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VOLUME X, NUMBER 4

OCTOBER, 2000

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Articles and reviews published in *Christianity & Society* represent the views of the individual authors and should not be taken as an official position endorsed by *Christianity & Society* or its editors. Readers are invited to submit previously unpublished articles for publication. A style-sheet can be obtained from the Editorial office. It is requested that authors supply a brief biographical sketch or c.v. for the contributors panel above. Manuscripts will not be returned unless they are accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Letters and comments are invited, as well as suitable anecdotes, questions, news items and feedback on any issues raised. Advertisements are accepted at the discretion of the editors. All manuscripts should be sent to the editorial office in England. Correspondence should be sent to the editorial office in England or by e-mail to: C&S@kuyper.org. *Christianity & Society* is published quarterly by The Kuyper Foundation, a registered charity in England.

Designed and typeset by Avant Books, P. O. Box 2, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4ZD, England.

Printed by Stuart Dick Printing Co., Kingsdale House, Martinet Road, Old Airfield Industrial Estate, Thornaby, Cleveland TS17 0AS, England.

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Editorial office: *Christianity & Society*, P. O. Box 2, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4ZD, England.
Tel. (01823) 665909 Fax. (01823) 665721
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Subscriptions: four consecutive issues

UK: £12.00

Europe: £15.00 (airmail). Sterling only drawn on a bank in the UK or Eurocheque

USA: \$30.00 (airmail). US dollars only drawn on a bank in the USA

All other subscriptions: £20.00 (airmail).

Sterling only drawn on a bank in the UK.

Cheques payable to: The Kuyper Foundation.

For credit card payments see p. 32.

Subscription offices:

UK and Europe: P. O. Box 2, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4ZD, England

America: P. O. Box 20514, Seattle, Washington 98102, USA

All others & credit card payments:

P. O. Box 2, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4ZD, England

EDITORIAL

PREACH THE GOSPEL AND HEAL THE SICK

by *Stephen C. Perks*

JESUS came preaching the kingdom of God and healing the sick (Mt. 4:23; Lk. 4:18–19); and he commanded his disciples to preach the kingdom and heal the sick (Mt. 10:7–8; Lk 9:2; 10:9). This commandment has been understood historically as a command to Christ's church, not merely to the apostles and the seventy. Doubtless these days, as a result of claims for miraculous healings and the exercise of the charismatic gift of healing in many churches, the texts supporting this understanding have been applied in a far narrower way by those who affirm the cessation of the charismatic gifts of the Spirit—although one does not hear the argument that preaching the kingdom was also limited to the apostles and the seventy, which is the logical corollary of such a narrow application of the text. Nevertheless, the fact is that wherever Christianity has gone, the healing of the sick has accompanied it. Hospitals were not invented by compassionate humanists with an eye on the greatest good for the greatest number in society. They were the consequence of the church's taking her commission to heal the sick seriously and of the Christianisation of society.

A belief that the healing of the sick must go hand in hand with preaching the gospel does not commit one to a charismatic perspective therefore. All Christians ought to take this command of Christ seriously, and the church has throughout history. We are commanded not only to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, but to heal the sick. This command binds the Reformed churches no less than the charismatic. Nor is it to be understood merely in terms of providing medical care. Of course, the provision of medical care is an important part of it; but to restrict the command to such would be to interpret it in a way that does not find support in Scripture. Christ and his apostles were not physicians and did not provide this healing by means of contemporary medical practice. Nevertheless, they healed the sick, miraculously. Even Reformed and non-charismatic churches and believers pray for divine (i.e. miraculous) healing—or at least should do so, since it is commanded in Scripture (James 5:13–15). Such prayer does not commit one to a charismatic perspective.

Let me make it clear, therefore, that I am not going to argue for a charismatic understanding of this command. I am not going to argue the case for the contemporary commitment to the charismatic gift of healing. Neither am I going to argue against it, at least not here. My point is simply that this command has been understood historically (leaving aside the contemporary argument about the charismatic gifts) as having a present application. This command binds us as Christians, whatever our perspective on the charismatic gifts, to the healing of the sick in Christ's name as an inevitable accompaniment of the preaching of the kingdom of God, and not only by the use of medical science, which for sure is not excluded,—indeed it is a necessary aspect of it (cf. James 1:27; 2:15–16)—but also by means of prayer for miraculous healing. As already intimated, to understand the command as *not* involving such divine intervention would be to interpret it in a way that is not

consistent with the record of the church's practice in the Scriptures themselves. In other words, the command does not apply exclusively to miraculous healing, but this is at least an important part of it, because there are situations in which modern medicine does not have the answers. Such an understanding of this command does not, in itself, argue the case for the continuation of the charismatic gift of healing. Quite the contrary, we are given instructions as to what we are to do when sickness strikes; the elders are to pray over the sick person and anoint him with oil, praying that any sins that have been committed be forgiven (James 5:13–15). This all Christians should accept as the ongoing practice of the church without denying that God can work outside this context as well. This is healing by God directly in response to prayer without the intervention of medicine. Nevertheless, even when medical science is the direct means of healing we must trust ourselves primarily to God as the healer, and medical science as one means that he uses in his mercy. We must not be like Asa, king of Judah, who trusted himself to the physicians instead of to God (2 Chron. 16:12).

But we find ourselves in a difficult situation today. The healing of the sick is at best a hit and miss thing in the practice of modern Christianity. However much we might like to dress it up otherwise and pretend that the church exercises a healing ministry, the church does not heal the sick in any convincing way today, not in any way that is convincing to non-believers, and not even in a way that is convincing to many believers. And this is true on both fronts of the church's healing activities, i.e. the practice of medical science and prayer for miraculous healing.

Let us look at the medical side first. The church's commission to heal the sick has been taken over by the State on the medical front. This is not meant to be a criticism of the many Christians who work in the medical profession. But the fact is that people do not see the church as an institution that provides healing in any sense today on the whole. They see the *State* as the institution that provides healing. Is there a problem in the Health Service? Most Christians in Britain would probably see the answer as somehow involving State funding of the NHS more adequately (i.e. via taxation or borrowing). But, as readers of this journal will know, the perspective we try to promote does not even recognise the State as legitimately acting in this sphere at all. Christian answers to the problems that face our society cannot be found down a route that is in principle not in accord with biblical ideals of social order. If even Christians trust the State rather than God to provide healing, is there any wonder non-believers do not recognise the church's mission in this area. Whereas the church in times past was recognised as providing for society significantly in this area, especially for those who were not able to provide for themselves—the poor—the church has virtually abandoned all claim to this role today. The State has taken over completely. This is just another aspect of the State's usurpation of roles that belong to other organisations, but essentially with healing the result is to create a trust in the State; i.e. people see the State as the author of salvation in this area.

Now of course, I use the NHS. I am not suggesting that Christians stop going to see their NHS doctor or stop using NHS hospitals. Why? Because we are now, as a Christian nation, effectively in a state of occupation by the enemy: secular humanism. We cannot realistically do otherwise—at least for the time being. But being in a situation where we have to accept that the NHS is the primary provider of medical health care in society (which we are forced to pay for via taxation anyway) does not mean that we should be ideologically committed to State health provision in principle. Unless we are prepared to think through and develop a distinctively

Christian approach to the provision of health care we will never be able to free ourselves from our enslavement to the State. Most people cannot afford private health insurance in a society as socialist as ours is. And in any case, Britain does not really have an optional private health service anyway. The private system in Britain is largely a queue jumping system, since the doctors who service the private system are the same ones who service the State system. Having private health insurance means usually that you see your NHS trained and NHS employed physician at a time when someone else on the NHS is waiting for an appointment. He gets paid for the appointment via the insurance policy (i.e. privately); but he also works in the NHS and the time spent with a private patient means a time delay for the NHS patient next of the list. Or he may get an appointment for you to see a specialist at an NHS hospital a good deal earlier than if you had waited on the NHS list; but even then, the specialist would be taking time out of his NHS list to see his private patients. This is not a private system at all; it is a queue jumping system. This is not meant to be a criticism of those who use this private queue jumping system. My purpose is merely to point out that we do not have a proper alternative private system in Britain. Nor is it meant to be an argument against private medical health care. Quite the contrary; it is an argument *for* a proper private system. (Neither is it to argue that the free market will provide suitable health care for all. I do not believe it will, though I do believe it will provide a significant part of it). But we need to stop pretending we have a private health system. We do not. We have a private queue jumping system, which those who can afford pay for.

This is a far cry from the Christian ideals upon which Christian health care works. Health provision for society as a whole in our nation was born out of Christian ideals, and the church still has a responsibility in this area. But the State has taken over because the church has withdrawn. So now people look to the State where once they looked to the church; and Christians on the whole in Britain seem to think this is a good thing. But the consequence is that the church in this area, as in so many others, is now irrelevant; she has no role, and people do not look to the God she proclaims as having any role in their lives when it comes to such things. Why? Well, in part the church has been telling us that this is the job of the State. The State must fund health care by taxes. Our nation has even been told this is a Christian ideal. And yet in the very practice of it virtually every Christian virtue is under assault in the State-run health service (witness abortion and the attempts to legalise euthanasia), just as Christian principles are under attack in the State education system (witness the stripping of Christian values from education on just about every level). Under the State-run system we now have the absurd situation in which one can get a “sex change” on the NHS but those who suffer from multiple sclerosis cannot get the latest and most effective drugs to alleviate their condition. To argue that this is immoral is seen as religious bigotry by secular humanists. The Christian values underpinning medical health care have gone.¹ Now we have the ethics of State-run health care, which is supposed to be religiously neutral.

This will not stop or be reversed in the State systems of health care or education despite the considerable money that Christians pour into trying to halt the decline each year under the misguided notion that they can “Christianise” a pagan system. The effect of such actions is at best to clean up humanism. But that is simply not good enough. It does not

fulfill the church’s commission. For the time being we have to abide in the situation we have. But we can start building for the future if only the church will awake from her slumber. But this means there must be leadership, and this is where the church has fallen down. The church’s failure today is a failure of leadership. A Christian health care system would operate on criteria different from the humanistic criteria of the State-run system across the board. But one would not know this from the stance taken by the church, which on the whole supports the idea of a State health service.

What about the other front, i.e. the church’s prayer for the sick (miraculous healing)? Well, it’s all a bit hit and miss really. I’m not saying people never get healed. But they do so far less than is claimed and the dubious stories we so often hear and read of today in the name of divine healing hardly inspire trust in God as our healer. The church’s witness to God in terms of healing in this respect is often a bad one. People do not see the church as a source of compassion and healing for their diseases, but rather as a group of con-men trying to claim miracles as a testimony to a particular sect or charismatic leader. In other words, people do not see this infatuation with miraculous healing as a genuine concern for the sick or the glory of God (though doubtless it is on the part of many Christians).

In this respect the words of John Owen are pertinent: “It is not unlikely but that God might on some occasions, for a longer season, put forth his power in some miraculous operations; and so he yet may do, and perhaps doth sometimes. But the *superstition* and folly of some ensuing ages, inventing and divulging innumerable miracles false and foolish, proved a most disadvantageous prejudice unto the gospel, and a means to open a way unto Satan to impose endless delusions upon Christians; for as true and real miracles, with becoming circumstances, were the great means that won and reconciled a regard and honour unto Christian religion in the world, so the pretence of such as either were absolutely false, or such as whose occasions, ends, matter, or manner, were unbecoming the greatness and holiness of Him who is the true author of all miraculous operations, is the greatest dishonour unto religion that anyone can invent.”²

The fact is, neither non-believers nor even believers on the whole turn to the church for healing today, whether of the miraculous kind or as a provider of medical care. And when they do turn to her for miraculous healing in response to prayer they are usually disappointed. Why is this? I should like to suggest a possible answer to this in what follows. It is not meant to be a dogmatic statement, but rather to suggest a reason for the church’s current lack of credibility not only in her mission to heal the sick, but also in her mission to preach the gospel with any significant results for individuals or society (by results here I do not mean merely bums on seats or money in coffers, but rather changed lives and a changed society, something that is seldom observed as a result of modern evangelistic campaigns or in modern conversions even where people have genuinely come to belief in Christ as saviour of their souls³).

I suggest that the reason the sick are not healed by the church today, or in a rather hit and miss and shoddy fashion, is that the gospel is preached in a rather hit and miss and shoddy fashion. In other words, I suggest there is a direct link between the two parts of the command, between the preaching of the gospel and the healing of the sick. That is to say, unless we preach the gospel properly, we shall not be able to heal the sick properly, and the proper preaching of the gospel will lead

1. Anyone who doubts this need look no further than the incident related in the article “Prison—After Saving Their Boy’s Life” by John Smeaton in *Pro-Life Times*, Issue No. 5 (September 2000), reproduced on p. 17 of this issue of *Christianity & Society*.

2. John Owen, “A Discourse of Spiritual Gifts” in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), Vol. 4, p. 475.

3. For an explanation of this see my editorial “Christianity as a Cult” in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (Oct. 1999), pp. 2–5.

to the proper healing of the sick. If your church, therefore, has a rather poor record of healing the sick in its services, as most churches in Britain do, or in providing for the sick in other ways, as most do, the real problem lies not on the “heal the sick” side of the equation but on the “preach the gospel” side, because it is my belief that the gospel is preached very poorly in our land today. I am not referring to preaching by liberals and the like, who often do not even claim to believe in the God of the Bible (I do not think the church’s problem lies with them, but rather with the evangelicals who have handed over custodianship of the faith to them without a fight, and content themselves with sitting around tut-tutting about all the terrible things that the liberals are doing in the church but seldom try to do anything about this in real terms). I am referring to the gospel preached by evangelicals, however that term should be defined or understood.

Why should we expect God to heal the sick in answer to our prayers if we refuse to preach the gospel in its fulness? If we preach a cut-down version of the kingdom of God, can we not expect a cut-down version of the healing of the sick? Evangelicals preach a gospel of sorts, but it is generally a truncated version of the one given us in the Bible. It is often little more than “pie in the sky when you die.” Consequence: not much healing of the sick. A cut-down preaching of the message of salvation brings with it a cut-down healing of the sick. If we were to preach the gospel, we would be able to heal the sick. But we do not, we preach convenience religion, catatonic comfy-zone evangelicalism instead of the kingdom of God. Why? Because the kingdom brings discomfort and challenge, and what Christians seem to want in Britain today is comfy-zone Christianity. We don’t want any tribulation. By tribulation here I do not mean being thrown to the lions and the like; I mean the challenge that living life as a Christian brings. Whatever that challenge is, the answer too often of the church, of individuals and of church groups, is “We can’t do that,” which, translated into what people usually think rather than what they say, means “I don’t want to do that, it would be inconvenient.” Well, being thrown to the lions is a major inconvenience. A lot more inconvenient than providing your children with a Christian education instead of the secular humanist one they get down at the local State school (including State-funded C. of E. schools, which are usually little different from other State schools), or at a prestigious private school, which is much more convenient, and in the case of the former paid for by someone else on the whole. But so often we will not endure even the lesser tribulations that living the Christian life requires, both individually or as churches. So we tailor the gospel to suit our tastes, to fit in with our comfy-zone. The result: catatonic Christianity. At all costs, the world must not be turned upside down; that would be too inconvenient. Yet we are told that we must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation (Acts 14:22), and unless the world is turned upside down by what we preach, we are preaching a defective gospel. One consequence of this, but by no means the only one, is that the sick will not be healed, or at least not in any convincing way that demonstrates the church’s passion for God or her compassion for the sick.

Of course, there are many Christians who are desperately committed to the healing of the sick, both in medical terms and as miraculous answer to prayer. But perhaps the problem is sometimes that the cart is put before the horse. In other words, healing ministries come before the preaching of the gospel in its fulness. Jesus did not tell us to set up healing ministries. He certainly did not tell us to set up healing ministries and then heal the sick on a hit and miss basis. He did not promise to heal the sick on a hit and miss basis. But neither did he tell us to preach a gospel of personal salvation at death devoid of any real meaning for our lives in the here and now. He did not tell

us to preach “pie in the sky when you die.” He told us to preach the kingdom of God and to pray for his will to be done *on earth* as it is in heaven. The gospel we are given in the Bible is a gospel that impacts on our daily lives now, or at least should, to the extent that when people begin living it out it will turn their world upside down (Acts 17:6).

Perhaps in times past when our society was more Christian this characteristic of Christianity would be less obvious, though I’m not entirely convinced of such an argument. But today we live in an aggressively anti-Christian society. If our preaching of the gospel does not challenge both ourselves and the world, it is defective preaching. Unless your church is turning the society of which it is a part upside down something is missing. We are not *being* the church effectively. We may go to church, sing all the hymns and choruses, say all the right things, but still fail to live effectively as Christians. This is not to deny the salvation of individuals. But one can have a saved soul and wasted life. If all our church does is to go through rituals, good as those rituals are, we are not *being* the church effectively. We have to stop thinking about planting and building up churches as the business of Christianity (i.e. building institutions dedicated to the Christian cultus) and start thinking about how we are to *be* the Christian church, the body of Christ, a Christian community of faith, to the society God has put us in. I suspect this is at the heart of the church’s problem today. The gospel we preach is a cut-down version and the churches we go to are cut-down churches. What people get when they come into contact with Christianity is quite simply the cut-down version. Just as some people buy the cut-down version of computer programmes, which cannot do all the things that the full versions can do, because the full versions are too expensive for them, so also, Christians find the full version of the Christian faith too inconvenient, too much hassle in their lives, so they settle for the cut-down version; they are content to be brands snatched from the fire, to have a saved soul and a wasted life.

So what is the nature of this cut-down version of the faith? Primarily it is a gospel that treats salvation as deliverance from hell and an eternal home in heaven at death. It emphasises the eternal only. As one evangelical lady once said to me: “I think death is the most wonderful thing in the world, I’m looking forward to it.” But Jesus said that he came that we might have *life* more abundantly (Jn 10:10), not that we might have death more abundantly. Of course, as Christians we believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. This is a cardinal doctrine of the faith; without it there is no salvation ultimately. But the faith addresses our lives here and now in a decisive way. It changes everything, not merely our eternal destiny. So why do so many Christians have this truncated view of the gospel?

The answer to this question lies in the gospel that is preached. The evangelical gospel of today is not biblical. It is devoid of true religion: i.e. it is devoid of an overarching religious structure that anchors man in God’s will for his life. Put in more biblical terms, it is devoid of the covenant. This does not mean that Christians are not regenerate, that they do not exercise saving faith. But it does mean that due to the lack of teaching of what the faith is in the churches the evangelical practice of the faith is one-sided. Evangelicalism on the whole lacks a biblical paradigm for structuring this present life in such a way that it provides a meaningful context for the expression of the Christian faith. Where is such a paradigm to be found? In the concept of covenant, and, particularly as it refers to this present life, in the Old Testament. Of course, many Reformed churches preach covenant theology. But even this is usually a cut-down version of the covenant with a narrow focus on soteriology and ecclesiology. The biblical covenant (the covenant of grace) and thus the biblical gospel is much broader than this, and to restrict the covenant to soteriology and

ecclesial matters is to misunderstand the nature of the biblical concept of salvation.

Thus, the evangelical gospel of today, including that preached by most Reformed churches in Britain, is unbiblical precisely because of its neglect of the covenant. As a result, evangelicals often do not have the biblical tools or raw material with which to work in determining the Christian attitude to many issues. While the evangelical churches concentrate exclusively on New Testament Christianity they will miss the significance of the faith for this life and the salvation of our society and culture as well as our souls. And in doing this they will continue to preach an unbiblical gospel that has no basis in the New Testament either, but only in a truncated view of the New Testament. How is this?

When the New Testament speaks of Scripture it speaks of the Old Testament. When Christ spoke of the “Scriptures” he was referring to the Old Testament (Mt. 21:42). When he rebuked the Pharisees, telling them that they erred because they did not know the “Scriptures,” he was referring to the Old Testament (Mt. 22:29). It is these Scriptures, says Jesus, that “testify of me” (Jn 5:39; Lk. 24:27). Likewise, when Paul speaks of the “the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ” and says that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:15–17), he speaks of the Old Testament. The believers of the apostolic era did not have a New Testament, though they did have the teaching of the apostles, which was founded on the doctrines of the Old Testament (cf. Mt. 5:17–19; Eph. 2:20). The Old Testament, which testifies of Christ, is the foundation of the New, and the New cannot be properly interpreted outside of the context of the Old. As Augustine said, “The New Testament is latent in the Old, and the Old is patent in the New.”

