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EDITORIAL

UP YOURS! THE NEW APPROACH TO SEX EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

by Stephen C. Perks

READERS of this journal may perhaps recall that in the Editorial for the October 2000 issue (*C&S* Vol. X, No. 4, p. 6) I commented that Clause 28 (the regulation forbidding homosexual propaganda in schools) is as good as gone, and that one of the likely consequences of its abolition would be that pupils would be expected to engage in homosexual family role play as part of sex education lessons. Since the publication of that editorial it has come to light that in Scotland, where Clause 28 has already been abolished, this is precisely what it is now being proposed that children be asked to do. According to the *Daily Mail*: “Children as young as 11 are to be made to perform role-play games in class in which they imagine they are homosexual. The lessons are being backed in Scotland despite a pledge by Prime Minister Tony Blair that ‘no child would be forced into taking part.’ They [i.e. the lessons] are now being promoted by the Scottish Executive which has recommended them to schools in its sex education guidelines . . . The game is contained in a sex lesson called Taking Sex Seriously, aimed at 11 to 14-year-old pupils. Boys are told to imagine they are a ‘male who thinks he is gay but has not told anyone else before.’ There are similar gay instructions for girls. After acting the part in class, the children then have to discuss the role-play experience with fellow pupils.”¹ In one of the Scottish Executive’s recommended resources it is suggested that children be asked to go into chemists and buy condoms as “homework” to help them overcome their embarrassment.²

If Clause 28 is abolished in England (and it is highly probable that it will be) the same will likely happen in English schools. But we should be wrong to think that this is an isolated issue, that what those who send their children to State schools are faced with is a single issue or even a few issues of morality. This is all part of a much greater movement away from Christianity; namely, the repaganisation of our society. The promotion of a homosexual lifestyle is only one aspect of this. Regardless of whether Clause 28 is abolished in England, therefore, Christians need to rethink the whole issue of whether Christian children should be placed in State schools. Campaigning against this and other single issues as if these were isolated problems in an otherwise healthy system is quite futile in the present climate, in

1. *Daily Mail*, Wednesday March 28, 2001. Articles reporting this and similar sex education developments in Scotland appeared also in the *Scottish Catholic Observer*, Friday March 30; *The Scotsman*, Thursday March 29, Friday March 30 and Tuesday April 3; and the *Scottish Daily Mail*, Friday March 23. The source of this information is research done by the Christian Institute in Newcastle.

2. Julian Cohen, Pamela Wilson and James Kay, *Taking Sex Seriously* (Liverpool: Healthwise), Chapter Six, “Condomania—Using the male and female condom.”

which secular humanism (i.e. neo-paganism) is the ethos that permeates the whole secular schooling system. Furthermore, Christians need to realise that a development like this is not the beginning of anything; rather, it is the end game, the conclusion of the abandonment of God in education. The secularising process has been at work for a long time, and now it is bearing fruits that Christians may perhaps more easily recognise. But the damage has already been done. Campaigning against the abolition of Clause 28 is tantamount to closing the door after the horse has bolted. This is not an omen of things to come; it is the result of what has gone before (see further the Editorial in *C&S* Vol. XI, No. 1).

Christian parents are required by God to provide a Christ-centred education for their children. God’s word commands parents to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). This includes education. Secular schooling does not do this. It is in principle opposed to such an education. What then can Christians do about this? For most parents in the present situation the only alternative is home schooling (for some there may be Christian schools, but there are few of these in Britain). The traditional public (i.e. private) schooling system in Britain is on the whole not a serious Christian alternative, since although lip-service may be paid to the Christian religion, the whole ethos of these schools is usually governed by the same secular humanist world-view that governs the State schools. Public schools in Britain merely provide an alternative form of secular education. Church of England schools, as I have often said, are no better than State schools or public schools. Home schooling is a growing and viable—and for many Christians the *only* viable—alternative, but it is still only a minority of Christians who are prepared to take this issue seriously and home school their children.

What is it that hinders Christians from turning to home schooling in greater numbers? For most families the only answer to this can be “Nothing—at least nothing that can be justified.” And in the few cases where a genuine difficulty does exist (poverty for example), this could quite easily be remedied by the church if the biblical functions and responsibilities of pastors and deacons were to be taken seriously. In fact, if pastors were to show more commitment to and leadership in the faith, by doing this themselves and encouraging others to do the same, this would in itself provide a significant witness to Christ and his total claims upon our lives. Instead of this most Christian children continue to be educated in terms of the religion of secular humanism, sex education lessons and all. What are the real reasons that so few are prepared to take their responsibilities as Christian parents seriously in this way?

First, on the part of many there is the problem of ignorance. Some are simply unaware of the issues. But such ignorance is culpable on the part of church leaders. The sheep follow their leaders and for the sheep who know no better we must show some understanding. But church leaders should not be permitted to plead ignorance with impunity (though I suspect few leaders could legitimately plead such ignorance, and where they could this would only indicate their unsuitability for leadership in the first place). The answer to this ignorance is a decisive and vigorous programme of re-education among Christians about the implications of the faith for the raising of children. That the leaders of our churches should have failed so much in this matter is truly a scandal.

Second, there are those Christians who do understand the issues, who have seen the example and heard the reasons and rationale for Christian schooling, yet still do nothing despite the witness of their own consciences as evidenced in the aggressively critical stance they take against the whole idea of Christian home schooling. This group is very large. Why do Christians react in this way? What is it that prevents them from acting in a way that is consistent with their profession of faith—and their conscience? There are two things in particular that stand in the way of Christians fulfilling their responsibilities as parents in this way, and both are forms of idolatry: *first*, there is the issue of intellectual respectability, i.e. the desire to be approved by men and the institutions of men in terms of educational qualifications. Yet this is at a time when such qualifications are widely recognised even by humanists to be failing and increasingly of less value. That Christians should run after the secular idols of the age and put mere academic respectability before a godly education is reprehensible, and absurd when the qualifications that are idolised are worth so little in real terms.

A *second* reason for the failure of Christians to pursue a Christian alternative to secular education is Mammonism, i.e. the idolatry of wealth as evidenced in an unwillingness to make the financial commitment that a Christian education involves. Home schooling requires one parent to stay at home and therefore forsake the extra income that can be earned if both parents work while their children are brought up and educated by someone else in terms of the religion of secular humanism. The financial commitment necessary to home school one's children relates mainly to the need for one parent to stay at home instead of going out to work. The materials needed to home school children are not financially prohibitive for most Christian families. The difference that a second income makes is not the difference between poverty and self-dependence for most Christian families, but merely one of a lower standard of self-dependence; in other words, fewer luxuries. That Christians refuse to forgo these luxuries is a testimony to the materialism that animates them, regardless of the fact that they may support and vote for socialist political parties and claim to be against materialism—socialism, remember, means at best helping the poor with your neighbour's money, and more likely helping yourself with his money. The irony is that such materialism—e.g. voting for socialism—is counterproductive; that is, it only succeeds in sharing the poverty around ultimately, not in producing more wealth for everyone. A socialist society is a less wealthy society, and therefore the higher standard of living available to a family in which both parents work while the State brings up their children is ultimately a mirage, although to those who are only interested in the short term, as materialists (e.g. socialists) invariably are, it seems irresistible.³

Of course, we should not underestimate the role that sheer laziness plays in this whole outlook as well. A faith that requires works consistent with one's profession is just too much trouble for many Christians. It is easier as well as

3. State run services are also more expensive than privately funded services of a similar kind where there is a free market for such services that is not vitiated by tax-funded State provision (for more on this point see Stephen C. Perks, *The Political Economy of A Christian Society* [Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, 2001], pp. 208–212). Such services are also morally deleterious, since their effect is to strip the population of responsibility as well as freedom.

cheaper (but only in the short term) to let the secular humanist State raise one's children.

That parents will tolerate this situation is a testimony to the authority and power of the idols of intellectual respectability and Mammon in the modern Church. That the church is prepared not only to acquiesce in such practices, but will even *discourage* Christian parents from providing their children with a Christian education in this way, is deplorable and evidence of the utter state of apostasy into which the Church, and particularly the clergy and leaders of the Church, whose calling it is to guide their flocks in the path of salvation, have fallen today.

The situation we face today is extreme. An extreme secular humanist ideology is in control of our society and has even invaded the Church, vitiating the ability of Christians to think and live in a way that is consistent with the demands of the faith. And the clergy have not only sat by and done nothing; they have been in the vanguard of promoting compromise with and surrender to this ideology, this false god. Extreme situations call for extreme remedies. The alternative is compromise.

Homosexual role-play lessons—*Coming soon to a school near you!* What are you going to do about it? What is your church going to do about it? What is your pastor going to suggest you do about it? What is he going to do about it? What will the Church's response be? Compliance? Oh yes, there will be the token complaint, perhaps some lobbying of government. But compliance nonetheless. The world is watching. But more importantly, the Lord Jesus Christ is watching. And remember, this is not Candid Camera; it will not all turn out to be a practical joke in the end. The future of our children's lives is at stake, and the future of our civilisation. *C&S*

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CALVINISTIC ACTIVISM: ITS RISE AND TRANSFORMATION

by Michael W. Kelley

ERNST TROELTSCH, in his monumental masterpiece, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, without the least misgivings asserted that “Calvinism is the chief force in the Protestant world to-day.”¹ What did he mean by this candid remark? Did he mean that the Calvinist faith was more pervasive and widespread than, say, Lutheranism or the various Anabaptist followings? Did he mean that Calvinist (Reformed) churches were more numerous or successful than other Protestant confessions? And what did he mean by *today*? Did he mean in our very own time and century (twentieth)? If so, would he agree with such a verdict at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first?

Troeltsch’s assessment of the force of modern Calvinism was not limited to the last century nor did he have in mind the success of the spread of Reformed churches. He had in mind the rise of a religious force which began in the sixteenth century but extended its influence up to the present. What is more, that influence was primarily ethical-social, and not narrowly ecclesiastical, in significance. Calvinism was the *chief force* not because it sought to be such, but because it proved more naturally conducive to the rise of modern civilisation than other Protestant-religious points of view. This was because the soul of Calvinism was a religious point of view that, more than any other, gave a positive affirmation to the world rather than to encourage a withdrawal from it or to teach an indifference to it so far as the Christian faith is concerned. But as to its being the chief force today, we could hardly say that this is so any longer. Still, it was the chief force early on, at least so far as imparting an ethos which had a direct and powerful effect upon other forces which were working to bring about unpredictable changes in the world. It would be worthwhile to take a fresh look at this religious phenomenon and perhaps consider once again what Calvinism did to promote the world as we know it. This study is not about Calvinism as a set of doctrines so much as it is about Calvinism as a civilising and modernising force. But, equally, it is about what the loss of that religious dynamic has come to mean and why, therefore, it would be beneficial to consider the rise of early Calvinism as something beyond merely a confessional interest. Our guide in this endeavor will be Troeltsch’s own work whose thoughts on Calvinism showed the spirit of that faith in action in a way that many

theologians have failed to consider, but which ought to come to the attention of anyone who would evaluate the relevance of faith for life in general.

The impact of Calvinism on the modern world was due to its “active character.”² Calvinism’s faith was no mere salvation of the *soul* and a promise of *heaven*. Instead, it fostered the idea that the believer must provide the evidence of his salvation by actively serving God in the world. In other words, redemption meant that a religious change not only took place in the believer, but, as the mark of such a change, the believer should go into the world to bring about change there as well. This should not be understood to mean that Calvinism originally thought in terms of producing *Christian culture*. Early Calvinism was scarcely motivated by this sort of ideal. But it did believe that the Christian believer—the *elect* in Christ—had a responsibility to produce *good works* in life, and that the purpose of his salvation was not solely for the performance of religious exercises of an exclusively subjective-personal or ecclesiastical nature.

