full agreement with these three critical Evangelical teachings: beings are by nature totally corrupt; this corruption is the result of original sin; they can be justified only through God’s grace in Christ . . . Wesley’s ‘Doctrine of Original Sin,’ published in 1757, demonstrates how strongly his concepts of sin are rooted in that doctrine” (Melvin Dieter et al, *Five Views on Sanctification* [Academy Books/Zondervan Publishing House, USA, 1987] p. 21f.).

50. Forster and Marston, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 390.



will or plan of God which is inviolable.”<sup>53</sup> This is the humanistic triumph of free-will with no imputed original sin. For what difference is there between Forster and Marston’s “God of love, [who] wants to co-operate with whoever will accept his love”<sup>54</sup> and Pelagius, whom Forster and Marston criticise, and his God where “man could (of his own volition) decide to live a moral life”?<sup>55</sup> Pelagius, Forster and Marston all deny original sin and give importance to freewill regarding volition towards “God/good.” So where is the need of “the grace of God . . . that we may have a good will”? (Article X). Consequentially, Alpha is semi-Pelagianism.

*Gumbel, Roman Catholicism and Grace Not Alone*

It might be said that it is unfair to assume that Gumbel accepts Forster’s and Marston’s explicit denial of original sin. But if one of the major tenets of a book is the denial of original sin, and that tenet cannot be accepted, then why should the book be recommended? The theory of evolution implies the denial of original sin. This has been shown from my argument against Forster’s and Marston’s fallacious reasoning that theology is unconnected with science.

Alpha is not out of accord with Roman Catholic teaching on the “Big Bang” and evolution. “*Humani Generis*” accepts that evolution is compatible with Catholic teaching. But I am yet to read of the theological consequences of Roman Catholicism’s acceptance of evolution. The acceptance of evolution leads logically to the denial of original sin. And the denial of original sin implies freewill, that the will is not in bondage to sin; consequently there is no need of Grace (Articles IX and X). The Roman Catholic Church, in the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent, states that “all men had lost innocence, in the prevarication of Adam . . . as has been set forth in the Decree on Original Sin . . . although free will . . . was by no means extinguished.”<sup>56</sup> Thus with Alpha’s implicit denial of both the “Bondage of the Will” and the need of Grace, Catholicism comes into its own with grace through the sacraments.

Archbishop Bradwardine, in the fourteenth century, said that the Church of Rome was elementally Pelagian; that is, it believed that the nature of man was not depraved through original sin and that man has the ability and power to choose between good and evil. This is the same point that I have made about the theology of Forster and Marston: consequentially and logically it is the theology of Alpha. But we need to distinguish between Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism. Luther said that the former “is bad enough, for it tells us that we are able to earn our salvation, and this is to flatter man; but semi-Pelagianism is worse, for it tells us that we need hardly do anything to earn our salvation, and that is to belittle salvation and to insult God.”<sup>57</sup>

James Packer, in his “Introduction” to Martin Luther’s *The Bondage of the Will*, comments that

to the Reformers (which includes the Lutherans and not just the Calvinists) the crucial question was not simply, whether God justifies believers without works of law. It was the broader question,

53. Roger Forster and Paul Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History* (Highland Books, British edition, 1989), p. 32.

54. *Ibid.*, “Introduction” (no page number). 55. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

56. Mark Noll, ed., *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Apollos, 1991) p. 174.

57. Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (James Clarke and Company, 1957) p. 50.

whether sinners are wholly helpless in their sin, and whether God is to be thought of as saving them by free, unconditional, invincible grace . . . Here was the crucial issue: whether God is the author, not merely of justification, but also of faith.<sup>58</sup>

This was the position of the Reformers, the biblical position, against which the Council of Trent stated in Canon 5, “Concerning Justification,” that “if anyone says that after the sin of Adam man’s freewill was lost and destroyed, or that it is a thing only in name, indeed a name without reality, a fiction introduced into the church by Satan, let him be anathema.”<sup>59</sup> And the Second Vatican Council has not rescinded the Council of Trent.

In Part 1 of this series of articles I mentioned that Gumbel acknowledged that criticism of Alpha came from extreme fundamentalism. Even though I said this term was given no reference by Gumbel, it can be assumed that it includes people who hold to the infallible and inerrant Word of God (as Luther did) and who hold to original sin and the need of divine grace (again as Luther did). Since Gumbel accepts “anything that calls itself Trinitarian,” are we also to assume that Gumbel agrees with Forster and Marston when they write that “while Luther denounced all popes as anti-Christ, Erasmus tried to act as a mediating influence between warring parties of Christians, accepting as true believers those in any denomination with genuine spiritual experience.”<sup>60</sup> Such a perspective has more in common with the Counter-Reformation of the Church of Rome than with the Reformation of Luther and Calvin. *C&S*

58. *Ibid.*, p. 58f.

59. Mark Noll, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

60. Roger Forster and Paul Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History*, p. 295.

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# LEX AETERNA: ST AUGUSTINE'S COSMONOMIC IDEA

by Colin Wright

## PART I

### INTRODUCTION

WHAT on earth is a *cosmonomic idea*?<sup>1</sup> You might well ask. The term is Dooyeweerd's preferred translation of the Dutch *wetsidee*. This is perhaps not that much more helpful, particularly in light of the fact that even the Dutch had never heard of the word until Dooyeweerd coined it in 1924.<sup>1</sup> It can also be translated as *law-idea*.

We shall begin, therefore, by giving a brief account of how this idea developed, and the importance Dooyeweerd attached to it not only for his own philosophy but also as a fundamental principle of every philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, at one point he describes it as “the basic Idea of philosophy.”<sup>3</sup> By this term Dooyeweerd understands the view each philosophy has of the origin and meaning of the cosmic order. Each philosophy, and each world- and life-view, must begin with an idea of the structure, or the law, of the cosmos. This structuring principle of the cosmos has historically taken on a multitude of meanings, including a plethora of accounts of natural law; Leibniz developed his *harmonia praestabilita* theory—the idea that despite all seeming anomalies in the details, there is an overall or supreme harmony to the whole cosmic order that accounts for good and evil. Early Christianity, according to Dooyeweerd, did not develop a specifically Christian law-idea but simply accommodated itself to versions of Stoicism. It was Augustine, he claimed, “who first ventured a bold attempt at formulating a law-idea which corresponded to the Christian world- and life-view.”<sup>4</sup>

But if Dooyeweerd was prepared to hand the palm to the bishop of Hippo for inaugurating a radical shift away from pagan thought into a truly Christian conception of the world- and life-view, he was nevertheless eager to limit the actual extent to which that revolution succeeded. He adds:

In this he was far from being free of pagan philosophy. The Greek-Jewish *logos* doctrine of Philo and especially the neo-Platonic doctrine of a hierarchical emanation of the highest, absolute idea

(the One) provided him with the basic material for his law-idea. However, he sought to purify this Jewish and pagan doctrine of its pantheistic features in order to permeate it in a brilliant synthesis with an idea that was so very profoundly rooted in his thought, namely the idea of the absolute sovereignty of God and of the boundary between the finite and the infinite. The neo-Platonic philosophers conceived of the cosmos as a hierarchical emanation of the One (God), in which intellect (*nous*), as the sum total of the ideas, constituted the first stage, the soul the second stage, and matter in its infinite forms the third stage. Replace in this conception emanation with creation in the Christian sense, replace the neo-Platonic *nous* (intellect) with the Philonic *logos* (the Word), and you have in rough outline the content of Augustine's law-idea.<sup>5</sup>

This severe limitation on the radical character of Augustine's achievement is something I want to question in this essay. At first glance it might seem that it was the product of a thought not yet fully matured. Dooyeweerd was still in his twenties when he penned his famous essay on *Calvinism and Natural Law*. However, we find that the sentiment is maintained throughout his illustrious career, and appears again in his mature work—*A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*—some three decades later:

The *a priori* horizon of human experience is thus the Divine order of the “earthly” creation itself, in which man and all things have been given their structure and order in the cosmos.

Before the foundation of the world this order of the creation was present in God's plan. The Christian synthesis-philosophy in patristic and scholastic thought has adapted this truth of revelation (which is beyond all human understanding) to Greek philosophy and changed it into the speculative ideas of a realistic metaphysics.

This turned the order of the creation into a *lex aeterna* founded in Divine reason. And the Divine principles of the creation became the *universalia ante rem* (in Divine reason) and *in re* (in temporal things).<sup>6</sup> After all that we had to say about this, it will be clear that we unconditionally reject such a metaphysics, because *fundamentally* it sets the Divine order of the creation aside to replace it by an absolutized reason.<sup>7</sup>

1. R. D. Henderson, *Illuminating Law: The Construction of Herman Dooyeweerd's Philosophy 1918–1928*, p. 123, n. 218.

2. *New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub Co., 1953), Vol. I, p. 94f.

3. *New Critique*, Vol. I, p. 93. Sometimes also called the *transcendental ground idea* or the *transcendental basic idea*.

4. “Calvinism and Natural Law” (1925) in *Essays in Legal, Social and Political Philosophy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), p. 10.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 10f.

6. *Ante rem* means universals as they exist before or apart from real things; *in re* means universals as they actually exist in real things. Plato taught that universals exist apart from things in which they become instantiated, that is, they exist *ante rem*, and that in fact only knowledge of them as such is real knowledge.

7. *New Critique*, Vol. II, p. 559.

There can be no doubt that he had Augustine principally in mind when he penned these remarks, though he was also referring to the later developments of medieval scholasticism.

These passages have worried me for a number of years. They have worried me because they just do not ring true to my own understanding of what Augustine was thinking. That understanding, of course, could be drastically wrong . . . a *mis*understanding. Because of this I have returned again and again to both Augustine and Dooyeweerd in the quest for a satisfactory resolution. What follows is the result of those researches.

But although this essay is critical of Dooyeweerd's analysis of Augustine's philosophy, it is not meant as a refutation. Indeed, I equally want to draw attention to those areas of Augustine's cosmological-idea on which I am in agreement with Dooyeweerd. Rather, I seek to explore our disagreement and, if possible, understand why we differ. Thus I shall be concerned with methodology as much as, if not more than, result. Dooyeweerd's scholarship in general is something I admire and hold in high repute. I do not differ from him lightly, recognising his far superior intellect and unsurpassable scholarship. However, even Hercules might blink, as the saying goes.

Both Christian and non-Christian philosophers are currently teaching us that there is no such thing as a neutral observer, that "facts" are always seen from a "perspective." There is no "view from nowhere," as Thomas Nagel describes it.<sup>8</sup> So perhaps it would be well to begin with establishing my own perspective and understanding what in that perspective is likely to influence the way I read Augustine. Allow me to begin, therefore, with a brief but, I believe, a *relevant* autobiographical note.

I first encountered Augustine during the time I was among Pentecostals in the late Sixties. I bought a copy of his *Confessions* for the quite ignoble purpose of winding them up.<sup>9</sup> My disillusionment with their philosophy of life, particularly their tunnel vision, their idea that only what their tradition—totally divorced from and independent of other traditions—explicitly proclaimed could be truth justified this act. But when I began to read the *Confessions* I awoke to a whole new world. The experience wrought a sea-change in my thinking as a young Christian and I knew I would never be the same again. It was not that I discovered any new doctrines in Augustine that I had not found already clearly formulated in the Reformed confessions. But here was quite a distinctive perspective on the faith, even in its agreement with later Calvinism. And I discovered in Augustine a depth and breadth of insight, a clarity and a passion, that was lacking in anything I had previously read. Something about the way in which Augustine wrote struck a chord.<sup>10</sup> Meeting

8. Christian presuppositionalists such as R. J. Rushdoony and Cornelius van Til have referred to this often when they describe facts as always being interpreted facts. Thoughtful non-Christian philosophers also now admit that one's perspective plays a significant role in the way we perceive and interpret the world. See Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986).

9. For our non-British readers who may not understand this phrase, it means to deliberately annoy, but generally with a degree of good humour.

10. I do not doubt that some of this was due to Augustine's turn of phrase. He was a master orator, a professional in fact, and used his mastery of language with great skill and to great effect in all his

Augustine was like finding a long-lost twin brother. Such an experience can be dangerous, and have a blinding effect on one's critical faculties. It is as difficult perhaps to see such a person's faults as it is to see one's own. The reader must judge from what I have to say whether I have escaped this pitfall in my estimate of Augustine. For sure, one of the most stabilising facts in my development of an understanding of him has been an almost equal predilection for Dooyeweerd's way of thinking.

Naturally, there are some things in Augustine's writings of which I cannot approve. But there are many more that I find both wholly biblical and supremely exhilarating. If one can ignore, or at least filter out, the detritus of the fourth century cultural baggage that Augustine brought to his thinking—much as we bring so much more than we suppose or admit of current humanist cultural baggage to our own thinking—we will discover one of the profoundest expositions of the Christian faith that has yet been made. This, too, provides a clue to one of the issues I want to address in this essay, namely, the way in which we should read texts from other cultures.

#### THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

Fundamental to what I have to say about understanding Augustine's relationship with pagan, and particularly Platonist or Neoplatonist, philosophy is contained in the following assertion, which I print in italics for added emphasis: *Augustine's fault was not that he read paganism out of Plato but that he read Christian theology into Plato.*

I believe this to be the pivotal or crucial factor in interpreting what Augustine was doing. It seems to me that the academic community has generally adopted the opposite thesis, namely, that Augustine borrowed pagan concepts from Plato and the Neoplatonists. Christians unfortunately have followed the herd. I am profoundly convinced they are wrong. It yet remains to convince the reader that my convictions are well-placed. This can only be done by answering the following two questions:

How do scholars go about to establish their thesis that Augustine was significantly influenced by Platonism or, what they often imply, that he was a Platonist in Christian disguise?

How does one establish the contrary position, namely, that Augustine's position is primarily Christian, and that he misunderstood Plato to be propounding views in accordance with Christianity?

Before turning to a consideration of Dooyeweerd analysis of Augustine I want to look at a cluster of issues that I feel must be uppermost in our minds as we approach ancient texts, indeed all texts. But ancient ones especially, because here we confront far more than just a text; it is a text within a cultural context to which we are alien. We will need to carefully pick our way through a minefield of interpretative pitfalls if we are to succeed in really understanding what our author was saying. Again, our selection of material for consideration must be meticulously examined for its suitability for drawing conclusions from. Giving precedence to scattered and doubtful allusions while neglecting passages

writings as a Christian. He makes Charles Haddon Spurgeon look like a stammerer.

of significance and substance will quickly lead to a false portrayal of the author's intentions. By selecting a few choice phrases out of such a large body of writing it would probably be possible to prove that any set of opinions could be imputed to Augustine. Even where Augustine does use language that is patently part and parcel of the philosophical tool kit of fourth century Neoplatonism a critical study will disclose that the meaning might still be quite different. Francis Schaeffer was always warning us to distinguish between denotation and connotation. Nowhere is this more true than in our use of the word "god." Everyone is aware that it can, and does, mean everything from a unique personal being through to an inner principle of human nature and down to the impersonal life-force of plants.

Three other issues will have to be considered. First, we must examine our author's system and look for what, if anything, makes it coherent. It will then require a quite severe process of justification to maintain that some part of that thought is seriously at odds with the bulk of the author's intentions. There will be a *prima facie* case for suggesting that we have misunderstood what he was saying. Secondly, we must examine our interpretations to discover whether or not we have been engaged in eisegesis, that is, of reading into the text what is not there. As we shall see, this has been a common pitfall in the study of the history of any scientific pursuit. Finally, as we ponder the influence of external factors on our author's thinking we will have to ask precisely what was that influence. Again, we shall see that the picture is not as clear as many scholars have supposed or maintained.