But today we here of “New Testament” Christians. This mentality is symptomatic of the cut-down version of the faith that prevails among evangelicals, but it is a less powerful gospel, and a distorted gospel. Christ’s own teaching of the gospel of the kingdom, of his purpose in coming to die for sinners, strikes at the heart of this reductionist version of the faith. The Old Testament is not an optional extra for the serious minded or the religious enthusiast. It is at the heart of the Christian faith. That is how it is presented in the New Testament and in Christ’s own teaching. The Old Testament is fundamental to the gospel itself. Christ says to the Jews: “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” (Jn. 5:46–47). Unless we understand Moses we shall misunderstand Christ.

Yet a desire to understand Moses is hardly a characteristic of modern evangelicalism. Christianity for most evangelicals is a New Testament affair. The greater part of Scripture is neglected. This neglect then results in a distortion of the faith. For example, in one evangelical church I heard the message that basically God had three plans. The first two, the cultural mandate and the giving of the law through Moses, went wrong, so God sent his son to die for sinners instead (this is not too far removed from the schoolboy’s quip about why God gave everyone four cheeks). This is the heart of the evangelical gospel today: the gospel supersedes the cultural mandate and the law of the covenant.

Jesus told us plainly that this is *not* what he came to do. He did not come to negate the law and the prophets but to fulfill them, i.e. to bring them into their full expression (Mt. 5:17–19). Thus, Jesus says that unless we understand Moses we will not understand him. His gospel cannot be separated from his word

in the law and the prophets. If we cut ourselves off from the whole message of the Bible, either by using only the New Testament or by spiritualising the Old Testament away, we will end up with a cut-down version of the faith, and inevitably a cut-down experience of the Christian life, including answers to prayer for healing.

If we want to heal the sick we *must* preach the whole gospel. If we preach a cut-down gospel we shall have cut-down healing. What is the gospel? It is the good news about the kingdom of God. It involves the whole word of God for the whole of life. This means that we must cease practising Christianity merely as a personal worship hobby and make it our *religion*, i.e. what structures our whole lives in thought, word and action. We must bring the Word of God incarnate into the whole of our lives by looking to the word of God inscripturated to guide the whole of our lives. It is no good just asking Jesus into our hearts—that is, to save our souls. We must bring him also into the life of our society at all levels, into our family life, our economic life, our leisure life, our work life, our political life, our medical life, our children’s educational life, by listening to his word and seeking to conform ourselves to his word in all areas of life. Unless we subject ourselves to Christ and his word in this way the gospel we preach will be a cut-down version. But where do we go to get teaching, principles for action, understanding, for all this? The New Testament alone does not provide this. The Old Testament is a vital deposit of God’s word for these areas of life. The New Testament does not claim to supersede all the teachings of the Old in these areas; it claims rather to be based on the Old Testament and to bring it up to date, so to speak, to show us how to bring the teachings of the Old Testament into fuller expression now that Christ has come and given his Great Commission to his disciples, i.e. the discipling of the nations. How shall we do this if we neglect the very words of Christ in the Old Testament, which comprises the larger part of the Bible? The result will be a distorted and a defective gospel.

The reason, I suggest, that the world is cynical about the church’s claims of miraculous healing, is that there is little substance to these claims. This is because there is little substance to the Christian faith itself as practised by the church in Britain today. The problem is not really that there is little substance to the claims of healing; rather the problem is that there is little substance to the practice of the faith across the whole of life, and this inevitably affects the church’s healing ministry. In short, if we preached and lived the gospel more fully we should find that the sick are healed more convincingly. And this would have repercussions not only for the healing of the sick but also in other areas, including politics, economics, education, etc. The effect surely would be to turn the world upside-down. If we do not want Christ to rule our political, social, vocational, economic and educational lives, why should we expect him to jump every time we ask him for healing when we are ill?

For many years full-time Christian work has been seen as the work of the clergy and possibly medical missionaries. It is true that in recent years there has been a reaction to this in which whole body ministry has been stressed, but this ministry has still been narrowly conceived as ministry within the walls of the institutional church; in other words, its emphasis has been to share out the minister’s job among a greater number of people. I suggest this is a wrong-headed notion to some extent. Not because I think church leadership should be a one-man band. I do not. But because it focuses too narrowly on what Christian work is. It confines it to the institutional church instead of seeing it as our cultural mandate in the world. Still the emphasis is only on the narrow soteriological and ecclesial aspects of the faith and also on the medical and the healing of

the sick. Perhaps this has been because of a failure to understand the meaning of the command to preach the gospel and heal the sick, as if church and hospitals are the only areas of life that Christ is concerned about. The rest of life is neutral. There's no such thing as Christian art, Christian music, Christian politics etc., just art, music and politics, which, because of their association with the world must be avoided. In this perspective Christ has not come to redeem the world, only individual souls. On the contrary, the gospel is for the whole of life. God commands us to bring all things into obedience to his Word incarnate by submitting to his word inscripturated as our rule of life.

What does this mean in practical terms? It means a lot of things. But because our nation is now occupied by the enemy our ability to do a great deal on all these levels is limited. That does not mean we should not try, but it does mean we shall progress slowly. But here is an example in which our ability to respond to God's call upon us is not so limited—at least here in Britain. It is an area where the Christian still has a great deal of freedom and where he is able to do something significant and constructive. Let us use it as a test. The area I speak of is the education of our children. God requires us as Christians to give our children a Christian education. Christians are not expected to hand their children over to secular humanist schools for their education. Of course, there are few Christian schools. But home schooling is also an option, and it is growing in this country. Those who home school their children are no longer isolated individuals. "Oh, that is not for me!" "I can't do it" you say. Christ does not offer you a choice. He commands you to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). That includes, though is by no means limited to, their education.

The Christian church (i.e. the Christian synagogue) has more in common with a school than it has with a temple, which does not feature in the new covenant as a place of worship. The church is the community of faith, and in the church institutional education has a central role. At the least, therefore, supporting Christian education is a vital role of the church, the community of faith. This is why in centuries past Christians set up schools as well as hospitals. Our schooling system was originally largely the product of a Christian society, as were our hospitals. Both have now been given over to the State, which, as the new god of our secular society, provides health and education for its citizens. One always looks to one's god for these things. Health care and education are intensely religious social functions. In our secular humanist society they are run in terms of the religion of secular humanism, as is our politics, which is also always an intensely religious activity.

Well, what are you going to do? Wait until your child is asked to engage in homosexual family role play activities in school? Don't think this will not come. Clause 28 is as good as gone. Christian lobbying groups may stave off the debacle for a while. But as with all the other victories achieved by trying to play humanists at their own game (power politics) they will not last long. But suppose I'm wrong and clause 28 stays (and this is only an example, there are many other problems to consider); if your children are left in a secular humanist school they will continue to be educated in terms of a secular humanist world-view (and secular humanism is a *religion*), regardless of whether they attend the Christian cultus on Sundays and receive some third rate Sunday school programme for a hour that isn't even aimed at undoing the effects of what they are bombarded with in school all year. In other words your children will continue to be educated as secular humanists not as Christians. This is not merely a matter of sex education and discipline. Christ is concerned with more than our sexual behaviour; he is concerned with the whole of life, all the actions

that are necessarily the result of our thought life, and it is the whole of this thought life that secular humanist education seeks to affect. State schools are responsible for the academic, physical, moral, psychological and spiritual growth of the child; i.e. the whole person. And raising children in the admonition of the Lord is equally concerned with all these things, i.e. with the whole person, not merely RE in the narrow sense. There are no neutral areas.

Of course, there are other issues to consider besides education. But this is a good one to start with because it is one of the few areas where Christians are able to do so much. If you are not alone get together with other Christians in your church and area. Pull your children out of school and start home schooling them. Ask your pastor to support you and the whole idea of Christian education. If the church will not support you in seeking to promote Christian education do it alone. Be prepared to be the only one. Make your faith count. This is *not* too difficult for you do (Mt. 11:30).

This will just be the start. There's more to come, but we have to start somewhere and, well, the other things we have to do will probably be much more difficult and contentious. Don't expect success elsewhere if you can't provide leadership here. Leadership training starts in the family not the work place (1 Tim. 2:4, 12). How are we going to set up Christian hospitals, Christian law courts operating at the local level (1 Cor. 6:2), a Christian political party, ministries and services to the homeless based on the Christian work ethic (2 Thess. 3:10), and perhaps most difficult of all Christian *churches*, if we cannot lead our own families? (1 Tim. 3:4-5) You have more freedom, ability and power to educate your children in the faith than you have to affect just about any other field of human endeavour. If we fail here how can we expect to succeed elsewhere?

We have to create a Christian society, a Christian nation within a nation that will in time supplant the pagan society that now exists. Waiting for the rapture will not achieve this. When we start doing this—discipling the nation, as Christ commanded us to do (Mt 28:18-20)—we can expect to see the sick healed along with a lot more things we presently pray for but do not see. But don't expect much more than phoney claims of healing until we rid ourselves of the phoney gospel that is preached and lived today.

There is no lack of those who want to see the sick healed in the church today, but there are many who do not want to preach the uncompromising gospel of the kingdom of God, and we all have to fight the sin in our own hearts that militates against the desire to live it out. The catatonic comfy-zone Christianity that presently prevails in Britain is the easy option: pie in the sky when you die. But don't expect the sick to be healed, and don't expect society to turn to Christ. The choice is yours. Don't wait for someone else to do it first. God calls you now to live out the gospel in word and deed. You can start now with the easy bit: a Christian education for your children either at home or in a Christian school if there is one in your area. God does not call us to do the impossible, because with God all things are possible (Mt. 19:26). Either we believe it or we don't. If no-one else in your church or area believes it, at least you do. Make your faith count, and make the words of Joshua your own: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). *C&S*

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

THE e-mail address for *C&S* has changed. The new address is: "cands@kuyper.org" (please note that the ampersand sign "&" has been replaced by "and." This is the only change to the address.

ALPHA AND THE OMEGAS?

by Peter Burden-Teh

PART III

7. FAITH ALONE

IN contrast to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which James Packer has called “the best possible introduction to Puritan thought” with its “mature, balanced presentation of Reformed theology,”¹ The Thirty-Nine Articles do not have an Article devoted to repentance. Instead, there is a homily *Of Repentance*, number 19 in Article 35, *Of Homilies*, and references to repentance within some other Homilies. But the Westminster Confession of Faith, in Chapter 15, *Of Repentance unto Life*, states that

(1) Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.

(2) By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavouring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.²

These two sections show us some important points concerning repentance: it is an evangelical grace; it is to be preached by the minister of the gospel; it is the realisation of the offensiveness of the sinner’s sins against the holy law of God; and in grieving for these sins the sinner turns from them unto God and follow his commandments.

Although the Thirty-Nine Articles have no direct Article on repentance, there is the following Article on Justification:

Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not our works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely in the Homily of Justification.

This Article, in a singular way concludes with reference to one of the Homilies for a more developed view of what was previously stated. Because of the brevity of the Article, it seems as though more needed to be stated. And in so requesting it, the Homily of Justification takes on an almost equal standing as the Article itself. However, there is no

known Homily of Justification, although there is the Homily of Salvation.

The Third Homily, of the Homily of Salvation, in the First Book has two chapters entitled “A Short Declaration of the True and Living Faith” and “A Sermon of Good Works annexed unto Faith.” To quote from them:

Faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified; but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying. So that, although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not all together. Nor that faith also doth shut out the justice of our good works, necessarily to be done afterward of duty towards God (for we are most bound to serve God in doing good deeds commanded by him in his holy Scripture all the days of our life) . . .

Nor when they say that we are justified freely, they mean not that we should or might afterward be idle, and that nothing should be required on our parts afterward; neither they mean not so to be justified without our good works that we should do no good works at all, like as shall be expressed at large hereafter.³

Archbishop Cranmer, the writer of this Homily, implores that faith alone has the office of justifying and that this same faith does not afterwards exclude good works as our duty towards God.

From the fuller development of Faith Alone in the Homily, it can be seen that Cranmer, along with other Reformers, did not see any disunity between the faith of being accounted righteous and the same faith which is joined with good works in the person who has been justified: justification and sanctification are distinct and united. Thus we cannot finish at Article XI regarding Faith Alone but have to continue on to Article XII, which states

Of Good Works

Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

As can be seen, this Article is a related and requisite continuation of the previous Article. And as such, it must be explained further so that a scriptural and Reformed position concerning Faith Alone can be understood.

The relationship and difference between these two Articles and their teaching can be shown by the following summary:

1. James Packer, “Sanctification—Puritan Teaching,” *The Christian Graduate*. Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1952, p. 125.

2. Peter Hall (Ed.), *The Harmony of Protestant Confessions*. (Still Waters Revival Books, Canada. 1992), p. 587f.

3. E. Gibson, *The Thirty-Nine Articles* (Methuen & Co., 1902), p. 407f.

ARTICLE XI

- Romans 3:28
- Concerning non-Christians
- Necessity of Faith
- Work must come from faith
- Correcting error of legalism
- Warning against spurious faith of being justified with own standard
- Romans 4:2
- Cannot be saved without justification

ARTICLE XII

- James 2:24
- Concerning professing Christians
- Necessity of works
- Faith must be proved by works
- Correcting error of antinomianism
- Warning against spurious faith of being justified before men
- James 2:18
- Cannot be saved without sanctification

It can be observed from the Scriptures, as from these two Articles, that there is a distinction but no separation between justification and sanctification. James Packer has said that “Reformed theology links sanctification to regeneration, regarding it as the continuation of man’s subjective renewal by the Holy Spirit; it represents both operations as centring on the will, and makes acts of repentance and faith their fruit and issue.”⁴

The antinomian way of justification accepts everything concerning the judicial accounting of righteousness, but its problem is related to Article XII and the proving of faith by works. John Gerstner, who holds to the Reformed position regarding this issue, writes that this “does not mean that the adherents of this [antinomian] school are opposed to good works . . . on the contrary, they themselves are often zealots for good works.”⁵ So what is the problem? Gerstner continues that “the antinomian defends the proposition that there can be justification by faith without works whatsoever . . . [this] is an implicit denial of justification by faith because it does not require the working faith that alone brings justification. Without a true faith, there is no union with Christ, and without Christ there is no justification. Faith without works is dead, and justification without faith is dead.”⁶

Gumbel and Repentance unto Life

Questions of Life begins by equating a “direction for a lost world” with a person’s undefined relationship with an undefined God.⁷ Then there is “reality in a confused world” where mention is made of a “relationship with the one who is the truth.”⁸ Finally, “Life in a dark world” is where eternal life is a quality of life which comes from living in a relationship with God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3).⁹ The second chapter continues this emphasis on relationships: “He [Je-

sus] said to people, in effect, ‘If you want to have a relationship with God you need to come to me’ (see John 14:6). It’s through a relationship with him that we encounter God.”¹⁰

This emphasis on relationship is a major aspect of Alpha as *Questions of Life* is replete with references to “relationship.”¹¹ Gumbel writes that “there are many ways of speaking about starting the new life of the Christian faith—‘becoming a Christian,’ ‘giving our lives to Christ,’ ‘receiving Christ,’ ‘inviting Jesus into our lives,’ ‘believing in him’ and ‘opening the door to Jesus,’”¹² but not one of them, even by this account of Gumbel’s, is “to live in a relationship with God.”¹³ However, this emphasis on relationship affects the Alpha gospel in various ways.

In his introductory chapter, Gumbel writes that “we are all (also) fallen—we are born with a propensity to do evil.”¹⁴ But is our innate evilness only a partiality, a penchant, a predilection or a disposition? Or is it that “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”?¹⁵ Such a distinction between Gumbel and the Westminster Confession of Faith helps explain the deficiency regarding repentance in Alpha.

Gumbel provides several personal insights to his experience of “starting the new life of the Christian faith,” on which he either bases or provides examples of his teaching. He “used to think [he] was a ‘nice’ person—because [he] didn’t rob banks or commit other serious crimes. Only when [he] began to see [his] life alongside the life of Jesus Christ did [he] realise how much there was wrong.”¹⁶ If the standard against which Gumbel measured his life was that of the life of Jesus Christ, what was the standard against which Jesus Christ measured his life and in turn against which Gumbel should have measured his life? Gumbel’s only indication of this standard is his statement that “Jesus never did anything wrong. He lived a perfect life.”¹⁷ But this does not help at all. On what basis was it a perfect life? What is the standard of the perfect life that Gumbel is reluctant to mention? Why is it not mentioned that Jesus Christ was “born under the law” (Gal. 4:4), that he observed the law (Mark 1:21; 14:12), that he taught that the law was of divine authority (Mt. 5:18), that he put the law on a par with his own words (John 5:45–46) and that he fulfilled the moral law by perfectly obeying God’s commandments, by which obedience he became the sinner’s perfect righteousness for the broken law (Mt. 3:15, Rom 10:3–4, 2 Cor 5:21, Gal 4:4–5)? For as Gumbel himself says, “the greater our understanding of our need the more we will appreciate what God has done.”¹⁸ But he falls short in presenting that need. In contrast, James Packer has said that “A converted man is one who has been made to see himself as a guilty rebel against his Creator, threatened with judgment by the law . . .”¹⁹

However, having “looked at the evidence for Christianity, [Gumbel] became convinced it was true . . . [and] very reluctantly [he] gave [his] life to Christ.”²⁰ Without any

4. James Packer, “‘Keswick’ and The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 3, July 1955, p. 160.
 5. J. Gerstner, *A Primer on Justification* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., USA, 1983), p. 15.
 6. J. Gerstner, *op. cit.* p. 15, 21.
 7. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life* (Kingsway Publications, 1995) p. 15f.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 12, 15, 16, 22, 27, 44, 59, 61, 67, 80, 83, 85, 86, 88, 91, 96, 99, 101, 103, 118, 119, 123, 138, 156 and 165.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 18–19.
 15. Westminster Confession of Faith. Chapter 6, Section 4.
 16. Nicky Gumbel, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
 19. James Packer, “Sanctification—Puritan Teaching,” p. 126.
 20. Nicky Gumbel, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

mention of repentance he continues that “what [he] had failed to realise is that Christianity is about a relationship with God.”²¹ But contrarily, this reluctance on “becoming a Christian was the start of the most exciting relationship.”²² Although there is no mention of repentance at the start of this relationship, even when seen against the life of Jesus Christ, Gumbel affords only one reference, in *Questions of Life*, to repentance which is not in conversion (Chpt. 1 to 3), assurance (Chpt. 4), daily reading and praying (Chpt. 5 to 6), or baptism in the Spirit (Chpt. 7 to 9), but in resisting evil (Chpt. 10).

It is only in this chapter on resisting evil that Gumbel explicitly pronounces the need of repentance and, based on the law, what we should turn from.

Involvement in these things [specified occultic activity] is expressly forbidden in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18:10; Leviticus 19:20ff; Galatians 5:19ff; Revelation 21:8; 22:15). If we have meddled in any of these things, we can be forgiven. We need to repent and destroy anything associated with that activity such as books, charms, videos and magazines (Acts 19:19).²³

It is true that repentance is mentioned in *Searching Issues*,²⁴ but Gumbel says that “Those on the course may agree with much of what is being said in the talk [based on the chapters in *Questions of Life*], but they often say, ‘What about . . . ?’ In this book I have set out the seven issues most often raised, in descending order of frequency.”²⁵ Thus in the less frequent issues of “Sex Before Marriage,” “New Age” and “Homosexuality” Gumbel states that:

Jesus died for us so that we could be forgiven. The way to receive forgiveness is through repentance. In Psalm 51 we see a model for repentance following sexual sin.²⁶

. . . if we have been involved in any way in New Age practices, whether unwittingly or not, we need to recognise that they are wrong and to ask God’s forgiveness and turn away from all such things.²⁷

There is a distinction between the repentant believer who occasionally sins and the unrepentant following of a steady, unresisted course of planned disobedience. To the man or woman who repents and seeks to obey Christ, the New Testament promises total forgiveness through the cross of Christ.²⁸

Even though the latter quote of Gumbel previously uses the strongest language ever of sin—“lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious’ (1 Timothy 1:9)”²⁹—he then uses the passive voice to say that “Paul assumed that homosexual practice would have been abandoned at conversion (1 Corinthians 6:11).”³⁰ And then Gumbel only mentions repentance and forgiveness for the repentant *believer* and not that “they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20). The implication of this is that the homosexual turns to God for a relationship and then repents.