A peculiar distinctive of early Calvinism was its emphasis upon the doctrine of predestination. To be sure, Calvinism stood for other important ideas as well, but certainly it is no exaggeration, nor cause for embarrassment, to say that predestination was the centerpiece of its thinking. This was not merely a matter of how Calvinism understood redemption, viz., that some men were *chosen* or *predestined* to be saved, whereas others were predestined to be damned. Unfortunately, this is usually how non-Calvinists tended to understand the doctrine as taught in Calvinist circles. The importance of this doctrine should be seen as the product of Calvinism’s unique understanding of God: a point which cannot be stressed too strongly. Calvinism, simply put, saw God to be absolute in a way other Christian-religious viewpoints did not. This was true even of other Reformation points of view. Certainly, the attribution of the salvation of sinners to God alone was a more or less shared point of view, but the idea of predestination as the expression of the sovereignty of God in the matter of redemption came more naturally to Calvinists for the principal reason that the *will of God* was taken to be the absolute cause of everything that exists or happens in the world. Accordingly, Calvinism placed an emphasis upon the *will* of God to a degree not emphasised in either Lutheranism or Anabaptism, and certainly not in Roman Catholicism. God’s will was the preeminent starting-point for everything in creation as well

1. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1992 [1931] trans. Olive Wyon), Vol. II, p. 576.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 577.

as redemption. This was because Calvinism understood God not merely as a being who had a will, but as he whose being is his will, and whose will is his being. In other words, in Calvinism's doctrine of God, being and will are equally ultimate. And since God's being is prior to and over the created universe, so, too, is his will. For Calvinism, then, nothing was more basic, more foundational than the will of God. So far as everything other than God is concerned, it is to be traced back to his sovereign and majestic will. Predestination comes naturally to such a view of God.

The will of God, then, is the reason for everything and every event, not just some things or some events. In the final analysis, it must be the reason for the *why* that men seek to know as they question and search into the meaning and working of all that exists. There is nothing but that it has its roots, and ultimate explanation, in the will of God. However, the Calvinist did not speak of the will of God as something that existed in the abstract, as a kind of mechanical operating principle of the cosmos. The will of God was for him a profound indication of the preeminence of the *personality* of God in all the affairs of this world. No reality or realm of existence could be independent of God, could function or move apart or in isolation from his will. More importantly, God's will, far from being merely the cause of things coming into existence, constantly and mysteriously maintained all things in their natural courses and according to their created form and purpose. God's will was no mere first cause, but an ever-present reality that sustained and made possible the purposes of man and nature. Naturally, such a view cannot limit God by seeing his relevance in some matters while excluding him from others. In other words, one cannot speak of the absolute sovereign will of God in the realm of creation and not see its relevance for redemption. Nor can one regard God's will as absolute in matters of grace and salvation, and not also see its implications for everything that touches man's life in the world. The will of God for Calvinism was indivisible, it lay at the back of all the life and activity of man, whether he became a recipient of saving grace or not. And so certain was he that the will of the creature could not possibly deflect or hinder the will of God, that, in matters of redemption, it seemed altogether inappropriate to the Calvinist to regard it from a self-centered or personal salvation standpoint. Salvation does not begin or end with the creature, nor of his own willful intention to respond positively to the *love* of God that is merely *offered* to him in the gospel. In the thinking of some, the idea of *love* lay at the center of their conception of God. This was true, for example, of Lutheranism. But for Calvinism, the will of God was at the center of its thinking about redemption. It is God's will alone that gives the creature the grace and ability to serve the greater purpose of God. And having been the recipient of this grace by the will of God, the creature can neither thwart nor frustrate its unshakeable design.

If for Calvinism the will of God was the driving force behind everything in this world, this was not meant to be taken as a simple datum. Always there was in his mind a deeper recognition and appreciation of the motive that underlay this Divine attribute. God's intention, in all that he wills and in all that he achieves by so willing, is to glorify his person. The very existence of the world was a mark of God's glory. However, the Calvinist especially appreciated that man was given a responsibility to live so as to reflect glory upon God, or bring glory to his person and name. He was to

advance the cause of God in the world which would then redound to God's glory. But, at the same time, doing so would advance the cause of man and redound to his good. For Calvinism, the glory of God is the end for which all action on the creature's part is directed and the will of God is that by which he is governed to reach that end. This was true whether he thought of creation alone or redemption with it. All things that men do—that God gives them to do—must be accomplished for the glory of God. Sinful, fallen men have, of course, refused to live in terms of this purpose. So, the Calvinist reasoned, if men are to glorify God, then they must be made to overcome their opposition. Man's will and God's will, because of sin, have become mutually opposed to one another. If man's resistance to God was to be at all overcome, then it must lie in the absolute superiority of God's will over man's. In the doctrine of predestination the Calvinist expressed his confidence in a God whose will was irresistible.

Now this conception of God had vast implications and turned Calvinism not merely into a doctrine of redemption, but into a world-and-life-view. Unlike other Christian-religious viewpoints, Calvinism did not make salvation dependent upon the receptive will of man. Consequently, it did not put salvation at the center, but saw it only as instrumental to the accomplishment of God's glory. God's purpose in redemption, then, was not limited merely to salvation *per se*, but to the restoration of mankind to his original purpose of living and doing all things for God and his glory. Redemption was a means, not an end in itself.

Consequently, the Calvinist came to see God, and man's submission to him, in all aspects of life. God was not just in the *religious* matters, but in everything that concerned man, good or bad. The Calvinist, therefore, learned to place a calm repose in God, because whatever his circumstances, God was working out and bringing to completion his electing purposes with regard to him. However, this did not lead him to a life of quietism or ascetic withdrawal, but to one of thankful acceptance and active engagement in the world. God, in election to salvation, had granted man the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and set him free from guilt not merely so that he could feel better about himself, but in order that he might render his life an instrument of his will. And for the Calvinist, the proof of his justification before God did not consist in inwardness and depth of feeling, but in a new energy for life and action in the world at large. In other words, the certainty of belonging to the elect did not produce in him an introspective outlook, but released a new and vital spirit of active personal and social involvement. The Calvinist, consequently, refused to become preoccupied with the happiness of salvation for its own sake; instead, he preferred to focus his mind upon a life of dutiful, yet eager, service. If his endeavor to realize that goal was not strictly determined by some earthly measure of success, nevertheless, the Calvinist was convinced that God would cause him to prosper in his service. The main point was to lead a life of practical engagement, not to waste time and effort on fruitless meditation and inward contemplation. Thus, Calvinism turned its energies to work and productive accomplishment as these were the signs of a life now dedicated to the service and glory of God.

Faith, then, issues in life so far as Calvinists were concerned. Such a life, however, is not merely for the blessedness or benefit of the creature, but for the all-important purpose

of glorifying God. Nothing contented the Calvinist individual if his life did not come to rest on this point. He was not satisfied with mere happiness for himself. He did not even come to see his service of God as having its end merely in giving himself in service to others. But neither did he live with a sort of passive endurance and toleration of the condition of the world he lived in. Rather, he was driven from an inward faith to enter into all aspects of life and service, but with one goal in mind—the glory of God and the achievement of his will. Because this motive lay at the core of his outlook, he did not lose himself in the world; that is, he did not act in the world for the sake of the world, or anything in the world. He did not, for example, surrender to ideals of *do-goodism*, nor did he measure anything by some standard of worldly success or human betterment. He worked with one purpose in view—to shape all life to be an expression of the divine will.

Since the Calvinist knew that his calling and election were sure, he felt free to give his whole attention to the effort to live in faithful devotion and service of God's will, and, thus, to seek to shape his life to be a reflection of God's purpose and truth. What is more, he felt impelled to labour in the world without having to worry constantly about his relationship to God, whether it was secure or not. He was confident of God's predestinating purpose and accomplishment in him, and, therefore, he did not constantly feel the need to search his soul to find the comforting presence of God. God's will was imperturbable and unchangeable. This putting of confidence in God meant that the Calvinist set all confidence in man at a distance. Moreover, secondary motives did not rise in his conscience to undermine or cancel his primary motive. He did not, for example, think first of man as the cause of his acting in the world. That is, in his motive for acting he did not give priority to man's needs or sufferings, important as these might be. In other words, his incentive to work in the world was not due to the condition of the world, because he found it to be a place of misery and pain, and therefore felt an emotional and sentimental burden to relieve his fellow man of his wretchedness and distress and improve his lot in life. The Calvinist, we might say, was not driven by feelings of guilt to assist those who perhaps had not been as fortunate as he. Rather, so far as he was concerned, he did not regard himself or his actions as being somehow indispensable to the well-being of life or the world whatsoever. In fact, he did not view himself as possessing some value of his own—he was not burdened with problems of self-esteem or self-worth—but regarded himself as simply an instrument, to be used for the sake of God and his kingdom. In this sense—and in this sense only—he had immense value.

The Calvinist, then, endued with a systematic spirit of self-control, with an independence of all that is *creaturely* or *worldly*, and resting all hope and confidence in the power of God's grace and election, acted in the world not for the sake of the world, not even for his own sake, but for nothing except the honor and glory of God. However, this attitude of detachment from the world did not require a withdrawal from the world. Rather, it simply meant that the Calvinist lived in the world and acted upon the world not out of a desire to get hold of the world or its blandishments, but strictly from the idea of serving God and advancing his cause.

The Calvinist always looked at life from the standpoint of God's purposes, not merely his own interests. At the same

time, he thought of himself as an instrument in bringing about those purposes. At the core of God's purpose was his wish to create mankind not merely as a bunch of dissociated individuals, but as a community, serving God's interests together. Therefore, in his mind the whole range of life should be brought under what today we might call *Christian* control and be regulated by Christian ideals and goals. There was not for the Calvinist a distinction between the affairs of this world which have importance for the Christian faith and those which are more or less *secular*. Nothing to him belonged outside the need to conform to God's will and serve his glory. Every aspect of life ought to develop as a Christian purpose: whether we think of the church or the State, the family or society, or economic life, or all personal relationships, public or private, it should all be brought into conformity with God's intention, not man's. In all these areas and more the goal should be to create the *holy community* or *commonwealth*. Now this does not occur without the recognition and implementation of an ethical obligation based upon complete submission to God and his commands. The new active life in the world, arising out of God's redemption of the sinner, required a clear standard of ethical obedience upon which it was to be structured. For the Calvinist that standard was the moral law of Scripture.

In the moral law the Calvinist saw and heard something much more than the call to *duty* for its own sake. For him the moral law was not merely God making explicit what man *ought* to do in order to make God happy and pleased, and nothing besides. Calvinism was no simplistic *moralism*. Rather, the goal or end of obedience was the creation of the holy community. In other terms we might call this the kingdom of God. The moral law contained the regulating principles of action which led to its realisation, the purpose of which was part of the chief end of man. Man was not complete as man, whether as individual or as a community, unless and until the kingdom of God had been brought to completion. And the moral law was like the instructions in a plastic model kit, enclosed along with the airplane or automobile parts to show clearly the steps to be followed in order to construct the model. In similar fashion, the Calvinist, too, needed the ethical rules of Scripture to guide him in building the community of man or the kingdom of God. In a sense, then, the law of God had for him a *utilitarian* purpose. It was the tool he needed to complete the job of fulfilling God's plan and purpose for the life of man in society.

This gave to Calvinism a rational, yet practical, character. It was rational, because it required a distinct employment of intellectual energy to understand the moral obligation required of him and his world. In the first place, he must seek to comprehend the meaning of Scripture and the nuances of its application to life's situations. This was because Scripture was for him the source of all knowledge having to do not only with redemption but man's moral obligation. The Calvinist, then, put a high premium upon the development of the intellect to understand the teaching of Scripture. But the Calvinist did not stop merely at the knowledge of Scripture. The world, too, needed to be understood. Intellectual effort must be applied to making sense of law, economics, engineering, commerce, industry, and so forth. One must then see how it all works in unison in God's world and how it is connected to the revelation of God's will in Scripture. But the Calvinist was no mere theorist. In fact, the strength of Calvinist activism derived from its very practical outlook

on life and its opportunities. He exerted his energies to accomplish things in the world, not simply to reflect upon it. All this stemmed from the Calvinist's view of what redemption means. Those who were saved were not saved merely to be put right with God, but in order to live in God's world as God intended.