#### DISCOUNTING THE CULTURAL BAGGAGE

Every age has its own mind-set. It has thought patterns<sup>11</sup> that are governed by its past, just as individuals have thought patterns governed by their own upbringing. In some senses, it would be true to say that we *are* what we have *experienced*. For although the modern behaviourist school of philosophy is far from biblical or true to the facts of human experience, it certainly contains a grain of truth; a grain that Christians have unfortunately too often denied because it seemed inimical to their idea of moral accountability. Early indulgences quickly become habits that bind the soul with a vice-like grip that even years of Christian experience cannot break. Ask anyone over fifty who is prepared to be honest with himself. It is encapsulated in the proverb that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. We also refer to it as being set in our ways. In effect, we are *conditioned* by our past experiences. And as these experiences are largely themselves determined by our cultural environment, we may say that we are conditioned by that environment. Of course we so often loudly proclaim our independence from these forces. Christ, we maintain, has set us free (The work of "science" in non-Christian circles). Yet even as we do so we but echo the language and thought of the day. No doubt there is a partial liberation due to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but it is partial. In principle it is very radical, but in practice it is far from being so. We think by and large as our culture thinks. We are all children of our age.

11. I stress *patterns*, not *doctrines*, for reasons that should become apparent.

The Scriptures teach that a man is what he thinks, Pr. 23:7. And what he thinks will be determined by what he knows and, just as important, what there is to know. It is almost impossible to really understand just how someone like Augustine thought, or how he viewed his world. Could we really claim, for instance, that we understand what it was like to live in a world that was stationary and at the centre of a whirling universe? A universe, moreover, that was almost totally out of man's reach just a few feet above the ground.<sup>12</sup> This outlook on life, this *Weltanschauung*, shapes our life and shapes our thinking.

This must not be taken to mean that we are bound to believe in the philosophical and theological systems of the majority. But what we believe, what we discover, will always be believed and discovered within a framework of cultural praxis that we cannot ignore and that we cannot—on the whole—alter. What we wear, how we live, our diet, the way we interact with others, our expectations and fears, the thought forms and language with which we operate, all these and much more determine the way we express ourselves even in those areas of life where we most seek to differ from our contemporaries.

Most importantly for our purposes, we need to remind ourselves that Augustine could only express himself in the language of his culture.<sup>13</sup> No good expecting to find conscious attempts to develop a world- and life-view here! We may not expect to find the forensic language of Reformation theology in his writings. And just as we—Christians of the twenty-first century—use the language of our culture, largely humanist driven language, without subscribing to its humanist meaning, so we must extend that privilege to Augustine. The term *human rights*, or the *rights of man*, is a thoroughly secular and positively anti-Christian conception. Nevertheless, there are times when, today, it is right to speak of "human rights" and to denounce the violation of them. There was a time when tyrannical, cruel, government was denounced with other words. But we would consider it very unfair to be accused of harbouring atheistic Enlightenment views simply because we used current language to denounce these things. We must see beyond the language to the content, to the meaning the author is seeking to convey. I am not fond of looking to Ludwig Wittgenstein for support but it seems to me that there is a great deal of truth in his assertion with regard to language that "the meaning is the use."<sup>14</sup> Primarily, we have to ask, not *What words does this author use?* But rather *What does he mean to convey?* These two are not necessarily equivalent. Indeed they are often not so, even in our ordinary day-to-day conversations. In Augustinian studies, it seems to me, this failure to look beyond the immediate selection of Latin words to the intended sense has vitiated much of the effort expended by scholars on under-

12. Even if we cannot personally travel by air or into space we nevertheless now know that in principle space is *reachable*. This reachability was *unimaginable* in Augustine's time.

13. H.-X. Arquillière, *L'augustinisme politique* (Paris, J. Vrin, 1934) pp. 6–9, where Arquillière demonstrates that some ideas which been attributed to Augustine actually derived from a much later date. Arquillière has produced a perceptive study of how the medieval scholars misunderstood Augustine's political theory, though his own conclusions are definitely governed by his Thomistic nature-grace presuppositions.

14. Though I am here using Wittgenstein's phraseology, it is with a Christian meaning and not a Wittgensteinian meaning.

standing him. It is particularly important here too because it is characteristic of Augustine to write with only the current problem in mind and to use language which, if applied further than the immediate context, would imply many things he never intended. So, he could speak with such an animated warmth about the Neoplatonists that it is easy to suppose he was enamoured of their teaching. But when, as we shall see later, we examine his severe criticism of Neoplatonist teaching we come away confused, if we do not limit that warmth to the particular aspect of Neoplatonism he had under consideration.

If we are to understand Augustine aright, the first thing we must do is differentiate between his use of the language of the day to express his own ideas and any use of that language to express someone else's ideas (for example, Plato or Plotinus).

English-speaking Christians of all people ought to be aware of this problem. The English language is positively riddled within biblicalisms. They appear on virtually every page of our newspapers every day. They are on the lips of the most ungodly almost without intermission. Yet would we seriously expect scholars of 3600 AD to look back on our times and draw the conclusion that these times are dominated by the Bible? Consider just a few of the terms we use in everyday speech that are wholly derived from the Authorised Version of the Bible: sodomy, hypocrite, salt of the earth, Jezebel, David and Goliath, Philistine, scapegoat, to atone, Job's comforter, Judas, apocalypse, Armageddon, daily bread, wolf in sheep's clothing, talent, turn the other cheek. In addition, much of our phraseology is the direct result of Tyndale's translational skills.<sup>15</sup> Also, first names are still generally those derived from the Bible, the New Testament in particular. In England, *Nero* has always been reserved for one's dog, while *Thomas* and *Daniel* are extremely popular for one's sons. Countless more general allusions prevail, such as *living on borrowed time*—a reference to Psalm 90:10, long before statistical studies were ever invented.

Why should it be any different when Augustine uses the philosophical words *idea* and *form*, which originated in Plato's Academy? In our own day, when Herman Dooyeweerd made a name for himself by creating a whole new vocabulary for Christian philosophy it was not so much by creating new words as by imparting new life and new meaning to old words that he did it.

#### USING THE RIGHT MATERIAL FOR THE RIGHT PURPOSES

Too often scholars have begun by finding allusions to Neoplatonic language in Augustine and concluded by reading into these allusions a theory of Augustine's relationship with Neoplatonism. This is highly suspect at best, and highly unscientific at worst. If a letter to the editor of the local newspaper refers to the parish vicar as a "wolf in sheep's clothing," do the readers have any justification in concluding that the letter-writer has succumbed to biblical Christianity? Would they not rather conclude that he was merely using the language of the day to good effect, perhaps even ignorant of its origin? He *might* be consciously referring to the

New Testament, but one could not conclude thus simply from this.

If we want to know Augustine's estimate of Neoplatonism the correct place to start is by asking the question: *Does Augustine actually say anything explicitly in his writings about Plato, Plotinus, and Porphyry, or about Platonism and Neoplatonism?*

The answer is: Yes, he does, and little of it is complimentary.

There is no doubt Augustine held the Neoplatonists<sup>16</sup> in very high regard—in *some respects*. But he is very clear about what those respects are. If we do not keep this clearly before our minds eye at all times we shall easily become confused and misled. Augustine could speak of Porphyry, for instance, as "the noble philosopher," and it is evident that he read his works with keen interest. But over against this we have to consider Augustine's extremely negative critique of Porphyry. In *The City of God*, for example, he devotes three whole chapters to the subjects of Porphyry's inconstancy, impiety, and spiritual blindness.<sup>17</sup>

What was it then that Augustine found so attractive about those he termed the Platonists? The following quotation from *The City of God* gives a clue:

If, then, Plato defined the wise man as one who imitates, knows, loves this God, and who is rendered blessed through fellowship with Him in his own blessedness, why discuss with the other philosophers? It is evident that none come nearer to us than the Platonists. To them, therefore, let that fabulous theology give place which delights the minds of men with the crimes of the gods; and that civil theology also, in which impure demons, under the name of gods, have seduced the peoples of the earth given up to earthly pleasures, desiring to be honoured by the errors of men, and filling the minds of their worshippers with impure desires, exciting them to make the representation of their crimes one of the rites of their worship, whilst they themselves found in the spectators of these exhibitions a most pleasing spectacle,—a theology in which, whatever was honourable in the temple, was defiled by its mixture with the obscenity of the theatre, and whatever was base in the theatre was vindicated by the abominations of the temple.<sup>18</sup>

The context of this passage is significant and is partly alluded to in what we have quoted. Augustine is comparing the Platonist philosophy with the disgusting rituals of Roman religion. In the Neoplatonists we have a concern for morality. Defective it might be from a Christian point of view, but at least it had a concern. Roman religion, as those will know who have read *The City of God*, lacked any moral code. Rather it delighted in making the most depraved and sordid practices into acts of divine worship. The Neoplatonist view of God was also far superior to the Roman. It was by and large monotheistic; it placed all of man's happiness in the spiritual realm rather than the material; it placed strong emphasis on the pursuit of wisdom as opposed to a pursuit of materialistic pleasure.

And yet . . . All this while these heathen philosophers remained just that: heathen. Cut off by sin from the light of God's truth they groped in darkness, catching only glimpses of the beyond by means of that illumination that comes to all men through creation, as Paul taught in the first chapter of

16. Augustine always refers to them as Platonists. The word *Neoplatonist* is a much more modern appellation.

17. *The City of God*, Book X, cc. 26–28.

18. *Ibid.*, Book VIII, c. 5 (*trans.* Marcus Dods in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series*).

15. See esp. David Daniell's excellent assessment in *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1994), p. 3.

his letter to the Romans. Augustine, following in Paul's footsteps, issues<sup>19</sup> a stern warning to all Christians who might read even the best of Platonist writers: "Beware that no one deceive you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the elements [principles] of the world."

Nevertheless, where the Platonists are in accord with the truth, Augustine will not deny them the light they have. But he *never* speaks of following the Platonists, or even learning anything from them. Rather he simply discusses the extent to which they are in accord with Christian truth, not vice versa. Christian truth is primary, it is infallible, it is clear, it is the standard by which everything else is to be judged. He speaks favourably of the Platonists merely in terms of his preference for them over the Roman theology:

This, therefore, is the cause why we prefer these to all the others, because, whilst other philosophers have worn out their minds and powers in seeking the causes of things, and endeavouring to discover the right mode of learning and of living, these, by knowing God, have found where resides the cause by which the universe has been constituted, and the light by which truth is to be discovered, and the fountain at which felicity is to be drunk. All philosophers, then, who have had these thoughts concerning God, whether Platonists or others, agree with us.<sup>20</sup>

Augustine's fascination with how close the Platonists came to the truth on a limited number of points never blinded him to the awesome inadequacies of their philosophy and theology. He never entertained the idea that they were regenerate. What we do have to question is his understanding of their meaning, however. The words they used he took to mean what he would have meant by them. In this sense, and certainly by later standards, Augustine was an exceedingly uncritical scholar. This we believe was his fundamental mistake vis-à-vis the Platonists. He did not take pagan ideas from them: he wrongly understood them to be propounding Christian-like views. They *agree with us*, he claimed. There was no question of him agreeing with them.

But I would not wish to be too hard on Augustine for this failing. Scholars with greater light and greater privileges even today refuse to see Plato and Socrates for what they were. Both were enthusiastic pederasts. Plato was as totalitarian as one can get in his political beliefs, and Karl Popper's temerity in saying so in his remarkable work, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, was met with virulent criticism from the classics and philosophic communities.<sup>21</sup> Christians have always been fascinated by Plato, and over the last two millennia have taken his ideas on board in ways that Augustine would have denounced in no uncertain terms.

#### EXAMINING AUGUSTINE'S USE OF NEO-PLATONIC LANGUAGE

We must now look at precisely *how* Augustine used Platonist language, when he did use it. We shall look at one example. This involves Augustine's discussion of Porphyry's use of the

19. *Ibid.*, Book VIII, c. 10. In this chapter Augustine deals with the question of what later became known as Common Grace, though a subject he did not deal with at length in any of his writings.

20. *The City of God*, Book VIII, c. 10.

21. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols. (London, Routledge, 1966, 5th edition) vol. 1: Plato. And . . . No! My delight in this book in no way signifies that I accept Popper's atheistic libertarianism or his idea of an "open" society.

Latin word *principium* (plur. *principia*). It may be found in *The City of God*, Book X, chapters 23 and 24.

In the 23rd chapter Augustine relates how Porphyry asserted that man cannot be purified by sacrifices to the sun and moon, i.e. to god. Purification of the soul can be achieved solely through the agency of the *principia*, or principles.<sup>22</sup> "And," says Augustine, "what he as a Platonist means by 'principles' we know. For he speaks of God the Father and God the Son, whom he calls (writing in Greek) the intellect or mind of the Father."

After discussing some of the problems that Porphyry and Plotinus got into with this he deems it no wonder: "For philosophers speak as they have a mind to, and in the most difficult matters do not scruple to offend religious ears; but we are bound to speak according to a certain rule." That is, philosophers seek to attain wisdom and knowledge without reference to any external standard—"as they have a mind to"—but Christians are governed by Holy Scripture—"a certain rule."

In the 24th chapter Augustine asserts that as far as Christians are concerned, "When we speak, we do not affirm two or three *principles*, no more than we are at liberty to affirm two or three gods." And he goes on: "It was therefore truly said that man is cleansed only by a Principle, although the Platonists erred in speaking in the plural of principles." There is a clear reason why the Platonists should have erred so, apart from their previously-rejected autonomous speculation:

But Porphyry, being under the dominion of these envious powers, whose influence he was at once ashamed of and afraid to throw off, refused to recognize that Christ is the Principle by whose incarnation we are purified. Indeed he despised Him, because of the flesh itself which He assumed, that He might offer a sacrifice for our purification,—a great mystery, unintelligible to Porphyry's pride.

So that whilst Augustine was prepared to engage with the Platonists, as we have seen, because they had a much higher conception of God than the Roman pagans, he nevertheless was unsparing in his criticism of them when they went astray from Scripture. He was quite prepared to take on board Porphyry's terminology of the Principium, but what he meant by it was light years away from Porphyry's conception. We do not have here the picture of a weak-minded Christian eagerly devouring pagan concepts. Rather we see a confident bishop, secure in the truth of Scripture, quite happy to engage the opposition and, where possible, take the Egyptian spoils into the tents of Israel.<sup>23</sup> Augustine generally displays, in his interaction with all non-Christian

22. It is as difficult to get a suitable English translation from the Latin as it is to get one from the Greek. Context is all important. The Greek word translated into Latin as *principium* by Augustine is *hypostasis*. This, as many of our readers will recognise, was used by the Greek Church of the time to express the three persons or subsistences within the Trinity. But Augustine clearly has no intention of using it in that sense as the passages I have quoted in the text demonstrate.

23. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book 2, c. 144, he says: "Any statements by those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, which happen to be true and consistent with our faith should not cause alarm, but be claimed for our own use, as it were from owners who have no right to them. Like the treasures of the ancient Egyptians . . . which on leaving Egypt the people of Israel, in order to make better use of them, surreptitiously claimed for themselves." (*trans.* R. P. H. Green, Clarendon Press, 1995).

literature, a fiercely independent line over against them. Of one thing he was sure, and that was that all must be tested against the plumb-line of Holy Scripture and, where available, the consensus of the catholic Church. There were exceptions at times of course, when Augustine lost his way. His attempt to understand Genesis 1 with the help of Plato was disastrous. But this was the exception, not the rule.

It has been a matter of interest to me for some years what Augustine might have achieved by way of critical self-reflection and ensuing consistency with his passionate attempt to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ had he possessed contemporaries who could have engaged with him in a meaningful way. Augustine was on his own. It was not to his advantage as a reforming thinker that he was a legend in his own lifetime. It is maybe significant, and certainly indicative of the low intellectual calibre of the catholic clergy in his day that his two major works, *The City of God* and the *De Doctrina Christiana*, were based on ideas that he derived from a *Donatist*, Tyconius. On the other hand, his anti-Pelagian work is testimony to what great and perceptive ideas could be drawn from him when really pushed.

#### COHERENCE IN AUGUSTINE'S THINKING

No-one is totally consistent in developing a theology or a philosophy, or indeed any science. Indeed, Gödel has proved that ultimate consistency is a pipe-dream in any intellectual pursuit unless one is prepared to drop a few disquieting anomalies.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, as far as each man is concerned, there appear to be no inconsistencies in his own thinking. If there were he would correct them.