These varied explicit calls to repentance in *Searching Issues*, further demonstrate the deficiency of repentance in *Questions of Life*. For when Gumbel asks the Alpha attendee

to pray “I am sorry for the things I have done wrong in my life . . . I now turn from everything which I know is wrong” it is against a deficient call of repentance. But if repentance is downplayed, or implicitly denied, then there are further consequences for the nature of the faith that is being exercised. How can saving faith be genuine unless it involves conviction of sin and repentance? Without repentance there is no basis for either receiving saving faith—“turn from [sin] unto God”—or for works as evidence of saving faith—“with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience” [Westminster Confession of Faith]. Furthermore, as James Packer has said, “Without sincere repentance, faith is hypocrisy, and without thorough conviction of sin repentance is an impossibility. The law must clear the road for the gospel.”³¹

Gumbel and the Moral Law

Just as there is no standard of measure governing repentance for saving faith in *Questions of Life*, so there is no standard of measure governing the evidence of saving faith. This is in contrast to the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Article VII and Chapter 19 Section 6 respectively state

Of the Old Testament

. . . Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of Commandments which are called Moral.

Of the Law of God

(6) Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet is it of great use to them . . . to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin . . . So as a man’s doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace.

Reading through *Questions of Life* there is insignificant reference or stress on the law as a basis of faith proven by works. But as James Packer has said, God the Holy Spirit “elicits holy action, and thus forms holy habits, by bringing home to mind and heart the demands of God’s holy and adorable law and the promises of assistance which are given to those who strive to obey.”³²

In the chapter on “Why and How Should I Read the Bible?” Gumbel offers a personal insight. Before he began his “most exciting relationship” he had started to read the Bible and became “completely gripped by what [he] read.” Gumbel then quotes Psalm 1:1–3 and says that he loves the phrase “His delight is in the law of the Lord.” Continuing he adds that “All the psalmist had at that stage was the first five books of the Bible. They were his delight.”³³ But Gumbel’s love of that phrase, unlike that of the psalmist, does not appear to mean that he too has a delight in the law of the Lord. Rather, Gumbel’s delight is in the psalmist, who only happened to have the first five books of the Bible. Not only is this condescending but also denigrating of the first five books of the Bible, which contain the Law of God.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 152–3

24. Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues* (Kingsway Publications, 1994)

25. *Ibid.* p. 7, emphasis added.

26. *Ibid.* p. 54.

27. *Ibid.* p. 73.

28. *Ibid.* p. 85.

29. *Ibid.* p. 80.

30. *Ibid.*

31. James Packer, “Sanctification—Puritan Teaching,” p. 127.

32. James Packer, “‘Keswick’ and The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification,” p. 156.

33. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 70.

Gumbel then has a sub-title of “A manual for life—God has spoken.” But does he view the Bible as a manual for life? Gumbel remarks that “If Jesus is our Lord, our attitude to the Scriptures should be the same as his.”³⁴ He then continues by quoting John Wenham, regarding “[b]elief in Christ as the supreme revelation of God leads to belief in scriptural inspiration—of the Old Testament by the direct testimony of Jesus and of the New Testament by inference from his testimony.”³⁵ However, in quoting John Wenham, Gumbel negates his own position by affirming both Baconianism and Christ’s attitude to the Scriptures.³⁶ Furthermore, Wenham, in the same book that Gumbel is referring to, quotes Gerhard Vos regarding “Jesus’ treatment of the law”:

“He [Jesus] once more made the voice of the law the voice of the living God, who is present in every commandment, so absolute in his demands, so personally interested in man’s conduct, so all-observant, that the thought of yielding to him less than the whole inner life, the heart, the soul, the mind, the strength, can no longer be tolerated. Thus quickened by the spirit of God’s personality, the law becomes in our Lord’s hands a living organism . . .”³⁷

If Gumbel is serious about both our attitude to Scripture being the same as Christ’s and Wenham’s statement regarding the revelation of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture, then he must accept Vos’ statement on Christ, the law and the Christian. But in the following paragraph he proceeds to his endorsement of the “Roman Catholic official view [that] is enshrined in Vatican II”³⁸ concerning the Bible.

When there is reference, by Gumbel, to the moral law it is through a quote of Bishop Stephen Neill: “[t]he ten commandments . . . are a brilliant analysis of the minimum conditions on which a society, a people, a nation can live a sober, righteous and civilised life.”³⁹ But the Ten Commandments are not even mentioned by Gumbel, let alone explained. Nor is there any definition of, or connection between, the quotation mentioning the Ten Commandments and the sub-title of “A manual for life—God has spoken.” Nor is there any mention that “no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of Commandments which are called Moral,” as stated in Article VII. Gumbel, then, has not presented a case for the Bible is a manual for life.

Before we consider the next sub-title, in the same chapter, which is “A love letter from God—God speaks,” it is necessary to continue examining Gumbel’s flawed case of “A manual for life” in a different context.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

35. John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible* (Tyndale, USA, 1972) no page number given. As quoted by Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 74.

36. “There are a dozen other passages where an Old Testament story might arguably be taken in a non-literal sense, but as the matter is pursued the impression gains in strength that our Lord understood the Bible stories in a natural way and that his teaching should be taken quite straightforwardly. The impression is strongly reinforced when we come to a further collection of passages where the historical truth of the saying seems to be essential to its validity.” John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, (Eagle, 1993) p. 19.

37. *Ibid.* p. 26.

38. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 74.

39. Bishop Stephen Neill, *The Supremacy of Jesus* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1984) no page number given, as quoted by Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 77.

Gumbel and the Ethics of Evolution

Returning to Gumbel’s quote about the Ten Commandments, he does proceed to say that “[t]here are some things that are very clear in the Bible. It tells us how to conduct our day-to-day lives, for example, when we’re at work or under pressure. We know from the Bible that . . . marriage is the norm (Genesis 2:24) . . .”⁴⁰ Gumbel writes in a similar way within *Searching Issues* when he says that

The biblical account of sexual intercourse is the lifelong commitment in marriage between one man and one woman. When Jesus spoke of marriage he went back to the creation account: “For this reason a man will leave his father and a mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5–6 quoting Genesis 2:24). Here we see the key to the biblical understanding of marriage.⁴¹

What does this say of Jesus Christ’s understanding of creation? Let us assume, from Gumbel’s argument, based on his acceptance of “the liberal emphasis on using our minds in a critical method of study of the Bible,”⁴² and on Forster and Marston, that Jesus Christ accepted evolutionary creationism. On what basis was Christ advocating “life long exclusive commitment” when he supposedly knew that evolutionary anthropology does not show nor prove that Cro-Magnon hominids had an understanding of life-long commitment? Following Baconianism, and contrary to what Gumbel has said, one cannot deduce this from the Scriptures. Instead one has to accept the evolutionary anthropology as stated in the book Gumbel recommended: at best “it is difficult to know what kind (if any) of religion they [Cro-Magnon] had”⁴³ and at worst “our closest modern relative . . . is . . . the omnivorous, promiscuous chimp.”⁴⁴ Although important, we have to leave aside the question of the religion of Cro-Magnon hominids, but it can be argued from the necessity of its dogma, which is integral to the “how of science,” that the evolutionary ethics of Genesis permits promiscuity before and outside of any life-long commitment.

Equally, when Gumbel asks “is homosexual practice an option for a christian?”⁴⁵ and refers again to Genesis 2:24, with Jesus’ comments, then any quotes from Leviticus 18:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 must take into account the evolutionary ethics of Genesis. Not knowing, therefore, the religion of the Cro-Magnons or the Neolithics, which includes their morals, there can then be no certainty that homosexuality was not practised. On that basis, homosexuality has to be an open issue, contrary to HTB’s censure of homosexuality. Perhaps not for Alpha’s position on evolution or the views set out in *Searching Questions*; but on the law-free *Questions of Life*, an Alpha course is being organised for homosexuals in All Saints Church, Beverly Hills (USA), even though, according Rev Richard Kirker, general secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, “The Alpha programme as known in this country [UK] has not gone down well with gay Christians.”⁴⁶

40. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 77.

41. Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues*, p. 44.

42. Andy Peck, “The alpha phenomenon” [sic], May 2000, p. 18.

43. Roger Forster and Paul Marston, *Reason and Faith* (Monarch Publication), p. 386.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

45. Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues*, p. 79.

46. “Next: the Gay Alpha course,” *Church Times*, 16 June 2000, p. 4.

And when Gumbel appeals to Psalm 139:14 to show that “we are ‘fearfully and wonderfully made,’”⁴⁷ it is not clear, or obvious, whether Gumbel is referring to humans or Cro-Magnon hominids. Continuing, he writes that “in God’s original creation Adam and Eve were ‘both naked, and they felt no shame’ (Genesis 2:25).”⁴⁸ But in what sense were they naked, when evolutionary anthropology shows that the Neolithics, if not even the Cro-Magnon hominids wore rudimentary clothing? If the Neolithics prior to “Adam and Eve” wore clothing, why should it not be accepted from the Baconian approach that clothing was not the result of moral shame but part of a Maslowian hierarchy of needs?

Furthermore, Gumbel carries on to say that “the Bible celebrates sexual intimacy as a profound form of communication. ‘Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain’ (Genesis 4:1, RSV).”⁴⁹ But if Cro-Magnon “Adam” had only a “rudimentary language and some power of conceptualisation,” as argued in the book recommended by Gumbel, then how is it that sexual intimacy for Cro-Magnon “Adam” was a profound form of communication? The implication, not supported by the “how of science,” is that their verbal communication was rudimentary but their sexual relationships, which were possibly of a permitted promiscuous nature, were a profound communication, i.e. of a thoughtful, philosophical, serious and sagacious character.

Gumbel and Christian Hedonism

So where does Alpha’s defective and incomplete repentance, lack of moral law in sanctification and ethics, which have to be based on the “how” of evolution science, lead by consequence? In the chapter on “Why and How I Should Read My Bible?” Gumbel is explaining “A Manual for Life.” He asks whether “the Bible takes away our freedom? Or does it in fact give us freedom?”⁵⁰ He revealingly answers that “Rules and regulations can in fact create freedom and increase enjoyment.” Gumbel describes a football match that he inadequately refereed which “descended into complete chaos.” But when the trained referee arrived “the boys had the game of *their lives*.”⁵¹ Gumbel concludes that “if we play within the rules there is freedom and joy.”⁵²

But is this the primary reason of rules? If it is, why is Gumbel denying the intrinsic moral value of the laws of God? Like the rules of football, do the rules of God necessitate extrinsic consequential delectation? If this is the purpose of rules, why does Gumbel not emphasise the moral law for sanctification, so as to “create freedom and increase enjoyment”? And if the moral law is not being emphasised as “rules and regulations” to “create freedom and increase enjoyment,” what does form the basis of Alpha’s ethics?

The ethical stance that Gumbel is developing becomes clearer through a side-swipe of his, under the sub-title of “A love letter from God—God speaks”:

For some people the Bible is never more than a well-thumbed manual for life. They believe God has spoken and they may study the Bible for hours. They analyse it, read commentaries on it . . . but they do not seem to realise that not only has God spoken, but he still speaks today through what he has said in the Bible . . . So as well as being

a manual for life, it also a love letter . . . *The main point of the Bible is to show how to enter a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.*⁵³

That Gumbel is intending a distinction between two ways of reading the Bible is confirmed when he quotes John 5:39:40. So, a person who holds to a “well-thumbed manual” is like the Pharisees, whereas, someone who enters a “relationship with God” comes to Jesus Christ to have life. Thus it can be said that Gumbel is anxious that the Bible is seen primarily as love letter and not as a manual, even though he fails to establish a case for the latter. For if it is alleged that the Bible shows us “how to enter a relationship with God” then it cannot be in terms of a manual: “a relationship” needs a “love letter” that still speaks today.

But how does Gumbel’s distinction between a manual and love-letter fair? What of the synonyms of manual which include exemplar, standard, ideal, beacon, light, landmark, guidebook, handbook or even companion pocket book? Can we assume that one has not been in love with a car or motorbike because he has a well-thumbed manual? Does not the manual tell how *to love*? Can a marriage survive just on love and love-letters? Can “well-thumbed love-letters” replace the manuals of DIY, cookery, art etc. which explain how to live and love in the broadest sense? Or, as with Gumbel’s out of context attention with sex,⁵⁴ will a couple who have a relationship of only love, sex and well-thumbed love-letters become emaciated in body and mind, through a lack of domestication and culture? (This also shows another fault with Alpha, for although Gumbel refers to marriage and relationship, he does not refer to marriage and the covenant.)

And a close reading of the section sub-titled “A manual for life—God has spoken” reveals that Gumbel, through default, does not equate “manual for life” with relationship, but does equate, through direct reference, relationship with love-letters in the next section. But how can a love-letter Bible give “Direction for a lost world,” “Reality in a confused world” and “Life in a dark world,” when each of these sections in Gumbel’s opening chapter refers to relationship? Are not these given by a manual that is a beacon, light, standard and definitive tome? And there is no mention that within this “love letter from God” that “Love and Law are one in God. Since Law is the transcript of the divine nature it is therefore the transcript of love.”⁵⁵

If manuals explain how *to love* then do not the received love-letters tell the lover how they *are loved*? This narcissistic ethics of Alpha, with the extrinsic consequential pleasure and the intrinsic necessity of being loved, is continued in the concluding chapter of *Questions of Life*. Here Gumbel asks the question “How Can I Make the Most of the Rest of My Life?”, gives a quote from Romans 12:1–2, then uses phrases from these verses as sub-titles. When explaining the term “Do not conform,” Gumbel states that a Christian should not be a chameleon Christian but a chrysalis Christian, where the latter does not conform to that which is around it,

53. *Ibid.*, p. 79, emphasis added.

54. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 236–8; *Searching Issues*, p. 41–56. It is out of context because although sexual morality “is one subject which arises time and time again,” Gumbel’s replies are not placed in the wider context and balance of social ethics, as I will show later in the chapter.

55. Ernest Kevan, *The Evangelical Doctrine of Law* (The Tyndale Press, 1956), p. 6.

47. Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues*, p. 43. 48. *Ibid.* 49. *Ibid.*

50. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 77.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 78, emphasis added.

52. *Ibid.*

but instead reaches their potential: “a relationship with God through Jesus should bring integration to our personalities.”⁵⁶ It seems that the greater part of the integration of our personalities comes from sex, where “God made us sexual beings and designed our sexual organs for our enjoyment.”⁵⁷ Then under “Be transformed,” after quoting Romans 12:9–21, he selects the word sincere and says that “When we know that God loves us as we are, we are set free to take off our masks. This means that there is a completely new depth in our relationships [with people].”⁵⁸ And beneath the sub-title “Present your bodies” Gumbel concludes that “The extraordinary paradox is that as we give him everything we find freedom.”⁵⁹

This concluding chapter is a far cry from the *magnum opus* of Wilhelmus à Brakel, a principal Reformer of the Dutch Second Reformation during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The full title of this work is “The Christian’s Reasonable Service in which Divine Truths concerning the Covenant of Grace are Expounded, Defended against Opposing Parties, and their Practice Advocated as well as The Administration of this Covenant in the Old and New Testaments.” This two thousand paged tome, in three volumes, was based on Romans 12:1.

The first volume is a dogmatic exposition. In forty-two chapters the doctrines of faith are discussed in a *practical, experiential manner*. In the second volume a description is given of how believers are to live a holy life before God. The ten commandments, prayer, patience, sincerity, and other important subjects are dealt with here. The third volume contains, among other things, an exposition of the Revelation of John.⁶⁰

Each doctrine of faith receives a thorough and profound treatment which is personally applied. These applications are of a decidedly Puritan flavour.⁶¹ (Let it also be said that à Brakel “regularly conducted religious exercises or public catechism classes pertaining to practical godliness . . . [in which] the minister did not preach during such an exercise, but rather conversed with those present.”⁶²) As previously mentioned, this was preached and written during the Dutch Second Reformation, which “in opposition to sin and complacency, [was] an urgent call [that] went out for fresh personal, church, and societal reform: *The scriptural appeal for sanctification must be zealously pursued; Reformation doctrine must be lived.*”⁶³

So in contrast to this tome, which supports the Thirty-Nine Articles on Justification and Sanctification, this concluding chapter of *Questions of Life*, as with the rest of the book, is not only insipid and superficial, but also teaches Christian hedonism. Because of its extrinsic consequential pleasure and its intrinsic necessity of being loved Alpha is narcissistic hedonism. John Piper has provided “Meditations of a Christian Hedonist” in his book “Desiring God.” He describes five tenets of Christian hedonism:

56. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 236. 57. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 240. 59. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

60. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service* (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, USA, 1992), Vol. 1. p. lxxvi, emphasis added.

61. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *op. cit.*, Adapted from the flycover.

62. *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

63. John Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation*, doctoral dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary. As quoted in Wilhelmus à Brakel’s *The Christian’s Reasonable Service* (Soli Deo Gloria Publications, USA, 1992), Vol. 1. p. xci.

1. The longing to be happy is a universal human experience, and it is good, not sinful.

2. We should never try to deny or resist our longing to be happy, as though it were a bad impulse. Instead we should seek to intensify this longing and nourish it with whatever will provide the deepest and most enduring satisfaction.

3. The deepest and most enduring happiness is found only in God.

4. The happiness we find in God reaches its consummation when it is shared with others in the manifold ways of love.

5. To the extent we try to abandon the pursuit of our own pleasure, we fail to honor God and love people. Or, to put it positively: the pursuit of pleasure is a necessary part of all worship and virtue. That is,

The chief end of man is to glorify God
BY
enjoying him forever.⁶⁴

And as John Mouw shows, Christian hedonism continues in the same practice as the utilitarian hedonism of John Stuart Mill:

If it be a true belief that God desires, above all things, the happiness of his creatures, and that this was his purpose in their creation, utility is not only not a godless doctrine, but more profoundly religious than any other. If it be meant that utilitarianism does not recognize the revealed will of God as the supreme law of morals, I answer that a utilitarian who believes that whatever God has thought fit to reveal on the subject of morals, must fulfill the requirement of utility in a supreme degree.⁶⁵

Taken with its defective and depleted repentance and moral law, Alpha is Christian hedonism because of the interdependence between relationship and pleasure. In the opening chapter of *Questions of Life* Gumbel says that “Life without a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is like the television without the aerial”: “quite happy . . . [but] not know[ing] anything different.”⁶⁶ Here Gumbel is centring on earthly lives and relationships; but that this relationship with God continues into eternity is almost incidental. However, Gumbel argues that a relationship with God transforms our enjoyment of *this* life. Clearly then, Gumbel is presenting a transformed enjoyment of life as the goal and a relationship with God as the means. Thus, as with Piper, the Alpha person glorifies God *by* enjoying him (incidentally) forever.

Gumbel and Selfism

Following on from my point on Alpha and Christian hedonism, there is a related issue that needs to be considered—selfism. Paul Vitz uses Erich Fromm’s definition of religion to define selfism: “[a] system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion”⁶⁷ in terms of “its rationale for self-

64. John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Multnomah Press, USA, 1986), p. 262. As quoted in Richard Mouw, *The God Who Commands: A Study in Divine Command Ethics*. (University of Notre Dame Press, USA, 1990), p. 32

65. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government*. (E. P. Dutton & Co., USA) 1951, p. 26. As quoted in Richard Mouw, *The God Who Commands: A Study in Divine Command Ethics*. (University of Notre Dame Press, USA, 1990). p. 31.

66. Nicky Gumbel, *Questions of Life*, p. 16.

67. Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (Yale University Press, USA, 1950), p. 21, as quoted by Paul Vitz *Psychology As Religion: The Cult Of Self Worship* (Lion Publishing, 1981), p. 35.

expression, creativity, and the like.⁷⁶⁸ Because of Alpha's deficient view of repentance and emphasis on life's enjoyment through a relationship with God, there is a similarity with the theology of selfism. Vitz refers to the work of Thomas Oden, *The Intensive Group Experience—The New Pietism*,⁶⁹ where in the theology of selfism there are three basic questions: What are the limits of my being that frustrate my self-actualization? What possibilities are open for deliverance from my predicament? How can I actualize these possibilities in order to become more fulfilled?⁷⁰

This selfism of self-actualisation and self-fulfilment can be seen in Gumbel's argument that a relationship with God transforms our enjoyment of this life: where we reach our potential; where our personalities are integrated, particularly through sex; and where we are freed to remove our psychological masks to experience a new intensity in interpersonal relationships.