Two facts accompany this outlook in Calvinism: in the first place, the Calvinist believed in a certain *spiritual detachment* from the world while remaining and working within it. We have already touched on this point where we expressed the view that Calvinism was not motivated to work in the world for the sake of the world. However, it must be made clear that Calvinism was not a world-conquering ideal. It did not propose a radical change of the world by means of something like a Calvinist ideology. It was not a revolutionary faith in that respect. For the Calvinist was not moved to active involvement in life for the sake of man-centered ends. A good way to put this would be as Troeltsch remarked: Calvinism, he asserted, "produces a keen interest in politics, but not for the sake of the State; it produces active industry within the economic sphere, but not for the sake of wealth; it produces an eager social organization, but its aim is not material happiness; it produces unceasing labour, ever disciplining the sense, but none of this effort is for the sake of the object of all this industry. The one main controlling idea and purpose of this ethic is to glorify God, to produce the Holy Community, to attain that salvation which in election is held up as the aim . . ." ³ In the second place, the Calvinist was not driven to work in the world in a blind disregard of the misery of the world's condition due to sin. Consequently, he was possessed of no utopian visions in his world-and-life view, but regarded his work as something that was always in progress, as something that did not arrive at some finished product in this life. This was because the Calvinist saw his labours here as a continuous working-out of his salvation, for the sinful propensities of man were not removed immediately upon the receipt of God's grace in Christ. Redemption, to be sure, begins with the conversion of the person to Christ, but such a person goes on to struggle against the opposition of sin and the world. And this work is on-going. What is unique about Calvinism in these and other respects was its systematic and thoughtful approach to the problems of life and society. Its pietism was not the pie-in-the-sky variety. Instead, knowing his duty, he laboured with a conscious intent and an informed knowledge of both the world as it is and the God who made it and rules over it.

It can scarcely be denied that the Calvinistic outlook on life had a profound and transforming effect upon the modern world then coming into existence. This was especially true in those countries where Calvinism had taken deep roots in the populace at large. Here we refer primarily to the Netherlands, Britain and America. The Calvinistic spirit was far and away more influential in the social and cultural milieu of these nations than elsewhere. It is not surprising that it was in these lands, where the modern commercial and industrial world first came into existence or were transformed by it to the greatest extent, that Calvinism left so valuable a legacy. For Calvinism was a theology of work. And work meant secular or ordinary work. Indeed, to labour in the world was a religious duty. It was not merely a method for providing the material needs of the body, but work was

an end in itself. It offered opportunity for the Christian man to exercise faith within the context of what the Calvinist believed was his *calling*. In these countries the commercial or industrial development was such as to give rise to the necessity for work, and to bring forth a bourgeois form of life that the faithful fulfillment of work had achieved. This was not brought about by the mere engagement in work, however, but by the attitude towards work and its accomplishments as shaped by the Calvinistic temperament. For the Calvinist pursued his labours within a spirit of ascetic self-discipline accompanied by an abstention from all worldly distractions or motives. That is, he did not view the profit of his labours as merely for the sake of his personal enjoyment. His work was his purpose, not because he found himself or his meaning in his work, but because it was the means to serve the greater glory of God and to be useful in building up his holy community.

This attitude towards work impacted the rise of the middle classes, an order of society whose existence was undoubtedly the product of disciplined and productive labour. Much can be said for the Calvinistic principle that laziness was a sin. Being steeped in this point of view was not something one would find among the aristocracy, or those who lived by inherited incomes. To live without a definite end or to waste time and energy by failing to use the chances of gaining a profit from labour was viewed by Calvinists not only as foolish, but a dangerous and unwholesome vice. Not only was it possible that such self-indulgent idleness could prove fatal to one's *soul*, it was also detrimental to the community at large. It had deleterious social repercussions. Calvinism, in consequence, strengthened the rise of the middle class and reinforced its belief in the ethic of work and self-help which has been so beneficial to the rise of modern urban society and large-scale capitalistic enterprise. And if early Calvinism strongly opposed the idle aristocracy, latter day Calvinism is just as antagonistic to the slothful indolence of the social-welfare underclass, although not for the same reasons. Work was the only way to serve God and to exercise proper responsibility for oneself and those for whom one had an obligation for care and keeping.

While the ethic of work in early Calvinism derived largely from religious motives, it was not unmindful of the usefulness of work so far as the wealth motive was concerned as well. Calvinism did not regard the motive to serve God to be adverse to the motive to acquire material gain *per se*. It was possible for them to conflict, but not necessarily so. In fact, Calvinism often regarded the accumulation of wealth as a sign of God's approval of one's conscientious labour in the world. God rewarded the responsible use of one's time and effort, just as he disapproved of the waste of time of those who lived in luxurious idleness (or today's idle dependence upon social welfare). The Calvinist was thus inclined to view the getting of wealth, if done from the right motives, as a positive benefit to the labouring man of faith, and also to the greater good of the community. Labor was not seen merely as a painful necessity of no consequence, but a responsibility that brought good to man and demonstrated thereby the good pleasure of the Lord.

In this respect, Calvinism gave a tremendous boost to the economic activity of industry and trade, which were just then beginning to develop as a major features of the emerging modern world. The economic ethic of Calvinism was not limited merely to the problem of consumption, however.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 607.

Rather, it redirected ethical thinking to the issue of production. Calvinism recognised and approved of the productive power not only of manual labour but of money and credit. In this respect, too, Calvinism advanced the cause of progressive thinking in economic activity. Unlike the traditional feudal-agricultural world which regarded the production of material goods as more or less a self-contained and autonomous activity, intended solely for the purpose of self-sustaining consumption, Calvinism believed in industrial and monetary mobility and encouraged production for the market. Far from being terrified that this sort of activity would undermine centuries of established social and moral order, Calvinism, in fact, saw an implicit moral improvement in mankind through such aggressive and outwardly directed economic endeavor. For the first time in history, economic activity was given approval for its own sake, and wealth was no longer viewed as something static, an inevitable privilege for some and an impossibility for others. The distinction between *haves* and *have-nots* was no longer something rooted in nature or in the *Divinely* ordained class structure of society. Calvinism came to base it upon those who were willing to work and those who were not.

As Calvinism helped shape the coming economic order of capitalism, so, too, it influenced the political and legal order that served as the framework in which the labour of man could be given its due, and by which the conflicts of men in their actions could be mitigated or prevented. The Calvinist ethic was steeped in the notion that man's life must be given order and direction by the authority of God's word, which spoke to him as a *law-word*. Society, especially, could not function apart from a law to govern it. But for the Calvinist, the only true law that had authority in all man's affairs was the law of God, for only God was truly sovereign. Man could form political orders, but the rule of those orders was not for him to decide. The Calvinist inclination was always to regard the will of God as the fount of his thinking. Naturally, this led him to place a strong emphasis upon the *rule of law* as the only proper extension of the idea of the rule of *God's will*. And from this insistence Calvinism undoubtedly influenced the discussion of political power and authority, and its legal limitations, that had challenged modern thinkers at a time when the world was changing from the old medieval-feudal order into that of modern popular and democratic nation-States.

It must not be imagined that Calvinism, for all its profound influence upon the thinking and acting of early modern man, was the *cause* of the modern world coming into existence. The change from a feudal-agricultural society to one driven by industrial and capitalistic methods and motives was not something that Calvinism invented. Nor did the Reformation in general produce it. However, Calvinism, more than other branches of Reformation thought, had an impact upon the inner nature of man that helped shape his attitudes and responsibilities which thereby greatly aided the dawn of the new industrial and commercial age of Europe and America. Calvinism helped to instill the proper ethos that was necessary to sustain market capitalism, law-based democracy and the general rational ordering of life in modern urban society. It was no mere earthly motive, however, that impelled Calvinism, but a deeply religious and, we might almost say, *other-worldly* motive. For Calvinism fostered an engagement in secular work and instilled in vast numbers an ethic of practical activity in the world for other

than worldly ends. To work in the world was an altogether legitimate and holy duty, but the goal was not to acquire the world for its own sake. Rather, it was to give evidence of the fruits of election and to realise the purposes of God. But in doing so, it proved to be a powerful inducement to activity we would not ordinarily associate with a religious faith. For the Calvinist believed that whatever was a worthy endeavor of man, there was a proper place for him to exercise his calling to serve God. The modern world would have arrived on the scene in any case, but it would be difficult to imagine what it would have been like without the faith that gave it impetus and a man-transcending dignity and purpose.

In fact, that faith no longer exists to undergird and impel the actions of man in the world, and it is quite possible to notice the changes which have occurred as a result. The demise of Calvinism has meant a vast transformation of the ethos that drives men as they work in the world and seek to appropriate it for themselves. It has been replaced by a different motive, one more secular but also more aggressively anti-Christian.

Ironically, that transformation first began to take place with the rise of early modern *liberalism*. It is ironic because early liberalism was itself an offspring of Calvinistic conceptions and attitudes. Its ideas on law and State, on work and the right to the fruits of one's labour, on social order and ethical obligation all, more or less, pervaded the thinking of men like Locke, Grotius, Althusius, Pufendorf, and even men like Thomas Hobbes and Adam Smith. But, at the same time, a change in thinking occurred beginning with these and other thinkers and writers. The most important of the changes to occur took place in the realm of the motives for acting in the world, and this was due to the de-personalising of God that the newer Enlightenment thinkers were beginning to insist upon in general. The God of Calvinism was replaced by a god in the image of Deism. God lost his personal character; hence, the emphasis the Calvinist put upon his will had succumbed to a view of God as simply a first cause of a mechanical sort. A type of god was retained in this sort of understanding, but the real action was transferred to Nature, now a realm of self-operating power and order no longer viewed as directly dependent upon the active and present will of the God who made and rules over it. Man looks to Nature with its impersonal laws, rather than to a personal God above and over Nature, to set the terms of life and society. Such knowledge is believed to derive from a rational investigation that no longer stands in need of faith or the authority of Scripture.

This thinking at the religious level then came to reshape the motives for human actions in the world. Instead of being governed by a theology of work as a necessary religious duty in the service of God, man's thinking, under the command of an impersonal Nature, turned to a more subjective and immediately experiential explanation for action. Duty to serve was changed into one of a calculated reason for acting; that is, one looked only at the *use* that one's actions could have for oneself. The only acceptable criterion was that of the impact that acting had upon one's immediate experience—did it produce or alleviate *pain*, and did it enhance *pleasure*? The increase of pleasure or the decrease of pain now acted as the motive for all man's activity in the world. Utility had trumped duty as the underlying attitude of work and its achievement.

With these and other changes men also began to reassess

why they formed societies and what the social order ought to achieve. The principle of utility was extended everywhere, to cover every social structure, including especially the State. If God is absent from the world, he is perhaps a power not to be relied upon. Man must look to himself, and the State is the greatest source of worldly power available to him. If his motives have now become utilitarian, then the State's existence must be viewed in terms of its usefulness to man—that is, as useful so far as achieving the goal of reducing pain and increasing pleasure. The law in this thinking was no longer a check on behavior, but a powerful instrument to create the satisfactions that man insisted upon pursuant to his utilitarian motives for acting in the world. In everything, man began to see that the world existed for himself and his experiences; he did not exist for God, his will and glory. The modern world as a result has seen a dramatic rise in brutal and uncouth behavior, along with a propensity for uncivilised

self-indulgence. At the same time, it shows a dramatic decrease in the value that man places upon work and productive accomplishment. Man has become inwardly directed rather than, like the Calvinist, outwardly directed. This has helped to foster a world in which the preoccupation with psychology and man's inner self-awareness has replaced the sense of responsibility and self-sacrifice that was so much a part of the attitude of early Calvinist activism.