There are two possible explanations of this fact. Firstly,—and what most people would consider to be obvious—one can be mistaken and blinded by *prejudices*. Doubtless this often happens. Our intellects are far from perfect. We do not always see the connections between our ideas as perhaps we should, and certainly as others seem to. But this explanation is to my mind far from convincing as a satisfactory explanation of the seeming lack of consistency or coherence in a serious scholar's systematic thought. Are not these very prejudices—as others choose to call them—often an integral part of that system of thought itself? And is it not therefore as a system—seen from the viewpoint of its promoter, entirely coherent? If we first remove the “prejudices” before analysing the system, have we not in effect removed an integral part of the system, indeed the very part that gives it its ultimate coherence?

We must distinguish between what I refer to as *consistency* and *coherence*. By the former I mean that none of the ideas in a system ever clash. Inconsistency occurs where two or more given ideas cannot both be true at the same time. On the other hand, by coherence I mean much more. To be coherent assumes consistency but also adds the quality of all ideas within a system being connected. A coherent body of ideas is a unified whole; a consistent body of ideas may contain many disconnected but not necessarily antagonistic ideas. Only coherence guarantees a genuine *system*.

When we examine Augustine's writings with some care we soon discover that there *is* a system to it. True, Augustine lived in an age that lacked the systematic rigour we now demand of technical literature. But this should not be taken to mean that he lacked a coherent body of theology or philosophy. True also, over the years his thought developed, and did so in a markedly Christian direction. Those who have studied his *Confessions* will know that Augustine's conversion was not a light-hearted affair. He recognised that it would mean a thorough reformation in the way he viewed *everything*. Repentance for him was always going to be a true *metanoia*—exchange of mind-set.

This system, this body of coherent thought, was firmly grasped. It took hold of him. Deviations from it may, under the influence of indwelling sin, have been possible. But before we assume that particular ideas were out of kilter with that system we should carefully examine precisely what Augustine meant by them, not what they seem at first glance to mean to us because of other associations. All of Augustine's writings scream at us that the last thing he was about was deriving nice ideas from pagan philosophers. If at times he seems to have done so, the *prima facie* evidence of his Christian goals should lead us to question whether we have really understood what he was doing. It is easy to write a fine account that in the last analysis is nothing but speculation and conjecture disguised as fact.

#### THE PROBLEM OF GAPS AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

We must ensure that we do not read into Augustine, or any author for that matter, what is not actually there. No man ought to be burdened with the so-called “logical consequences” of his position. Reading between the lines to get a juicy story is not literary criticism but playing fast and loose with the author's integrity. Yet this is something that is done all the time, especially in theology. This, of course, is integral with what we have just been discussing about the coherence of a thinker's work.

Nothing so irritates and angers a writer as this. It is misrepresentation and, for those who engage in it, I would point out that it is bearing false witness. It is neither conducive to constructive debate nor to understanding what the writer in question really means. It prompted the mild Melancthon to pray: “From the rage of the theologians, good Lord deliver us!”

A related problem is that of filling in the “gaps” in an author's work. I will illustrate this from the field of the history of natural science, where it has been a particular problem. In recent years it has received a good deal of attention, especially from the noted historian of science, Thomas Kuhn.

Kuhn developed the academic discipline of history of science almost single-handed.<sup>25</sup> His grasp of the historical texts is second to none. But he noticed that in teaching the same texts to classes from backgrounds in different disciplines he was getting widely differing interpretations of what those texts said. The most clear difference was between those

24. Kurt Gödel, “On formally undecidable propositions of *Principia Mathematica* and related systems I,” in *Collected Works* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986), vol. 1.

25. Pierre Duhem (1861–1916), the French theoretical physicist, blazed the trail and laid the foundations in a number of works, not least his massive ten volume *Le Système du Monde* and his trilogy on *Leonardo da Vinci*. I am working on a translation of the former.

whose background was in history and those whose background was in philosophy. Examining their work, he says,<sup>26</sup> “it was often difficult to believe that both had engaged with the same texts.” He goes on to describe this in some detail:

Subtle analytic distinctions that had entirely escaped the historians would often be central when the philosophers reported on their reading. . . . Sometimes the distinctions dwelt upon by the philosophers were not to be found at all in the original text. They were the product of the subsequent development of science and philosophy, and their introduction during the philosophers’ processing of signs altered the argument. Or again, listening to the historians’ paraphrase of a position, the philosophers would often point out gaps and inconsistencies that the historians had failed to see. But the philosophers could then sometimes be shocked by the discovery that the paraphrase was accurate, that the gaps were there in the original. Without quite knowing they were doing so, the philosophers had improved the argument while reading it, knowing what its subsequent form must be. Even with the text open before them it was regularly difficult to persuade them that the gap was really there, that the author had not seen the logic of the argument quite as they did.<sup>27</sup>

And it needs to be noted, these students were postgraduate high-fliers, not novices.

Why should they not see the “logic of the argument,” as Kuhn calls it, in the same way as the author of the text they were reading? The only explanation can be that reader and writer were working from different perspectives, within different coherent systems. The rationality of systems is integrally tied up with the system. Rationality cannot be imposed from without. Unfortunately even presuppositionalists tend to regard rationality as neutral in practice.

There is no doubt a similar process goes on in all reading of texts from earlier times, whether this be in physics or theology. And a genuine scholar will make a conscious attempt to avoid imputing to the author what he did not imply. Dooyeweerd himself excelled at this approach. Systems were to be examined first and foremost not against some external standard but in terms of their own criteria of coherence and their own presuppositions. He called this method “immanent critique.” In his Inaugural Lecture as Professor at the Free University of Amsterdam he described it as “getting to know every system from inside out, from its own basic starting point.”

#### WHO INFLUENCED WHOM?

I have always been fascinated by the way in which unbeliever reasons. No less so than by the conclusions that are drawn from the well-known fact that most ancient cultures have an account of a great deluge in their history. Firstly, it is “automatically” assumed that these accounts are not historical but mythical. Secondly, it is “automatically” assumed that the Genesis account of a deluge in Noah’s day is part of this mythical tradition. It seems to me however that a much more logical reaction would be to suppose that anything so universal would have a basis in fact, and conjecture that the differences (different gods, etc) are due to the “Chinese whisper” effect.<sup>28</sup> Otherwise it is very difficult to see how any

26. Thomas Kuhn, “The Relations between the History and the Philosophy of Science” in *Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (London/Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 6ff.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

reasonable answer can be found to the question: Why do all these cultures speak about a similar event in their history?

This same way of assumptions commonly plagues historical scholarship. And nowhere is it more endemic than among Augustinian “scholars.” Reading some books one gets the impression that Augustine did nothing with his life other than regurgitate Plotinus in a Christian garb.<sup>29</sup> No-one to my knowledge has ever asked the question: *Where did Plotinus and Porphyry—the founders of Neoplatonism—get their ideas?*

It is always assumed that these two thinkers derived their philosophy from the writings of Plato and their own cogitations. But neither Plotinus nor Porphyry were pagans in the way Plato was a pagan.<sup>30</sup> Plato is the product of a wholly pagan culture; Plotinus and Porphyry were the products of a largely Christianised culture. Plato wrote in ignorance of the true faith; Plotinus and Porphyry were fully conversant with the Christian faith and its literature. They wrote with the background of an extensive knowledge of its teaching and consciously opposed it. It is generally supposed in fact that Porphyry was a lapsed Christian. Plotinus—Porphyry’s teacher—was for eleven years himself the pupil of the Christian-Platonist Ammonius Saccas.<sup>31</sup>

Neoplatonism was largely a pagan movement to revive and reconstruct Plato’s thinking for a new age in the third and fourth centuries AD. It was profoundly influenced by Christianity. It could not be otherwise; Christianity was a significant and expanding factor of the culture in which it emerged. It was as much an anti-Christian as a pro-Platonist movement. Neoplatonists like Plotinus, Porphyry and Proclus may have been pagan, even anti-Christian,<sup>32</sup> but they were scholars who were in touch with the thinking of their day and took full account of it.

Thus Plotinus could speak of “God” in a way quite foreign to Plato, and eerily reminiscent of the New Testament. He recognised a “trinity” of three hypostases: first, the One or the Father, secondly, the Word or Logos, and thirdly, the Soul or Psyche, the universal principle of life.<sup>33</sup>

28. But then, what *we* think “reasonable” is always governed by much deeper presuppositions, of which we are often unaware. It is this lack of critical self-awareness that baffles us when, in debate, our opponent cannot see the evident “reasonableness” of what we are propounding.

29. Nowhere is this *prejudice* more clearly seen than in Henry Chadwick’s *Augustine* (Past Masters Series, Oxford University Press, 1986) and G. R. Evans’ *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

30. I am not convinced that Plato wholly lacked the influence of biblical thinking. Augustine certainly believed, as many have done since, that Plato would have become fully conversant with the Jewish Scriptures in his travels in the East to gain wisdom. It seems to me too that the influence of the Solomonic expansion of Israelitic influence in the world has been largely ignored and undocumented. There is a thesis, which I have not seen in print, that purports to prove that Greek architecture was not original but derived from Solomon’s Temple. For documentary evidence of the spread of Israelitic influence as far as New Mexico in the time of the Judges, see Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace* (Tyler: Dominion Press, 1987) p. 233 and his references to the work of Barry Fell.

31. Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1997 [1931]), pp. 291f.

32. Porphyry was fiercely anti-Christian and wrote a fifteen book attack on Christianity, of which only fragments survive.

33. *Enneads*, V, 1, x. See also the editor’s footnote 2 on p. 194 of Augustine’s *The City of God* in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Series edition. See also *The City of God*, Book X, c. 23.



Without doubt, this “trinity” was derived from the Neoplatonist contact with Christian culture. The Christian Trinity did not derive from Neoplatonist culture. And although the language is almost identical, and the ideas seemingly so, nevertheless the two trinities differ as light from darkness.

The glib assumptions of modern scholars that cultural, philosophical and literary traffic has always been from paganism to Christianity is untenable and at best naïve.<sup>34</sup> There is scope for a great deal of historical and philosophical

revisionism in the clash between Christianity and paganism. C&S

34. In an otherwise first-rate study of Augustine, Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo* (London, Faber, 1967), the author manages to derive the whole of Augustine's solution to the problem of Manichaeism from his reading of Plotinus (p. 98ff.). As if Augustine could not think for himself! As if Scripture did not exist! A study of the *Confessions* should have convinced Brown of the true origin of Augustine's view of God.

# TIME OF THE SIGNS: A POSTMODERN APOCALYPSE

by Crawford Gribben and Simon Wheeler

## I. INTRODUCTION

SINCE Simon Peter declared that a day with the Lord was as a thousand years, an enduring fascination with endings has characterised the literary, historical and theological quest of Western civilisations and their constituent social elements. In the fifth century, St. Augustine moved from an heretical millenarianism to mould a symbolical reading of Revelation which would determine orthodox eschatology for the succeeding thousand years. In the 1530s, in revolutionary Münster, a late-medieval peasant rebellion was bolstered by apocalyptic rhetoric, engendering a social movement so disruptive it took the combined efforts of Protestant and Catholic powers to engineer its bloody demise. In December 1999, anti-capitalist rioters in London daubed a burning car with the motto: “Babylon is falling”—a clear allusion to Revelation 18:2.

This last example demonstrates the confusion of a post-modern world, struggling for clarity after a century of eschatological turmoil. *Fin de siècle* concerns have remained at the foreground of popular consciousness throughout the twentieth century. Thomas Hardy's gloom and Oscar Wilde's decadence were signs of the times, concern for what the twentieth century might hold. The rush of history surpassed their fearful expectations: Marxism and Nazism fostered a utopian promise devoid of Christian hope; world wars, environmental chaos, atomic capability and the meltdown of the superpowers have each invoked awesome eschatological terror. Standing on the threshold of the twenty-first century, the consequences of such eschatological doomsaying seem diverse and confused. While Ronald Reagan immersed himself in Hal Lindsey's warnings against communism and the “ten-horned beast” of European union, the popular culture of late-twentieth-century Western civilisations repeatedly invoked super hero fantasies to preserve the known world order.<sup>1</sup>

Writing in the last year of the second millennium, Elaine Showalter characterised this age as a “permanent carnival of crisis”; Susan Sontag described it as “Apocalypse from Now On.”<sup>2</sup> These critics are right to note the sense of carnival at the heart of contemporary crises. No doubt much of this has its roots in the media's hyping of disasters—the ratings wars demand a rather heartless exploitation of human frailty. But perhaps this appalling sense of carnival has a more serious cause—the vacuum at the heart of contemporary appreciations of history.

Without a moral framework through which to interpret the evening news, our increasingly passive and unreflective neighbours simply let the news happen to them. It's Millennium Night, there are fireworks in London, nuclear scares in Japan, and political crisis in Russia. What's on the other channel? There is a vague consciousness that something is missing, but rarely the understanding that the missing substance is moral commitment to a set of objective ideals. Without an interpretative framework, the evening news is a series of random and disparate facts.

All this is evidence to support the claim that ours is indeed a “postmodern” world. Although the concept of “postmodernism” has received wide discussion, its critics, like its proponents, have failed to offer a complete definition of the term. Most generally, postmodernism describes a lifestyle and worldview which is built upon a profound suspicion of all metanarratives of explaining the world—whether scientific, religious, environmental or political. It is a lifestyle which celebrates “pick and mix.” A postmodernist

*Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992), passim. For an up-to-date discussion of puritan eschatology, see Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550–1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000). For a more general view of teleological thought, see Richard Kyle, *Awaiting the Millennium: A History of End-Time Thinking* (Leicester: IVP, 1998).

2. Elaine Showalter, “Apocalypse now and then, please,” *The Times* (April 16, 1998), p. 38

1. Christopher Burdon, *The Apocalypse in England: Revelation Unravelling, 1700–1834* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 7; Paul Boyer, *When*

may select elements of Marxism, feminism, and environmentalism, but will abandon any pretence of intellectual coherence in the manner in which he fits those pieces together. In fact, he delights in the play of ideas, and may even be happy to combine elements of Christian thinking into his *a la carte* worldview, so long as they do not exercise the claims of objective and ultimate truth.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, the popular culture of our postmodernist world does not identify its essence with anything like precision or scientific objectivity. Instead, its cardinal doctrines are subtly disseminated through a series of TV shows and pop tunes, carefully educating the laity into the doctrines of this new faith. This education is not advanced at a propositional level—but, as *attitudes* are inculcated, the new faith is adopted. We are encouraged to be coolly distant, ironically posturing and always in parodies of the past. We are not encouraged to think—feelings, and sensory experiences of a variety of types, take precedence over the mind. The old Nike slogan “Just do it” is a motto of postmodernity. This is echoed in some popular music; consider the following from British band James: “May your mind be wide open/may your heart beat strong./May your mind’s will be broken/by this heartfelt song.”<sup>4</sup> Or this from the veteran (but ever inventive) Irish band U2, “don’t try too hard to think . . . don’t think at all/I’m not the only one starin’ at the sun/afraid of what you’d find if you took a look inside.”<sup>5</sup> Computer games follow the same pattern in that they have no “clearly defined beginnings middles and endings” but also “portray a world without any sense of consequences. You rarely lose or die.”<sup>6</sup>

## 2. POPULAR CULTURE

This sense of historical ambiguity has been reflected to an unusual degree in one of the most successful television serials to have appeared in the 1990s—*The X-Files*. These dark and often spiritual narratives have been described as “Gnosticism reborn” and “the flip side of the New Age.”<sup>7</sup> Illustrating the tension between objective science and subjective intuition, the series projects two FBI agents—Mulder and Scully—into a mysterious investigation of paranormal events documented in the FBI’s secret records—the X-Files. Plots invoke the renewed fascination of angelology and brood darkly over the implosion of the environment. Encounters with the paranormal involve aliens, renegade FBI agents, and sinister multinational corporations in fabulously intertextual tableaux. “The truth is out there,” reads the poster on the wall of Mulder’s office; but his search for

meaning, for the point of the X-Files’ existence, is a postmodern’s quest for metanarrative, an attempt to secure a signifier capable of transcending each 50-minute episode—an attempt, in other words, to secure a metanarrative capable of explaining his world. Mulder’s search for his sister offers one hope of narrative continuity; but while the series continually plays with the idea that his sister was abducted by aliens, individual episodes suggest that covert government agents or a child serial killer were instead to blame. It would almost appear that “the search for a metanarrative” was itself the metanarrative of the series.