Interestingly, but equally disconcerting, Vitz says that Selfism embodies powerful Pelagian elements. And to reinforce the point that I made in *Grace Alone*, Part II Chapter 6, Vitz states that "Pelagius . . . opposed the doctrine of original sin . . . thus downgrading the importance of God's grace."⁷¹ However, Vitz does not agree with Erich Fromm when the latter "cites Pelagius as an ally and representative of what he [Fromm] calls 'humanistic' religion, in contrast to the 'authoritarian' religion typified by Augustine."⁷² But Forster and Marston, whom Gumbel recommends in *Searching Issues*, do view Augustine as authoritarian.⁷³ And this puts Gumbel and Alpha in implicit contrariety with Articles IX—XVIII on sin, grace, repentance, faith and the exclusivity of Christ. For as James Packer once pointed out, "The fact that they [Articles IX—XVIII] echo Augustine's technical vocabulary (original righteousness, original sin, nature, free will, good will, concupiscence, grace preventing and working with us) and use medieval technical terms as well (merit, supererogation, congruity) must not be allowed to obscure for us the fact that it is plain New Testament teaching that is being confessed."⁷⁴

Furthermore, a comparison can be made between Alpha and Packer's past attack on Keswick teaching, in contrast to his present support of Alpha.⁷⁵ But in order to do that I must quote extensively from Packer's article "'Keswick' and the Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification":

They [Keswick teachers] deny that the fall made it impossible for man without renewing grace, from his heart to say "yes" to God . . . It left him the possessor of a sinful nature, but a sinful will was no part of that nature. This is evidently the Keswick opinion; for, had its leaders believed that fallen man is by nature the willing bondsman of sin, and so, as the Reformed creeds teach, not free for faith, they would have been bound to acknowledge that repentance, faith and good works are possible to him only to the degree to which the sinful habit of unbelief and enmity to God has been first eradicated from him . . .⁷⁶

68. Paul Vitz, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

69. Thomas Oden, *The Intensive Group Experience—The New Pietism* (Westminster, 1972), p. 103–5.

70. Paul Vitz, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Roger Forster and Paul Marston, *Reason and Faith* (Monarch Publications, 1989), p. 168. Roger Forster and Paul Marston, *God's Strategy in Human History* (Highland Books, 1989), p. 287.

74. James Packer, *The Thirty-Nine Articles: Their Place and Use Today* (Latimer House, 1984) p. 60–61.

75. I will return to the issue of James Packer and Alpha in the next part of this series.

Keswick . . . links sanctification to justification, regarding it as a second and supplementary blessing; it represents both as external to the will, and makes acts of consecration (repentance) and faith—which, it is assumed, man is antecedently free to perform—the condition of their bestowal and the mode of their reception . . .⁷⁷

It [Keswick teaching] is Pelagian; for, in effect, it makes the Christian the employer, and the Holy Spirit the employee, in the work of sanctification. It is shallow; for it externalizes sanctification, reducing the Spirit's work to the mere preventing of sinful acts and excluding from it altogether the positive renewal of the agent's person. As such, it is a depressing message for the Christian; for what a regenerate man, as such, desires most of all for himself is, not freedom from conflict and tension as an end in itself, but freedom from the pollution and defilement of sin in his heart.⁷⁸

Equally, Alpha implicitly denies that the fall made it impossible for man without renewing grace to say "yes" to God. It left him the possessor of a propensity to do wrong, but a sinful will has no part in that inclination. And had the leaders of Alpha believed that fallen man is by nature the willing bondsman of sin, as the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles teach, then they would have been bound to acknowledge that repentance, faith and good works are not possible to him through narcissistic Christian hedonism.

Further, Alpha links sanctification to justification, through regarding the former as a second and supplementary blessing of the self-actualisation and self-fulfilment of selfism. Alpha is Pelagian; for it makes the Alpha Christian the employer and the Holy Spirit the employee when it presents a transformed enjoyment of life as the goal and a relationship with God as the means. Alpha is shallow; for it externalises sanctification through reducing the Spirit's work to the mere extrinsic consequential pleasure of the Alpha Christian and creates the necessity of the latter to be loved. As such, it is a depressing message for the unregenerate man, for what he requires most of all for himself is not the freedom of a relationship with God which transforms his enjoyment of this life in which he reaches his potential, but a freedom from the defilement of sin in which the demands of the holy law of God have been satisfied. And may I venture to suggest that Alpha "would more effectively promote its avowed aim by reforming its tradition according to the Word of God?"⁷⁹

*Gumbel, Roman Catholicism and Not Faith Alone*⁸⁰

In the first section of this series I mentioned that the Reformers saw Arminianism as being closer to Roman Catholicism than to the Reformed truths, where the former abates the power and guilt of original sin. Similarly, Gumbel holds that we are born with only a partiality or disposition to do evil and Roman Catholicism contends that although innocence was lost, freewill was not extinguished. Both contend, although one implicitly and the other explicitly, that although the nature of man was changed through the Fall, man still has the ability to choose between good and evil. However, a distinction has to be made between Alpha and Roman Catholicism: the latter is Pelagian, where man,

76. James Packer, "'Keswick' and The Reformed Doctrine of Sanctification," p. 159.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 166, emphases in original.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

80. I have altered this from the previous form in chapters 5, 6 and 7, because it has become apparent that there is a significant difference between Faith Not Alone and Not Faith Alone.

with his freewill, can earn salvation, but the former is semi-Pelagianism where man, with his free will, does little to earn salvation and enjoys a Christian hedonism and selfism.

Repeating a previous quote of James Packer: “Without sincere repentance, faith is hypocrisy, and without thorough conviction of sin repentance is an impossibility.”⁸¹ And both Alpha and Roman Catholicism are not only without sincere repentance, but they are without repentance. A comparison can be made between the Alpha prayer, on pages 54 and 55 in *Questions of Life*, and Roman Catholicism’s Act of Contrition. The latter states that

O my God, I am sorry for having offended thee and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all, because I have offended thee, my God Who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.⁸²

Although Roman Catholicism confounds repentance with penance, it also confounds repentance with contrition as does Alpha. But contrition in either case is not repentance.

Reading through “What are the results?” of “Why Did Jesus Die?” in *Questions of Life*, nowhere is there any pronouncement that by faith we are *accounted* righteous, which is disputed and denied by the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, either by design or default, Gumbel has implicitly allowed the Roman Catholic Church to remain unchallenged about its basis of righteousness: “that we are *made* righteous, and that this *inherent* righteousness is the ground of our justification.”⁸³ This is why the Roman Catholic Church can accept Alpha when the Canons Concerning Justification, in the Council of Trent, states, in Canon 9, that “If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone (*supra*, chaps 7 to 8), meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in

any way unnecessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema.”⁸⁴ And yet, the Roman Catholic Church maintains that justification is a gift of God, because a person’s faith and works do not directly procure justification, for the initial grace, through the initiative of God, cannot be merited. This has a similarity in Gumbel’s ambiguous example of the judge who can be seen to initiate the initial unmerited grace. Where in Gumbel’s example is there anything to challenge the Roman Catholic position, i.e. that the prisoner receives initial grace and is then *made* righteous, so that, “*something* else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification”?

Furthermore, concerning sanctification, Canon 24, in the Canons Concerning Justification, from the Council of Trent, states that “If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema.”⁸⁵ That is why Calvinism, which is biblical Christianity, is anathema to Roman Catholicism. It is also the reason why Calvinism is anathema to Gumbel and Alpha. Thus it can be seen how and why Alpha’s sanctification of Christian hedonism and selfism does not preclude Roman Catholicism’s belief of preserving and increasing the grace of justification through good works. Why not achieve good works through a hedonistic and selfist approach? As I said in Chapter 5, Alpha is more than a series of copyrighted talks based on *Questions of Life* with the aim of building ecumenical Alpha churches. To achieve ecumenical development it is necessary for churches to have the same, or similar, foundations; in the same way that two cannot walk together unless they agree. If it is to provide such a common foundation Alpha needs, and appears to have, an empathy towards Roman Catholicism, with its individualistic “anabaptism/Arminianism.” C&S

81. James Packer, “Sanctification—Puritan Teaching,” p. 127.

82. Wilson Ewin, *You Can Lead Roman Catholics to Christ*. Christian Publications Registered, Canada. 1961, p. 111.

83. David Samuel, *Pope or Gospel? The crisis of faith in the Protestant Churches* (Marshall Morgan & Scott 1982), p. 136, emphasis in original.

84. Mark Noll (Ed.), *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Apollos, 1991), p. 185.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

AN OUTLINE OF THE COMMON LAW[†]

by Ruben Alvarado

THE Western legal tradition provided the context for the development of the Constitution of Liberty. Legal historian Donald Kelley argues that the true “perennial philosophy”—the ongoing dialogue about reason, truth, justice, and meaning—was the legal tradition together with philosophy and theology.¹ Anyone who delves into the works of

pre-modern political and legal theorists will note that theological and philosophical matters were dealt with in tandem with political and legal ones. Theologians and philosophers were likewise busy with political and legal questions. The common-law tradition therefore is not simply a matter of legal-historical importance but of cultural and educational importance. It is the tradition upon which our civilisation is based; an acquaintance with it is an absolute imperative for those who wish to achieve cultural literacy.

Basic to the common-law tradition is the subordination of sovereignty to property. In Roman legal terms, *imperium* exists to serve *dominium*. Among other things, this means that sovereignty is not a power to create law, but only the power

[†] For a review of Ruben Alvarado’s recent book on common law, *A Common Law: The Law of Nations and Western Civilisation*, see page 29f. of this issue of *Christianity & Society*.

1. See the articles contained in his *History, Law and the Human Sciences* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984) and, most recently, *The Human Measure: Social Thought in the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990).

to enforce law. The power to create law is the formula of absolutism and tyranny. It is also the philosophy of modern politics. Modern politics feeds off the evolutionary worldview that states that ultimate reality is flux and has no meaning, and that law is man's tool for imposing order on this pre-existing chaos. By extension, then, the State is the means by which man achieves order amid the chaos of society. But the common-law tradition does not postulate a pre-existing chaos but rather a pre-existing order by virtue of being created by God. It also postulates a pre-existing law-order in society that does not have to be created but rather must be recognised by the sovereign.

Therefore public law exists to serve private law. This is a corollary of the first principle, and is crucial to a proper understanding of the Constitution of Liberty. The public-law/private-law distinction is prior to all legal philosophising; it has to be assumed—it cannot be ignored. Even the German socialist legal philosopher Gerhard Radbruch recognised this. “The concepts private and public law are not concepts of positive law that could just as well be eliminated from a particular positive law order, but much rather logically precede the practical application of law and seek application ahead of time in any practical application of law. They are a priori law concepts . . . The distinction between private and public law is anchored in the concept of law itself.”² Radbruch argues that the priority one gives to private over public law or vice versa is historically determined and as such is more or less a matter of preference; the common-law tradition understands and proclaims that the priority must go to private law.

This is not to say that the social contract theory of the origin of property and the State is the correct one. The social contract theory, remember, derived the powers of the State from the individuals' natural lordship, with the individual transferring this sovereign lordship to the State, thus endowing the State with the power of the sword. With this theoretical construct, the social contract theory conflates *dominium* and *imperium*. But: *imperium* and *dominium*, sovereignty and property, are fundamentally distinct. *Dominium* is the power one has over something; *imperium* is the authority to enforce the law over third parties, which law is primarily concerned with protecting *dominium*.

We say that public law exists to serve private law, and we do so because the State exists to administer justice, and public law is a means to that end. Public law regulates civil government. It ensures that civil government is able to function properly. But it does not tell us to what end civil government functions. It does not provide the goal, the rationale of civil government, only an internal structure to ensure its well-being. The end of civil government extends beyond public law to all the associations of which society is comprised. The law regulating the inter-relations of these associations, the law regulating and co-ordinating their several activities, is private law.

Private law has a unique structure that cannot be reduced to any other form of law; it has its own independent existence. This is the burden of an important book by Ernest J. Weinrib entitled *The Idea of Private Law*.³ Private law, Weinrib argues, is characterised by the bilateral relation-

ship of the parties involved. Two parties are involved, joined by an action, one party acting, one party being acted upon. What flows out of such an action, whether agreeable or disagreeable, forms the subject matter of private law. Concepts of distribution and administration do not enter into this equation, because such concepts import considerations that do not flow from the relation. The resolution is inherent in the relation, and depends upon the consideration of the action itself.

The private-law relationship is necessary because contemporary society is not a monolithic organisation but rather a plethora of organisations and communities. As Johannes Althusius wrote in his *Politica Methodice Digesta*, society is a complex of associations beginning with family and progressing to the State. It is these associations that are the owners in society, and not primarily individuals. (Thus the charge lodged against private ownership, that it is a system of possessive individualism and thus antisocial, is from the start categorically refuted. Private ownership is ownership by private associations, beginning with the family. Purely individual ownership forms the exception, not the rule.) And it is the interactions *between* owners, thus between these, shall we say, ownership entities, that form the subject matter of private law.

The two kinds of justice first delineated by Aristotle, distributive justice and commutative justice, highlight this difference. Distributive justice involves the proper distribution *within* a given organisation or community. It refers to goods common to all, owned by all, to be distributed in terms of what each member merits. Commutative justice, on the other hand, refers to exchange *between* organisations or communities, regarding goods not shared or owned in common but rather owned separately by the exchanging parties, and therefore not falling under the authority of a distributing agent but free to be disposed of by the separate parties involved. Thus the difference between commutative and distributive justice is based on the question of ownership. Within the bounds of ownership, distributive justice prevails; outside the bounds of ownership, thus among free, “autonomous” actors, commutative justice does. It is the difference in ownership which explains the difference in law.

Private law therefore is the law applying to relations between these owners; it is, as we said, an external, co-ordinating law. Now the associations falling under the regime of private law are also governed by internal law-orders peculiar to each—family law, corporate law, laws governing foundations, clubs, etc.—and these law-orders, being internal, are expressive of the principles of distributive justice. Private law does not extend into the internal affairs of these associations; they form a world apart.

Public law, as we said, concerns the internal functioning of the public association, which is civil government. It is therefore concerned with those things the citizens hold in common. This may be common property, but it has more to do with the functions of government proper, which is something all citizens share in, both administering those functions (public office) and paying for those functions (taxation). For example, voting rights fall under public law. Constitutional law, fiscal law, administrative law, all fall under the purview of public law. All these forms of law, being internal to the functioning of government, are covered by the principles of distributive justice.

Because private law arises out of the relationships and

2. *Rechtsphilosophie* (Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1973 [eighth edition]), p. 220f.

3. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

interactions of autonomous organisations and associations and individuals, the private-law order develops in a bottom-up, appeals-court manner. It is court-evolved law. The operative word is adjudication, not legislation. This does not mean that judges make the law, only that they base their decisions on the inner logic of private law in accordance with the principles of commutative justice. The role of legislation should be corrective rather than prescriptive. Where judgments prove unjust, where courts are corrupt, where judges cannot be trusted, there legislation has a definite role to play—because here they have to intervene in the functioning of the courts, and this is an aspect of public law. But as far as the underlying principles of justice are concerned, there legislation is an extraneous element that can only serve to confuse and bog down the judicial process.

The court-evolved nature of private law is part and parcel of the Christian-historical nature of the common-law tradition. The Constitution of Liberty evolved; it was not legislated. It arose through the integration of the classical inheritance—represented in “the three languages of the cross,” Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—among the barbarian tribes of Europe, under the leadership of the church. Sir Henry Maine characterised this process as the transition from status to contract.⁴ Many have seen this as a sort of liberal triumphalism, pitting contract against status, the former desirable, the latter not. But that is a false dream of liberalism, as surely flawed as the social contract theory was. For status can never be subsumed in contract; authority is the necessary and abiding context of liberty.

In fact, the growth of liberty paralleled the growth of property rights and private law. Liberty did not come on the scene as an abstraction, but as the incremental growth of concrete rights and liberties. For as individuals and associations gained their freedom they began acting in terms of that freedom. Out of these actions arose the private law.

This historical reality highlights the fact that in the common-law tradition, sovereignty is the necessary prerequisite for property. Although sovereignty serves property, that does not mean that property exists before sovereignty. On the contrary, it is sovereignty which secures property and makes the entire system of property and private law possible. Where sovereignty is uncertain, there the entire law order stands under threat. Historically, the establishment of sovereignty precedes the development of property rights and the system of market exchange and contract.

The common-law tradition further affirms that nations, not States, are sovereign. The seat of sovereignty is the nation, understood as an associated body of member associations ranging from the family to local and regional public authorities—the “members” of the body. The government only exists to administer the sovereign power located in the associated members. These nations therefore are the original building blocks of civilisation. It has been this way ever since the aftermath of the Tower of Babel, when God called the nations into existence.

The original situation is nations establishing themselves on the land. The land is pacified. It is held first in common and it is then parcelled out (as, for example, the Israelites upon conquering Canaan). Land is the basic resource; upon it is erected the entire superstructure of culture and property. In this situation, the individual is subordinate to the

group. Private law is inchoate; it slumbers, awaiting the stimulus of creativity and innovation. As soon as production on the land exceeds the subsistence level, room is created for cultural progress, for the multiplication of the division of labor. This process calls for the development of laws to protect and promote property; otherwise the incentive to produce is stifled. It also fosters the establishment of towns, which are veritable outposts of private law in the midst of pre-existing tribal and manorial communities.

Contemporary legal science, developing the anti-capitalist bias inherent among intellectuals for the past 200 years, is at war against private law. Private law is a “bourgeois capitalist” concept that has no standing in a truly social order. If the nineteenth century was the century in which the theory of the attack on private law was developed, then the twentieth century was the century in which this attack was put into practice. The subsumption of private by public law was perhaps the chief focus of socialist regimes. Radbruch viewed it this way: “for an individualistic legal order, public law—the state—is only the restrictive protective framework revolving around private law and private property; for a social legal order the reverse is true—the private law is only a provisionally preserved and ever-shrinking space for private initiative within the all-encompassing public law.”⁵ The agenda is clear: private law as an independent structure has no standing in the socialist system.

But private law, being expressive of commutative justice, has its own inner logic, its own structure which must be respected in lawmaking of any shape. Currently, legislation is the primary source of law, both public and private. The problem with this is that legislation is primarily directed by considerations of distributive and not commutative justice. This is because the legislature is oriented towards public law, it historically has been shaped by public law, and it sees its mission in terms of public law.⁶ Add to this the modern social-democratic bias in favor of public law as an all-encompassing “social” law, and one begins to see the danger of legislation to the regime of private law.

This underlying bias viewing distributive justice and by extension public law as a kind of remedy against supposed “excesses” of private law has a long history. Hugo Grotius was the first to pit commutative justice against distributive justice, and he did so in favor of commutative justice.⁷ He created a hierarchy with commutative justice being strict justice, and thus capable of being expressed as civil law, and distributive justice, which he described as a moral rather than a strictly juridical category, and thus unable to be expressed in law. Later in the same century, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz turned this construction on its head, arguing that commutative justice formed a lower sort of justice that needed to be adjusted and corrected by distributive justice, which served as a principal of equity, correcting undesirable results arising from the administration of this lower form of justice. G. W. F. Hegel took Leibniz’s principle further, arguing that civil society—the private-law society—needed the corrective and leading role of the State to rectify its inevitable “conflicts of interest.” The entire structure of social democracy and the Welfare State is built on this concept.

5. “From Individualistic Law to Social Law” (1930), reprinted in *Der Mensch im Recht* (Göttingen, 1957), p. 40.

6. Friedrich von Hayek, *Law, Legislation, And Liberty*.

7. Alvarado, *A Common Law*, p. 92ff.

4. *Ancient Law*, chapter 5.

This is the unexamined presupposition underlying the typical modern concept of justice and law. It presupposes that private law fosters conflicts of interest and unjust outcomes. This is an expression of the conflict-of-interest world-view that I discussed in my book *A Common Law*.⁸ The question is, are conflicts of interest spawned by the regime of private law? Do private associations in their mutual interactions require the guidance and distributing power of an overarching State? Or is there a built-in structure of harmonisation—commutation—enabling the regime of private law to function quite well on its own, making intervention superfluous if not downright destructive?