Calvinism was clearly a civilising force. We could go on, but it is fairly obvious what has been the consequence of the demise of the Calvinist spirit in our modern culture. With its loss we have come to witness the increase of a new barbarism that, so it would seem, has not yet spent itself or reached its ultimate conclusion. Still, we may appreciate the positive good the Calvinist spirit did accomplish once and reflect that if it were to be at all revived, we might surely expect to see its positive impact once again. *C&S*

WHEN AUTHORITY IS ABUSED[†]

by Peter Moore

Introduction

CHRISTIANS who submit to the Word of God know the principle of Biblical submission to God-given authorities in their various spheres, i.e. citizens to civil rulers (Rom. 13:1), wives to husbands (Eph. 5:22), children to their parents (Eph. 6:1), employees to employers (Eph. 6:5), church members to the elders etc. It is clear from Scripture, that God himself has graciously instituted these authorities for our benefit and good (Rom. 13:4). However, what is seldom stressed, is that the authority given by God is not an unconditional authority void of boundaries and responsibilities, e.g. can a husband do what he likes with/to his wife, because she is under an obligation to obey him? All people who have been given authority, in whatever form, have the responsibility of exercising that authority under God's ultimate sovereign rule, set out in his sovereign Word.

The Dilemma

Many Christians seem incapable of even perceiving the very real tension that exists when they are expected to submit to a law or command that has been issued by someone occupying a clearly biblical position (father, civil authority, etc.), but is obviously a violation of God's Word. In the modern world, this conflict happens frequently, and Christians are often caught in a real predicament of what to do. The Scriptures, church history and our own age, record numerous examples of such dilemmas. What would you do in the following situations?

- The year is A.D. 150 and you live in Rome. Roman law permits the father, as supreme ruler in the family, to throw out an unwanted baby onto the street to die. Christians pick up these babies and care for them. The State forbids this practice. You walk past a house on your way home and find one of these babies and know Christians in your church who would willingly look after this child. What do you do? To even touch the abandoned baby would be to break the laws of an authority ordained by God.

- The year is A.D. 298 and the Roman emperor, Diocletian, is in full force with his persecution of the Christian church. He comes to your house and asks you if you have copies of parts of the Scriptures. You do have such copies. What do you answer?

- The year is 1941. You are a Christian living in German-occupied Holland. You are approached by a Jewish family to hide them from the Nazi's persecution. To hide them would be a crime. What do you do?

- The year is 1944. The Nazi's are doing a door to door search looking for Jews. They ask you if you are hiding any Jews or are aware of anyone hiding Jews. You happen to know that someone in your street is hiding a Jewish family. What do you answer?

- The year is 1955. You live in Alabama, USA. You are a black woman coming home from a hard days work and are sitting in the front section of the bus, which is legal as long as no white person is required (by crowding) to sit next to you. By city law, blacks are not allowed to sit parallel to whites. The bus fills up and the bus driver tells you to get up and go to the back of the bus because a white person needs the seat. What do you do?

- The year is 1983. The State is using its army to

[†] This essay was originally published as *Muse Time Paper 34* by Reason of Hope Ministries in Mutare, Zimbabwe.

suppress opposition and is committing unprecedented human rights abuses and genocide on the civilian population because they do not vote for the ruling party. What do you do?

- The year is 2001. The civil authority fails to uphold laws, which are supported by the Word of God and lawful rulings by the Supreme Court. What do you do?
- The year is 2001. The State will not uphold law and order, one of the prime functions of the state (Rom. 13:4), but instead sponsors and encourages violence and lawlessness. What do you do?

The Response

What is certainly needed in each of these situations is clear thinking, faith and wisdom to respond appropriately. God is the God of all reality and records numerous examples in the pages of Scripture showing lawful, righteous protests against civil, as well as other, authority. Often this resistance is recorded in the better known Sunday school stories. However, we seldom recognise the very real issue of civil disobedience inherent in each account. The disobedience recorded in each instance is not of the same nature or intensity. There are examples of progressive steps of biblical resistance, dependent on the nature of the godlessness in question. How are we as Christians meant to respond? We are to obey God's Word, as the final and inerrant authority, rather than authorities, although authorised by God per se, who are fallible and errant.

First, there is the case of an individual who knows that a law is wrong, and who protests verbally. The person obeys the command, but voices their objection to the command. Joab did this when David insisted that the people be numbered in a census. Joab, realising that what David had in mind was an affront to the sovereign care of God, voiced his objection to this command before continuing with carrying out the task. Clearly God was displeased—70 000 people died of a plague as a result of David's command (2 Sam. 24:25). Joab, who recognised the sinfulness of the command and protested, was spared. Joab was faced with a dilemma when David gave him the command. On the one hand he was called to obey the head of State, and on the other hand, such "obedience" would be a breach of the first and greatest commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. This form of resistance probably describes the most frequent way in which we object to something we believe is wrong.

Another way of responding to an order, which contravenes the Word of God, would be to disobey the order and voluntarily suffer the consequences. This is what the three young men did when Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to worship the image or suffer death in the fiery furnace (Daniel chapter 3). This is what the disciples did in the book of Acts when they were commanded not to preach the gospel (Acts 5:29).

Another option would be to warn the civil ruler of the evil being ordered and then flee the geographical jurisdiction of that civil authority. This is what Elijah did when he warned the king about God's coming judgement of drought, and then hid in the city of Zarepath in the nation of Sidon (1 Kings 17). Many Jews did this in Germany in the period leading up to the Second World War and fled to America.

There are other examples where the protester refuses to comply with the law and adopts the strategy of deception rather than flight. The best examples of this in the Bible are the deception of Pharaoh by the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1), the deception of Jericho's authorities by Rahab (Joshua 2) and the wise men failing to obey Herod's command to bring him information on the birth of the Messiah, Jesus, at the time of the nativity (Mt. 2:9–12).

Another possible response to a command which breaches God's law would be for a group of people, as a corporate assembly, to intervene and tell the ruler that he will not be allowed to implement the judgement arising from a bad law. The Israelites did this when Saul wanted to execute his own son, Jonathan, for having eaten honey during a battle (1 Sam. 14:43–46).

Yet another Biblical response, would be for a God-anointed protester to warn the representatives of the people of the error of the law and to challenge them to rebel against that lawfully constituted authority. This is what Elijah did when he directed the assembled lawful representatives of Israel to kill the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah after they had been clearly shown to be false (1 Kings 18:40).

My final example of Biblical resistance, is when a God-ordained *lower official* joins with other *officials* and revolts against unlawful central government after a series of official protests. This is what Jeroboam did when Rehoboam, Solomon's son, imposed harsh new taxes which may have taken the form of forced labour. Jeroboam created a new nation by seceding from the unified kingdom (1 Kings 12:19).

Conclusion

From the above examples of differing and more serious forms of resistance it is clear that righteous resistance, authorised by God, is not *only* to happen when the preaching of the gospel is forbidden. Resistance in some shape or form is required *whenever* God's law, as has been revealed in his Word, is challenged (2 Cor. 10:3–5).

It's important for Christians to realise that there will always be godless laws as long as there are godless people. The issue is the degree of godlessness and what we are going to do about it. Doing nothing, and rather concentrating on the congregation's program for the year, is tantamount to turning a blind eye. Sure, it often takes real courage to resist evil. Contrary to popular belief, life does not become easier when you become a Christian. The world (and sadly, often fellow believers) will not cheer when you attempt to be light and salt in this world. We need to ask God for courage to stand for the truth contained in his Word and wisdom to determine the most appropriate way to do so. One thing, however, is inescapable, and that is that God expects us to diligently stand for truth, justice and righteousness. Liberty requires responsibility. The Irish patriot and judge, John Philpot Curran (1750–1817), very much aware of the relationship between one's liberty and responsibility, warned his own nation with these words: "It is the common fate of the indolent to see their rights become a prey to the active. The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance; which condition if he break, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt."

Think about these things! C&S

OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORICO-CRITICAL METHOD[†]

by *Bertrand Richenbacher*

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the objects of the *Corpus Christi* broadcasts was to put forward the opinions of a host of theologians on the significant facts, or what were assumed to be such, of the life of Jesus. In order to do this several specialists from the main Christian denominations were interviewed by the programme makers, and then what they had said was brought together into a more or less coherent whole. Without going into the detail of the various broadcasts, it is possible to pick out two factors. The first is not surprising: the various contributors clearly did not all share the same degree of intellectual honesty and scientific and theological competence. The second factor is more interesting: despite these differences there is discernible a fundamental unity, which may be likened to what T. S. Kuhn, calls a *paradigm*. This is how he defines this term:

By choosing it, I mean to suggest that some accepted examples of actual scientific practice—examples which include laws, theory, application, and instrumentation together—provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research . . . Men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice.¹

What lies behind this article is the idea that the contributors to *Corpus Christi* all function within the same paradigm, that they “keep to the same rules and the same norms” in their practice, which they claim to be *scientific*. What we are talking about here is the historico-critical paradigm.²

The purpose of this article is to put forward a critique of this system of thought. It will not be a matter of putting a particular theologian in the dock, or pondering over a particular technical aspect of this method, but of approach-

ing it from a systematic perspective; it is true that the historico-critical method is a system of thought which forms a relatively coherent whole. In order to do this, we will focus on three aspects of the critical paradigm—its presuppositions, its principles, and its deontology, that is to say its professional code of ethics.

Our main source is an article by Jean Zumstein which appears in the recent *Dictionary of Protestantism*.³ This article displays many qualities. Recent, and written by a recognised theologian, it cannot be dismissed as outdated or on the fringe. Not only that, but its composition is very clear and its content characterised by great intellectual honesty. The important elements of the paradigm thus emerge with a clarity to which we have scarcely become accustomed in those embracing the historico-critical method.

The presuppositions of the method

In the review which precedes his exposition of the method's presuppositions, J. Zumstein puts forward a number of factors which are worth considering. Let us notice two of them. The first concerns the philosophical origins of the paradigm: “From an epistemological point of view, the historico-critical method is a fruit of the humanist and rationalist tradition which crystallized in the 18th century.” The second important element is concerned with an aspect which is too often left out of the critical plan: “The polemical dimension of the project is obvious: the interpretation of Scripture is snatched away from the power of the Church; from now on its prerogative is to be read in a way which claims to be autonomous, rational and critical.” It is good to be reminded of these two elements in a day when those holding to the historico-critical method are happy to be regarded as the spokesmen for a science which is perfectly pure and objective.

Then J. Zumstein puts forward the three major presuppositions of this method:

The first concerns the concept of reason, and may be formulated thus: reason, taken as an autonomous and normative authority, is the instrument for investigating history and human thought. The

[†] Translated from the French by Peter Beale. This article, which was previously published in *Contrepoison* (No. 5) of the Cahiers de la Renaissance Vaudoise, was first given as a conference address on 4th August 1998 at the Summer Seminary of the Vaudois League.

1. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1962] 1970), p. 10–11.

2. As such, despite what many claim, the historico-critical method is not moribund. The other approaches to the text conveyed by postmodernism question not the validity of the method, but its hegemony. Whether it is on television or in journals addressed to the public at large, the critical paradigm remains by far the major point of reference on the subject of exegesis.

3. Pierre Gisel (ed.), *Dictionnaire du protestantisme* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995). The article mentioned is entitled “Birth and deployment of the historico-critical method.” It is to be found on pages 124 to 128 of the dictionary, in the article devoted to the Bible.

second presupposition relates to the concept of reality: present reality is a fact which, in its entirety, is accessible to a knowledgeable person and which, as far as history is concerned, allows the reconstruction of the past by means of analogy. The third presupposition has to do with the definition of the concept of history: history is a homogeneous temporal parameter designating the past, the different units of which are linked together by means of causal analogy. This means that: (a) only those phenomena introducing an analogy into our actual perception of reality can lay claim to historicity; (b) the explanatory scheme which links the events together is that of causality.

The philosophical content of each of these presuppositions is very tightly packed, and it is no good trying to uncover the whole of it. We will limit ourselves to drawing out the main lines of thought, all the time remembering that we are indeed dealing with presuppositions, that is to say philosophical *a priori* assumptions which precede every historico-critical process.