The stunning success of *The X-Files* demonstrates that the conspiracy theory ideologies with which the series plays still exploit a felt need in a post-Christian, fragmenting and pluralistic American culture. This type of theory is projected to give the nation a sense of meaning, an explanation of the type of “manifest destiny” it had squandered with the rise of George Bush’s “New World Order.” Now it is neither God nor Providence controlling events, but a shadowy elite orchestrating the assassination of President Kennedy and colluding in uncontrolled mind experiments with Nazi, Japanese and even alien scientists. During the Cold War the threat was external, something other, something “alien”; in the late 1990s the danger was represented as lying *inside* the very institutions which protected the United States in her confrontation with the “evil empire.” Thus old loyalties and historic identities are exposed as being meaningless. There cannot be commitment to the past—the metanarrative of history has been exploded. Thus the *The X-Files* deconstructs the American dream.

But *The X-Files* is far from being the only element of popular culture to portray such ideas—this postmodern approach is widespread. Two 1999 teen films convey basic elements of this ambiguous worldview. *Drop Dead Gorgeous* tells the story of a teenage beauty pageant in small town America.<sup>8</sup> Of the two principle contenders, Becky Leeman is daughter of the only significant local businessman, a leading light of the Lutheran Sisterhood Gun Club (note the accumulation of right wing interests), and in every way a “pillar of the community”; her infinitely more talented and better-looking rival, Amber Atkins, has been brought up in the trailer park by an alcoholic single mum and has to work evenings at the undertakers to make ends meet. Although a black comedy, the film has a serious question to ask. Can Amber’s heart-of-gold character triumph over the Leeman family’s machinations and multitudinous vested interests and thus realise her dream of making it into big-time show business? Put more simply, is the American dream still alive?

Of course, the theme has been common in American entertainment as the nation has sought to define and represent itself as the world’s leading democracy, where ambition and hard work can make anything possible. *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, however, presents quite a different view of the American dream. Only by a freak series of coincidences and good fortune can Amber achieve her goal. The American public has lost confidence in the vision that made the country what it once was. The new pioneers must face not arduous terrain and hostile natives, but the self-interest of the ruling elite determined to maintain the status quo.

8. Michael Patrick Jann (dir.), *Drop Dead Gorgeous* (New Line, 1999). The general practice, reflected in the film, is that such contests will assess talent at performing arts rather than being exclusively about physical appearance.

3. For an extended Christian analysis of this pluralistic tendency in the contemporary world see D. A. Carson, *The Gaggling of God* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996). This book pays special attention to postmodern theories of literary interpretation which have received a thorough evangelical critique in Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998).

4. James, “Waltzing along” on the album *Whiplash* (Mercury Records, 1997).

5. U2, “Staring at the Sun” on the album *Pop* (Island Records, 1997). For a condensed Christian analysis of some of the songs on this album see Simon Wheeler, “Beating Time,” *Evangelicals Now* (April 1999), p. 12.

6. Marcus Honeysett, *Monitor* (Leicester: UCCF, 2000). *Monitor* is an short annual magazine which aims to provide a Christian view of cultural changes over the previous 12 months.

7. David Lavery et al (eds.), *Deny all Knowledge: Reading the X-Files* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), p. 1

*She's All That* takes a related tack by portraying the contest to become Prom Queen at the annual graduation party in a run of the mill American High School.<sup>9</sup> The throne of the Prom King is evidently reserved for the popular and talented Zack Siler. His one-time girlfriend, the equally talented and apparently very good-looking Taylor Vaughn, is generally expected to take the place of his consort. This convenient status quo is upset, however, by Laney Boggs. Laney is a working class girl at a generally middle-class and Republican-sympathising school, an artist with distinctly left-wing and environmentally-concerned politics who captures Zack's heart. Although she fails in her bid to be Prom Queen, Laney finishes the film in Zack's willing and tender embrace having discovered his latent disaffection with the role his father would thrust upon him. Zack finally rejects the possibility of a place at an Ivy League university and a future glittering career in business. Metanarrative has collapsed in Zack's life—and by synecdoche in America as a whole—but he has no alternative with which to replace it.

A third example is the latest offering by American rock band REM. Their album *Up*, heavily influenced by British postmodern band Radiohead, was released to the disappointment of fans and critics alike.<sup>10</sup> REM have always been openly socialist and this has frequently prompted them to record songs criticising prevailing political currents.<sup>11</sup> *Up*, however, signalled a new level of disaffection with contemporary society. Arguably the most significant song in this regard is the final track "Falls to Climb" which relates existential freedom and personal redemption through voluntary, vicarious self sacrifice. Hidden among the lyrics is a stanza which begins, "gentlemen, mark your opponents/fire into your own ranks." The message is clear: the authorities cannot be trusted to safeguard their citizens' freedom and well-being, for they are the active enemies of both.

Emerging from a troubled and ambiguous view of the present, postmoderns struggle to articulate a comprehensive anticipation of the future. A worldview that has lost faith in the rulers of the present might be expected to be overflowing with revolutionary zeal for the future. This is apparently seen in the climactic final paragraph of Douglas Coupland's 1998 novel *Girlfriend in a Coma*:<sup>12</sup>

You'll soon be seeing us walking down your street, our backs held proud, our eyes dilated with truth and power. We might look like you but you should know better. We'll draw our line in the sand and force the world to cross our line. Every cell in our body explodes with the truth. We *will* be kneeling in front of Safeway, atop out-of-date textbooks whose pages we have chewed out. We'll be begging passers by to see the need to question and question and question and never stop questioning until the world stops spinning. We'll be adults who smash the tired, exhausted system. We'll crawl and chew and dig our way into a radical new world. We will change minds and souls from stone and plastic into linen and gold—that's what I believe. That's what I know.<sup>13</sup>

9. Robert Iscone (dir.), *She's All That* (Miramax, 1999).

10. REM, *Up* (Warner Bros Records, 1998).

11. Good examples would be "Radio Free Europe" on the album *Murmur* (IRS, 1983) and "Ignoreland" on the album *Automatic for the People* (Warner Bros Records, 1992).

12. Douglas Coupland *Girlfriend in a Coma* (London: Flamingo, 1998). Despite Coupland's repeated protestations that he speaks for no-one but himself, he has been adopted as spokesman by large numbers of young people the world over.

13. Coupland, *Girlfriend in a Coma*, p. 281. This passage contains an implicit challenge to Christians. Are we begging passers by to turn to Christ? Are our eyes dilated with truth and power?

Powerful stuff, but is it really a coherent eschatology? Is it a vision of what these people want the future to be? Despite the impressive phrasing it seems rather to be nebulous, based primarily on the hope that a new generation—which has seen the bankruptcy of what has gone before—will be able to construct a better future. This ending to his latest offering is essentially a reworking of one of the themes from his landmark 1991 book *Generation X*: that some postmoderns no longer believe in the future.<sup>14</sup> At least, they no longer believe in the future as an extension of the present. They are simply appalled by the quest for continually higher standards of material comfort at the expense of quality personal relationships and an appreciation of beauty. They see no great virtue in efficiency which they perceive as simply an excuse for getting the same people to do more in the same amount of time. Similarly with automation—what's so great about producing better cars more cheaply when hundreds of people have lost their jobs to allow it to happen? Coupland defines these attitudes as "cryptotechnophobia: the secret belief the technology is more of a menace than a boon."<sup>15</sup> It is quite common for some folks simply to opt out (at least in principle) of the society that has produced this state of affairs. Indeed, the term "Generation X" is introduced by Coupland to apply to a group of people "purposefully hiding itself."<sup>16</sup> This is seen perhaps most clearly in the political arena. Coupland defines it as "Voter's block: The attempt, however futile, to register dissent with the current political system simply by not voting."<sup>17</sup> This attitude is widespread.

This suspicion of the rulers of the present has historical roots that certainly exist but are poorly understood. It can be traced back at least as far as the Watergate scandal of 1974. Watergate is something everyone *thinks* they know about, allusions to it are frequent and ubiquitous, but the reality is that trying to find out what actually happened, even from reasonably politically aware people, is next to impossible. If ever a Hollywood director had a conspiracy-theory axe to grind, it is Oliver Stone, yet his biographical movie of President Nixon's life assumes that the viewer understands Watergate. Even some history books contain only a passing mention of this apparently seminal event.<sup>18</sup> The result is that Watergate has become a byword for betrayal of the people by the authorities whilst the "-gate" suffix has become associated with anything to do with taped conversations with little or no understanding of the real historical event.<sup>19</sup> This willful lack of understanding on the part of the many becomes an excuse for deep fear of the few in control of our nations.

Contemporary American manifestations of this fear of government, this belief that the whole system is hopelessly discredited, have been ably documented by the BBC correspondent Gavin Esler.<sup>20</sup> He quotes a US citizen who is

14. Douglas Coupland, *Generation X* (London: Abacus, 1992). For an extended review of this novel see Simon Wheeler, "Book of the Decade?" in *Evangelicals Now* (October 1999), p. 19.

15. Coupland, *Generation X*, p. 200.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

18. See for example, Michael Howard and W. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

19. On thinks of the "Squidgygate" and "Camillagate" terms associated with the marital infidelities of the Princess and Prince of Wales respectively.

20. Gavin Esler, *The United States of Anger* (London: Michael Joseph, 1997).

convinced that the US federal government was responsible for the bombing of its own building in Oklahoma city in 1995, who has investigated the event and found that the case against Tim McVeigh (who was finally convicted for the bombing) was full of holes. “The US government lied to its citizens about Watergate. About the Vietnam war. About the Iran-Contra affair. Why would it now be telling the truth?”<sup>21</sup> Society has always seen a particular group of people as “the enemy” and “in the 1990s they carry White House passes or FBI and CIA identification tags.”<sup>22</sup>

### 3. PHILOSOPHY

Yet this presentation of the apparent omnipotence of a shadowy elite merely presents the stunted eschatological vision typical of postmodern theorisations. Outside popular culture, current philosophical trends everywhere highlight the purposelessness of history. Thomas Docherty’s useful compilation *Postmodernism: A Reader* (1993) reviews the major contributions to the last few decades of philosophical debate. His introduction highlights the apocalyptic tenor of much modern theoretical writing and describes its context as a “chiliastic historical period.”<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, he claims, “No longer do we know with any certainty the point towards which history is supposedly progressing. In the wake of this, humanity becomes enslaved not to the enchantments of myth, but rather to the necessities of narrative, for humanity has embarked upon a secular movement whose teleology is uncertain, whose plot is not inherently predetermined by values or by an ethical end.”<sup>24</sup> Docherty’s comments reinforce the utility of *The X-Files* as a metaphor of contemporary life: like Mulder, postmoderns find our direction uncertain, and appear to be abandoning any hope of historical objective.

Postmodern theories, to a greater or lesser extent, emerge from this historiographical uncertainty and seek to construct some metanarrative of meaning in the period stripped of its past and future. Thus Jean-François Lyotard writes of the “severe reexamination which postmodernity imposes on the thought of the Enlightenment, on the idea of a unitary end of history.”<sup>25</sup> Fredric Jameson offers a similar analysis: “The last few years have been marked by an inverted millenarianism, in which premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that (the end of ideology, art, or social class; the “crisis” of Leninism, social democracy, or the welfare state, etc., etc.): taken together, all of these perhaps constitute what is increasingly called postmodernism.”<sup>26</sup> Gianni Vattimo has also commented on the “extreme secularisation of the providential vision of history”<sup>27</sup> which finds expression in the “crisis of the future which permeates all late-modern culture and social life.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, the individual’s lack of awareness of historical time—past, present and future—is at the very heart of the sense of the postmodern condition.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

23. Thomas Docherty, “Postmodernism: an introduction,” in Thomas Docherty (ed.), *Postmodernism: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 3.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

25. Lyotard, “What is Postmodernism?” in Docherty, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

26. Jameson, “Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” in Docherty, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

27. Vattimo, “The Structure of Artistic Revolutions,” in Docherty, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 117–8.

Arthur Kroker has described postmodernism as “a whole series of panic scenes at the *fin-de-millennium*”<sup>29</sup>—though it is likely to last longer than that.

Yet in academic philosophy it is not only history that is seen as purposeless; philosophy itself now enters that category, according to some. Richard Rorty has taken his cue from Derrida, Fish and others who advocate postmodern theories of language where meaning is inaccessible at best and non-existent at worst. Rorty has applied these theories to epistemology—with frightening effect:

the professional philosopher’s self-image depends upon his professional preoccupation with the image of the Mirror of Nature. Without the Kantian assumption that the philosopher can decide *quaestiones juris* concerning the claims of the rest of culture, this self-image collapses. That assumption depends on the notion that there is such a thing as understanding the essence of knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

Rorty makes it quite clear that under the postmodern scheme to which he thinks we have no choice but to subscribe, “understanding the essence of knowledge” is an impossibility. Philosophy therefore has no right to establish norms for the rest of society. Thus philosophy, on its own terms, is left with nothing to do but participate endlessly in what Rorty calls the “conversation of mankind.”<sup>31</sup> Once again closure has vanished, the possibility of meaning been abolished and we are left to drift forever in the present.

Postmodern theories, then, strip the individual of his past and his future. Rootless and alone, he is left historically naked. The past was his identity, and the future his orientation. Without past or future, he inhabits an amoral, eternal present, without any sense of a goal or a route for an exodus.<sup>32</sup> It is common for those in such a position to make a virtue of necessity, and this is precisely what many postmodernists do in their enthusiastic embrace of whimsy and impulse. Along with this conscious, existential enjoyment of the now frequently comes a realisation that this world isn’t all there is, that a transcendent dimension lies behind and over it. Perhaps this burgeoning interest in “spiritualities” will prompt a postmodernist to turn to the Church. But what does he find there?

### 4. THEOLOGY

No surprise, really. The Church is once again married to the spirit of the age, and in its perennial interest in “relevance” seems once again to be bending backwards to accommodate the latest aberrant trends. The same fascination with postmodernism parades in the Church. In evangelical liturgy, it undergirds the now-staple “multi-media presentation,” where sounds and images are juxtaposed to an allegedly evangelistic effect. It guarantees the popularity of the Alpha course, where the construction of a spiritual community builds up to the powerful emotive force of the “Holy Spirit weekend.” It suggests the appropriateness of

29. Docherty, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

30. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 392.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 389. It is tempting to see that this is Rorty’s attempt to preserve the “professional philosopher’s self-image.”

32. Compare the Christian position as set out by Luke in the prologue to his gospel. He tells Theophilus that his belief in the present (1:3, 4) can be grounded in predictions of the future (1:1, commentators are generally agreed that *plerophoreo* here carries the meaning of fulfillment) and events witnessed in the past (1:2).

the “alternative service,” where dance music is combined with high Anglican worship. But in the theology of the academy, its effect has been much more far-reaching—and devastating.

Postmodernists’ fascination with the temporality of linguistic structures has generated some of the most influential theological writing of the last few decades. Jürgen Moltmann has become famous as a “theologian of hope,” and evangelicals, reluctant to engage such a Goliath in debate, have not always challenged his proposals with the rigour they deserve. Moltmann’s work, though sometimes dazzling in its brilliance, has paved the way for postmodern attacks on orthodox Christian eschatology. Although basing his career on an exploration of the Christian hope, Moltmann has radically qualified its possibility.