We have already answered this question in the affirmative, but let us examine the issue further. There are a variety of terms that express the principle underlying private law: retribution, restitution, reciprocity, “an eye for an eye” (*lex talionis*). It is indeed an ancient principle of justice and one that in itself no one has ever presumed to find fault with, at least in principle: the literal application of the *lex talionis* is adhered to only in primitive cultures—more advanced ones substitute a penalty considered equal, though not literally so (for example, one is not literally required to give up an eye if one causes blindness in someone else). Problems arise only upon consideration of outcomes. Private law is no respecter of persons. It does not take into consideration the relative conditions of the parties involved; it only takes cognisance of the matter involving them. Thus, for example, if a poor person steals from a rich one, private law requires restitution regardless of the fact that one has much and the other has little. Private law only sees that one has robbed another,

8. *Ibid.*, p. 106ff.

creating a disturbance in the legal order that must be restored.

It is precisely this lack of “social concern” that sticks in the craw of the modern ethicist. He starts out yielding the point that the principle underlying private law is just. But he then argues that its outworking is unjust. The argument used to justify this sleight of hand runs along the lines of “moral man, immoral society” or “structural sin.” The individuals involved have done nothing wrong, yet the outcome of their actions is deemed undesirable. Therefore something must be done to correct this unforeseen consequence. Therefore private law cannot be allowed an autonomous existence. Therefore economic freedom cannot be allowed free rein. It must be restricted for the sake of “social justice.”

This is where distributive justice invades the proper sphere of commutative justice. Public law in the name of social justice begins to subsume private law. It does so through legislation. Which is why the question of the source of law is so important. If legislation is the only legitimate source of law, then private law as an autonomous regime is imperiled. Because, as we have seen, legislation is inherently distributive. Its invasion into the area of private law is usually to bend outcomes away from how they normally would turn out.

Private law must be defended from these invasions. It must be recognised as an autonomous realm, indispensable for the functioning of a free society, a society of associations. It therefore must be allowed to grow and develop in terms of the interactions of these associations, in line with the principles of commutative justice. On this realisation depends the freedoms we treasure, the tradition we have come to know as the common law. C&S

Prison—After Saving Their Boy’s Life

by John Smeaton

National Director, SPUC

RELATIVES of a disabled boy are serving jail sentences after they saved his life. They stopped doctors giving him a diamorphine drip which was administered so that he would “slip away.”

Raymond Davies, Julie Hodgson and Diane Wild, uncle and aunts of David Glass, now 14, were imprisoned earlier this year for their part in altercations with medical staff in October 1998.

When David, who had a chest infection, fell into a coma and began to turn blue, relatives helped sustain his breathing and Carol Glass, his mother, removed the diamorphine line. Doctors have admitted that the withdrawal of the drip saved the boy’s life.

The family had been told that it was in David’s “best interests to allow him to die without distress or pain.”

The family GP has praised the quality of home-based care given to David by his mother and other relatives. The

family regards David’s quality of life as good and, while he can only communicate in a limited way, he never lacks love and attention.

David’s relatives were charged with causing actual bodily harm and violent disorder. In June Ms Wild was sentenced to 12 months’ imprisonment and Mr Davies and Ms Hodgson were each sentenced to six months. The sentences reflected Department of Health policy—actually intended to deter drunken violence in casualty departments—of demanding maximum penalties for assaults on staff.

In July the appeal court reduced the sentences so that the relatives could resume their care for David when his sisters return to school later this month.

Carol Glass is now deeply resentful of medical and legal institutions which, instead of helping the weak, tried to end her son’s life and then severely punished members of his family. C&S

LEX AETERNA: ST AUGUSTINE'S COSMONOMIC IDEA

by Colin Wright

PART II (concluded)

AUGUSTINE'S COSMONOMIC IDEA—AT LAST!

Now that we have examined in some considerable detail a number of pitfalls that must be avoided in reading texts, we can proceed to the study of Dooyeweerd's comments on Augustine's cosmonomic-idea.

Dooyeweerd's statement, quoted in Part I of this essay, to the effect that Augustine "ventured a bold attempt at formulating a law-idea which corresponded to the Christian world- and life-view" must be received with caution. It is not at all clear what he means by Augustine's intentions here. Is he saying that Augustine made a deliberate and conscious attempt to formulate a Christian law-idea? Did the bishop of Hippo sit down at his desk one day and think to himself: "The current understanding of Christians as to the nature of our law-idea is still too pagan. We must seek to reform it and make it more biblical"? I doubt it. As Dooyeweerd himself admitted, a law-idea might well be an essential part of everyone's life world- and life-view but the conscious recognition of such an entity's existence was left to him to achieve first in the twentieth century. We could certainly agree that Augustine, determined as he was, nay driven, by the need to submit all his understanding to Scripture, would have been compelled by the logic of the case to move closer than many of his contemporaries to a more Christian or biblical conception. But then, what could Dooyeweerd possibly have meant by imputing the idea of a "bold attempt" to the enterprise? Is it merely metaphorical language? This manner of conveying Augustine's intentions is repeated in the longer passage I quoted from *Calvinism and Natural Law* in the Introduction.

But the process by which Augustine came to his ideas is not at all clear. The constant imputation to Augustine of merely rehashing Neoplatonic writers is mere conjecture. Neither is there any evidence from his writings that he at any time set out deliberately to formulate a self-conscious Christian philosophy. Much of his thinking is clearly *driven* by Scripture, but rarely if ever consciously *deduced* therefrom. Augustine may have been, he certainly was, an exceptional intellect and a deep thinker, but his agenda was governed and determined not by the intellectual interests of an academic—certainly not a twenty-first century academic—but by the practical interests of a Christian pastor. This must not be lost sight of.

There is a particularly fine example of this in one of the discussions with the Neoplatonists in Book XII of the *City of*

God. He has to grapple with their idea of the cyclic nature of time and history. For the Neoplatonists the cosmos is without beginning. They could not, and would not, conceive of the cosmos as temporal, finite, and created in the Christian sense. This was the foolishness that attached to Christianity in the Greek mind. The cosmos was as much an integral part of the "what is there" as any gods who might oversee it. Creation out of nothing was a scandal. But this conception raised a number of acute problems, which Christian apologists were to pick up and probe. Not least of these was the anomaly between the finite number of people in the world and the infinite number that an infinite past history would suggest. To make sense of this the Greek mind conceived an infinite number of cycles through which the cosmos had passed, constantly coming into being and vanishing out of being. Time and history repeat themselves over vast aeons.

Augustine has some sharp things to say about the illogicalities of this conception. But it is not the logic that drives his Christian conception of linear time—it is the redemptive work of Christ.

Throughout this debate Augustine shows no interest whatsoever in the academic pursuit of truth. He argues not as a philosopher but as a practical Christian. Christian truth forces particular cosmological truth upon him. He does not need a linear conception of time and history, or a creation-out-of-nothing theory of origins, to complete a satisfying intellectual system. He needs it because Christian truth demands it of him. He has no other reason for examining the subject. The Greek cyclical view of history is totally inimical to the Christian doctrine of the once-and-for-all atoning sacrifice of Christ, and had to be rejected outright on that score.

This is but one example, but it is typical of the way in which Augustine thinks. And we have every reason to suppose that this would have been the case in his construction of a more Christian cosmonomic-idea. He would not have approached the problem consciously aware of the need to establish a more Christian philosophical conception. It was the unconscious outworking of his deeply held Christian religious ground-motive of Creation, Fall, Redemption.

We need to ask what forces were being brought to bear on his thinking when he conceived this law-idea. In particular we need to look at the contexts in which he used the phrase that has become synonymous with this conception, namely, that of the *lex aeterna*—the Eternal Law.

Dooyeweerd has his own understanding of how that

came about. But it does not wholly satisfy us. Nevertheless he does draw out very clearly and explicitly what he sees as the critical feature of Augustine's development of a Christian idea. Dooyeweerd speaks of the "idea that was rooted in his [Augustine's] thought, namely the idea of the absolute sovereignty of God and of the boundary between the finite and the infinite."¹

We can wholly concur in this judgement. These two conceptions, particularly the latter, are perhaps more clearly expressed in Augustine than in any other Christian writer up to modern times. Augustine asserted his view of the boundary, as Dooyeweerd calls it, between God as uncreated and all else as created, with the most forceful expressions he could muster. No wonder. He saw them as the essential difference between the Scriptural view of reality and every other pagan view. It was with great pain that he had struggled free from the morass of fourth-century error; he was not likely to forget the things that made the difference. It had been on these very issues that, before his conversion, he had been confronted in his inner struggle with the problem of the origin of evil.²

This new, this *Christian* conception, derived wholly from the Book of Genesis. It was totally foreign to the pagan culture of Augustine's time. However, this was not simply due to a reading of the Scripture text isolated from the culture in which he moved. It was a doctrine firmly held and largely derived over against the leading pagan systems of thought of his day. These were Neoplatonism and Manichaeism. Augustine deliberately opposed his Scriptural doctrine to what he rightly conceived to be at the heart of the pagan systems he had tried: their pantheism, i.e. that God is all and all is God. Dooyeweerd correctly draws attention to this in his early essay *Calvinism and Natural Law* which we have quoted.

But Dooyeweerd goes further and argues that Augustine now fused this idea of the boundary or the antithesis into a modified Neoplatonist structure of thought. He took this structure and replaced two of its leading features, one the wholly biblical one of the unbridgeable distinction between God and Creation, and the other a syncretistic Greek-cum-Jewish Logos-theory. Unfortunately Dooyeweerd merely asserts this; we are given no reference to any of Augustine's work that might justify his claim. In a corpus of more than five and a half million words such references are essential. I have not been able to trace anything that would suggest that Dooyeweerd is correct, and I am confident that the passages I can draw upon give a radically different picture of Augustine's understanding of the Logos.

The attempt has often been made to promote the patristics as covert "Greek" philosophers.³ Christianity could

never be original. Ideas that bear any relation to those of the surrounding culture must have been taken from that culture and, so these scholars tell us, taken together with all or most of their pagan meaning. In particular, the attempt has been made to charge the Church with having derived its idea of the Logos—the Word—from the Hellenised Alexandrian Jew, Philo.⁴ Saint John did not in any case, they would maintain, get this idea by inspiration from God—perish the thought!—and he most certainly as a Christian did not have the nous to think it up for himself.

True, Philo did develop a pagan Hellenistic philosophy of the Logos. But his idea is so far removed from John's conception that, apart from the coincidence of the Greek word, one wonders how any one could suppose for a moment that they had any connection.⁵ Indeed, it is nigh impossible to determine whether Philo regarded his Logos as personal at all.

The Hellenised Logos was a concept developed to resolve the problem of the link between the divine and the earthy. The question was how to maintain the transcendence of the divine (I studiously avoid the word "God") and yet at the same time involve the divine in the cosmos. The Greek answer was the invention of the demiurge as an emanation from the divine. The demiurge is a go-between. It smacks sufficiently of the divine to be able to create (whatever connotation might be put on that word) and sustain the cosmos, yet—being only derived from the divine—is not a true participant in the divinity itself. It is therefore able to get its hands dirty in the messy work of creating the temporal earthy cosmos. Philo popularised the idea and used the Greek word Logos to identify it.

In order to fully ensure that the divine was completely removed from this messy business most Greek thought proposed a hierarchical series of such emanations with each one, as it became even further removed from the divine source, being increasingly earthy itself and thus fit for the dirty work ahead. By some it was supposed even that the cosmos itself was simply the last in the series of emanations, together constituting a Great Chain of Being.

But what has this to do with the Christian conception of the *Logos Tou Theou*—the Word of God? What was all the fuss about over Arius' teaching other than this—that he, against the whole catholic tradition of the Christian Church, sought to impose the Philonic meaning on the Scriptural one? Up to this time the Church had never felt the need to make any conscious attempt to guard its doctrine of the Logos from the imputation of such Hellenistic meaning. The difference was so stark that it did not constitute a problem *at all*.

Now it may be insisted that John, while not deriving his concept of the Logos from Philo, nevertheless used the language of his day to create a new Christian idea, or rather to express a Christian idea. Doubtless this is a possibility, though I am inclined to think that it was much more likely to be influenced by Old Testament ideas, particularly the first chapter of Genesis. John may then have been aware of

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

2. See my essay "St Augustine: His Life and Thought" (*Christianity & Society*, Vol. VII, No. 2, April 1997), Part VI: "The Problem of the Origin of Evil."

3. Certainly, many of the patristics used Greek ideas in their apologetics and some, like Origen, made a right mess of their theology with it. But what I am arguing is that Christian theology is not the result of a syncretism of Greek and Jewish ideas but a unique revelation, though it was sometimes expressed in a terminology currently available. In this paragraph I have followed Augustine in speaking of only one context and should not be regarded as having spoken of every context.

4. For a summary of the teaching of Philo (30BC–40AD) see Edouard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1997 [1931]), pp. 259–264. A longer account can be found in W. Fairweather, *The Background of the Gospels* (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1926) pp. 349–361.

5. For the differences between John's conception of the Logos and that of Philo see H. R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 1914), pp. 116–121.

the Greek idea. But how does this justify the charge that he accommodated Philonic ideas to Christianity? In the intellectually sterile culture of modern Christianity, in which the antithesis between Christianity and humanism has been lost sight of, no doubt such an action is conceivable. Yet it does not sit at all well with the evident stark contrast between the new Christian *evangelion* of the first century and the Greek-pagan culture it opposed in a head-on clash that was a fight to the death. Whatever, it is difficult to understand how a Philonic concept of the Logos could be attributed to Augustine.

What then was Augustine's view of the Logos? The phrase *Word of God* (Gk: *logo tou theou*; Latin: *verbum dei*) occurs frequently in his writings. Sometimes it is used merely as a title or synonym for Christ. But there are significant passages where Augustine unfolds his understanding of the term. These must be taken as primary and authoritative over against any pretended allusions—the stuff of so much modern clever scholarship—if we are to do justice to his thought.

The conception was an important one for Augustine. He wished there to be no mistake as to what he meant by it. He spelt it out very clearly. In his exposition, too, he knew that he had to do more than simply expound the biblical idea; he had to engage head-on the pagan conceptions that he believed to be inimical to Holy Scripture. And that meant engaging the Neoplatonists. Clearly Augustine was fully aware that his views on this issue were not drawn from pagan philosophical sources but wholly from Scripture. And he was also aware that the two were seriously at loggerheads. This in itself ought to have given pause for thought to Dooyeweerd, and all who too readily assume that the Christian bishop could not tell the difference.

In particular, in those very books where Augustine is most explicit in his handling of this subject, namely *The City of God*, the *Confessions* and *On the Trinity*, he is most fully conscious that he is engaging the enemy—the *Civitas Terrena* (City of Earth). His awareness that he must draw a clear line in the sand between the *City of God* and the *City of Earth* will be most acute here, and it would be surprising therefore to find here the extensive intrusion of Platonist ideas that scholars have been so ready to suggest. In his engagement with the pagan systems of Greece and Rome Augustine was acutely aware that he was engaged in a bitter struggle of life and death. The defence of Christianity was neither a game nor a cosy intellectual or academic diversion.

Augustine identified the “Word of God” with the “Son of God:”

The Word of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, in all things like and equal to the Father, God of God, Light of Light, Wisdom of Wisdom, Essence of Essence, is altogether that which the Father is, yet is not the Father, because the one is Son, the other is Father.⁶

This passage from *On the Trinity* is not an isolated remark. Its language constitutes the tenor of Augustine's vision of the Trinity in general and of the Son in particular.

In the preceding chapters and subsequent ones Augustine discusses the analogies between the Trinity and man as made in God's image. He is especially interested in the way we think and how this relates to the language in which we express our thoughts.

6. *On the Trinity*, Book XV, chap. 14.

Particularly instructive is the thirteenth chapter, whose thesis is the difference between the knowledge and word of *our* minds and the knowledge and word of God. Our knowledge is changeable; we can gain knowledge and we can lose knowledge. And thus for us, to know is not the same as to be wise. Neither our knowledge nor, more importantly, our wisdom are of our essence—our nature. We do not cease to be human by becoming ignorant or foolish; we do not become more human by becoming more knowledgeable or wise. God is not like this, for:

The knowledge of God is itself also His wisdom, and His wisdom is itself His essence or substance. Because in the marvellous simplicity of that nature, it is not one thing to be wise and another to be, but to be wise is to be.⁷

(We must digress briefly here to anticipate an objection that may well be raised against Augustine's identification of God's knowledge with his being. To many it seems to clearly imply that God would thus be inextricably dependent upon what happens in time, and that his knowledge thus being contingent, so is his essence. Nothing could be further from Augustine's mind. Indeed, precisely the opposite. Augustine had fully anticipated such a response and, though he does not deal with it at this time, he explains the identification elsewhere:

For God made nothing unwittingly; not even a human workman can be said to do so. But if He knew all that he made, He made only those things which He had known. Whence flows a very striking but true conclusion, that this world could not be known to us unless it existed, *but could not have existed unless it had been known by God*.⁸

It is creation's utter dependence on the uncreated Word of God that both originally created it and now upholds it that necessitates God's *prior* knowledge of all that happens in time.⁹ As Luther was later to remark to Erasmus: God wills what he foreknows and foreknow what he wills.¹⁰)

Therefore, as our knowledge is unlike God's knowledge:

So is our word also, which is born from our knowledge, unlike that Word of God which is born from the essence of the Father. And this is as if I should say, born from the Father's knowledge, from the Father's wisdom; or still more exactly, from the Father who is knowledge, from the Father who is wisdom.¹¹

In the following chapter, he continues:

Accordingly, as though uttering Himself, the Father begat the Word equal to Himself in all things; for He would not have uttered Himself wholly and perfectly, if there were in His Word anything more or less than in Himself. . . . the Son knows all things, namely, in Himself, as things which are born of those which the Father knows in Himself.

7. *Ibid.*, chap. 13. He expresses a similar sentiment in *The City of God*, where he says: The Trinity is “simple, because it is what it has, with the exception of the relation of the persons to one another”—*quod deus habet, id est*, Book XI, chap. 10.

8. *The City of God*, Book XI, chap. 10. The whole chapter is extremely instructive and worth perusal.

9. For a first-class treatment of the problems relating to God's eternity and his relation to time we highly recommend Paul Helm's *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

10. *Bondage of the Will*, II, iv. (London, James Clarke, 1957), p. 80.

11. *On the Trinity*, Book XV, chap. 13.

One passage above all encapsulates Augustine's conception, as it were a *locus classicus*, found in his *Confessions*. In the fifth chapter of Book XI, he confesses God's transcendence in regard to all that is created. And all that is not God is created and temporal. And all that is created is created by God alone, through the uttered Word:

What exists, save because You exist? You spoke and heaven and earth were created; in Your word You created them.¹²

But *how* did You speak? Was it perhaps as when that voice sounded from the cloud saying: This is my beloved Son? That voice sounded and ceased to sound, had a beginning and an end. The syllables sounded and died away, the second after the first, the third after the second, and so in order, until the last after the rest, and silence after the last. From this it is clear beyond question that that voice was sounded by the movement of something created by You, a movement in time but serving Your eternal will . . . Clearly You are calling us to the realisation of that Word—God with You, God as You are God—which is uttered eternally and by which all things are uttered eternally. For this is not an utterance in which what is said passes away that the next thing may be said and so finally the whole utterance be complete: but all in one act, yet abiding eternally: otherwise it would be but time and change and no true eternity, no true immortality. . . . *But of Your Word nothing passes or comes into being, for it is truly immortal and eternal. Thus it is by a Word co-eternal with Yourself that You say all that You say, and all things are made that You say are to be made.*¹³

Thus we conclude that, without any doubt, Augustine's conception of the Word of God—of the Logos—was thoroughly biblical and not at all drawn from Philo's pagan logos theory. Philo's Logos is an emanation from God (whatever that might mean); he or it (we are never sure with Philo) was not God Himself. On the other hand, Augustine's Logos is the personal God himself, eternal, uncreated, the creator of all that is created. Augustine recited interminably¹⁴ the opening verses of John's Gospel to insist not only that the Logos was God but that he was the uncreated Creator of all things. Of these we shall cite two, the most explicit demonstrations of the biblical nature of his Logos conception:

They who have said that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God, or not very God, or not with the Father the One and Only God, or not truly immortal because changeable, are proved wrong by the most plain and unanimous voice of divine testimonies; as, for instance, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." For it is plain that we are to take the Word of God to be the only Son of God, of whom it is afterwards said, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," on account of that birth of His incarnation, which was wrought in time of the Virgin. But herein is declared, not only that He is God, but also that He is of the same substance with the Father; because after saying, "And the Word was God," it is said also, "The same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made." Not simply "all things;" but only all things that were made, that is, the whole creation. From which it appears clearly, that He Himself was not made, by whom all things were made. And if He was not made, then He is not a creature; but if He is not a creature, then He is of the same substance with the Father. For all substance that is not God is creature; and all that is not creature is God.¹⁵

12. An almost certain reference to Psalm 33:6, 9.

13. *Confessions*. Book XI. chap. 6, 7 (trans. Sheed).