The first presupposition, our author informs us, concerns the concept of reason: “reason, taken as an autonomous and normative authority, is the instrument for investigating history and human thought.” That man examines his past and looks into his own thinking by means of his reason, no one would question. The likening of human reason to an “autonomous and normative authority” is already distinctly less innocent, and propels us into that “humanist and rationalist tradition” which was mentioned previously. A good example is to be found in certain passages of the “First Preface” to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which Kant appeals to the “tribunal of reason” to lay down the law on the whole of human knowledge.⁴

Etymologically, *autonomous* reason is reason which is *a law unto itself*. This presumed autonomy goes hand in hand with the normativity of which J. Zumstein speaks. In speaking of normative reason, the author states concisely that reason *is* and *constitutes* (establishes) the norm. From this perspective, reason must therefore be considered as a judge without obligations to anyone, in that he is autonomous and establishes norms on his own account. That such is the first presupposition of the method will be no surprise to the informed philosopher of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the latter will find in it a clear exposition of the classic rationalist doctrine.

Nonetheless—or consequently?—This first point is open to severe criticism, from both philosophical and theological viewpoints. Speaking philosophically, it rests upon a theory of knowledge called *idealism* which, in brief, stipulates that in the act of knowing, the subject has pride of place. Thus, reality is given its structure by the human spirit and not vice versa.⁵

The first presupposition of the method is also untenable theologically, at least from a perspective claiming to be Christian. Indeed, from this perspective it is God alone who is perfectly autonomous (thus classical theology speaks of the *aseity* of God). Man does not evolve within an indifferent and neutral universe, because he lives under the gaze of his

Creator. His entire existence, and by the same token his use of reason, is duty bound to be *theonomous*, that is to say *prescribed by the law of God*. The latter is revealed in Creation as well as in the Scriptures. The autonomy and normativity of human reason is thus always in second place to and dependent on the profound structures of divine revelation. The traditional understanding of human autonomy is therefore radically opposed to that conveyed by modernity: whereas the second is the claim of absolute liberty by man thinking he is God, the first consists of a liberty dependent on respect for the norms instituted by God.⁶ That is why we prefer to abandon the term *autonomy* and replace it with that which is more familiar today, *theonomy*.

The second presupposition of the historico-critical method is concerned with the concept of reality: “Present reality is a fact which, in its entirety, is accessible to a knowledgeable person.” This second presupposition is an extension of the first. Here, the key element consists in the fact that present reality is accessible in its “entirety” to the person who knows it, that is to say to rational man. Having made the assumption that human reason is an autonomous and normative authority, the historico-critical paradigm postulates that the extent of rational (or rather rationalistic) jurisdiction is as great as that of reality. Here we come across again, in slightly different formulation and context, the celebrated Hegelian identification of the real world and the rational world: “Everything rational is real, and everything real is rational.” The corollary of such a presupposition is that everything which goes beyond nature—the supernatural—cannot be real, at least in the current sense of that word.

Such a presupposition will be somewhat surprising to someone not initiated into the historico-critical paradigm. How can a theologian claiming to be Christian adopt as a presupposition the idea that there is nothing in reality which is not accessible to our reason? What, then, is to be made of the miracles, prophecies, and the very centre of the Christian revelation, the incarnation and resurrection of Christ? What is to be made of such events if one thinks in terms of a system which excludes *a priori*, on philosophical grounds, the possibility of a genuine irruption of the supernatural into nature? The answers given by our rationalist theologians are manifold, and for the most part are conspicuous by their vagueness and awkwardness. Without going into detail, suffice it to say that these answers all deny what lies at the heart of the Christian faith, the knowledge that the God who is transcendent, on no account capable of being encompassed in the reality of this world, is equally a God who is immanent, intervening really and objectively in his creation.

At this point it is helpful to open a parenthesis. Our insistence throughout this article on the real and objective character of God’s interventions in his creation is not accidental. It is made necessary by a critical phraseology which, in an attempt to hide the disastrous consequences of this method for the faith, sows confusion in people’s spirits. Anxious not to shock the faithful by being too blatant in their treatment of the evangelists as liars and the Gospel narratives as naive fabrications, the critical theologians attempt to locate themselves on another plane, which is in their opinion much more spiritual. Thus the miracles, the fulfilment of prophecies, the Resurrection, are no longer *historical facts*;

4. Emmanuel Kant, “Preface to the first edition (1781)” in *Critique de la raison pure* (Paris: PUF [Quadrige], 1944), p. 6f.

5. We cannot develop this point here. Those who are interested are advised to read the work by Roger Verneaux, *Épistémologie générale* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1959). Let us state simply that it is no surprise to see Kant defending both autonomous and normative reason and an idealistic epistemology. The two things are in effect intimately linked.

6. Pierre Courthial develops this point very well in his work *Le jour des petits recommencements* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1996).

they are the *realities of faith*. If a particular event understood in its rich symbolism moves me, then it opens up for me an access to truth which is much more certain than a mere reflection on its historical character. The attempt is a clever one, but it goes counter to the message of the Gospel, which is a message of the incarnation, of the direct and objective intervention of God into human history. Thus one moves from an objective conception of the truth to an approach to it which is subjective.

The third presupposition of the historico-critical method relates to history:

History is a homogeneous temporal parameter designating the past, the different units of which are linked together by means of causal analogy. This means that: (a) only those phenomena introducing an analogy into our actual perception of reality can lay claim to historicity; (b) the explanatory scheme which links the events together is that of causality.

Although it is presented in technical terms, the idea behind this presupposition is relatively simple. The second presupposition postulated a world hermetically sealed from any supernatural intervention; the last applies this *a priori* principle to history.

In passing we may note that the corollary (a) illustrates well the self-sufficiency of our moderns: because they are incapable of recognising the supernatural in present reality, they come to the conclusion that it does not exist. As for corollary (b), the author should have specified that he has in mind only immanent causality (which does not go without saying). In the historico-critical paradigm, God can never be the cause of an observable event. Thus two fundamental criticisms may be raised against this last presupposition: the first, which we have already mentioned, is that such an *a priori* approach excludes on principle any miraculous and supernatural intervention by God in the history of the world. The second is that it presents history to us as a “homogeneous temporal parameter.” This is a claim which is opposed to the Christian conception of history, according to which it is not a homogeneous parameter, but the gift of redemption. Thus, not all the past periods of history have value: some (the Exodus, the time of Christ’s incarnation) see God acting in a particular way, while others are less “eventful.”

If we had to restate briefly the three presuppositions we have just mentioned, we could do so as follows:

1. Human reason is the measure of all things.
2. Everything rational is real, everything real is rational.
3. It has always been so.

It is right on the one hand to insist on the fact that we are dealing with presupposition, with elements which are fundamental to the historico-critical paradigm. On the other hand one can put forward a Christian reformulation of these rationalist presuppositions:

1. God is the measure of all things. The *autonomy* of human reason is secondary and derivative: correctly interpreted, it should be restored to the concept of *theonomy*.
2. Natural reality does not by any means exhaust the concept of what is real. It is just one aspect of it.
3. It has always been so.

The principles of the method

After tackling the question of the presuppositions of the method, J. Zumstein presents its principles to us. He puts up

seven of them, but for the sake of conciseness we will look at only two. Here they are:

(a) The biblical text forfeits its *status as sacred text*. It is just like any other text of the world’s literature, and therefore may be read according to the methods used in the literary and historical sciences (Semler’s axiom) . . .

(c) Historico-critical enquiry is guided by a concern to *establish historical truth*. It is a matter . . . of establishing (if necessary, in opposition to tradition) the original meaning of the texts.

Let us deal briefly with these two principles.

The first principle is sufficiently clear not to need an explanation; however, its content gives rise to two comments. First let us note that from an historical point of view, such a principle places the historico-critical paradigm at odds with the tradition of the Christian Church. Note again the polemical dimension of the critical project. Without going into detail, we may mention the fact that the Church of today, whether Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, has been careful to recognise the human (natural) and divine (supernatural) origin of the Bible. This classical approach makes possible the use of methods which stem from the human sciences (the text is fully human), but in a spirit of humility and submission (the text is fully divine, and therefore sacred).⁷

The second comment stems from the fact that apart from the question of its legitimacy, this principle is inapplicable. It assumes a reading of the biblical text which is to be “according to the methods used in the literary and historical sciences.” A short aside on the nature of the work of the historian is necessitated by this assertion. An important principle in history is that of *sympathy*. In brief, it stipulates that the historian is to believe what is told him by the chronicler whom he is studying, unless he has strong reasons, coming for instance from more reliable sources, for doubting his statements. An historian who called a testimony into question not for strictly historical reasons, but as a result of *a priori* philosophical principles, would encounter legitimate opposition from his contemporaries. These, however, are the sort of *historians* that one meets in the corridors of theological faculties. It is in fact the presuppositions of the method which forbid them to account as genuine any objective intervention of transcendence in the reality of the world. Thus a problem arises when coming into contact with certain passages in the Gospels. Here are two examples:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. (Luke 1:1–4)

This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. (John 21:24)

7. See the article by Jean-Marc Berthoud, Lire les “Écritures avec Augustin d’Hippone, Thomas d’Aquin et Jean Calvin.” On the question of the double origin, human and divine, of the Bible and the consequences for exegesis, read the book by Paul Wells, *Dieu a parlé* (Quebec: 1997).

There is no need to be an expert to see that the evangelists Luke and John claim an historical character for their work. The problem for the critical theologian is that these two Gospels contain many accounts of miracles, of fulfilled prophecies, and . . . *horribile dictu*, even go so far as to speak of a bodily resurrection of Christ. That is, events which, let us remember, are *a priori* impossible in the historico-critical paradigm. These theologians can, therefore, not even contemplate that what the evangelists say may be true (at least when they record miracles), and are bound, in their exegesis, to mobilise a speculative and fanciful arsenal to circumvent the evidence of the text. Because of their rationalistic presupposition, the critical theologians are unable to consider the biblical text “according to the methods used in the literary and historical sciences,” because they are *a priori* unable to give credence to the testimony of the evangelists, an attitude which no secular historian would allow himself to adopt in his own field.

The second principle of the historico-critical method we wish to consider is the following: “Historico-critical enquiry is guided by a concern to establish *historical truth*. It is a matter . . . of establishing (if necessary, in opposition to tradition) the original meaning of the texts.” Once again, the naive reader will not fail to be astonished: does not the historical truth of the texts follow on from their obvious meaning? When an evangelist speaks of a miracle of Christ, is he not dealing with historical truth? Such a reader would need to be stripped of his naivety, by our experts. In fact, because things were *a priori* incapable of happening as recorded in the Gospels, the truth, the true, must be found elsewhere; the task of the critical theologian will be, therefore, to find it in “the original meaning of the texts.” In doing this, he will be in a position to say what message the biblical writers intended to pass on by means of such a symbolical account (for example the resurrection of Christ), why they have embellished some event (for example the multiplying of the loaves), why some incident has been added subsequently (for example the institution of the Lord’s Supper), etc. Each theologian has his own explanation, which is rarely compatible with that of his colleague. The only point universally accepted (within the confines of the paradigm) is that the obvious meaning of a text cannot take account of historical truth.

The natural consequence of such an approach is the founding of a new form of gnosticism, a hidden wisdom to which only the initiated are allowed access. The grand masters here are the critical theologians who have the means to declare who was the real Jesus, what really happened in first-century Palestine, which parts of the Bible are reliable, etc. To remain outside this paradigm is tantamount to demonstrating one’s obscurantism. In her excellent book *Les Évangiles sont des reportages*, Marie-Christine Ceruti-Cendrier develops a similar thesis from St Irenæus of Lyons’s *Adversus hæreses*. She mentions certain methods which are common both to the gnostics opposed by the famous Church Father and to our scholarly exegetes. Here is her presentation of one of these methods:

Distort the texts; invent some new ones; remove from the Gospels or Epistles any passages they do not like; say that it is necessary to find the deep meaning, since the obvious meaning is only symbolic; . . . make use of a vocabulary which is pompous and abstruse, or pseudo-scientific; . . . claim that since the Gospel was written following an oral tradition, it is necessary to give greater credence to what the gnostics say about it than to the evangelist whose name

is at the foot of the letter . . . affirm everything with the authority of one who was present at the scene.⁸

The initiatory character of the historico-critical paradigm partially explains, in our view, the astonishing success of *Corpus Christi*; how many viewers have not put up with the off-putting character of these broadcasts in the hope of eventually coming to know the *real story behind it all*?