The dispute begins, as it so often does, with words. Moltmann’s first book, *Theology of Hope* (1965; ET 1967), dwelt upon the difficulty of linguistically representing a description or definition of the eschaton:

But how can anyone speak of a future, which is not yet here, and of coming events in which he has not as yet had any part? Are these not dreams, speculations, longings and fears, which must all remain vague and indefinite because no one can verify them? The term “eschatology” is wrong. There can be no “doctrine” of the last things, if by “doctrine” we mean a collection of theses which can be understood on the basis of experiences that constantly recur and are open to anyone. The Greek term *logos* refers to a reality which is there, now and always, and is given true expression in the word appropriate to it.<sup>33</sup> In this sense there can be no *logos* of the future, unless the future is the continuation or regular recurrence of the present. If, however, the future were to bring something startlingly new, we have nothing to say of that, and nothing meaningful can be said of it either, for it is not in what is new and accidental, but only in things of an abiding and regularly recurring character that there can be logical truth.<sup>34</sup>

The eschaton cannot be represented; it defies closure; and words are inherently retrogressive. Having no future orientation, they cannot describe events which have yet to come to pass. “Eschatology” then becomes redefined, re-orientated towards the present. Whole sections of evangelical Systematic Theologies should simply be rewritten—or, better, left blank.

Moltmann does for Christian theology what Derrida and Rorty have done for philosophy, what *The X-Files* and Douglas Coupland do for popular culture. He denies that we can say anything meaningful about the future—or that we would want to if we could. Put more simply, he claims that the future is nothing more than a renewal of the present. At this point we should pause to note that Moltmann’s charge carries the same force no matter to which particular brand of Christian eschatology we subscribe. What unites us is the belief that the future, as the past, belongs to Christ. We believe that he is the Lord of past history and future hope, that his kingdom is most importantly a spiritual kingdom regardless of our beliefs about how that will be manifested

33. It is instructive to note that Moltmann uses *logos* in a way quite different from Luke in 1:2 of his gospel (see also note 32). Moltmann, with literary deconstructionists, makes it refer only to words whilst Luke makes clear by his use of “eye-witnesses” that the *logos* is a person. The famous first five verses of John’s gospel likewise imbue the *logos* with personality.

34. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM, 1967), pp. 16–17

at various times in the history of the world. So wherever we stand we need to ask ourselves whether there really is nothing we can say with certainty of the future.

The implications of Moltmann’s thought are not only for the future, however. The Christian lives in the overlapping of the ages, in that period before the old order has ended and in that period after which the new order has begun. The work of Christ, culminating in the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, has inaugurated this new age, and the Christian experiences in the present many of the blessings of the life to come, like the resurrection, for example, of his spirit. Thus in discussing the world to come, evangelical eschatologies do not anticipate something “startlingly new.”

Moltmann’s comments then come to have implications both for the Christian’s present life and his life to come. Moltmann himself is quite clear on this point:

Eschatology is always thought to deal with the end, the last day, the last word, the last act: God has the last word. But if eschatology were that and only that it would be better to turn one’s back on it altogether; for the last things spoil one’s taste for the penultimate ones, and the dreamed of, or hoped for, end of history robs us of our freedom among life’s many possibilities and our tolerance for all the things in history that are unfinished and provisional. We can no longer put up with earthly, limited and vulnerable life, and in our eschatological finality we destroy life’s fragile beauty. The person who presses forward to the end of life misses life itself.<sup>35</sup>

But rigorous and gracious criticism is hard to find. Within evangelicalism, Moltmann’s comments are continuing to set the direction for the study of the end. In winter 1999 editions of *Third Way* and *Books and Culture*, a flagship journal of the United States’ culture wars, Moltmann was embraced again by an unreflecting evangelicalism. This is understandable given that this more recent work on eschatology has an impressive and commendable emphasis on the glory of God. We need to be clear about what Moltmann means by his initially appealing remarks, however. He interprets our Lord’s declaration in Revelation 21:5 (“Behold I am making everything new”) as a renewal of the present rather than an entire re-creation—because “God will remain faithful to his creative resolve.”<sup>36</sup> This is a subtle but significant re-orientation of eschatology towards the present, refusing to see the end as containing the destruction of this life’s “fragile beauty.” For this reason the “hope” of which he is acclaimed as the theologian “is not the active hope for the future with which Abraham went out” but rather a “resisting, enduring expectation, capable of suffering, in a situation in which nothing more can be done to avert disaster.”<sup>37</sup> These last comments effectively destroy the relevance of Hebrews for the contemporary believer, and hint that the crisis underpinning Moltmann’s theology is similar to that being endured by popular culture and philosophy.

Richard Bauckham, Professor of New Testament at the University of St Andrews, has led the evangelical appropriation of Moltmann’s work in a series of scholarly works. But, while Bauckham’s work is a crucial resource for the student of contemporary theology, it has generally failed to actively engage with Moltmann’s view of Scripture. Reviewing his subject’s later work, however, Bauckham notes that Moltmann’s work features “elements of undisciplined specula-

35. Jürgen Moltmann (trans. Margaret Kohl), *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM Press 1996), pp. x-xi.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

tion” and comments that “his use of Biblical material seems increasingly to ignore historical-critical interpretation and leave his hermeneutical principles dangerously unclear.”<sup>38</sup> So in Moltmann’s theology, as in academic philosophy and popular culture, the same two elements occur: rejection of a coherent view of the end and distrust of established sources of authority.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Living at the beginning of the third millennium, contemporary Christians are compelled to engage with that social and cultural bankruptcy which has followed our society’s abandoning of the faith. Our neighbours’ historiography is a sterile patchwork of aimless cyclicism, computer turmoil,

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38. Richard Bauckham in David F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 308–9. See also Richard Bauckham, *Moltmann: Messianic Theology in the Making* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1987); “Jürgen Moltmann,” in David F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 293–310; *The*

sci-fi spirituality, and re-hashed conspiracy theories. Our apparently thoughtful evangelical brothers are increasingly embracing theories which tend to negate the very possibility of eschatology. Throughout this cultural landscape, a continual sense of crisis sustains secularism’s perennial apocalyptic moment. But throughout popular culture, philosophy and theology, any sense of purpose within these crises has largely been abandoned. As we seek to redeem this culture we must offer it a goal—the “now” and “not yet” of the triumphant kingdom of God. But we must be swift, for, like Mulder, our postmodern neighbours are groping for a metanarrative, and any teleology will do. Paul’s warning—that we should “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8)—has never been more timely. *C&S*

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*Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1995); “Must Christian Eschatology be Millenarian? A Response to Jürgen Moltmann,” in K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliot (eds.), “*The reader must understand*”: *Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (Leicester: Appollos, 1997), pp. 263–277.

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# Any Questions?

## WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

by Stephen C. Perks

“SPIRITUALITY” and “spiritual” are terms constantly used by Christians, yet seldom defined. No Christian would question the need for spiritual development, but what this means is left to the individual to work out. When spirituality is discussed and taught it is often vaguely defined at best, and the result is that spirituality is equated with a sort of mysticism, or spiritual experiences and charismatic gifts. Yet seldom is the subject explored from the biblical perspective. Even among charismatics there is often little exegesis of scriptural texts relating to spirituality (as opposed to texts relating to spiritual gifts); rather, assumptions are made about spirituality, which remains unexplored biblically. To be sure, spirituality is understood as being “in tune with the Lord” or “walking close to the Lord” etc., but again these ideas are often very vague and undefined. And now, not only are Christians and other people who are perceived as “religious” types using the term. Teachers in State schools, for example, are now held responsible for the intellectual, social, physical, moral and *spiritual* development of the child. But what does this mean? We now have New Age spirituality, which hardly sits well with Christian spirituality; though among evangelicals today all sorts of ideas about spirituality are popular. Celtic spirituality, for example, seems particularly popular at the moment—though I have not as yet found anyone who really seems to know what it is, at least sufficiently to be able to explain it to me. Hence it is just another type of mysticism.

Whatever notion of spirituality is adopted, it seems that being spiritual or spiritually mature is essential to knowing how to live the Christian life properly, especially when it comes to that old problem *guidance*. And here it is that the church so often finds herself adrift on a sea of changing ideas and fashions, tossed to and fro by all manner of strange phenomena claiming to be the latest work of the Spirit of God in our midst. Some get guidance from the Spirit directly, through impressions in the mind, “words from the Lord” and the like, while others evidently do not. Does this make the former more spiritually mature than the latter, who are less “in tune with the Spirit”? Doubtless to some it does, even if it is not overtly stated.

Then there is the common contrast between the spiritual and the intellectual, in which the mind or intellect is set up in some kind of antithesis to the spirit or spiritual understanding. Intellectual knowledge is often perceived as dangerous and detrimental to the development of spiritual understanding and the reception of Spirit-inspired guidance. In this perspective the use of the mind is rejected as a sort of fleshly temptation. In some charismatic churches and movements the concept of spirituality that prevails could perhaps be described more accurately as a kind of spiritualism, so important are beliefs about genealogies of demons and demon possession of particular human blood lines, problems with being afflicted with curses, deliverance ministry and the like. Even to question this

kind of spiritualism is often taken as sure sign that one is “not sensitive to the Spirit.” Such ideas seem more akin to animism than Christianity.

Yet when we look at the effects of such an understanding of spirituality we see not the spirit of a sound mind, the order and discipline that the Bible tells us should characterise the lives of those who are followers of Christ (1 Tim. 2:7), but rather the very opposite, i.e. a tendency to mental instability, disorder and even chaos that affects both congregational meetings and individuals. The “Toronto blessing” is a pertinent example. The nearest biblical incident of a man behaving like a beast I can think of is Nebuchadnezzar, who was driven to live like an animal until he acknowledged that sovereignty belongs to God (Dan. 4:28–37). Yet at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton, London, I saw men acting like animals under the pretense that they were receiving some blessing from the Holy Spirit. One man, who got up to give his testimony, was so constantly racked with a violent jerking of the knees and head that I thought initially he was severely disabled. As he gave his testimony, however, it became clear that he had no disability; his behaviour was a blessing from the Holy Spirit! When the “Toronto blessing” came upon the participating congregation as a whole at the end of the service I saw people running up and the down the aisles imitating cockerels, mooing like cows and imitating various other assorted farmyard animals. Along with this there was the jabber and insanity of various other “manifestations” recorded throughout history in times of “revival”: violent shaking, uncontrollable weeping, crying and laughing, stamping and padding. The anarchy and lack of discipline of such meetings is in stark contrast with the obedience to God’s law and the discipline and order that the Bible demands of believers in their worship. Even in small meetings and Bible studies those who claim to have the gift of “speaking in tongues” will continually babble away under their breath (with just enough volume to make sure everyone knows what they are doing), despite the fact that we are told clearly by Scripture to pray with the *mind* as well as the spirit (1 Cor. 14:15) and forbidden to speak in tongues without a translation (1 Cor. 14:28). And this contrast between obedience to Scripture and the reputed manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit, being “in tune with the Spirit” etc., has not diminished with the decline of the charismatic movement as such, but has in some respects become more common as the influence of charismatic ideas has become more widely diffused within evangelicalism, though in a more diluted form. The result is that evangelical churches are no nearer being able to act on biblical principles of guidance than they were before the advent of this era of spiritual gifts. And this great movement of the Spirit in the charismatic churches seems to have had no effect whatsoever on the decline of the church and of the faith in Britain.

When it comes to pastoral matters this situation only makes things worse. People sit around waiting for God to speak rather than seeking to understand and apply the biblical principles of life that have already been revealed in Scripture. The answer to all sorts of problems in the Christian life is seen as a new revelation from the Spirit rather than the development of a Christian mind through the study and understanding of Scripture.

So what is spirituality? What does it mean to live a spiritual life? How is spirituality to be defined biblically? The answer is given very clearly in Rom. 8:1–16, where walking in or according to the Spirit is contrasted with walking in the flesh. But what does it mean to walk in the Spirit? In itself this gets us no further. We still need an explanation. And which spirit is being referred to? Ours or the Holy Spirit? And Christians who use this term profusely should, at least these days, stop to consider how the term is used more generally, because non-Christians now use

the terminology of spirituality a great deal. What is spirituality to a non-Christian? Do we mean the same thing? Hardly. New Agers use the term, and unless we understand the difference and are able to explain it clearly to others who do not share our faith, our use of the term in the present cultural/religious climate will be misleading. Personally I try to avoid the term because of this, though its use by Christians prior to the advent of New Age spiritual ideas was not altogether well defined or helpful. And what of teachers who are to promote the spiritual development of their pupils?

Well, walking in the spirit could mean living according to our own spirit, i.e. getting in touch with our own spirit—the New Age idea of getting in tune with oneself at the deepest level. Or it could mean living in tune with the Holy Spirit. I shall take it as granted that for Christians the latter is the correct meaning. But this still leaves a lack of focus and room for much difference of interpretation and misunderstanding because what Christians believe about the Holy Spirit differs so much.

Fortunately, Paul does not leave us guessing about these questions. He explains what it means to walk in the Spirit very clearly. Interestingly, the criterion clearly set out by Paul as characterising living in the Spirit in contrast to living in the flesh is seldom mentioned in the context of discussion about spirituality, at least not in a positive sense. The criterion Paul gives us is *obedience to God’s law* (Rom. 8:7). The one who walks or lives in the flesh is hostile towards God, we are told, because the *mind* does not subject itself to the *law of God*.

Now this is interesting because discussion of spirituality among Christians, at least in my experience, seldom revolves around the criterion Paul uses here. Spirituality is not usually seen in terms of adherence to God’s law. More often the law of God is assumed mistakenly to be the “law of sin and death” mentioned in v. 2. Yet Paul shows clearly that the inability to subject ones *mind* to God’s *law* characterises those who walk according to the flesh, not those who walk according to the Spirit, because the law, he tells us in v. 14 of chapter 7, is *spiritual*. The one who walks in the Spirit is the one who is prepared to subject his mind and thus his whole life to God’s law, according to Paul. He is the spiritual person. Indeed, Paul even goes so far as to say that God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin in order that the requirements of the law might be fulfilled in those who walk in or according to the Spirit (8:3–4).

Clearly, therefore, when we come to understanding what spirituality is we must take into account this doctrine. If we fail to understand that salvation is essentially deliverance *from* bondage to sin (i.e. disobedience to God’s law) into obedience to God (as he has set down his will for man in his law) we shall fail also to understand the true nature of spirituality. Then all sorts of ideas foreign to the Bible, or biblical ideas that have been twisted in our understanding, will come to dominate our ideas of spirituality and guidance. Such foreign and twisted ideas have been common in the church through the ages and are still common.

We are now in a better position to answer the question “What is spirituality?” from a biblical perspective.

1. The spiritual man, i.e. the one who “walks in the Spirit,” as defined by the Bible, is first one who is a son of God: “For as many as [i.e. all who are] led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). The spiritual person is one who has received the Spirit of God, who has been delivered from his sin, i.e. from his bondage to disobedience to God, through faith in Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit, who has received the Spirit of adoption, and has God as his father (Rom. 8:15–16). First of all, therefore, to be spiritual, or spiritually minded (let us not forget that the spiritual man is one whose *mind* is subject to God’s law), is to trust God in Christ for

salvation. It is to recognise that one cannot save oneself by one's own works, one's own righteousness, and it is to trust oneself solely to Christ as the one who delivers us from our sins. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of *faith*, trust in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 4:13–14). Therefore those who are Spirit-led are those who trust Christ for salvation. We shall go on to consider the necessity of obedience as the fruit of this faith; but here I want to stress that the beginning of true spirituality is the abandonment of our own righteousness, our own works, as a means of reconciliation with God; it is to trust oneself totally to Christ. Salvation is the gift of God in Christ, not the reward of self-righteousness. Those who will be saved must turn to God in Christ and trust in him as the one who delivers men from sin. Only this work of grace in the human heart by the Holy Spirit, granting faith to God's elect, makes one a spiritual person, i.e. one led by, or living according to, the Holy Spirit. This faith is the gift of God, not the product of the human will or the reward of our own works: "For ye are saved by grace through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not by works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8–9). The spiritual person is one who has received the gift of faith in Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit in his heart, and who is therefore a son of God. The spiritual person is one who has been freed, delivered, from the power of sin and death by the Spirit of life in Christ, and who is thus no longer under condemnation for sin (Rom. 8:2).