14. In *On the Trinity*, Augustine constantly refers to ". . . the Word of God, by whom all things were made."

15. *On the Trinity*, Book I, chap. 6.

Because therefore the Word of God is One, by which all things were made, which is the unchangeable truth, all things are simultaneously therein, potentially and unchangeably; not only those things which are now in this whole creation, but also those which have been and those which shall be. And therein they neither have been, nor shall be, but only *are*.¹⁶

We might profitably add what Augustine confessed¹⁷ to God in his *Confessions*: "That eternal reason is Your Word, the Beginning¹⁸ who also speaks unto us."

We do not quote these passages to pad out our discourse. They are pregnant with meaning for our understanding of Augustine's conception of the Logos. They bear eloquent testimony to his thoroughly biblical conception, and to that extent, to his absolute opposition to any Philonic influence.

From whence, then, does Dooyeweerd derive his idea that Augustine's Logos was a Philonic Logos rather than a Johannine Logos? We believe that what we have demonstrated above from Augustine's own writings is the authentic Augustinian conception. We can only surmise that on these matters Dooyeweerd relied much too heavily on the secondary literature, a literature which, perhaps significantly, he did not cite any more than he cited Augustine himself.¹⁹

Before we proceed to consider Augustine's theory of Eternal Law (*lex aeterna*) we need to briefly touch upon one further issue: granted that Augustine did not hold a Philonic conception of the Logos, did he in any way hold a Neoplatonist one? It does not seem so. The evidence we have deduced from his writings would suggest that his conception was wholly biblical in its foundations. But if we look at Augustine's response to the Neoplatonists we shall see that he was not only pro-biblical but anti-platonist. Augustine was aware of the Neoplatonist teaching. He had read it thoroughly and mastered its essential premises. Yet we do not find that he ever expressed any agreement with it on this matter. Indeed his strictures against Porphyry—the one he called in another context "that noble philosopher"—are unrelentingly severe.

For the Neoplatonist, the Logos was the mind or intelligence of God—a somewhat garbled and cumbersome attempt to create a de-Christianised version of the same conception. But Porphyry's God, like Plato's God before him, was transcendent above the world without being immanent in it. He is unknowable directly and does not himself know the world directly. Such knowledge requires the intermediaries of the realm of demons and lower gods. There is no way Porphyry would admit to the scandal of the Incarnation. Augustine almost taunts Porphyry with the repeated quoting of John 1:14—*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*. According to Porphyry and the Neoplatonists, the body was anathema for human beings, let alone the

16. *Ibid.*, Book IV, chap. 1.

17. *Confessions*. Book XI. chap. 8 (trans. Sheed).

18. I.e. the Principium, as noted in Part I. Augustine derived this idea from his Latin version of Jn 8:25, where Jesus claimed that he was the Beginning (Gk: *arche*; Latin: *principium*). The Authorised Version has "from the beginning." See also Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, No. 38. It does not appear that the Greek will bear this interpretation, however; see Henry Alford, *Greek New Testament*, loc. cit.

19. Augustinianism was not a major theme in Dooyeweerd's researches, which centred around the history and philosophy of law. His studies were, quite rightly, devoted in the main to modern literature. If Dooyeweerd followed the consensus of opinion rather than questioning it on this issue, this must be attributed in the main to human limitations rather than any failure of scholarly duty.

divinity. Salvation consisted rather in our being freed from the body and participating in the mind of God, in his Logos. Neo-platonist salvation meant deification, not moral and juridical redemption. Grace and forgiveness were transposed into knowledge—*gnosis* and *theoria*.

AUGUSTINE'S CONCEPTION OF THE LEX AETERNA

Augustine often spoke of a *lex aeterna*—an Eternal Law. Dooyeweerd has maintained that this formed the basis of Augustine's cosmomic idea. We must now turn to an examination of what Augustine had to say on this issue, asking ourselves as we do so whether Dooyeweerd's strictures, to wit, that this was an attempt to "... adapt[ed] this truth of revelation (which is beyond all human understanding) to Greek philosophy and change[d] it into the speculative ideas of a realistic metaphysics" is valid. The "truth of revelation" he had in mind was that "... 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 concept appears early in Augustine's Christian pilgrimage. It was given a prominent place in his *On Free Choice of the Will* (*De Libero Arbitrio*). Augustine wrote *On Free Choice* shortly after he became a Christian, at Rome on his way back to North Africa in 388 AD. We can be confident that this treatise represents Augustine's mature thought, however. It was only completed many years later, and towards the end of his life he reviewed it thoroughly in his *Retractions* in response to the misunderstanding of it by the Pelagians. He did not at any time see any need to modify what he had written therein.²⁰

The subject of *lex aeterna* arises in the first book of *On Free Choice* in the context of a discussion regarding the essence of justice. Augustine and Evodius are discussing in particular the justice of laws which allow or command the use of lethal force. Evodius is not too sure that such force could ever be truly right and Augustine chides him: "I can't think why you are searching for a defense of people whom no law condemns." Evodius responds with:

No law, perhaps, of those that are public and are read by human beings; but I suspect that they are condemned by a more powerful, hidden law, if indeed there is nothing that is not governed by divine providence. How can they be free of sin in the eyes of that law, when they are defiled with human blood for the sake of things that ought to be held in contempt? It seems to me, therefore, that the law written to govern the people rightly permits these killings and that divine providence avenges them.²¹

Evodius is referring to acts of self-defence against thieves and rapists. His "spiritual" view of earthly things makes a defence of them by any means, let alone killing, unjustified; and since rape does not destroy the victim's chastity as there is no consent, violent and lethal opposition to it is obviously

sinful. Evodius' government is caught in a cleft: it must defend justice (preventing theft and rape) but can only do so by acting unjustly (committing or allowing murder).

Augustine's response is two-fold. First, he insists on the limited nature of State law. "You think," he says, "that the law that is established to rule cities allows considerable leeway, leaving many things unpunished that divine providence avenges; and rightly so. And just because that law doesn't do everything, it doesn't follow that we should disapprove of what it does do." But Augustine believes that using lethal force in self-defence is justified and will not be avenged by divine providence.

Second, Augustine raises a question about the nature of that law and in particular how its validity or justice is determined. Consider, he says, a State in which the people are orderly and law-abiding, just and moderate in their behaviour. Is not a law that allows them to engage in matters of public interest a just one? Yet, if this same people becomes disorderly and lawless, putting self-interest before public, would not a law forbidding their engagement in matters of public interest be a just one too? Thus we seem to have two contradictory or mutually-exclusive laws, both of which are just. There is a sense then, claims Augustine, in which human laws, or temporal laws as he chooses to call them, are dependent for their formulation on changeable circumstances. But consider, he says:

... the law that is called the highest reason, which must always be obeyed, and by which the wicked deserve misery and the good deserve a happy life, and by which the law that we agreed to call "temporal" is rightly enacted and rightly changed. Can anyone of sense deny that this law is unchangeable and eternal?²²

In response to Evodius' approval of this sentiment, he continues:

Nothing is just and legitimate in the temporal law except²³ that which human beings have derived from the eternal law. For if at one time a people can justly confer honors, and at another time cannot justly do so, this temporal change can be just only because it is derived from the eternal law.²⁴

In this context at least, Augustine's use of the term eternal law or *lex aeterna* is as a heteronomic standard for all human legal formulation. As he goes on to explain by an explicit definition, it is "the law according to which it is just that all things be perfectly ordered."

The concept of *order* is extremely important in Augustine's thought; as is that of *peace* (*pax*) to which it is closely related. A famous passage in *The City of God* encapsulates Augustine's vision:

The peace of the body then consists in the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts. The peace of the irrational soul is the harmonious repose of the appetites, and that of the rational soul the harmony of knowledge and action. The peace of body and soul is the well-ordered and harmonious life and health of the living creature. Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obe-

22. *Ibid.*, c. 6.

20. The Pelagians mistakenly understood Augustine to be defending free will (in their sense) against predestinarianism. In fact, Augustine was defending personal responsibility over against Manichean determinism. Modern scholars almost to a man make the same mistake, despite Augustine's clear statement in his *Retractions*.

21. *On Free Choice*, Book I, c. 5.

23. A little earlier, Augustine had remarked that "an unjust law is no law at all." Implicitly, he is positing a *standard* for justice outside and above legal systems, and which gives them or denies them legitimacy. Augustine's legal theory had a theonomic foundation and justification.

24. *On Free Choice*, Book I, c. 6.

dience of faith to eternal law. Peace between man and man is well-ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order.²⁵

If we take into account Augustine's concept of Divine Providence, it seems to me that the vision he is seeking to express is of a universe in which God's unchangeable standard is that alone by which all human (and angelic) action can be directed and judged. Dooyeweerd, as we shall see, wanted to charge Augustine with reducing all law to the moral dimension. This, though instructive in some respects, misses the point of Augustine's thesis. For Dooyeweerd forgets that Augustine never developed a philosophical *system*—nor could he have done so in his day—that possesses the clarity and fine logical distinctions of the twentieth century in which he himself thought. But if we look at Augustine's overall vision, we see that his universe was supremely *personal*, and *personally governed*, and thus opposed to both the Greek (Platonic and Aristotelian) and Roman (Stoic, etc) perspectives. It might be termed radically new in that respect.

DOOYEWEERD'S ANALYSIS OF AUGUSTINE'S LEX AETERNA

We need to bring in at this point a further elaboration of Dooyeweerd's, for which we will need to cite a rather lengthy passage from his *Calvinism and Natural Law*:

This conception of law, called *lex aeterna* by Augustine, therefore has a twofold implication:

(1) The conception of a hierarchical ascent and descent in the whole creation from the lower to the higher to the absolute unity of God and *vice versa*, in which everything has its appointed place, and the whole, as one voice, sings the praises of God its Creator, and

(2) the attribution of this hierarchical creational order to the will of the personal God of revelation, the Creator of heaven and earth (the doctrine of *providentia*).

Augustine did not entirely succeed in reconciling these two lines of thought (the neo-Platonic and the Christian-theistic one) in his conception of law. For the first line easily led to an identification of the eternal law with the being of God, so that law would be made binding on God himself; the second line, on the other hand, presupposed a boundary between the Creator and the creature, a boundary which Augustine accordingly attempted to carry through strictly in his theology (doctrine of predestination, Christology, etc.), but which was partially lost again in his neo-Platonic mysticism.

. . . The secular state, which is not guided by the absolute justice contained in God's *lex aeterna*, but restricts itself to the pursuit of its own temporal well-being and that of its citizens, remains enclosed in the *civitas terrena*. If the state wishes to participate in the *civitas Dei*, then it must put itself in the service of the church (by eradicating heresies). Even the secular state, however, continues to occupy a very modest position; it is situated below the church, as the lower under the higher. Consequently, it is absolutely stripped by Augustine of the all-encompassing position which it occupied as "perfect community" in the thought of both Plato and Aristotle.²⁶

25. *The City of God*, Book XIX, c. 13;

26. "Calvinism and Natural Law," p. 11.

In the first sentence of this citation we sense a very subtle twist that must be unmasked. Dooyeweerd draws his two implications not from Augustine but from his own re-interpretation of Augustine. If this interpretation is wrong then any implications drawn from it are not only wrong but irrelevant. *But it this very interpretation that we are questioning, indeed opposing.*

Dooyeweerd was right to insist that Augustine took as the starting point of his cosmonomic idea the concept of creation *ex nihilo*. He was also unquestionably correct in insisting that Augustine constituted the concept of the Divine Logos central in his thinking about the relation between God and creation. But to suppose that in doing so Augustine was consciously taking a foreign cosmonomic idea and replacing key elements in it in order "to purify this Jewish and pagan doctrine of its pantheistic features" is totally without warrant from Augustine's writings. Having begun with this presupposition, however, Dooyeweerd is now forced to consider the status and implications of this new "purified" pagan-cum-Christian formulation. In doing so, it will be no wonder if he attributes to it "Jewish and pagan" features that in essence Augustine's conception does not possess.

If we abandon Dooyeweerd's thesis of Augustine's purifying process, and posit rather a cosmonomic idea drawn from a radical re-thinking along biblical lines, it will be impossible to find within Augustine's thought any idea of a "hierarchical creational order." The word "hierarchical" suggests, *nay means*, a governmental structure with successive levels of command.²⁷ In the Greek conception of emanations this was no doubt meaningful, but we have concluded that Dooyeweerd was wrong to suppose that Augustine took over the emanationist theory—even in a "purified" form—in any way. True, Augustine believed and taught that creation was structured, that there were levels or grades of *being*. But what did he mean by this? Simply this, that the spiritual or personal (Augustine often uses these terms synonymously) is a superior level of existence to animal existence, and that animal existence is a superior level of existence to inanimate existence. God, as *self-existent* being—unlike men and angels who have being dependent on God—has supreme and thus the only real type of being. Granted Augustine used the terminology of abstract being that was characteristic of Greek thinking, we have to ask what other language he could have used. The context of his exposition always clearly indicates that his thinking is biblically and not Neoplatonically oriented. As we have already pointed out, we all have to use the language that is current in our culture, and I have no doubt that in 1500 years time scholars will look back at today and wonder at the humanistic (and post-modern) "content" of even the most Reformed thinking. It is of paramount importance that we recognise here the gulf between ideas-in-words and their content, if we are to understand Augustine aright.

Dooyeweerd speaks of Augustine in this context of cosmonomic-idea creation as "ventur[ing] a bold attempt at formulating a law-idea," as seeking to purify Jewish and pagan ideas, as replacing Greek ideas with Christian ideas, as trying to synthesise Greek and Christian ideas, as "trying

27. Originally, *hierarchy* means government by priests (Gk: *hieros*—*hieros, priest*), but its meaning was shifted to a particular aspect of priestly rule, namely, its usual manifestation in a number of grades or levels.

to reconcile” two lines of thought, the Neoplatonic and the Christian-theistic one. In doing this he has attributed to Augustine conscious motives for which there is no justifiable evidence. Rather, he has read back into Augustine’s life thought processes that are characteristic of his own twentieth century. He has attributed to Augustine a self-consciousness with respect to philosophical problems that did not exist in the fourth or fifth centuries. And in doing this he has misunderstood what Augustine was trying to do, and seriously misinterpreted his thought as a result. Unfortunately he was born too early to have learnt from the lessons of Thomas Kuhn’s extensive researches—though if he had studied Duhem’s magisterial works he could have avoided some of the worst excesses of his mistaken historical conceptions.²⁸

Dooyeweerd’s misunderstanding is further compounded as he seeks to draw out Augustine’s meaning based on this false premise. “The secular state,” he goes on, “which is not guided by the absolute justice contained in God’s *lex aeterna*, but restricts itself to the pursuit of its own temporal well-being and that of its citizens, remains enclosed in the *civitas terrena*. Etc . . .” Sure, *in practice* the secular State does not allow itself to be guided by God’s *lex aeterna* (the church doesn’t seem to do so either today) and Augustine would have acknowledged this. Was this not the theme of the early books of *The City of God*? “Depraved²⁹ by good fortune, and not chastened by adversity, what you desire in the restoration of a peaceful and secure state, is not the tranquillity of the commonwealth, but the impunity of your own vicious luxury,” he told the Empire. He spoke of Rome³⁰ as that “earthly city, which, though it be the mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by its lust of rule.”

In theory, however, the state is bound to the *lex aeterna* in all its actions. The need of justice is foundational to any republic or commonwealth, yet “the fact is, true justice has no existence save in that republic whose founder and ruler is Christ.”³¹ To reiterate Augustine’s clearest and most categorical statements on this matter, already quoted: “Nothing is just and legitimate in the temporal law except that which human beings have derived from the eternal law,” and “An unjust law is no law at all.” Precisely here, in the failure to take into account Augustine’s own clear statement of his position, and in the mistaken attempt to impose upon him a system of thought he neither held nor could have held, is seen the danger of reading into an author the philosophical problems and methods of an alien culture.

LEX AETERNA AND LEX NATURALIS

In a further analysis of Augustine’s *lex aeterna*, Dooyeweerd goes on to say:

The Augustinian *lex aeterna* is the cosmic plan of God’s law. Humankind participates in this eternal law by means of the *lex naturalis* (law of nature), which is God’s law as it is by nature written

28. Strangely, there is no trace of Pierre Duhem’s name in the *New Critique*, let alone of the magisterial ten-volume *Le Système du Monde* or the epochal trilogy *Etudes sur Leonard da Vinci: Ceux qu’il a lus et ceux qui l’ont lu*. An oblique reference to Duhem’s medieval studies may be intended in a reference to the Occamists of the University of Paris in *New Critique*, I, p. 202.

29. *The City of God*, Book I, c. 33.

30. *Ibid.*, Preface.

31. *Ibid.*, Book II, c. 21.

in the hearts of the heathen (Paul). Now it is in the *lex aeterna*, with its subjective counter-part, the *lex naturalis*, that positive law (*lex temporalis, humanum ius*) is founded.

Characteristic of Augustine’s law-idea with its neo-Platonic hierarchical structure is the manner in which he bases natural law on it. Augustine gives a Christian formulation of the content of natural law by defining it as the treatment of others as one would wish to be treated oneself. For him this law of nature coincides with the *ius gentium* of the Romans and the moral law of the Jews. If this law of nature is an idea, then its concretization or shadowy reflection is found in human law, the way the body is the shadowy reflection of the soul.³²

Again, we have to admit that Dooyeweerd has been led astray by his preconceptions of the manner in which Augustine formulated his concept of eternal law.

As he now comes to consider the outworking of this law in human culture and society he is forced to square his interpretation with the supposed rather than the real nature of Augustine’s conception.

Firstly, just because he saw in this conception a profoundly Greek foundation he assumed that there must be profoundly Greek implications. Not least among these is “an identification of the eternal law with the being of God, so that law would be made binding on God himself.” Augustine never made such an identification. The thought is incomprehensible in any case, for if the *lex* and God are identified—i.e. are one and the same thing—how can the one be binding on, and thus superior to the other?

Secondly, Dooyeweerd is compelled to posit a relationship between a distant (Greek-style) eternal law and the actual law (natural law) which alone man can know. This is a truly Greek conception. But Augustine does not speak of the *lex naturalis* (law of nature) in terms of “God’s law as it is by nature written in the hearts of the heathen.” Rather does he insist that it is the *lex aeterna* itself that is stamped on the human mind. In Augustine’s schema there are *two* laws, not three—the eternal and the temporal. The former—*lex aeterna*—is the unchanging and unchangeable law of God. The latter—*lex temporalis*—is human positivised law that may or may not be in conformity with God’s eternal law. Dooyeweerd wants to see natural law, as the temporal expression of eternal law, as positivised in temporal law. But this is not at all what Augustine envisioned: “Sin, then, is any transgression in deed, or word, or desire, of the *eternal law*. And the eternal law is the divine order or will of God, which requires the preservation of the natural order.”³³

In Augustine, eternal law impinges directly on all men as the standard by which they must live. But above all it is the principle of being for the structure of all things. It determines how all creation, animate and inanimate should exist. It is, indeed, for Augustine—as Dooyeweerd admits—“the cosmic plan of God’s law.” It is the source of all order within the cosmos. Each created being is given a nature, an essence, that determines the way it shall be. Augustine sometimes calls this the *law of nature* or *natural law*. But it is never set over against eternal law. Rather is it the full expression of eternal law within the created order; indeed, it is the foundation of that order.