The study of the presuppositions and some of the principles of the historico-critical method enable us to see that we are dealing with a system of thought which is coherent in its rationalism. Leaving provisionally open the question of its compatibility with the Christian faith, we move on to its code of ethics.

The code of ethics of the method

According to Jean Zumstein, there are three elements which characterise the ethics of the historico-critical method: intellectual honesty, freedom to research, and the insistence on rationality and clarity. These three points are of particular interest insofar as they allow one to appreciate the extent of agreement existing between theologians within the critical paradigm and those outside it.

The first ethical characteristic is that of intellectual honesty. The author develops this point thus: “By this one must understand the attitude which consists in accepting every result which had been established as a result of investigation, without excluding any *a priori*.” This intention is praiseworthy and should be acknowledged. But sadly one notes that its field of application is limited to the critical paradigm. What it amounts to is that one will accept any result established by investigation, provided that it does not call into question the rationalism of the method. Thus, with regard to the record of a particular miracle, any exegesis will be accepted except one: that which proposes that things actually happened as stated by the evangelist. We have seen that the *a priori* philosophical principles of the method forbid one to consider that supernatural events might be real; so no result is excluded *a priori*—except one: that what the Gospels say may be true. If that was the case, it would then be necessary to change the presuppositions and the system of thought, uncomfortable operation though that would be.

The second element in the critical code of ethics is freedom of research. This is what Zumstein has to say about it:

In concrete terms, that means that there is no question which could *a priori* be excluded from the study being undertaken; no method, whatever its basis, which could be forbidden; no document which could be hidden from the attention of the researcher. Freedom demanded by and for scientific research cannot be separated from tolerance. It implies both the acceptance of the co-existence of differing opinions and the inevitable risk of error.

It is possible for this principle to be applied within the scope of the critical paradigm. But for those who decline to enter into this perspective, another principle prevails: that of the *totalitarianism of the eiderdown*, or the *ensorship of ignorance*.

8. Marie-Christine Ceruti-Cendrier, *Les Évangiles sont des reportages* (Paris: Téqui, 1977), p. 324. We invite those who have been put off by the harsh character of these assertions to read this work. They will find many examples which illustrate perfectly every one of these assertions.

This totalitarian censorship can take two forms, either silence or scorn. The theologians who do not keep to the critical paradigm are allowed to pursue their studies, but one must be careful not to take their work at all seriously. At best, one gives the impression of being unaware of them, as is the case in *Corpus Christi*, where the viewer is served up with dates for the production of the Gospels which are strongly disputed, without even mentioning the fact that there is a debate on the subject. At worst, these studies are rejected without any argument other than that they are desperately obscurantist. Thus the second ethical principle of the historico-critical method is only really applied with regard to those whose ideas are developing within the paradigm. The others do not even deserve to be considered.

Finally, the third element of the code of ethics is the insistence on rationality and clarity. This principle may be formulated as follows: "Like every other activity of human culture, the religious phenomenon is susceptible of being formulated in language which is clear, reasoned, and accessible to the intelligence." Against all forms of religious irrationalism, we adhere entirely to this formula. However, it seems to us that it cannot be applied in any proper way to the historico-critical method. In the first place, this is because rationalism is the enemy of rationality. From too great a desire to deny any possibility of an objective intervention by God in human history, the critical theologian finds himself obliged to build up speculative constructions which owe more to theological fiction than to a reasoned use of reason. It is pathetic to see certain participators in *Corpus Christi* getting tangled up in the wanderings of their own imagination, all in order not to be obliged to accept the natural meaning of the Gospel texts.

The second reason why it seems to us that the formula mentioned above is not applicable to the critical paradigm lies in its lack of clarity. It is in fact an unusual thing to come across a text in historico-critical literature which is as clear as that of J. Zumstein. Usually the reader has to face up to clever theologico-rhetorical subtleties the aim of which is probably to allow *things to be said without actually saying them*. Here is an example, taken from among many, found on page 72 of M.-C. Ceruti-Cendrier's book. The author quoted by

Mme Ceruti speaks of the resurrection of Christ: "We have never said that it did not happen, but only that it may be read in the light of this explanation." The *Corpus Christi* broadcasts abound in such devices, which end up noticeably obscuring the clarity of the words.

CONCLUSION

These remarks on the historico-critical method, based on its presuppositions, its principles and its code of ethics, naturally lead us to raise the question of its compatibility with the Christian faith. Can a method which is overtly rationalistic and atheistic contribute something to the Church? Our reply is negative.

First, it would appear that this method is more a *pseudo-science* than anything else. It effectively takes no account of the distinguishing qualities of its object of study, despite that being a basic tenet of all true science. By appealing to rationalistic outlines in speaking of what surpasses reason, the adherents of the paradigm leave one hardly knowing what to think. Is not theology "discourse having God as its object"? How can one say anything concerning God while excluding *a priori* the possibility of any tangible and objective manifestation on his part?

It is, in our view, possible to go further and state that the historico-critical method is not only a pseudo-science, in the way that one might speak of a relatively innocent fabrication, but rather an *ideology*. Such factors as the affirmatively closed character of the system and the obstinacy shown by several in their defence of rationalistic presuppositions give support to such a thought. Thus, this paradigm would not have appeared by chance in an eighteenth century marked by a tidal wave aimed at emancipating Western man from any Christian heritage; it would have drawn its substance from it and would in the end be nothing other than an aspect of the radically anti-Christian ideology of the Enlightenment. The scientific veneer worn by the critical theologians is bound to crack; in the clear light of day it will then appear as nothing but rebellion against the real and objective authority of God the Creator over his creation. C&S

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KARL POPPER'S SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE

PART III: A CHRISTIAN-THEISTIC CRITIQUE

by Colin Wright

Science was invented once. It was suppressed by Christianity, and it was only reinvented or, rather, recovered, with the rebirth of Platonism in the Renaissance.

—Sir Karl R. Popper

INTRODUCTION

LET'S begin by recalling what we said about the significance of scientific pursuit and scientific knowledge for our modern era.

Science—or natural science to give it its proper title, for not all science is natural science—is the hallmark of our times. The general perception of science is that here, and here alone, we have the embodiment of the truth about our universe. The scientific method—whatever philosophical debates there may be about its nature—is unquestionably regarded as the only true path to genuine knowledge. Here we have what the ancient Greeks styled *theoria*—true insight into the nature of things, accessible only to the intellectual. All other knowledge is mere *nomos*—convention—or *doxa*—opinion. It has no substance in reality, only in human sensation.

Even among those who denigrate science this view of science is accepted as true. Post-modernists reject its absolute claims not because they have found a better way but because it stands in the way of human autonomy. It is a reactionary movement of thought. Its response to science is encapsulated in the Gordon Dickson sci-fi novel, *The Necromancer*, alluded to in Part I. A world run almost without human intervention by computers is seen as dehumanising, and Walter Blunt's Chantry Guild sets out to save the world by destroying the computerised Super Complex. When the Guild finally succeeds in its task Blunt announces his agenda in no uncertain terms:

“Until the final moment of destruct!” His voice rang through the room and out into the night. “Until Man is forced to stand without his crutches. Until his leg irons are struck off him and the bars he has built around him are torn down and thrown away! Until he stands upright and alone, free—free in all his questioning, wandering spirit, with the knowledge that in all existence there are only two things: himself, and the malleable universe!”

This response to the spirit of natural science is not a new one. It may be detected as early as Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* in 1436. It is the outcome of the basic problem of the modern humanistic movement that began with the Renaissance. First man seeks to establish his freedom and his superior dignity and control over nature. Mirandola's *Oration* was the manifesto for this movement. Basically it is a secularisation of the Christian concept of man as the image of God. Rightly seeing man as lord over creation, it nevertheless perverted and distorted this biblical idea by eliminating God from the equation, thus constituting man as absolute master and creator rather than as a vicegerent under God. However it was not until the time of Voltaire that the true motive of this movement was openly proclaimed in his cry of “No God. No Master.”

Now, this movement was bound to incur a divine judgement in time for its attempt to oppose and deny the God-created structure of things. For in establishing himself as free of the world that he sought to dominate, man had perforce to posit an external world that was thoroughly subject to him—a mechanistic world that he could control. It was not long before the implications of this became clear: If the world was a giant impersonal mechanism, man too was subjected to its iron grip and therefore not free at all! In the sixteenth century Thomas Hobbes saw this implication and embraced it wholeheartedly. In our own time it may be clearly seen in B. F. Skinner's behaviourist philosophy, which reduces all life to mere chemical reactions and in Jacques Monod's impersonal and pessimistic universe ruled by pure Chance and Necessity.

Whichever way modern man turns, he is faced by the overwhelming presence of science. And his response seems to be in many ways an imitation of the one he often professes to have towards women: You can't live with them, and you can't live without them.

Christians are not exempt from the pressure of this powerful cultural force. To the extent that they deny this, to that extent are they gripped by it. I would suggest, and this is the reason behind this long introduction, that the very real tragedy of modern Christianity is its failure to recognise just how gripped it is by humanistic thought forms. Deep down Christians are convinced that science must be true, that its

conclusions are *facts* and based upon facts. And this is deeply disturbing for them. For these “facts” are inimical to their Christian faith. How can you square Genesis 1 with the evolutionary hypothesis or the Big Bang theory of origins? The consequences for soteriology are insurmountable. And this does not affect merely the unthinking portion of the Christian constituency. No less a Christian scholar than Dr Albert Wolters—who has produced some excellent work on biblical worldview and creation—finds it impossible to reject what he calls the scientific “evidence” that so contradicts what he believes Genesis 1–11 to be saying.¹ This breeds a schizophrenic Christianity that can only maintain its sanity by either abandoning Scripture or by abandoning creation, that is, by becoming pietist and retreatist.

Pietism or retreatism is the preferred option of most who seek to adhere to Scripture. Their call is to abandon the world, to concentrate on the “spiritual.” Abandoning the world means ignoring human culture, and in our time that means abandoning science.

But this is cowardice in the face of the enemy. It is to admit that the universe is not what God made it but what the scientist makes it. It is to admit that Christianity has no answer to the unbelieving and hostile theories of the modern scientist.²

If we are to carry out our biblical task as a Church to disciple all nations and to prevail against the gates of hell in all its strongholds in human life and culture, then we have to face up to the problem of natural science. Its domination of our culture makes this imperative. That is precisely why I am writing this series on Karl Popper. We must understand what is going on if we are to engage it and defeat it.

Excuses will not do. Scientists have turned their subject into an esoteric art in the hope of keeping out the troublesome influence of their opponents. Too often we have accepted their stance as valid. Is it not the general consensus even among Christians³ that modern science is much too difficult for the non-professional to dabble in? That we had best not involve ourselves in these things but merely accept what the scientific community hands out as some sort of new Gospel, ignoring it but not denying it if it crosses our path?

Sure, there are many technicalities in all academic disciplines that require a good deal of previous training to understand. But not understanding the mysteries of the internal combustion engine never stopped anyone from expressing an opinion on the quality of a particular motor

car. Furthermore, is it right that scientists should be allowed to carry on their work without any reference or accountability to the society they profess to serve?

POPPER’S ENTERPRISE AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE INDUCTIVE PROCESS

For reasons already mentioned and some to be further investigated we feel it necessary to reject much of Popper’s enterprise as inimical to the Christian faith. No doubt Popper would have agreed with us on this, but not for the reasons we propose. He saw Christianity as radically opposed to science and to rational enquiry. See the motto we have put at the head of this essay. We, on the other hand, see Christianity as the only valid and workable basis of a genuine scientific enterprise. We would maintain that without Christianity natural science would never have got off the ground. Indeed we concur with the Roman Catholic philosopher of science Stanley Jaki that science has made a number of attempts to get off the ground in history and all have manifestly failed apart from the one occasion in which it arose in a Christian culture.