2. This deliverance from sin involves a complete change of mind. The word *repentance* in the New Testament (*μετάνοια*) means a *change of mind*. Repentance is the changing of one's mind about God and his will for one's life. It should manifest itself therefore in the whole of a person's outlook.

The Bible has much to say about the mind. Many Christians today have a wrong understanding of the mind. As we have seen, the mind is often seen in some kind of antithesis with the spirit or spiritual understanding. This perspective is foreign to the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible defines true spirituality as a *mind* set on the law of God (Rom. 8:6–7). You know the old proverb: "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." A man who says he is Christian and believes in Christ, but whose mind has not been changed, is a man who has not repented. Christianity is not a form of fire insurance against being thrown into hell. It is not something we take on just in case something nasty happens, like the Last Judgement. It does not consist in the saying of mere words or creeds. It involves a complete change of *mind*, a turning away from what had been our unbelieving attitudes, views, aspirations etc. to *submission of the mind to God's law*. It is a change of mind.

Now, this emphasis on the mind is a biblical emphasis. Paul describes the unbeliever as one given up to a depraved *mind* (Rom. 1:28). The carnal *mind*, he tells us, is hostile towards God (Rom. 8:7). Non-believers live in the vanity, or futility, of their *minds* (Eph. 4:17). Paul warns the Colossians not to be misled by those who have a "fleshly *mind*" (Col. 2:18); he tells them they were once alienated and hostile in *mind* towards God and therefore involved in evil deeds (Col. 1:21). The unbelieving Israelites were people whose *minds* were hardened (2 Cor. 3:14). Non-believers have their *minds* blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). Paul expresses his concern for the Corinthians lest their *minds* should be led astray (2 Cor. 11:3). Peter writes to Christians in order to stir their *minds* (2 Pet. 3:1).

In contrast with this unbelieving mind, Christians are those to whom God has given the Spirit of a sound *mind*<sup>1</sup> (2 Tim. 1:7). The new covenant is one in which God puts his *laws* into our *minds* and hearts (Heb. 8:10). We are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our *mind* (Mt. 22:37). Christians

are those who have left aside the old self with its corruptions, lusts and deeds, and are being renewed in the spirit of their *minds* (Eph. 4:22–23). God shall keep the hearts and *minds* of believers in Christ (Phil. 4:7). Peter tells us to gird up our *minds* for action (1 Pet. 1:13).

The Christian is one who has changed his *mind*, whose mind has been renewed. Spirituality is the development of a renewed mind that is subject to God's law. Guidance in the Christian life, therefore, comes from the development of a renewed understanding that is subject to God's word, i.e. governed, *guided*, by God's law.

3. This change of mind resulting from belief in Christ leads to a different kind of lifestyle. What is this lifestyle? As already mentioned, it is a life that is subject to God's law, which is God's revealed standard of justice or holiness. As we have already seen, Paul shows us that the spiritual mind is a mind that is subject to God's law (Rom. 8:6–8). But there is more.

(i) Paul says that the fruit of the Spirit, i.e. the fruit of living in conformity with the Spirit, is *love*, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22–23). (Notice that he does not say that the fruit of the Spirit is pietism.) And he says elsewhere: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity [i.e. love, *agape*], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [*agape*]" (1 Cor. 13:13). Love (*agape*), we are told, of God and of one's neighbour, is the sum of the whole law and of the prophets (Mt. 22:37–40). But what is the love (*agape*) spoken of here? Paul tells us plainly: love (*agape*) is the fulfilling, i.e. the *keeping*, of the law (Rom. 13:10). The context makes this even plainer. Paul says "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another has fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8). But what does this mean? Paul explains immediately: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended [i.e. summed up] in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Rom. 13:9). Why? Because "love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling [i.e. the *keeping*]<sup>2</sup> of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Christ tells us: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15); and John tells us that we know we have come to know Christ by keeping his commandments (1 Jn 2:3) and that anyone who claims to be a Christian but who does not keep the commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him (1 Jn 2:4). The one who has the fruit of the Spirit is one who loves both God and his neighbour, and love is the keeping of the law, both with respect to God and one's neighbour. Here again, therefore, spirituality, i.e. living in conformity with the Spirit, is defined as obedience to God's law.

(ii) We get the same result if we look at this from another angle, that of the purpose of the sending of the Holy Spirit. Christ says: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove [i.e. convict] the world of sin, and of judgement, and of righteousness" (Jn. 16:7–8). The spiritual person is one who lives in conformity with the Spirit, who is sensitive to the will of the Spirit in our lives. But what is it that the Spirit comes to do? To convict the world of sin, judgement and righteousness. Let us look a little more closely now at these three convictions that the Holy Spirit comes to work in the world.

(a) The Holy Spirit comes to convict the world of sin. But what is sin? The Bible leaves us in no doubt about what sin is: "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 Jn, 3:4). Thus, where there is no law, neither is there transgression (Rom. 4:15). The

1. On the meaning of the term translated as *sound mind* by the AV in this text see the discussion at note 8 below.

2. Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1901), p. 518b.



Spirit comes to convict the world of sin, to reprove man for his disobedience to God's law, which is God's revealed will for man.

(b) The Holy Spirit comes to convict the world of judgement. What does this mean? The word used (*κρίσις*), from which we get the English word *crisis*, means *a separating, selection, or a decision, judgement*.<sup>3</sup> The Spirit comes to convict the world of the judgement that must necessarily come to a world of sinners who have disobeyed a righteous God. God is not politically correct. He discriminates. And the basis on which he discriminates, the criterion he uses to discriminate, is his righteous law, which is perfect justice. Those who transgress are judged and condemned. But for those who trust in Christ the judgement fell on Christ at Calvary. This is what it means for Christ to bear our sin.

(c) The Holy Spirit comes to convict the world of righteousness. But what is righteousness? The word used for righteousness in the New Testament (*δικαιοσύνη*) means "conformity to the Divine will in purpose, thought, and action."<sup>4</sup> But then what is the divine will? Where do we find it? How do we know what God requires of us, how he requires us to purpose, think and act? By looking into the perfect law of God, which is a perfect transcription of God's righteousness. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7). "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19:8). "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is a light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Pr. 6:23). Righteousness is conformity to God's will as revealed in his law, in purpose, thought and action. Thus, righteousness means *justice*, since what is just is defined by God's law. The Spirit, therefore, comes to convict us of righteousness, to show us not only that we are sinners, disobedient to God's holy law, but that we must also conform to the law if we are to be righteous.

Now, someone will say that our righteousness is Christ and that we are justified by his righteousness, not our own. This is true. This is the gospel. But Christ's righteousness is perfect conformity to the divine will in purpose, thought and action. The definition of righteousness is the same. We are saved by his righteousness, by means of his substitutionary life and death on our behalf. But the nature of righteousness remains unchanged. And though we are not delivered from our sins by our own law keeping, i.e. our own righteousness, but by Christ's righteousness, we are delivered from our sin so that the requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, i.e. so that we might live obediently to God's law (Rom. 8:4). Thus Paul says "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2). In other words, how can those who have been delivered from sin, from bondage to disobedience to God's law, continue to live disobedient lives. The life of the believers is to be characterised by obedience, not disobedience. Our obedience is the response of faith, not the cause of it. Obedience to God's law does not save us, but it is still required of us, and the Spirit comes to convict us of this, to show us that we must obey and to lead us into the truth (Jn. 16:13) that we might obey God's law. Therefore Paul says that by faith, i.e. through faith, "we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

In these three particulars, therefore, we see that the work of the Holy Spirit is a work of enlightenment, but enlightenment of a specific kind, namely a work of *conviction*. The Spirit does not come to enlighten the world with mystical revelations and spurious spiritualistic experiences. He comes to convict us that we have sinned, transgressed against God's righteous law,

God's *spiritual* law, that God judges those who transgress against his law, and that his righteousness is the standard of behaviour, the rule of life that he requires of us. The law shows us what it means to conform to the divine will in purpose, thought and action. Of course we are convicted also that we cannot escape the judgement that awaits those who disobey God's law except by faith in Christ. So Jesus says, "He [the Holy Spirit] shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (Jn. 16:14). The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, judgement and righteousness, all concepts that relate to God's righteousness as revealed in his will for man, his law.

So the one who is Spirit-led in the way he lives is one who is convicted, convinced, of the righteousness of God's law, of man's sin in disobeying it, of the inevitability of God's righteous judgment against that disobedience, and of man's need to conform to that law in purpose, thought and action; and he is one who knows, to whom the Holy Spirit has revealed, that only in Christ is there forgiveness and reconciliation with God. This is the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads men.

Being Spirit-filled or Spirit-led by this definition begins now to look much more familiar, more recognisable as the kind of behaviour that the Bible requires of us. Being Spirit-led is not being led astray by all sorts of spurious experiences into some kind of "Christian" spiritualism such as we often see in the churches that claim to have direct revelations from God—revelations that seem to lead people into ever more bizarre and disturbing behaviour, mental instability, the breakdown of personal and congregational discipline and increasing chaos, so that the church begins to resemble some kind of mystical cult rather than the congregation of a people who have received the Spirit of discipline (2 Tim. 1:7).

The Bible has no time for the heretical notion that the law of God and the Spirit of God are in opposition to each other. The law is spiritual (Rom. 7:14) and the Spirit comes to convict the world of the need for conformity to God's law, that the requirements of that law might be fulfilled in those who walk in the Spirit, i.e. those who are spiritual (Rom. 8:3–6).

But what of Paul's statement that in Christ we are set free from the "law of sin and death"? (Rom. 8:2). The law of sin and death spoken of here is *not* the law of God. How could it be? Paul has told us that by faith we *establish* the law of God, that the law is spiritual, that the Spirit comes to lead us into conformity with that law. What then is "law of sin and death"? It is simply the *ruling power* of sin and death. Paul does not refer to God's law as being a law of sin and death but rather to the dominating power of sin in producing death. The "law of sin and death" is the ruling power, the dominating influence of sin in its capacity to produce death.

This is not a novel interpretation. For example, C. E. B. Cranfield writes: "It would seem that Paul is here using the word 'law' metaphorically, to denote exercised power, authority, control, and that he means by 'the law of sin,' the power, the authority, the control exercised over us by sin. It is a forceful way of making the point that the power which sin has over us is a terrible travesty, a grotesque parody, of that authority over us which belongs by right to God's holy law. Sin exercising such authority over us is a hideous usurpation of the prerogative of God's law."<sup>5</sup> Likewise John Murray: "'law' in this instance is used in the sense of rule or principle of action. The usual signification of law, however, as that which propounds and demands action need not be suppressed. 'The law of sin' may be conceived of as not only impelling to action that is antithetical to the law of God but also as dictating such action"<sup>6</sup> And

3. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1986), p. 258.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

5. *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1975), Vol. I, p. 364.

6. *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1959), Vol. I, p. 264f.

Calvin says: “I would not dare, with some interpreters, take *the law of sin and death* to mean the law of God.”<sup>7</sup>

There is, therefore, no antithesis between the Spirit and the law of God; rather, the antithesis is between the Spirit of life, who comes to free us from disobedience to God’s law (sin) and to enable us to obey God’s law, and the law of sin and death (i.e. the ruling power of sin), which leads us to disobey God’s law.

4. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of a *sound mind*, or a *disciplined mind*. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7—note again the reference to love [*agape*], which is defined biblically as obedience to God’s commandments [see 3 (i) above]). Modern translations usually have “. . . of power, and love, and *discipline*.” Ultimately it comes to the same thing since discipline, the ability to correct oneself according to God’s word, is essential to wisdom and thus to a sound mind.<sup>8</sup>

What is clear from this is that a mind that is Spirit-filled or Spirit-led is a disciplined mind. It is not characterised by instability regarding one’s understanding and practice of the faith. The Spirit is also a Spirit of order. Congregational meetings that are spiritual or Spirit-led will be orderly meetings, meetings characterised by discipline (cf. 1 Cor. 14:40). Paul counsels the Corinthians that non-believers who see the church acting disorderly will think they are mad (1 Cor. 14:23). So they are to make sure everything happens in an orderly fashion. Disorderliness and anarchy in church meetings is *not* a mark of the Spirit, nor is disorderliness and indiscipline a mark of the Spirit in the individual. The Spirit-led person is one whose life is characterised by discipline in the faith, including stability in understanding and practice of the faith, i.e. wisdom (see note 8 below).

This gives us a very clear benchmark against which to assess claims that people or churches are being led by the Spirit. Is this spirit of discipline what we find among those individuals and churches that claim to be led by the Spirit, who claim that they have received directions and revelations from the Holy Spirit? If not then the claim to be Spirit-led is vain. Those who engage in disorderly and chaotic meetings, and those with disorderly and chaotic lives have not understood the meaning of spirituality. Indeed, we tend to find quite the reverse, namely, that those who proclaim loudest that their churches and lives are Spirit-led tend to display greater disorder, an observable lack of discipline, lack of understanding and an inability to act in terms of biblical wisdom (immaturity in the faith). One thinks immediately of the “Toronto blessing” but this is merely the latest fad in a long established tradition of idiocy in the charismatic movement. My experience and the experience of many others is that those who claim a never-ending stream of revelations and “words” from the Holy Spirit are least concerned of all about knowing, understanding and applying God’s law to their lives and churches in order that they might live in a disciplined way according to biblical wisdom. It would not be going too far to

say that on the whole charismatic churches least of all can be said to be characterised as disciplined churches, and often an element of mental instability can be observed (and I think this latter observation can be explained to some extent by the fact that the unbiblical ideas of spirituality that tend to prevail in such churches are inherently destabilising mentally). Least of all could it be said of charismatic churches that they are characterised by the spirit of a sound mind.

I have been asked to discuss the nature of spirituality and to explain my assertion that to be spiritual is to trust and obey God. This is not meant to be a pogrom against charismatic churches. I have written on this subject because I have been asked to do so. But if I am to acquit myself properly of this task I must deal with the relevant issues pertaining to it. I must highlight the serious problems relating to the practice of faulty spirituality, not because I wish to lambast particular people or churches (I do not wish to do so), but because misunderstanding of what constitutes biblical spirituality has issued in a serious failure to practise the Christian faith properly, a failure that is particularly relevant to the charismatic churches, and a failure that seriously inhibits the church’s mission in the world as this is defined biblically. All of us fall short. But knowing that we do and where we fall short is half the battle in overcoming our lack of true spirituality, and this is impossible if rejection of the use of the mind in accordance with biblical teaching is automatically viewed with suspicion or as unspiritual. Why? Because, as we have seen, it is through the renewing of the *mind* by the Spirit that we grow in our faith and in our understanding of the faith and thus become more spiritual in our thoughts and actions.

So what is a sound mind or a disciplined mind, biblically speaking? What is spiritual discipline?

(i) Spiritual discipline is the ability to use scriptural wisdom as a means of guidance. It is not reliance on every impression that might pop into one’s mind as a means of guidance, nor is it being tossed about with every whim or fashion of “spiritual” experience that blows in one’s direction. Rather, it is the disciplining of the mind according to God’s word.

The most difficult battle that anyone ever has to face is the conquest of the mind. And it is here that we see the Holy Spirit at work in the sanctifying process, because as a man thinks, so he is (Pr. 23:7). We are what we think, the Bible tells us, not what we eat. The way we think determines the way we speak and act. If we are to conquer our words and our actions we must first conquer our minds. Renewing of the mind by the Holy Spirit is what leads to obedient living, i.e. sanctified living.

This spiritual discipline involves understanding God’s word and the ability to apply it. This is not mere theological knowledge, knowledge of or commitment to Reformed creeds and doctrine, as some seem to think. Knowledge of doctrine, valid as it is, even vital as it is, does not on its own constitute true spirituality. True spirituality is more a question of developing a Christian mind, a Christian world-and-life view, and living in terms of this, something that Reformed churches as much as any brand of Christianity tend to depreciate. This is a matter of developing a biblical wisdom (to use John Peck’s definition), i.e. the discerning ability to recognise one’s situation and apply biblical principles of life appropriately. This is something that is *learned*. We put on Christ, Paul tells us: “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ . . .” (Rom. 13:14). Wisdom is acquired through learning and practice in the submission of one’s mind to God’s word.