In seeking to establish the fundamental principle of morality in *On Free Choice*, Evodius at first maintains that it is “the treatment of others as one would wish to be treated

32. “Calvinism and Natural Law,” p. 11f.

33. *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, Book XXII, c. 27.

oneself,” as Dooyeweerd styles it. But Augustine soon disabuses him of this misconception, and in no uncertain terms. He gives the example of a dissolute man who can nevertheless claim to be acting wholeheartedly on this principle: “What if someone’s lust is so great that he offers his wife to another and willingly allows himself to commit adultery with her, and is eager to enjoy the same freedom with the other man’s wife? Do you think that this man has done nothing evil?”³⁴

“What makes adultery evil,” he insists, “is inordinate desire.”³⁵ In his modern translation of *On Free Choice*, Thomas Williams has captured the quintessential feature of Augustine’s meaning for the Latin *libido* (synonymous often with *cupiditas*). Since all creation is inherently good—because God created it—all evil must come from the way in which man views it or relates to it:

For avarice is not a fault inherent in gold, but in the man who inordinately loves gold, . . . Neither is luxury the fault of lovely and charming things, but of the heart that inordinately loves sensual pleasures. . . Nor yet is boasting the fault of human praise, but of the soul that is inordinately fond of the applause of men, and that makes light of the voice of conscience. Pride, too, is not the fault of him who wields power, nor of power itself, but of the soul that is inordinately enamoured of its own power, and despises the more just dominion of a higher authority.³⁶

Evil is the voluntary refusal to conform to the law of one’s nature, the law of one’s *raison d’être*, that is, God’s eternal law.

EPILOGUE

There can be no doubt that in isolating the idea of eternal law in Augustine’s thought, Dooyeweerd discovered the true ground of Augustine’s cosmomic idea.

In Augustine’s thought, all order in creation is ultimately the order of God’s eternal plan or law for creation. This *lex aeterna* is comprehensive and all-embracing. It has reference to the way in which rational creatures (i.e. humans and angels) must conduct themselves. It has reference to the instincts and habits of irrational creatures (i.e. plants and animals). And it has reference to the whole of the inanimate structure of creation also. This *lex* is the structure for all creation. It consists of the moral code by which man lives as well as the “natural” laws by which stones are stones and trees are trees. Neither is it an abstract law. It is the personal will of the personal Jehovah, the divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In a well-known passage in his *Eighty Three Different Questions* entitled *On the Ideas*, Augustine discusses in some detail the concept of *forms*, *ideas* or *species*. Many have supposed that his acceptance of Plato’s terminology here is evidence of the influence of Greek philosophy on his thought. But Augustine’s *ideas* or *forms* are light years from Plato’s conception.

For Plato the forms constitute the real universe. The “real” world of appearances is but a shadow of the genuinely real world. Actual triangles, oranges, cats and dogs are ceaselessly changing, always only pale imitations and approximations of the real thing. The true triangles, oranges,

cats and dogs are those that exist only in their abstract forms in sheer perfection. Plato was an idealist in the extreme. For him the intellectual was the only true world; all else is but myth and shadow. But this is not at all what Augustine understood by the term. He asks:

What person, devout and trained in religion, . . . would dare to deny . . . that all things are, i.e. that whatever things are fixed in their order by a certain particular nature so as to exist, are produced by God as their cause? And that by that cause all things which live do live? And that the universal soundness of things and the very order whereby those things which change do repeat with a certain regularity their journeys through time are fixed and governed by the laws of the most high God? . . . Who would dare to say that God has created all things without a rational plan? But if one cannot rightly say or believe this, it remains that all things are created on a rational plan, and man not by the same rational plan as horse, for it is absurd to think this. Therefore individual things are created in accord with reasons unique to them.³⁷

Augustine begins, then, by asking whether God’s creative work was thought through before he began it, or whether it was purely capricious or merely determined by his nature. Both of the latter explanations are anathema to him; horses are horses because God first conceived them as such and created them according to his own design, and men are men according to a similar thought process whereby God determines beforehand what man’s nature will be. Creation is not the spontaneous and uncontrolled outworking of an impersonal “divinity” that is subject to the laws of its being. God as the personal self-existent one, as the eternal I AM, created all things freely according to a plan of his own devising. These reasons (Latin: *rationes*), which govern the nature of each creature, “must be thought to exist nowhere but in the very mind of the Creator. For it would be sacrilegious to suppose that he was looking at something placed outside himself when he created in accord with it what he did create.” And precisely because God is eternal and unchangeable, so are those things also that are in his mind.

To suppose, as many have, that Augustine is positing these ideas or reasons as *inherent characteristics* of the Deity is to miss the point entirely. It is to fail to perceive that God’s thoughts are not as man’s thoughts. They do not succeed each other in time for God is not in time but “eternal without time.”

There is good reason to affirm that Augustine had a cosmomic idea very similar to that of Dooyeweerd himself. Both held to the absolute boundary between creator and creation; both held to the view that all that exists (in creation) exists in the form it occupies in the mind of God. For neither were there any abstract eternal principles above God that control or determine the way in which he thinks or acts. Augustine would, no doubt, have fully concurred with Dooyeweerd that “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.”³⁸

There are differences. But these are due to historical factors rather than philosophical or theological ones.

34. *On Free Choice*, Book I, c. 3.

36. *The City of God*, Book XII, c. 8.

35. *Ibid.*

37. *Eighty Three Different Questions*, trans. David L. Mosher (Washington, DC; Catholic University of America Press, 1982), pp. 79–81.

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

Dooyeweerd lived in a radically different culture. The forms in which each expressed his convictions would have to be governed by the parameters of those respective cultures. Time alone will tell to what extent Dooyeweerd's own conceptions are coloured—at least in their thought forms—by the age in which he lived. Dooyeweerd, too, lived in a *much later* culture. The cultural progress of mankind—or at least European mankind—in that time interval has been enormous. In particular, philosophical thinking has become increasingly systematic and rigorous. It no longer tackles

questions in the same ad hoc manner to which Augustine was accustomed.³⁹ It would have been remarkable if Dooyeweerd could not have improved upon Augustine's thinking. As it is, Dooyeweerdian philosophy is founded on the clarification of Augustinian ideas by Calvin and subsequent Calvinism. And without Augustine, Calvin and Calvinism are unthinkable. *C&S*

39. This is not to say that Augustine's era was one of woolly or irrational thinking, but that the standards of rigour required today were just not conceivable at that time.

Book Reviews

CALVINUS—AUTHENTIC CALVINISM:
A CLARIFICATION
BY ALAN C. CLIFFORD

Norwich: Charenton Reformed Publishing,
94 pages, paperback, £5.95

REVIEWED BY JEAN-MARC BERTHOUD

It is always an encouragement for someone coming from the French-speaking world to discover foreign scholars who manifest an interest in the history and the heritage of French Protestantism. Dr Alan Clifford is to be commended for his zeal in this field. His abundantly documented extended essay, *Calvinus*, is a substantial effort at a theological interpretation of the history of the Reformed Churches in France from the Sixteenth-century Reformation to the middle of the Eighteenth century. His thesis is simple. The true Reformed tradition (i.e. faithful to the teachings of John Calvin) is not that which has often been proposed by the central thrust of Calvinist theology and scholarship, as going from Calvin (1509–1564) to his immediate successor, Theodore de Bèze (1519–1605), to Simon Goulart (1543–1628), the Canons of Dort (1619), Pierre Du Moulin (1568–1658), François Turretini (1623–1687) and Benedict Pictet (1655–1724), and ending with the latter's remarkable disciple, Antoine Court (1696–1760). Not at all! For Clifford the line would rather go from John Calvin to Moïse Amyraut (1590–1664), to Jean Claude (1619–1695) and then to Antoine Court and J. F. Ostervald (1663–1747). Indeed, for Dr Clifford the central test of his orthodox tradition is nothing else but the explicit rejection of the doctrine of *particular redemption* as it can be found in the formulations of *Dort*, of *Westminster* and of the *Helvetic Consensus*, which all affirm this specific point of doctrine. For Dr Clifford (as is the case for many academic historians) the teachings of Bèze, by its *scholastic rationalism*, is considered to have marked a decisive break in the true Calvinistic tradition, even though neither Bèze himself, nor any of his contemporaries or immediate successors, were in any way aware of being party to such a

betrayal. For Dr Clifford, Moïse Amyraut and the Academy of Saumur (and their like) are thus the only genuine heirs of the biblical theology of the great Genevan Reformer. This thesis is well known in its Anglo-Saxon version in Great Britain and is largely (though not exclusively) associated with the name of Dr R. T. Kendall of Westminster Chapel. It requires critical assessment.

1. The modern French Calvinist tradition, whose resurrection began with the conversion of Auguste Lecerf (1872–1943) through his reading of Calvin's *Institutes*, and which includes theologians of the stature of Jean Cadier, Pierre Charles Marcel (1910–1992), Pierre Courthial and Pierre Berthoud, goes flat against such an interpretation of the history of French Protestantism. For these scholars the traditional interpretation is the correct one. The Canons of Dort, Pierre Du Moulin, François Turretini and Antoine Court stand fully (with minor differences) in the fundamental tradition of the French Reformation. And it is this heritage that they claim as their own. For these Reformed historians Moïse Amyraut and the Saumur Academy represent a radical breach (in the line of Arminian humanism and Cartesian rationalism, though prudently avoiding explicit identification with these) with the tradition of Calvin, Bèze and Dort. These crypto-Arminian influences led to the *New Orthodoxy* of such men as J. F. Ostervald (1663–1747) and J. A. Turretini (1671–1737)—the son—who had both been strongly influenced by the teachings of Saumur and whose theology opened the way to the thoroughgoing infection of French Protestant theology in the latter part of the eighteenth century by Enlightenment rationalism. Pierre Courthial briefly summarises this point of view:

The period after 1633 was the period of the decline of Calvinism in France. As a Provençal proverb says, "The rotting of a fish begins with the head," and under the regrettable influence of theologians of the Academy of Saumur, such as Moïse Amyraut (1596–1664), Louis Cappel (1585–1658), and Josué de la Place (1596–1655), the faith of a growing number of pastors and churches was impregnated with Arminianism.¹

1. Pierre Courthial, *The Golden Age of Calvinism in France, 1533–1633*, in W. Stanford Reid, ed., *John Calvin: His influence in the Western World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 76.

It is indeed striking to observe that nowhere does Dr Clifford make even the slightest mention of this modern Calvinist French theological and historiographical school.

2. Dr Clifford's representation of the history of French Protestantism can thus be characterised as clearly standing in the line of nineteenth-century liberal German historiography and can also be associated with the Kantian position of Karl Barth and of his school of dialectical theology, which opposes the supposedly dead scholastic orthodoxy of the seventeenth century to the biblical theology of the Reformation and to the neo-orthodoxy of the twentieth century. In addition, Dr Clifford's interpretation renders the tragic history of the French Reformed Churches quite incomprehensible for it ignores the influence within the churches of the yeast of heresy and unfaithfulness and its consequence within the covenant, the judgement of God on the unfaithful Church.

For Amyraut what separated him from the orthodoxy of his time was what he called a *difference of method*. In fact this is manifestly a reference to Descartes' *Discours de la methode* (1637) and to the Cartesian rationalism which exercised such a baneful influence on large sections of the French Reformed pastorate during the latter part of the seventeenth century. What Descartes' New Philosophy did to Nature, this new hermeneutic did to the Word of God, atomising it and then seeking to reorganise rationally the multitude of fragmented texts thus obtained. This new theological organisation of the biblical material functions, not according to the biblical standards of the confessions of faith, but according to the subjective lights of each individual theologian. Modern subjectivistic and individualistic Protestantism had been born. In fact this procedure removes the biblical texts from their theological and exegetical context.

This *method* forgets that the Word of God is an organic whole which must be interpreted according to its inherent fundamental confessional structure, its proper substantial form, a structure expressed in the faithful confessions and creeds of the Church. Such a nominalist² fragmentation of God's pre-ordered reality (whether it be his Word or the Creation) makes truly systematic thought well-nigh impossible. Both Amyraut and his latter day disciple, Dr Alan Clifford, seem to be quite incapable of seeing (what was evident for the Divines of Dort and of Westminster) the inner structure and coherence of Calvin's thought. This method of mental fragmentation leads Dr Clifford to limit himself to

2. In this nominalistic view the name—e.g. *a tree*—has a purely formal, arbitrary character and does not refer to any substantial (*sub stare*, to stand under) stable reality in the created order. It is thus Man (not God) who eventually by the use of his autonomous reason (free from the ordered constraints of created reality, of the realism of human language and the authority of Scripture) then impresses on all naturally chaotic reality, the order we perceive in it. The pre-existent order created by God at the beginning is thus not discovered as a given, but imposed arbitrarily on nature by man's purely subjective autonomous God-like mind, his *cogito* as Descartes would say. Within such a perspective no such thing as absolute truth can exist. A clear example of such nominalistic thinking is, of course, Darwinian evolution. For evolutionary thought is utterly contemptuous both of the stable given created order of biological reality (every kind reproduces itself according to its kind with limited genetic variations within each kind), and of the real relation between words and the reality they name. There is a clear resemblance between what Amyraut did to theology and what Darwin was later to do biology, a parallelism to which Dr Clifford would be wise to pay some attention.

the study of a particular doctrine—limited atonement—in isolation from and at the expense of a proper understanding of that coherent and systematic whole which is the Calvinistic (and essentially biblical) system of divine Truth. As in all nominalistic thinking the part is played over against the whole (here a particular doctrine as against the ordered body of systematic truth) at the expense of a proper understanding of the coherent meaning of the whole. This of course is exactly what Cartesian rationalism did both to metaphysics and to science and in consequence to theology itself, which thereby lost its overarching ordering office placed in final authority over every expression of human thought and bringing all human thinking captive to the obedience of faith. But this is another matter.

3. This leads us to the question of Dr Clifford's scholarship, of his knowledge and use of the source material and of the secondary studies today available in French. If he seems (to the best of my judgement) reasonably well-informed on the material available in English, his French documentation appears to be astonishingly full of the most amazing gaps. The great expert on Amyraut and on the French Protestantism of the seventeenth century is François Laplanche, a very thorough and able Roman Catholic scholar. His works are absolutely indispensable reading for a proper understanding of the issues raised by Dr Clifford, who never even mentions him.³ He also seems completely to ignore the major work of Lucien Rimbault on Pierre Du Moulin.⁴ This study is also vital to an understanding of the reasons why Du Moulin so strongly opposed the teachings of Amyraut. But worse still.

The nature of Du Moulin's real opposition is minimised (see p. 21 where Dr Clifford speaks of the *proto-Amyraldian language* of so-called early Du Moulin) thus divesting the debate of any substantial significance. For Du Moulin was not merely concerned with a proper understanding of the third of the five points defined at Dort. However important the doctrine of particular redemption might be, it is clear that the Christian faith does not stand or fall on its correct formulation. And the denial by such a godly man as Richard Baxter of the doctrine of limited atonement does not *ipso facto* make of him a heretic! Du Moulin's basic work on the question, *Eclaircissements des doctrines Saumuriennes* (1648),⁵ which is not even mentioned by Dr Clifford, makes it abundantly clear that the issues raised by Amyraut involved far more than the precise question of limited atonement. For Du Moulin it was nothing less than the orthodox structure of the Reformed confessions and the biblical faith itself that was being attacked by the new theology from Saumur. This new doctrine, as he clearly demonstrates, is nothing else but a disguised form of Arminianism modified by the influence of the thought of Descartes. The following were under attack by Amyraldism: the nature and the character of God; the nature of salvation, the nature of the grace of God and of his law; the attitude the theologian was to hold with regard to the very words of Scripture in theological development etc. But here it would be good to let Du Moulin speak for himself:

3. François Laplanche, *Orthodoxie et Predication. L'oeuvre d'Amyraut et la querelle de la grace universelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 358 pp.; *L'Écriture, le sacré et l'histoire. Erudits et politiques protestants devant la Bible en France au XVII^e siècle* (Amsterdam and Maarsse: APA Holland University Press, 1986), 1020 pp.

4. Lucien Rimbault, *Pierre Du Moulin, 1568–1658: Un pasteur classique a l'age classique*, (Paris: Vrin, 1966), 254 pp.

Even though the doctrine of Monsieur Amyraut changes the very nature of God, of the Law and of the Gospel; makes God changeable and hesitant in his decisions and incapable of bringing his plans effectually to pass; forges for us a form of saving faith different from that of which the Gospel speaks; teaches that the reprobate can be saved if they so wish; that the Law offers us only earthly promises; provides two different predestinations to salvation and two redemptions; and teaches that all men have the natural capacity to believe and to convert themselves; nonetheless, in spite of such enormous differences, the partisans of this new doctrine affirm that they differ from us only with regard to method and to certain expressions. But in spite of the apparently unimportant nature of this question, they nonetheless labour mightily night and day at making new proselytes through the printed page and by means of texts copied out by hand.⁶

And speaking of the abundant new vocabulary with which this new doctrine clothed itself, Du Moulin adds:

As this doctrine is new so they clothe it in words so novel that such theological expressions have never before been heard. They speak of a first and a second act of divine mercy, of two predestinations, and distinguish between a natural and a moral incapacity in man. Monsieur Amyraut says that God forces himself to act, that he overcomes his reticence, that he would eventually be pleased to do this or that. He says that if the decree to save all men is of no use to men, it is nonetheless useful to God himself and that it causes him a certain satisfaction. That God's nature is too serious for him to do this or that. That his mercy is irritated by the obstacles impeding the exercise of his justice. That God has desires and disappointments. That he would like much better this or that. That he feels emotions similar to those which agitate our bosoms, insofar as his nature can bear them. That his mercy overcomes obstacles, leaps over dykes and abandons its proper limits, etc. In brief, the language and the Spirit of God by which Scripture speaks to us is to these theologians a language lacking in necessary savour and decidedly of too low a style for men of good taste to bear.

However, anyone accustomed to discussions with Arminians knows full well that all these doctrines (which they call hypotheses) are nothing but the theories common to Arminianism. In their defence they use precisely the same arguments and proof texts as do the Arminians and indeed they say almost nothing which has not previously been formulated by them.⁷

Du Moulin comes to the root of Amyraut's errors when he writes: "The Arminians draw their objections from Scripture. They always fall into the same error which is to exchange the commandments and promises of God for the decrees of his Providence. The promises of God are conditional, but this is not the case for his decrees."⁸ And he adds: "I indeed recognise that God often changes what he has done. He makes a man die after having made him live. He

will destroy the world after having created it. But the change here is in the thing itself, not in God's counsel. This change is produced according to the immutable decision taken by God in all eternity. God is in no way thwarted in his intention."⁹

Du Moulin explains this Amyraldian itch for novelty in these terms:

Why do they so labour, basing their action on the most uncertain hopes, to attain ills which can in no way be avoided? It is manifest that what motivates these men to sow new doctrines and to propagate them with such ardour is their itch and ambition to appear above what is ordinary, common. For such great spirits consciously abandon the path common to all, fearing that the light of their originality be extinguished in the crowd . . . There can be no doubt that a sublime spirit like that of M. Amyraut could have been employed to encourage men to piety, to good works or to bring light to our discussions with the Roman Church. In such useful tasks he would have accomplished much excellent work. But he considers such labours as too menial and too vulgar for his high genius and has in consequence undertaken his first efforts against the doctrine of our Churches. To attain the notoriety he seeks he has undertaken the subject of the secret counsels of God, matter in which he imagines having received greater light than his predecessors.¹⁰

For Du Moulin the popularity of these teachings was to be explained by what he calls their *humanity*: "What makes his doctrine plausible to the people is that it makes God speak according to the manner of men, clothing him thus with purely human sentiments." But such a popularisation of Christian doctrine, then as now, is not without dramatic consequences for the Christian faith itself:

But M. Amyraut does not consider that by making God speak in this fashion, he attributes to Him changeable counsels, hesitant and conditional decrees, all these submitted to the most illusory and impossible conditions. He wants God to predestine to salvation the very men to whom he does not wish to give the means without which it is clearly impossible to be saved. Farther, such a God with the most ardent of love calls to salvation those very persons whom he has previously, and from all eternity, hated and condemned. One names Anthropomorphism the act of attributing to God the form of a human body, our Amyraldians are not less mistaken. They clothe God with human affections, assigning to him regrets, frustrated desires and changes of opinion.