But if at many points we differ with, and are highly critical of, Popper’s philosophy of science, yet there are aspects of his teaching and writing in which we can concur and to which we are favourably disposed. In the first place, there can be no doubt that he was right to draw attention to the limitations of the inductive process in the development of scientific theories. It was certainly a common element of science teaching throughout the twentieth century that natural science begins with observations (facts) and proceeds by drawing logical conclusions from them. Let us look at a couple of experiments—since experiments are the stuff of this kind of science—to illustrate this.

Experiment 1: We examine as many cats as we can discover and note that they all possess four legs and a tail. From this we may rationally conclude, so the theory goes, that all cats have four legs and a tail. From a host of “facts” the logical conclusion is a general law that applies to all cats: they have four legs and a tail. We could conduct further experiments to confirm the truth of our law by examining cats in different countries and on different continents. The results (as far as I know) would convince us that all cats have four legs and a tail. Observation of facts leads to right conclusions.

Now science, we are told, works on this principle. Examine the facts; draw a conclusion. But in this case would there not be a nagging thought in the back of our mind that perhaps we had not examined enough instances? When would enough instances be achieved? Was not one single experiment sufficient—even in Popper’s eyes⁴—to confirm the truth of Einstein’s predictions of the effect of gravity on light? And as for our experiment, a journey to the Isle of Man would convince us immediately that our so-called logical conclusion had been wrong all along, for *Manx cats do not have tails*.

4. The chief significance of this experiment for Popper was not that it proved Einstein right but that the capability of the theory being refuted by observation existed. Nevertheless, reading between the lines of Popper’s account, it is clear that he accepted this one instance as proving a particular theory of light to which he afterward gave credence—against his own theory of science.

1. See his *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). But alongside a most perspicuous analysis of the teaching and significance of Genesis 1–11 in a lecture (now on audiotape) on *Creation or Evolution?* given at Dordt College in 1994, Wolters adds a most worrying acceptance of so many “conclusions” of the modern science of origins.

2. This is a generalisation. Many Christians retreat simply because they are weaponless. The institutional church—the clergy—has coerced them into believing that they are not up to the fight even where it is possible to have one. It stems from their own lack of resolve to do other than act as functionaries within a hidebound bureaucratic establishment. To maintain its hegemony the clergy needs a docile and ignorant congregation and in this programme has been eminently successful. My remarks are aimed at those who ought to know better.

3. How often, when I have suggested preaching should be about more than a few pious platitudes, have I been put off by clergymen with the insulting response that their congregations are too feeble-minded to understand any of the major commonplaces of biblical theology! As if the Bible was written only for them! This was the overt admission of Rome in the sixteenth century as it tried to ban the English Bible. Now it seems to be the position of the Protestant clergy too.

Experiment 2: Suppose we want to establish the signs or characteristics of life. In the Seventies I taught junior science to thirteen-year olds in which this was part of the enforced curriculum. The textbook stipulated that there were seven signs of life, seven characteristics that are clear to human observation, though we need not concern ourselves at this stage about what they are. If we observe these seven characteristics in any creature then it is alive.

So I proceeded to ask the class whether they agreed with this. They asked how the conclusion was drawn in the first place. On this the textbook was clear: we examine all living things and look for characteristics that they have in common and that do not pertain to non-living things. Easy. Everyone agreed. Until I asked: But how did you know *before the experiment* how to divide all things into the two classes of living and non-living things? It could not have been by looking for the seven signs of life since we did not know of them until *after* the scientific experiment had been carried out. Even thirteen-year olds can see that such science is phoney. Incidentally, we might make the same criticism in experiment 1: how did we know that all the cats we examined were *cats* and all the things we rejected as *not-cats* were in fact *not-cats*, before we scientifically discovered what all cats had in common?

Nevertheless this view of science—largely of Baconian origin—persists, at least in popular thought, and especially in the schools. It is not as if Popper had come up with anything new in the 1920s. He but expressed a conviction found elsewhere in history, though he expressed it with a new clarity and vigour in a day in which a variant of the Baconian viewpoint was powerfully propagated by logical positivism.

However, Popper was not content to stress the *limitations* of induction. He wanted to excise it completely. Induction does not exist; that is his solution to the problem. In one sense Popper was right. Induction is not a *logical* principle in the sense in which, say, *modus ponens* is a logical principle.

The latter is a logical *law*. It establishes an unbreakable relationship between what may be called cause and effect. As an example we might give:

If all men are born equal then slavery is unjust
All men are born equal
Therefore slavery is unjust

More generally this may be expressed as the law:

If A is B then A is C
A is B
Therefore A is C

If we accept the first two statements in each argument, the third cannot possibly be denied, except by way of obstinacy. This is a *law for human thought*. We cannot ignore it without the most severe repercussions, and generally we do not consciously or deliberately do so.

But in everyday life we do in fact use induction *of a sort* as a matter of course. From the fact that the sun has risen every morning as far back as we can remember we conclude that it will rise tomorrow. From the fact that our having driven the car to work in the past led to the need to refill the fuel tank we conclude that we shall have to buy more fuel if we drive to work again next week. The reader will be able to think up an infinity of such conclusions drawn from perceived past regularities in his experience.

Philosophers of science who debunk the principle of induction have to find a way of explaining our behaviour and, even more importantly, of justifying it. Just how can we predict the future if the regularities of the past offer no indication of the future?

But then Christianity does not begin in the void as humanism does. Humanism accepts no authority; all facts must be constituted by man himself. All standards, all laws, all norms, are *determined* by man, *not discovered* by him. The only regularities acceptable to the humanist are those he can establish for himself. Denying any principle of induction is tantamount to denying him any ability to establish any regularities.

The Christian is not in this position. He does not begin with nature but with God. He does not begin with scientific experiments to determine the truth about his world; he begins with the authoritative Word of God in special revelation. The facts are for him what they are because that is the way God has constituted them. God is a God of order; creation is a creation of order. All creation exists, as Dooyeweerd has so masterfully explained and as Thomas Aquinas also did long before him, in a state of being-subject-to-God's-law. Whether these laws are known explicitly is immaterial. The Christian begins with the idea that all things are at all times totally governed by the law of their creation. The universe has no random features at all, whatever the appearances. It took a Christian—Blaise Pascal—to discover the mathematical laws of probability. Why? Because only someone who already accepts that the universe is not random could begin to look for a pattern in the apparently-random. Indeed, probability theory has no meaning other than on the basis of a totally ordered foundation. Einstein's rejection of quantum theory was based upon a commitment to this ultimate orderliness of creation—"God," he said, "does not play dice with the world."

SCIENCE AS AN ENTERPRISE OF RATIONAL ENQUIRY

We might also make favourable comments regarding Popper's spirit of rational criticism. Doubtless Popper was quite right to reject the dogmatism of much that sheltered under the name of science in Twenties Vienna. And if he was suspicious of, and turned against, Christianity because of its blinkered and dogmatic spirit, even here too we have to admit, blushing, that all too often this has been true.

True, there are elements of Christianity about which one has to be dogmatic. They are not open to question. They come with all the force of divine authority, never better expressed than in the words of the fourth century Lactantius:

For it was not befitting that, when God was speaking to man, He should confirm His words by arguments, as though He would not otherwise be regarded with confidence but, as it was right, He spoke as the mighty Judge of all things, to whom it belongs not to argue, but to pronounce sentence. He Himself, as God, is Truth.⁵

But all too often Christians have assumed they have such a divine authority to peddle and impose all their petty

5. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, Book III, Chapter 1, in *The Works of Lactantius*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871, 2 vols) vol. I, p. 140. Unfortunately, Lactantius is all too often only remembered, and that with derision, because he believed in a flat earth. He also did much to wipe out chattel slavery and astrology in Europe for a thousand years.

doctrinal quirks, both in religion and science. Opinions are elevated to dogma and put on a par with the most exalted Christian truths. Christian debate is all too frequently reduced to mere anathematising of those who differ from us. The vast majority of Christians never change any of their denominational allegiances in their entire life. What they begin with is regarded as ultimate truth and beyond debate. Not long ago an opponent of “common grace” informed me he had never read any literature supporting that view. I had asked him what he had read on the subject since he was fiercely opposed to it. When I further asked him why he had not sought to inform himself of what proponents of common grace really believed (instead of what he thought they believed) by reading their arguments, he replied “I never read heresy.” I informed him as politely as I could that he was the most vivid exemplar of a bigot.

Popper may rightly be somewhat excused for thinking this spirit to be inherent in the Christian way of life. Not completely excused, for he ought to have examined the faith itself, not just those who professed it. But the same spirit is rife in “scientific” circles too. And Popper was equally opposed to it here. There is, for instance, only one reason why modern evolutionists hold to the direct descent of all mankind from a single pair. It is that to suppose otherwise is to admit that all men are not equal. There could be no guarantee that all men had evolved to the same degree. Indeed, it would be almost certain that they had not.

Popper is right. Human conjectures—and even more so human *assertions*—ought to be scrutinised, debated, and critically examined before acceptance. We need to remember our limitations of intellect and our fallibility even within those limitations.

At one point, and that a crucial point, we have to part company with Popper however. For he was not prepared to accept that human beings ought to accept *anything* on authority. Man must be the final judge as to what anyone may say, be he God or man. If Christianity could be rationally deduced, well and good; but authoritative revelation is out of the question.

Ironically, Popper takes a stance here that is entirely out of keeping with his viewpoint. If his assertion is correct, then it is wrong. Should he not have left the issue open to rational debate and criticism? He was not prepared to do that. He could not do so. His stance is part and parcel of his deepest “religious” commitments. If in some ways he displays far more humility than his humanist predecessors, he is nevertheless equally committed to the philosophical and religious arrogance of their starting point. His forbears believed that man was the measure of all things and that he could discover the truth. Popper also believes that man is the measure of all things; he just does not accept that his tape measure can measure as certainly or as accurately as theirs. Like them, too, he accepted without question the ultimate ontological reality and certainty of human logic.⁶

PROBLEMS WITH THE OBJECTIVE VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE

Popper divided knowledge into two realms—subjective knowledge and objective knowledge. Subjective knowledge

consists of the sort of knowledge most people are familiar with. It is what we claim when we say “I know that today is Friday” or, “I know that rain is cold and wet” or, “I know how to make apple pie.” Objective knowledge on the other hand consists of sets of statements that are quite independent of anyone “knowing” them subjectively. In particular scientific theories are objective knowledge. Popper discounted subjective knowledge and its study as not worth considering; he was primarily interested in objective knowledge. Indeed, he went so far at times as to deny that genuine knowledge existed except as objective knowledge.

His reasons for this were complex, but perhaps of particular significance is his statement that “all science, and all philosophy, are enlightened common sense.”⁷ He does not see theoretical science as a form of knowledge distinct from subjective knowledge; he sees it as pure knowledge as distinct from unreliable knowledge. The reader will hopefully be reminded of a similar distinction made by the early Greeks between *theoria* and *doxa*, i.e. between the *genuine enlightenment* of the philosopher and the *opinion* of the common man. Both are what moderns refer to as *elitist* viewpoints.

Popper’s respect for objective knowledge is suspect in at least one sense. The reader may remember the “thought experiments” Popper devised to explain its significance and establish its reality. For those who have not seen the second instalment of this series we will repeat them:

Experiment (1). All our machines and tools are destroyed, and all our subjective learning, including our subjective knowledge of machines and tools, and how to use them. But libraries and our capacity to learn from them survive. Clearly, after much suffering, our world may get going again.

Experiment (2). As before, machines and tools are destroyed, and our subjective learning, including our subjective knowledge of machines and tools, and how to use them. But this time, all libraries are destroyed also, so that our capacity to learn from books becomes useless.⁸

If we consider Popper’s insistence, as essential to genuine scientific pursuit, on the need for intellectual humility and rational debate, we cannot but be staggered by the hubris he displays in foisting these beliefs upon us as self-evident truths. Nothing could be more dogmatic and contrary to the spirit he professed to be animated by. In his logic of scientific discovery, as he terms it, no theory or statement may be accepted that has not passed under the severe scrutiny and testing of the scientific community.