Neither is wisdom something that exists in a vacuum, i.e. divorced from an understanding of the world in which we live. It cannot co-exist well with retreat and isolation from the world because as a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives the purpose of the acquisition of biblical wisdom is to enable us to live

7. John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and Thessalonians* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1961), p. 157.

8. It is worth noting, however, that according to Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* this word (*σωφρονισμός*) “has a definite act[ive] sence [*sic*] in secular lit[erature]: ‘Making to understand,’ ‘making wise.’ Inasmuch as understanding is the basis of virtue and an upright life (Plat. Charm., 164d) it also means ‘admonition to do better,’ Strabo, 1, 2, 3; Plin. Cato Maior, 5, 1 (I, 338 f.); Jos. Bell., 2, 9; Ant., 17, 210; 18, 128; Philo Leg. All., III, 193. More rarely it can mean ‘discretion’ in the sense of ‘moderation,’ ‘discipline.’ Plut. Quaestionum Convivialium, VII, 8, 3 (II, 712c); Iambl. Vit. Pyth., 30, 174” (Ulrich Luck, “*σωφρονισμός*” in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971, trans. G. W. Bromiley], Vol. VII, p. 1104).

redemptively *in* the world, i.e. to live in such a way that we bring ourselves and the world in which we are placed and to which we relate continually into subjection to Christ. We are commanded to go out into all the world with the message of Christ (Mk. 16:15). Thus, pietism, for example, is not a manifestation of biblical wisdom. It is rather the opposite of biblical wisdom, namely an attempt to escape in some way from the world, to abandon the world or at least significant aspects of it. Pietism, therefore, is the opposite of living redemptively in the whole of life. The purpose of biblical wisdom, or the development of a Christian mind, a Christian world-and-life view, is to enable us to live redemptively in the world and therefore transform it, bringing everything we touch into subjection to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3–5).

(ii) A disciplined mind or a spirit of self-discipline leads to *reasonable* service. Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable* service” (Rom. 12:1). Some translations have “spiritual worship” instead of “reasonable service.” The words used (*λογικὴν λατρείαν*) mean “reasonable” or “rational service.” The AV is the better translation. The word translated as “reasonable” is the word from which we derive the English words *logic* and *logical*. According to John Murray “The service here in view is worshipful service and the apostle characterizes it as ‘rational’ because it is worship that derives its character as acceptable to God from the fact that it enlists our *mind*, our *reason*, our *intellect*. It is rational in contrast with what is mechanical and automatic. A great many of our bodily functions do not enlist volition on our part. But the worshipful service here enjoined must constrain intelligent volition. The lesson to be derived from the term ‘rational’ is that we are not ‘Spiritual’ in the biblical sense except as the use of our bodies is characterized by conscious, *intelligent*, consecrated devotion to the service of God.”<sup>9</sup> The word “service” does not refer merely to worship services, either privately or in the church, but rather to a whole life of service to God. Paul is not speaking merely about what we do in church or at Bible studies or in family devotions; he is speaking about the character of our whole lives, which are to be lives of reasonable, *rational* service to God.

This has some significant implications for the way we live our lives and the way we worship together in congregational meetings. According to Paul here there is no room in the Christian life of service for the mindless emotional binges that have become common in the “worship” of many evangelical churches, nor insane antics such as those to be observed at “Toronto blessing” meetings. Our service to God, our life of working for his kingdom in all its aspects, is to be *rational*. Mysticism and gnosticism are not part of the Christian religion. The Christian faith is a reasonable, a *rational* faith. Therefore we are required to be able to give a reasoned defence of the faith to all who ask (1 Pet. 3:15).

Here again we see that the use of the mind in defending the faith, which the Bible commends, indeed demands of us, is often incorrectly deprecated by Christians who have come to believe that defending the faith with reasoned argument is not a spiritual activity because it involves intellectual effort, and intellectual effort is perceived often as the antithesis of being spiritual. Spirituality in this perspective is divorced from the use of the intellect. The Bible denies this dichotomy. The spiritual person, i.e. the Spirit-led person, is one who is always ready to give a *reason* for the hope that is in him, i.e. a reasoned defence of the faith. God requires the service of our *minds* in the whole of our life of service. To fail to use our minds in the service of God is to offer a worship that is not acceptable. Acceptable

worship to God is rational worship, worship that “enlists our *mind*, our *reason*, our *intellect*.”

(iii) Spirituality, or the Spirit-led life, is a life of dominion in our callings to bring all nations under the discipline of Christ (the Great Commission, Mt. 28:18–20) and all areas and aspects of life into conformity with his word (the Cultural Mandate, Gen. 1:28).

I said earlier that wisdom cannot be divorced from the world in which we live since its purpose is to enable us to live redemptively in the world for God’s glory and in his service. As far as this life is concerned we cannot be spiritual unless we are engaged in the life of the world. Why? Because our calling as God’s people, the new humanity in Christ, is to bring all things into subjection to God’s word (Mk. 16:15; 2 Cor. 10:5). The spiritual person, or Spirit-led person, is the person who is obedient to the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate. Our purpose in serving God here on earth is to claim the world for Christ. Dominion is a biblical principle, but without biblical wisdom there is no dominion, only domination, and as Christ made clear, we are not to pursue domination (Mt. 20:25). The Spirit-led life is a life of dominion under God’s law, not domination, and this is something that especially those who see themselves in positions of spiritual authority should remember, because spiritual domination is a snare and a temptation to many pastors. Christ does not call teachers and pastors to bully and manipulate their flocks like little popes, nor does he give them divine authority to demand absolute obedience to their every whim and diktat. The spiritual man is not a man characterised by fear, but by boldness, power and discipline (2 Tim. 1:7). Boldness without discipline can easily turn into brashness; and it can turn into bullying among those who aspire to be spiritual leaders in the church. Control freaks have vandalised the church throughout much of history, just as their counterparts in the world of politics have ruined nations. It was said of John Knox that he feared God so much that he feared no man alive—and he suffered at the hands of men himself. But the fear of God brings humility also and self-discipline. Without the fear of God and wisdom there can be no true dominion and thus no reclaiming of the world, which is Christ’s inheritance, and our inheritance in him (Mt. 5:5). Our cultural mandate is to exercise dominion over the earth under God as his vicegerent, not to exercise domination over other people’s lives. The former builds the kingdom of God, the latter builds mere human empires (whether of the political or the ecclesiastical variety), all of which will perish before the kingdom of God. Our focus must be kingdom-oriented and we must build the kingdom of God with spiritual means and wage war against our enemy with spiritual weapons, i.e. in obedience to God’s law (2 Cor. 10:3–5).

Neither are we to fear Satan. Many there are whose Christian lives are almost dominated by talk and thought about Satan, whose churches are forever getting involved with demon deliverance and blaming everything that goes wrong in their lives on attacks of the Devil, from burning the Sunday dinner to adultery. The world for these people has become demonised. This is not a Christian view of the world, and in fact is more akin to animism. The mind-set or world-view produced by this perspective is neither healthy nor biblical, indeed it is the opposite of biblical wisdom. Satan has no power that is not given him by God. Our lives are to be governed by our relationship to God in Christ, by conformity to his will as revealed in his law. If we observe this rule of spirituality we need have no fear of Satan.

The spiritual person is one who works for dominion in Christ by applying biblical principles of wisdom and discipline in the whole of life. As he does so he develops a Christian mind, a Christian world-and-life view, and this enables him to face

9. Murray, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 112; my emphasis.

COMPARISON OF BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY WITH NON-BIBLICAL “CHRISTIAN” AND PAGAN SPIRITUALITY	
BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY	NON-BIBLICAL “CHRISTIAN” AND PAGAN SPIRITUALITY
—based on public revealed truth addressed to all men	—based on private revelations
—rational/reasonable —geared to understanding and applying God’s word and serving God by building his kingdom	—irrational/mystical and Gnostic—has meaning for and can be understood only by the initiated —geared to getting in tune with the self and realising one’s potential
—engaged in the world, bringing it into subjection to Christ’s law —Great Commission/Cultural Mandate	—retreatist/pietistic —not in the world but probably of it!
Guidance: wisdom oriented—concerned with applying biblical principles and doctrine —oriented to obedience to God’s law and understanding his revealed word, developing a Christian mind or Christian world-view	Guidance: by means of impressions and feelings

those situations in life that are difficult and for which he needs guidance by using his Christian mind in terms of biblical wisdom to determine how he should act. This is how true spirituality is developed.

The chart above summarises the issues discussed in this essay and contrasts biblical spirituality with the prevailing features of many spurious ideas of spirituality that are currently popular, both in the church and in the world.

To conclude: spirituality is a term much abused and misunderstood to mean many different things. Christian spirituality must be defined biblically. If we are to develop spiritually, rather than being led astray with every wind of spurious doctrine that blows our way, we must seek to understand the meaning of spirituality in terms of God’s revealed word.

In terms of biblical teaching the spiritual man is: 1. a son of God, i.e. redeemed by God’s grace in Christ through faith. He is one who has the Spirit of faith and trusts Christ for salvation. 2. He has thoroughly changed his mind, repented, i.e. turned away from his sin to Christ and wishes to live the whole of his life according to God’s will. He is one who is being

renewed in his *mind*. 3. He has turned to God’s law as the divinely revealed pattern for his life and therefore seeks to understand it and apply it to his life. 4. He is disciplining himself according to God’s word, (i) by seeking to develop a Christian mind, a Christian wisdom or world-and-life view, which will guide him through life, (ii) by seeking to render a reasonable, a rational service to God in the whole of life, enabling him to give a reasonable defence of the faith to those who ask it of him, and (iii) by seeking to exercise dominion in following Christ by being obedient to the Great Commission and the Cultural Mandate across the whole spectrum of life. Now all this can be summed up in a short sentence: To be spiritual is to trust and obey God. Spirituality is not a mystical feeling, or spiritual revelations, or Gnostic insight. The one who is led by the Spirit is the one who trusts and obeys God. In order to enable us to trust and obey, the Holy Spirit renews our minds and hearts. Thus, to put it another way, the spiritual person is the one whose heart and mind has been renewed by the Holy Spirit and whose life proceeds from this renewed mind. For as a man thinks, so he is (Pr. 23:7). *C&S*

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# Book Reviews

THE DECLINE OF EASTERN CHRISTIANITY  
UNDER ISLAM: FROM JIHAD TO DHIMMITUDE  
BY BAT YE’OR

London: Associated University Presses, 1996, paperback,  
522 pages, £15, ISBN 08386-3688-8

REVIEWED BY JOHN PECK

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BAT YE’OR is a British citizen, born in Egypt, who has established a reputation as a recognised expert. This is her fifth published book on this subject. I found it a deeply disturbing

book. It is a carefully documented historical study of the experience of subject peoples under Islamic government. Incidentally, but very significantly, it shows the processes by which those peoples (especially Christians and Jews) became subject. The author begins by surveying the circumstances of the rise and territorial expansion of Islam. In particular she explains the origin, strategies, and policies of Islam’s *jihad* (“holy war”). She shows how it arose and took its form from the necessities of survival for Mohammed’s refugees in Medina, in the context of the “warlike nomadism” which was endemic in the Middle East. Mecca had rejected God’s messenger, and therefore it was justifiable to raid caravans that were trading with it. Subsequent jurists established rules of war which regulated

such activity; Bat Ye'or is at pains to stress that at the time it was highly beneficial to Bedouin society, curbing the barbarities of contemporary warfare.

The relationship with the Jews of Medina and the Khaybar oasis became the precedent for Islam's special treatment of "the peoples of the Book." She sums up the basis of Moslem expansion thus: "The *jihad* provided non-Muslims with an alternative: conversion or tribute; refusal forced the Muslims to fight them till victory. Arab idolaters had to choose between death and conversion; as for Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians, if they paid tribute and accepted the conditions of conquest, they could buy back their right to life, freedom of worship, and security of property" (p. 38; Bat Ye'or had already pointed out that this only meant *possession*, not *ownership*). But this, too, was a moral advance for the time.

The book goes on to examine in some detail the "processes of Islamization": the forced conversions, the application of the *shariah* (the Islamic system of law), the contract of protection (*dhimma*) in return for tribute. The early process of conquest makes horrendous reading. The normal strategy was to begin with *razzias* (seasonal raids), which devastated the country districts, weakened the peasantry, and instilled such terror as to create a flow of refugees which further destabilised the society, in preparation for a full military onslaught on the towns. A typical effect of resistance overcome is given by a description of the treatment of the town of Amorium in Anatolia: "When Amorium was ransacked (838) and surrendered by a Muslim traitor, the caliph Mu'tasim had four thousand inhabitants put to the sword; women and children sold into slavery were deported; Greek captives, who could not be deported, were killed on the spot. A prisoners' revolt was put down by the extermination of 6000 Greeks" (p. 48f.).

Our writer, however, points out that "massacre, slavery, burning, pillage, destruction and the claiming of tribute were the common practices during the period under consideration of every army whether Greek, Latin, or Slav. Only the excess, the regular repetition and systematisation of the destruction, codified by theology, distinguishes the *jihad* . . ."

The process of conquest is described in two stages, first by the Arabs, and then from the eleventh century on, by Mongols and Ottoman Turks. The consolidation of the Moslem conquests presented some special difficulties. Since it was largely the work of nomadic tribes who easily fought among themselves, and the method of conquest involved considerable devastation, the period of consolidation was characterised by considerable anarchy. Christendom was useless in the situation, torn as it was by bitter religious and political conflicts. Sometimes Moslem rulers were appealed to as rescuers in such circumstances. Wholesale defections took place especially by the non-conforming victims of Byzantine intolerance. Bat Ye'or quotes a modern Greek historian to this effect: "[Islamized Christians] spiritually reborn into the Islamic world, became the State's most disciplined, zealous and able soldiers. It was they who dealt the Byzantine empire its final and most decisive death blows. It was they who were the most merciless persecutors of their fellow countrymen and former coreligionists. It was they who contributed most signally to the organization, extension, and consolidation of the Ottoman state."

An account of the process of colonisation and Islamization in which *dhimmitude* was the formative factor, takes the book to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As *dhimmis*, the leaders among the conquered Christians and Jews administered their territories, and in particular, collected the tribute necessary for the "protected" peoples to survive. In the ever-present threat from marauding Bedouins and Turks, Moslem rule offered the only hope of order. This section of the book concludes, "The inferior status of Jews and Christians under

Islam varied depending on time and place, but in traditionalist countries like Yemen, it survived till the 20th century. In 1856, the Ottoman sultan, under pressure from the European powers, proclaimed the equality of all his subjects. In Algeria and Morocco, it was the European colonization that abolished the inferior status of the Jews . . ." (p. 68).

The next two chapters go into the implications of *dhimmitude* in theory and practice. In particular, reference is made to contemporary writers who paint a very different picture from the idealised one found in the most quoted Moslem works of the time. Taxation was bitterly oppressive for the peasantry. In many cases it was arbitrarily and humiliatingly imposed, sometimes almost as a protection racket (akin to the experience of Christians in upper Egypt today), and often exacted with appalling brutality. The status of non-Muslims, including the *dhimmi* under the law, was precarious in the extreme. They could not own land, only, in effect, rent it from the State. In the courts the oath of a *dhimmi* against a Muslim was always regarded as invalid. This was particularly serious since an accusation of blasphemy could never be effectively defended. The implications of such social inferiority are then explored in the realms of worship, religious toleration, and social discrimination. The second chapter concentrates on Moslem strategies of Islamization as the environment in which the *dhimmi* population had to survive.

There follows what for this reader was the most depressing chapter of the book. It describes the relationships existing between the various *dhimmi* communities; and it is clear that the animosities which prepared the ground for Moslem supremacy continued unabated. The writer is at pains to show the various circumstances under which Muslim rule was beneficent; and at this point, I personally felt some appreciation of that fact!