Would it not have been a worthier enterprise to seek to elevate man's spirit to the heights of divine thoughts rather than to reduce Him to mere human affections and reflections?¹¹

We thus see that the issues facing Du Moulin were of the greatest import and are not very different from those we have before us today.

4. Amyraut, and Dr Clifford after him, seeks to find in the writings of John Calvin the indispensable confirmation for such novelties. To do this, in the manner proper to the atomistic hermeneutics described above, both Amyraut and Dr Clifford quote a number of isolated texts extracted from Calvin's works which are thus used to buttress their theories. Such an arbitrary method makes it impossible properly to understand the exact meaning of Calvin's texts for they are not read within the context of Calvin's complete theological system but in terms of the artificially constructed thesis

5. Pierre Du Moulin, *Eclaircissements des doctrines Saumurienes* (Genève: Pierre Aubert, 1659). It is urgent that this brief work by Pierre Du Moulin be rapidly translated into English to help counter Dr Clifford's revival of Amyraut's heresies. The original edition appeared in 1648, some 10 years after that of an unauthorised, pirated and inaccurate edition (published by Du Moulin's adversaries), entitled *Examen de la doctrine de MM Amyraut et Testard* (Amsterdam, 1638). Du Moulin suspended publication out of respect for the decision of the National Synod of Alençon (1637) forbidding the discussion of these questions. The Saumurian party characteristically refused to comply with this Synodical decision.

6. Pierre Du Moulin, *Eclaircissements des doctrines Saumuriennes*. (Genève: Pierre Aubert, 1649), Preface.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Quoted from *Eclaircissements* by L. Rimbault, in *Pierre Du Moulin*, p. 126.

9. Pierre Du Moulin, *Eclaircissements des doctrines Saumuriennes* (1649), p. 36.

10. *Ibid.*, Preface.

11. *Ibid.*

formulated by those who thus miserably abuse the texts they quote. Such a method, all too common today, makes *proof texts* say whatever those who use them wish them to express. Here again it is useful to quote Du Moulin himself who had perfectly understood the manoeuvre:

Calvin never speaks of a general predestination; nor of a first and a second act of mercy; nor of salvation without knowledge of Jesus Christ; nor of faith in Jesus Christ without knowledge of the Saviour; nor of imputation of forgiveness of sins without its application to the sinner nor of sanctification without the Gospel; nor of a moral incapacity without a natural incapacity, nor of two redemptions; nor of three Covenants.

For Calvin—as for later orthodox Calvinists—the eternal predestination of the elect to salvation could not in fact be separated from the proclamation of the gospel indiscriminately to all men, some of whom only were eternally destined to be saved. In addition, for classical Calvinistic thought the redemption of the whole creation (Romans 8) was also implied in the act of redemption of the elect Church.

Du Moulin concludes with these remarkable words:

Above all one stands amazed to see that although Calvin had, towards the end of his life and after having completed his *Institutes*, expressly written a book on the very themes of general predestination, of God's conditional decree to save all men and of universal grace, which we are now examining, M. Amyraut nonetheless passes this book over as if he had never even seen it.¹² Instead he amuses himself with gleaning various isolated passages where Calvin incidentally speaks of predestination and grace. These passages merely touch in passing on these matters and, for the most part, are not in fact even related to these questions. This book by Calvin is written against Pighius and Georgius Siculus who, amongst other errors, taught a conditional general predestination, saying that God had preordained all men to salvation and that Christ had died equally for all men.¹³

5. Finally, it is of interest to note that if Du Moulin was all his life very active in promoting the international unity of the Reformed cause in the face of an aggressive Roman Catholicism, Amyraut, on his side, was very favourable to ecumenical dialogue with Roman Catholics.¹⁴ This is not surprising as certain aspects of his theology mark the return to a type of semi-Pelagianism not very different from that of many of his Catholic contemporaries. Do we not find in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa* a treatment of the question of universal atonement remarkably similar to that developed by Moïse Amyraut?¹⁵ And a brief perusal of John Calvin's *Commentary on Romans* would rapidly convince the attentive reader that on the doctrine of salvation Thomism and Calvinism stand miles apart. C&S

12. Dr Clifford does worse. He abuses Calvin's very purpose by quoting passages from this book in order to refute Calvin's explicit meaning and aim.

13. Pierre Du Moulin, *Eclaircissements des doctrines Saumuriennes* p. 198f. See John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism: Treatises on the Eternal Predestination of God and the Secret Providence of God* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publication Association, 1552).

14. Richard Stauffer, *Un précurseur français de l'Oecumenisme. Moïse Amyraut* (Paris: Les Bergers et les Mages, 1962).

15. Jonathan R. Rainbow, *The Will of God and the Cross. An Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Limited Redemption* (Allison Park, Penn.: Pickwick Publications, 1990), p. 34–38.

A COMMON LAW: THE LAW OF NATIONS AND WESTERN CIVILISATION

BY RUBEN C. ALVARADO

Aalten, Pietas Press, 1999, 146 pages + index,
paperback, \$13.99, ISBN 90-76660-01-8

REVIEWED BY COLIN WRIGHT

THIS volume is a very welcome contribution, by a leading Reformed scholar, to the debate that is raging over the future of Europe.

However its advantage over so much of the current literature is that it does not deal directly with the specifics of that debate but with what lies at its heart. That heart lies in the answer to the question: Will Europe follow its current obsession with a civil-law tradition that emanates from the French Revolution, or will it return to its older *Christian* roots in a common-law tradition?

Alvarado sees this question as fundamental to the differences between the response of Germany and France on the one hand and Britain on the other (p. 135). In fact he goes much further: "If the civil-law tradition wins out in Europe, then future conflict is inevitable between Europe and the only other remaining common-law power in the world, the United States." And the answer lies in *German* hands: "Germany has been the central nation in European history. When Germany championed liberty, Europe enjoyed relative peace. When Germany championed power, Europe went to war. Since its defeat in World War II, Germans have been divided as to which tradition to follow, the civil-law variant or the common-law one. It is time for truly patriotic Germans to recognise in their history a great struggle between these two and to return to the inheritance they so carelessly cast aside" (p. 135).

Alvarado's account relates the story of the rise of Christian influence in European politics. That influence concerns the development of a common legal tradition throughout European Christendom that came to be known as the common law or, in Latin, the *ius gentium* (law of all nations), also known as *ius commune* (common law). This in itself was not a novel idea. It arose originally out of the need within the Roman Empire to develop a legal framework for handling equitably the legal problems of subjugated peoples, the recognition that there must be an equity that transcends national boundaries, one that would apply to Gauls, Britons, Greeks and Germans as well as Romans. Because it was seen as having its basis in the way things are by nature—rather than merely in the wishes and dictates of human rulers, who have always liked to apply the rule *quod principi placuit legis vigorem habet*, "what pleases the prince has the force of law"—it was also sometimes called *ius naturale*—natural law or the law of nature. (Interestingly, the Roman experience of other peoples led to the development of a common transcendent law structure, whereas for the earlier Greeks it had led more often than not to the notion of the complete relativity or conventional character of law).

The successful conversion of medieval European monarchs to catholic Christianity inevitably led to a new politics. For medieval Christianity was far removed from the effete and other-worldly cult that it has now become. Basing their political science on St Augustine's massive literary corpus—and particularly his notion of *Eternal Law*—they steered their new converts in a radically Christian direction. As Alvarado points out, they imbued these leaders with two fundamental concepts that were meant to form the basis of all their political activity.

The first was their elevation above the people. That is, they were leaders, not merely representative echoes of the vox populi: “Release from submission to the divinized people also meant release from bare custom and folkways in favour of the transcendental law-order” (p. 47). Secondly, and just as important, “his [the kings] demotion under God and under law . . . the king gained a new office and a new charge, for he no longer represented the interests of the conquering tribe but of all the peoples of his territory. Impartiality in administering justice was his calling” (p. 47).

Now it is precisely here that I find one of Alvarado’s most interesting insights, though his exposition of it is tantalisingly brief and incomplete. Allow me to quote his own words: “Conversion [of the kings] therefore brought with it a top-down law-order which allowed the concept of justice to permeate, slowly but surely, into every nook and cranny of Germanic culture. The Church successfully pressed the claims of the gospel on these nations, by first laying claim to the conscience of their kings, and then with the sanction and blessing of these kings by working to convert and disciple the populace, The state, therefore, proved indispensable to the mission work of the Church” (p. 48).

This is interesting because it is a position some of us in the Kuyper Foundation have been discussing for some time, and in opposition to what we originally imbibed from our study of modern Reformed literature. In numerous books and articles the idea has been promoted that reform, Christianisation, must be bottom-up. This now seems to be a standard position in many circles. Undoubtedly there is an element of truth in this. A regenerated society cannot be created by man or any of his institutions. At the end of the day it requires a heart commitment that can only be induced by the supernatural regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. But it also seems to me that this position assumes an either/or situation, and one that is in conflict with the Scriptural notion of societal order. Indeed, in the very circles that promote this view there is often a recognition of the need for the influence of godly leadership in family and church, family especially. Ultimately, this inconsistency (perhaps ambivalence would be a better word) stems, I believe, from failure to develop a philosophical system on the grounds that such a system must always be identified with Hellenic abstractionism. But it directly stems from an incipient anabaptist prejudice, namely, that Christianity’s task is to create alternative structures rather than to re-form existing ones. The differences between the two approaches may be subtle, but the consequences for political and social action are profound.

Among other issues I found particularly interesting was his analysis, early in the volume, of Hayek’s attempted refutation of socialism and collectivism on the basis of evolution. Hayek, claims Alvarado, painted himself into a corner. His solution would not succeed in defending the institutions of western civilisation. Again, he has written a fascinating account of the rise of the School of Salamanca and the pivotal role it played in the development of constitutional government.

Alvarado’s historical account is thoroughly researched and eminently readable. He gives us a thoughtful analysis, though the brevity of this volume means that inevitably many important and interesting issues are going to be dealt with cursorily. Nevertheless, it is a stimulating introduction to a vast field, and a necessary area of study for those who are concerned with the way European civilisation is heading. It would make a good basis for a series of discussion group studies.

For English readers this book needs to carry a warning however, one which Alvarado does not provide. Alvarado’s idea of common law must not be confused with the uniquely English understanding of that phrase. In England the term

common law carries a much more specific and limited meaning. Here it refers specifically to that body of law, developed under centuries of Christian influence, that applies across the board to all Englishmen. It was developed in opposition to local customs and traditions with a view to providing a basis for equitable dealing with and between all subjects of the realm. It is common in another sense too: it applies to all residents within the realm. Thus foreigners are subject to and enjoy the protection of the same laws as all Englishmen. This is a uniquely *Christian* aspect of common law in general and English common law in particular. It is wholly foreign to non-Christian law systems such as Islam. Sadly, English common law is now seriously undermined by our politicians’ sell-out to European civil-law and their failure of nerve in the face of mounting pressure from ethnic minorities. There are now laws, and they are on the increase, from which certain sections of the community are exempt. To plead that we live in a multi-cultural society is, however, merely to state the problem not the solution. A people’s laws do indeed reflect the nature of the people’s gods. But they do more. They are what *make* it a society, as Augustine so long ago pointed out: “A people is an assemblage associated by a common acknowledgement of law [i.e. by the acknowledgement of a common legal system-CW], and by a community of interests.”

This book is a must for everyone interested in re-forming European culture along Christian lines. *C&S*

GOD’S OTHER CHILDREN:
PROTESTANT NONCONFORMISTS AND
THE EMERGENCE OF DENOMINATIONAL
CHURCHES IN IRELAND, 1600–1700

BY RICHARD L. GREAVES

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, ISBN 0-8047-
2821-6, hardback, £40 (\$55).

REVIEWED BY CRAWFORD GRIBBEN

RICHARD GREAVES is one of the best-known and most respected historians of later seventeenth-century religious history. Specialising in the history of nonconformists, his work has done much to illuminate a crucial period of ecclesiastical experience. His previous work has focused on radical individuals as well as broad sweeps of their context. In *God’s Other Children* he turns his attention to the impact of denominationalism as a factor sustaining Irish nonconformity in a period when Restoration governments and church settlements were most interested in stifling religious dissent.

Scholarship on the Irish Reformation has exploded in the last twenty-five years. Alan Ford’s *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590–1641* provides the definitive outline of events and comprehensively covers the theological development of the Irish Reformed church in the period before the 1641 rebellion. He notes the historiographical debate about why and when the Irish reformation failed. The later period has been addressed by S. J. Connolly, in *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760*, and by Phil Kilroy, in *Protestant Dissent and Controversy in Ireland 1660–1714*, among others. In *God’s Other Children* Greaves offers a rich reading of the development of dissent in the same period and suggests that the most important factor in the success or decline of the dissenting

parties was their ability to construct a distinct denominational infrastructure and identity.

Greaves' narrative is a highly readable account of social and demographic changes, and the gradual evolution of the infrastructures which make denominational life possible. Discussing issues like clerical training, the construction of meeting houses, the administration of alms, and the impact of church polity on pan-Protestant fellowship and mission, he accounts for the success of the Presbyterians and Quakers in transcending the ferment of persecution to establish distinct denominational identities by the end of the century. He outlines reasons also for the apparent failure of the Baptists and Congregationalists to sustain the momentum they had initially created, and their consequent collapse.

This is therefore a delving into the debate about the reasons for the failure of the Reformation in Ireland. Greaves points to the fact that Protestant missions to the Catholic Irish were crippled by linguistic, economic and political factors. The Congregationalists and Baptists came with Cromwell's army, and were too closely identified with that regime to even hope to gain the goodwill of the populace. The Scottish Presbyterians in Ulster were split between moderate and radical Covenanting parties, and were too immersed in internecine feuding to grasp the possibilities of Irish reformation. The Church of Ireland were too concerned with policing the religious settlement and maintaining their ecclesiastical power base to give much thought to evangelism. Patterns of church growth, Greaves notes, were patterns of transferring membership from one Protestant party to another, and the forceful display of ecclesiology such patterns of evangelism necessitated effectively prevented the construction of a pan-Protestant identity.

Greaves' work is therefore crucial in our understanding of patterns of toleration and uniformity in early modern Irish church history. He illustrates the prevailing interest in "godly rule" and religious uniformity as a backdrop within which radical innovators sought toleration, and occasionally a fellowship which transcended denominational divisions. Greaves' account is compelling, convincing and highly accessible. Readers will not find a chronology of the later Irish Reformation but an insightful evocation of the mood inside the nonconformist groups in the period when they were most under pressure from an apparently Protestant establishment. Using a variety of source material—which is richly quoted—Greaves builds a delightful portrait of Protestant nonconformists struggling with the experience of defeat. *C&S*

THE END OF CHRISTENDOM AND
THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY
BY DOUGLAS JOHN HALL

Trinity Press International, 1995, 69 pages

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN J. HAYHOW

THIS short book comes from a Mennonite press. It is therefore the modern expression of Anabaptist theology and social theory, from what appears to be a liberal perspective. In our times Anabaptist social theory has become the dominant social theory of evangelicalism. The Magisterial Reformers and mediaeval heritage are long gone from the vision of modern Christians.

Hall is suspicious of the ascendancy of Christianity in the Constantinian period and then on into the mediaeval and

Reformation periods. That was Christendom, and now Christendom, he says, is over. On p. 19 he tells us that as the Christendom phase is over, we have to look for a better model. In fact, what the modern Protestant church needs to do it disestablish itself—extricate itself from the culture!

Now there is a grain of truth here. Christendom is dead. We need to face that fact, and we need to act differently. Yet while Christendom is dead, it remains as our past and as a model to be admired and improved upon for the future. This is where the reviewer and author part company.

The proposal that Hall sets out supports the liberal, politically correct agenda of establishment liberal politics. The irony is that, in calling us out to be separate and disestablish ourselves, he actually calls us to submit to the humdrum liberal agenda that is failing before our eyes. *C&S*

Letter to the Editor

SIR,

You can be assured that things do not seem to have changed much since 1991, save possibly for the worse. Here is an editorial from the autumn 1991 edition of *Evangel*:

"'Spirituality' has, in recent years become one of those buzz-words that so afflict Christianity. As with other such words ('ecumenical' and 'charismatic' come readily to mind) it is a word which lacks precision and while essentially biblical can cover a multitude of sins which undoubtedly are not so!

"Too readily 'spirituality' becomes a word used for techniques of prayer and worship. Such techniques may not be wrong in and of themselves (though some derived from eastern mysticism seem too readily and uncritically embraced into 'Christian spirituality'). However, it would appear that there is a real danger, which is not always avoided, which leads to confusion between 'spirituality' and 'spiritual.' This, in turn, deflects the pursuit of holiness into an existential rather than an ethical demonstration of the presence of God.

"Equally dangerous is the assumption that a similar spirituality or preferential piety is itself a witness to a common relationship with God. At this point the 'spirituality' movement can walk hand in hand with the ecumenical movement, seeking a unity divorced from confessional agreement. The widespread ransacking of spiritual writings from other traditions (sometimes of real value) can, in fact, lead to an uncritical acceptance of traditions which, at the most charitable estimate, are near to teaching another gospel."

And so he goes on. At the end he suggests that evangelical piety today seems to lack the ability its predecessors seemed to have of engaging mind, heart, and will together in their experience with God.

In similar vein, A. G. Dickens wrote some thirty years ago: "the claims of mysticism have always presented problems. Many of its phenomena are not confined to Christians, since analogous techniques and states appear in the literature of Platonism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Islam . . . in many instances . . . a dangerous trend towards pantheism can be detected . . . Such tendencies often compelled institutional Christianity . . . to view the contemplative approach with caution [one has now to say, the charismatic approach!]. The timid saying, that mysticism begins with mist and ends in schism, enshrines a measure of ecclesiastical wisdom" (*The English Reformation*, pp. 31, 32). On p. 36 he refers to "that unfortunate tendency of late mediaeval mysticism . . . to attract

emotional and idiosyncratic characters and to expect violent psycho-physical phenomena as signs of divine favour.” Hardly anything new in the so-called “Toronto blessing”!

On another matter—your remark that Britain seems to be quietly becoming a totalitarian country—one need look no further than the activities of too many so-called “social services.” There seems to be very much an anti-family ethos; despite its professed readiness to take seriously what children say it seems to only operate one way—only believe them if what they say agrees with what the “professionals” think is the case! And by the time the truth comes out the damage done is usually considerable. Another feature is the tendency to seek, and often get, wide-ranging gagging orders, with the result that public discussion of particular cases is outlawed; even the elected representatives of the parents are silenced. In a recent case—I happened to spot it on the front page of the Sunday edition of the *Daily Mail*—I found myself asking what the local Christians were made of. The scenario was as follows: a 12-year-old girl got herself pregnant; she came from a nominally Catholic family. Her parents were supportive, being quite prepared to back her up, whatever decision she made. In addition, the church lent its support. While this was in progress, they also involved the local social services. All went well, until a new social worker was assigned them. From then on it all unravelled. The social worker quite frankly suggested an abortion; the girl was horrified by this, and what was more, she was by then 24 weeks on. Faced with resistance from the girl and her family, the social services went to the courts, alleging the girl to be beyond parental control, and took her into care, under which circumstances she gave birth. They also got a court order banning the girl’s parents from talking to the media, a ban that wasn’t removed for many weeks. As for the baby, it was taken away from the girl, who was later allowed back with her parents.

What makes this incident stink was that there was already a network of support in place, and that whatever we may feel about the girl’s behaviour, she was at least not prepared to take

the easy way out. In this respect, she needed, and from her church and parents she had, ample support. For another party to go charging in like the proverbial bull in a china shop defies comprehension; what also is baffling is that the local Christian communities did not publicly denounce it from their pulpits. While court orders should ordinarily be respected, I venture to say that this is a good example of an instance where it is in order for the church as an institution to shout about it from their pulpits. Jailing a father for talking to his priest or minister would sound shocking enough; trying to jail several religious leaders for publicly commenting on a matter well within their remit would be a modern equivalent of James II (VII) trying to imprison the seven bishops who crossed him.

As it is, I am coming to the conclusion (possibly exaggerated) that it is manifestly impossible in practice to be a Christian and a social worker without accepting presuppositions that are radically at variance with biblical Christianity of any description.

Yours faithfully,
Barry Gowland

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