The last four chapters cover the period from 1820 to the present day, expounding the influence of the growth of nationalistic ambitions, European empires and democratic ideologies. Finally, there is a consideration of the nature and implications of "*dhimmitude*" as a historical and political phenomenon, the psychology of it as an institution, and the nature of tolerance and oppression.

By this time, we have reached the conclusion. But this is only page 265! There follow some 200+ pages of documentation, notes, and indices. This writer leaves nothing to chance; you can see where she gets her information. It is not easy reading, but the style of the translation is excellent in its lucidity; the typeface is comfortable to read with hardly any misprints, and with useful chapter subdivisions. The text is sprinkled with engraving-type illustrations, the relevance of which was not always apparent to me, but which lend a certain atmosphere to the text. And at £15, the paperback is a real bargain.

I have said that it is a disturbing book. There are several reasons for this. First, it convincingly and explosively destroys the myth that in the golden age of Islam, Christians and Jews were treated with generous tolerance. A typical passage from a child's book on history may illustrate this: "In 762 Al-Mansur, the leader of the Islamic world, built a new capital city of Baghdad . . . a centre of learning and culture . . . in which scholars studied mathematics and translated the writings of the ancient Greeks into Arabic. Christian and Jewish scholars were welcomed because Islam was tolerant of other religions . . . Arab medicine was very advanced . . ."

The facts, as Bat Ye'or uncovers them, are that Christian and Jewish scholars and leaders were accepted and used because they had sufficient status and influence to pay the *dhimmi* tribute, and often could not be dispensed with. But the common peasantry often could not afford it, and were accordingly without any legal rights or protection whatever. Furthermore, even those who could had a precarious status; their

security rested largely on the whim of the local governor. If envy or prejudice aroused the populace to violence, they were frequently forced to flee to somewhere where for a while they could live unmolested. It is, of course, a kind of tolerance; but not what we normally understand by the word.

Secondly, it demonstrates that historically Islam has consistently functioned within a mind-set derived from its founding documents, in which the world is divided between “the abode of Islam” and “the abode of the sword,” that is to say, between that which conforms to Islamic law and that which is an enemy to be destroyed or reduced to servitude. True, the Koran says that there should be no compulsion in religion, but against that are all the verses which insist that those who oppose must be subdued. The inevitable implication is that *jihad* is a religious duty. Jacques Ellul in his foreword sharpens the issue: “This war is a religious duty. It will probably be said that every religion in its expanding phase carries the risk of war, that history records hundred of religious wars and it is now a commonplace to make this connection. Hence religious passion is sometimes expressed in this manner. But it is, in fact, ‘passion’—it concerns mainly a fact which it would be easy to demonstrate does not correspond to the fundamental message of the religion. This disjuncture is obvious for Christianity. In Islam, however, *jihad* is a religious obligation. It forms part of the duties that the believer must fulfil. It is Islam’s *normal* path to expansion. And this is found repeatedly dozens of times in the Koran . . . the *jihad* is an *institution*, not an event . . . There are circumstances where it is better not to make war. The Koran makes provision for this. But this changes nothing . . . it must resume as soon as circumstances permit” (p. 18f.).

Thirdly, and more seriously, for the most part nothing has changed. There are Islamicists in the West who would insist that *jihad* is not to be understood literally, but only in the sense of a struggle against the evil in all of us. The current fashion is to speak of Moslem terrorists, governments oppressive to anything non-Islamic, the fatwah against Salman Rushdie, as the work of “Islamic fundamentalists,” “extremists.” But the reality is that such an ethos is typical of Islam wherever it has free rein. In Western democracies Moslems have in principle the same freedoms economically, politically and religiously as Christians, and they can claim them vociferously. Out of some fifty countries where Islam is in determinative control, I know of only two or three which uphold the corresponding rights to non-Moslems, even when freedom of religion is constitutionally established. The trouble is that in Islamic theology such freedoms are not moral *rights*; they are indulgences, granted or not as the ruling power sees fit. Pakistan (literally “the pure—Muslim—State”) is uncomfortably like a Muslim State of the pre-nineteenth century era.

One can hardly emerge from reading this and then relating it to modern Islam as it appears in the news without suffering an attack of Islamophobia. I personally am not ashamed to admit to it. The crucial question is, how, as Christians, are we to respond? One thing is for sure: we must learn from history. One cannot help feeling that Islam was a judgement upon a Christian church in the middle east that was corrupt, divisive, more interested in power and status than in loving service. In many respects the god of the Christian institutions had the same moral characteristics as Allah, and was worshipped with less real loving devotion. With some notable exceptions, it was spiritually destitute. Surely this calls us to pray for renewal, for a church that is passionately committed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ crucified and risen according to the Scriptures, that Christ’s people will be committed to him in such a way that even our most cherished convictions will not prevent us from acknowledging as brothers and sisters those who make the same profession, and that whatever happens

with those who differ from us, we will never abjure the way of faith which works by a Cross-shaped love. C&S

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AUTHORITY AND THE SACRED: ASPECTS OF  
CHRISTIANISATION OF THE ROMAN WORLD

BY PETER BROWN

Cambridge University Press (Canto), 1995,  
xiii + 91 pages including indices

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REVIEWED BY STEPHEN J. HAYHOW

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How did the Christianisation of the Western world proceed? It would be nothing less than pure romanticism to assume that the process of Christianisation proceeded without disruption, without inconsistency, and without confronting obstacles from within, as well as from without. The fact is that, rather than an uninterrupted, triumphant march of the true faith, the process of Christianisation in the early centuries was a mish-mash of truth and error, faith and superstitions. Modern evangelical romantics want to re-read early church history through rose-tinted theological spectacles. We all want to be able to read our position or tradition back into the early scene, but in a purer form than we ourselves attain today. Historically, this is untenable, furthermore it is not the truth.

Now, of course, it would be easy for us “moderns” to adopt the high ground, to look down upon what seem the obvious errors, dead ends and failings of the church during the early centuries. However, in some ways the modern church is, in some respects, still locked into the same fallacies that prevent greater advances. While we smile at the obviously foolish, immature utterances and practices of the early Christians, recall this recent example:

A Christian friend recently told me how a letter was circulating the churches, an anonymous letter predicting great national mourning (the funeral of Princess Diana) and the promise of revival to follow, sweeping across the land. This “revelation” had been posted anonymously through a church door by an old lady and was now doing the rounds as a genuine “word from the Lord.” To my friends way of thinking, there was no question that this was a “word from the Lord!” and so “exciting.”

The example exhibits the same immaturity, the same unquestioning lack of discernment, evident in the early centuries. For example, Peter Brown tell us about the tenacity with which the people of the early centuries looked to their holy men, ascetics who had fled from the humdrum of normal life. He tells us of many other happenings that make us flinch. But the church grew out these things. She matured, and grew up. Perhaps, we can “excuse” these “enthusiasms,” but we cannot excuse today’s immaturities because nearly two thousand years of corporate experience has succeeded these events. By now we ought to know better.

This short book contains three essays that deal with Christianisation, Intolerance and the holy men or ascetics. Regarding the process of Christianisation Brown cannot see the spiritual interpretation that we must place upon events. Brown tends to see events only in their naturalistic turn. This limits his vision. However, it is clear that the early church understood that Christ, by his death, resurrection and ascension had conquered the devil and his cohorts. This was the cry of the early Church Fathers. Brown paints a picture of a very inconsistent Christianisation, and rightly so, for it was just that. In many ways “Christianisation” was little more than a

syncretistic co-habitation of Christianity and paganism. But, underneath the inconsistencies and the foolishness there had been a basic and profound change of direction. As to intolerance, Brown explains that intolerance was exhibited on all sides. Pagans and Christians were equally so.

All in all, these three essays provide useful insights into the everyday impact of the imperfect process of Christianisation in the early centuries. It will certainly dispel our romantic predilections! *C&S*

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## Letters to the Editor

SIR

The “false prophets who predicted the computer catastrophe” got it wrong for more reasons than you mentioned. First, they were hardly “false prophets” in anything like the Biblical sense of the term. The basis of their fears was the fact that year-dates had continued to be entered in two digits long after this could ever serve as a memory saving procedure, and that there was a very real danger that as the date and time clicked over from 2359 on 31/12/1999 to 0000 on 1st January 2000 the system would wrongly read the year as 1900. Interestingly, some cases have come up, these being in connection with babies born early in 2000 and (if I read the news correctly) even finding themselves in line for a congratulatory telegram from the Queen on having reached 100, even though only a few weeks old!

However, the danger of such a computer melt-down was reduced by two factors. First, not all had the year entered in two-digit format. Apple Macs had always used a four-digit format, the Acorn Archimedes likewise. Second, the danger was recognised long enough in advance for the important users of computer hardware and software to either invest in replacements that did take account of the changeover or else somehow able to tweak the system to read the new date correctly.

Less transparent were some Christian evangelists—including some of my own persuasion who ought to have known better—who attached special religious significance to the year 2000 in their preaching (I learned of one such from an old friend in Australia). Perhaps they had forgotten that the Bible’s reverent silences deserve as much respect as passages that are as plain as the nose on the preacher’s face. It wasn’t too hard to see the weaknesses behind the “millennium-Sabbath” theory, which seemed to form the basis of such an unwarranted alarmist use of an apparently significant date, and one which (as another writer observed) was neither fish nor fowl when it came to working out the world’s end.

Yes, “men [need to] repent, turn to God for forgiveness and submit themselves to God in Christ.” This is not going to be an easy task. In former years one could assume a knowledge of the content of and respect for the Bible; today it is an almost unknown book, and the clever-clever academics who make a speciality of undermining faith in the Bible’s reliability, people the late Canon J. B. Phillips complained of in his time, will surely have a great deal to answer for. Today one has often to assume no knowledge of even the narrative parts of Scripture.

Like many of the others John Peck mentions I don’t remember voting for my Euro MP either. But I wonder if his analysis needs refining. Could it be that one fundamental part of the Eurodilemma of which he writes is that the “powers that be” in this monstrosity have failed to practice what they preach in the matter of (forgotten word already!) subsidiarity? The principle behind this is an ancient one; Moses had to be gently

reminded by Jethro that he couldn’t handle all the people’s problems himself. He needed to depute lesser decisions down a chain of command, with him only handling the crucial ones (Ex.18:14–26). In the same way, government needs to realise that it can’t do it all from the centre; a lot has to be done down at more local level, where folk are more in touch with the finer nuances of whatever it is that needs doing.

Thomas Schirrmacher’s two articles were both interesting reading. Just a few comments, though. First, regarding the Thugs. The word is from the Hindi thagi, and actually signifies a deceiver. They were also known as Phansigars, a term that does refer to their killing victims by strangulation. An even more odd facet is that quite a few of them came from Muslim backgrounds, though they never seemed to work out how on the one hand they would theoretically be worshippers of Allah and on the other hand they served a Hindu deity, thus (according to the Qur’an) dooming them to hell for their idolatry. It would be interesting to see how many so-called Christians fall into an analogous category.

Second, as regards the case of Jephthah’s daughter, I wonder if, in an attempt to clear up what seems a logical difficulty—Jephthah apparently sacrificing his daughter when the Torah forbade all human sacrifice—the learned commentators have overlooked the world-view of his daughter, as well as Jephthah’s own background. Dealing with the latter first, we read that he was an illegitimate son of his father, as a result of which his brothers, no doubt after their father’s death, turfed him out of the house as one who didn’t belong (Judges 11:1, 2). He then flees into a frontier region, a virtual no-man’s-land between the Aramaean principalities to the north and Israel to the south; in the process he becomes the leader of a group of “worthless fellows” (v. 3), probably broken men from anywhere and everywhere nearby. At any rate, he seems to have built up a reputation as “a valiant warrior” (v. 1), though Scripture is silent as to how this came to be so. At this point one has to ask: how much did Jephthah know about God? Yes, he would have no doubt been told of the deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus, together with the history of Israel afterwards—especially as it affected his own clan. However, although Jephthah would have still retained his faith in Israel’s God, it would necessarily have run in very narrow channels indeed. It is unlikely he would have had much opportunity to visit the tabernacle at Shiloh (although he may have done), in which case his doctrinal knowledge would have been equally limited. All of which adds up to his faith assuming a somewhat mutilated and unbalanced form. But be that as it may, he still believed in Yahweh, still no doubt prayed to him, possibly offered sacrifices to him. Contrast that with the covenant nation (10:6) who seem to have gone after every available heathen cult that was around, and that with the tabernacle in their midst.

Now to what happened when he came home after the battle. His behaviour on seeing his daughter come out to meet him first strongly implies his expectation that, under the terms of his vow (vv. 30, 31), he was under obligation to sacrifice her, even though (v. 35) he was obviously torn in two between his vow and his natural affections as her father. Enter his daughter, who, far from taking advantage of her relative youth, actually tells him to carry out his vow. But what is meant by her mourning because of her virginity? We have to enter into the thinking of Eastern womanhood here. No doubt, like any other girl of that time and place, she looked forward to the day when she would be married, and experience the pleasures (and the responsibilities) of being a mother, especially the mother of strong sons. During her period of mourning she would reflect on the fact that marriage for her was out, not because of any vow of future celibacy, but because of her untimely death. As for the language of v. 39, the point needs to be made that the

perfect (*yadá'áh*) can also be translated “she had not known”; if a reference to life as a celibate one would surely have expected the imperfect. The growth of a “custom” of a four-day commemoration of his daughter is a further pointer to her untimely end; would she not have been viewed as if she had actually fallen in battle against the Ammonites?

To be fair, the following commentators do seem to support the view that she was devoted to perpetual virginity, viz. Adam Clarke, Matthew Henry, and John Wesley. It would be of interest to see how others of note view this admittedly hard passage.

Yours faithfully,  
Barry Gowland

EDITOR’S RESPONSE: One point of clarification: my reference to the false prophets who predicted the year 2000 computer failure in the Editorial of the April 2000 issue was not aimed at people who merely feared that the computer bug may have led to a widespread crisis, and prepared accordingly (a sensible thing to do if one suspects impending calamity), but rather to those who proclaimed it as an act of God’s judgement and seemed to have developed an emotional attachment to the idea almost as if the failure would prove to be a divine vindication of *themselves* and their ministry.—SCP.

DEAR MR PERKS

Well, I wonder how much flak you’ll fly through for dropping a bomb that dares suggest contemporary communion services might amount to ritual abuse. But you are undoubtedly correct in the message of your article.

I like to think that over the long haul, Christ doesn’t allow His Church to wander too far for too long into serious error. Thus, the form in which we’re all familiar with a Lord’s Supper service may well have served the Church of previous times better than it serves the Church at present.

Until the very recent past, the majority of the race lived and died where they were born—community was the inescapable context of life for most. At that point in our experience, perhaps the ritualised agape meal served the Church by injecting an aspect of the world-to-come into a world-too-much-with-us.

But now, in an age of mobility both physical and intellectual, community in any sense is in short supply and fleeting when it can be found. Churches and pastors would do well to heed the message of your article.

“New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth;  
Lo, before us gleam her campfires! We ourselves must Pilgrims be,  
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,  
Nor attempt the Future’s portal with the Past’s blood-rusted key.”

Keep it up,  
John A. Nelson

DEAR STEPHEN

I read with interest your article in April’s issue of *Christianity and Society* entitled “The Christian Passover: Agape Feast or Ritual Abuse?” This is a thought provoking essay that is a timely call to all Reformed Christians to assess our conduct in

church. In the early section of your argument you make the point that spirituality “is simply trusting and obeying God.” I have no disagreement with this view but you have not supported this statement from the Scriptures. Since this is foundational to the rest of what you have to say, I would be interested to know how you would justify this view from the Scriptures.

Yours sincerely,  
Nick Pike

EDITOR’S RESPONSE: I have been asked this same question by a number of people. My response is given in the *Any Questions?* article “What is Spirituality?” in this issue.—SCP.

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