But when did either of these “experiments” ever take place? They are pure conjecture. And they are pure conjecture designed to support a preconceived theory of knowledge. Not only have they never been justified (a process Popper inveighs against anyway as unscientific) but there has never been an attempt to falsify them either. But Popper needs them to support his theory.

Indeed we would want to question seriously whether they are true at all. We would also want to assert that as

he do it for no reason? If the former, was he not presupposing what he wanted to prove; if the latter, why insist on it? That we could, or should, begin with an authoritative explanation from the world’s Designer and Creator was just too much for him to even consider.

7. K. R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) p. 34. Italics in the original.

8. “Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject,” in Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 107–108.

6. I once asked a university lecturer why he always insisted on beginning with logic or reason. Did he have a *reason* for doing so, or did

theories they already presuppose what they are intended to prove, namely, an objective theory of knowledge.

The chief assumption, or should we say, presumption, of Popper's first "experiment" lies in his claim that with nothing other than information in books and human intelligence a society that had entirely forgotten—*subjectively*—all the science and technology of yesterday, could quite easily rebuild what it had lost. It completely ignores—or rather, perhaps, denies—the fact that man is only what he is in terms of his culture. Without the subjective side we would cease to exist. Popper wants to elevate man above and beyond the reach of history; the most remarkable feat for an evolutionist!

Let us suppose such a catastrophe. We have forgotten all that we knew. Popper has to suppose we still speak our native tongue. But what would that be? As we no longer have any knowledge—*subjective* knowledge that is—of motor cars, flush toilets, sliced bread, stainless steel or television and radio, how could we possibly have words for them? The libraries would be meaningless. Science, and civilisation, are not *just there*.⁹ They are the product of a long historical development. And in saying this what we are saying is that *man*, as we know him, is the product of a long historical development. For science and civilisation only exist as they exist in human society. They are aspects of a community of real flesh and blood people.

Let me give a simple example. A small child is taken into a shop and, spotting the shelves of brightly coloured sweets, starts putting some into its mouth (as small children will). Is the child stealing from the shop? Well, I think we should first ask, Does the child even know what a shop is? All of the knowledge we take for granted has come to us through the process of cultivation in history.

If we could take a man from the Stone Age,¹⁰ teach him our language, and put him back in the Stone Age with a complete library of twenty-first century scientific knowledge, he would not be able to make sense of it at all. Knowledge is not objective or abstract in this sense. Libraries, books, are not knowledge but expressions of the knowledge of a society. That is why we find it difficult to understand what we read from former, especially distant, generations and cultures. We are puzzled by their choice of topics of significance. We are bemused by their interest in things that to us are seemingly so illogical we would be surprised if our children even gave them a passing thought. Take even a well-known *Christian* book like Augustine's *City of God*: people are puzzled by his introduction of so many subjects and ideas that seem to bear no relation to the theme. But they were evidently of vital import to Augustine. They were part of his culture and the warp and woof of the way of thinking in his culture. How often have scientific ideas cropped up in past history that we now regard as significant and self-evident, but were at the time tossed aside as not worth consideration. Scientific knowledge, at the least, is cultural. It can only be truly understood by someone of the culture in which it was discovered.

9. There is no better account of the tendency of modern man to ignore this point than that of José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1964). See esp. Chapter 12, "The Barbarism of Specialisation."

10. I am assuming, as I believe all Christians should, that earlier man was not less intelligent or gifted than modern man; that he was in fact as much man as modern man. His state was due to historical factors not biological or evolutionary ones.

At one point, Popper claims that "The special thing about human knowledge is that it may be formulated in language, in propositions."¹¹ This is manifestly not so, and only Popper's devout commitment to a positivistic philosophy could blind him to the fact. Indeed, was he not aware of the magisterial work of Michael Polyani that had thoroughly debunked any such idea? Take even an elementary bit of subjective knowledge: the colour red. How could you possibly express this, that is, define it in a proposition that would make it recognisable to another person?¹² How could you explain pain in a proposition, without relying on the fact that the person you are explaining it to has also experienced pain? In fact, most subjective knowledge is just not expressible objectively, in Popper's terms, at all.

PROBLEMS WITH FALSIFICATIONISM

No doubt there is an element of truth in Popper's falsificationism. Certainly, any statement that claims to speak about a whole class of things can be shown to be false with one simple exception. One single black swan completely demolishes the idea that all swans are white. Certainly, no amount of gathering instances of a type will confirm absolutely that all in a class are of that type. We might investigate all known swans for a million years and discover they are white, without any certainty—logically speaking—that absolutely all swans are or must be white. Whatever practical conclusions we might draw are one thing; nevertheless there is no logical principle that enables us to infallibly deduce from our countless observations that all future observations will be the same.

In this Popper was correct. Correct, too, to inveigh against a scientific methodology that taught the opposite, that acknowledged a logical inductive method. If Popper was not right about what science was, he was certainly right about what it was not.¹³

Was not Popper correct, too, to draw attention to the need for some demarcation principle between a genuine science and a pseudo-science? Was he not correct, too, in discerning in much of the supposed science of his day, particularly psychology and political theory, a good deal of unwarranted claim to scientific respectability?

Nevertheless, falsificationism—the idea that a genuinely scientific theory may be distinguished from a pseudo-scientific theory by the possibility of falsifying it—does not hold water. It may be a *necessary* condition, but it is certainly not a *sufficient* one. In his perceptive article *What is a Science?*—written from a Christian perspective—Martin Rice has shown that virtually any "theory" can be put into a falsifiable form, including one containing all the declarative statements of the Bible.¹⁴

To say, as Popper does, that "A theory which is not

11. K. R. Popper, *Realism and the Aim of Science* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. xxxv.

12. It will not do to define it as the reaction to light of a specific wavelength. This does not say anything about redness at all, only about a theory of what causes it. Redness exists objectively, for sure, but *only* in relation to a subject who experiences it.

13. Get round these negatives if you can! But it is certainly good Augustinian language.

14. See Martin A. Rice, Jr., "What is a Science?" in D. F. M. Strauss & Michelle Botting (eds), *Contemporary Reflections on the Philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000) pp. 239–270.

refutable by any conceivable event is non-scientific”¹⁵ is fine; but it does not follow that “. . . the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability.”¹⁶ It may be that in this Popper was committing a faux pas rather than expressing a genuine and well-thought out aspect of his principle. Perhaps we are too hard on him. But the point needs to be made. Nevertheless, it appears to us that Popper did place a great deal of stress upon the principle of falsifiability.

In his *Logic of Scientific Discovery*—his first published book—as in all his later work, Popper makes the process of attempting to falsify scientific theories the be all and end all of scientific activity. Scientific life is about making conjectures about interesting problems and then trying to test them. *Methodology* is all that concerns Popper. He never asks the important questions. He is permanently talking about what we should do with the statements or theories of the scientist, but he is stunningly silent about their origin.

It is not enough simply to say that the scientist puts forward tentative solutions to interesting problems. What, for instance, makes one problem interesting and another uninteresting? And why are these problems *problems*? Should not problems be rated, too, according to their *significance* for something or other? For me, my bank balance is an interesting problem, indeed a pressing one, but I hardly think that that is sufficient to constitute it the object of scientific theorising. Popper never distinguishes these things because they do not fit into his severely restricted schema. All that concerns him is the preaching of his methodology of falsification and the denunciation of inductive logic. His attitude is concisely summarised in the following passage early in the *Logic*:

The initial stage, the act of conceiving or inventing a theory, seems to me neither to call for logical analysis nor to be susceptible of it. The question how it happens that a new idea occurs to a man—whether it is a musical theme, a dramatic conflict, or a scientific theory—may be of great interest to empirical psychology; but it is irrelevant to the logical analysis of scientific knowledge. This latter is concerned not with questions of fact (Kant’s *quid facti?*), but only with questions of justification or validity (Kant’s *quid juris?*). Its questions are of the following kind. Can a statement be justified? And if so, how? Is it testable? Is it logically dependent on certain other statements? Or does it perhaps contradict them?¹⁷

So Popper has single-handedly, and without any clear justification other than his own imposed restrictions, excised from science a whole host, if not the majority, of interesting questions and problems. His philosophy of science is so restricted that it has little at all to say about the nature of science or scientific activity.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Popper insists,¹⁸ “. . . truth is correspondence with the facts (or with reality); or, more precisely . . . a theory is true if and

only if it corresponds to the facts.” Popper’s concern with Truth is rather odd.¹⁹ No doubt he saw nothing odd with it at all, but for those of us who keep reading his assertions that the truth is unreachable this concern is puzzling.

Popper’s philosophy is based on a fragment of Greek wisdom, already quoted but worth quoting again. He mentions it on numerous occasions and quotes it verbatim often:

But as for certain truth, no man has known it,
Nor will he know it; neither of the gods,
Nor yet of all the things of which I speak.
And even if by chance he were to utter
The Perfect truth, he would himself not know it:
For all is but a woven web of guesses.²⁰

Part of the reason he wishes to major on objective knowledge and discount subjective knowledge is that he does not see any reason to investigate how we can subjectively arrive at certainty in knowing. All knowledge is uncertain; that is, all subjective knowledge. It is but a “woven web of guesses” or conjectures. We will have to keep this in mind as we look at Popper’s theory of truth. For a *theory* it is, though Popper always deftly skirts around this fact and avoids its implications. Popper unhesitatingly acknowledged his debt to Alfred Tarski,²¹ from whom he derived his theory of truth, quoted above.

But we have to ask to begin with: is this theory of truth *scientific*? Is it a genuine scientific theory at all? Does it meet the criterion for such a theory, that is, is it possible to establish a set of circumstances under which it could be tested with a view to falsifying it? Popper never raises this issue, and I don’t know of anyone who has ever confronted him with it. He made no effort himself to put it to the test.

He ought to have done so. For Tarski’s theory was not just any theory; it was an old one and a disputed one. It was the correspondence theory of truth. Clearly there was good reason to subject it to severe scrutiny. Had it not in fact been falsified by the failure of the Ptolemaic astronomical theory, in which the theory *did* correspond to the (observed) facts? It might be argued that the Ptolemaic theory did not correspond to all the facts, only all the known facts. However, if a theory has to correspond to *all* the facts, not just the *accessible* ones, then it is of no use anyway since we *never* have all the facts in this sense.

But even more worrying, is it even *logically coherent*? Lots of statements and theories correspond with the facts but are nevertheless not true. An early theory I heard was that thunder was the result of a giant knocking down the beanstalks. Early generations of Chinese had a theory that eclipses were the result of a giant dragon taking a bite out of the moon. Why should these theories be any more fanciful than currently accepted ones? And as Popper insists, our theories too are only guesses as to what might be going on; we can never know the truth about what is really happening in nature.

19. Initially Popper had been uneasy about even mentioning truth let alone incorporating it in his philosophy of science. Tarski’s work converted him. See the first two paragraphs of “Philosophical Comments on Tarski’s Theory of Truth” in Popper’s *Objective Knowledge*, p. 319.

20. Quoted here from the motto to Chapter 1 of *Realism and the Aim of Science*, volume 1 of the *Postscript to the Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Routledge, 1996)

21. Alfred Tarski, *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

15. K. R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (London, Routledge, 1963) p. 36.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 37. My emphasis.

17. K. R. Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Unwin & Hyman, 1980) p. 31. This is a translation of the German *Logik der Forschung*, published in Vienna in 1934. It did not appear in English until 1959. It is still in print and now has a three volume supplement—the *Postscript*—larger than the original book.

18. K. R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) p. 44.

Popperians might retort that we have now *established* the cause of eclipses. I would respond: The current theory was accepted long before it could be established and, in any case, a Popperian cannot establish a theory he can only falsify it.

A further complication arises. For Popper, all facts are theory-laden anyway. So the theory determines what the facts are! From this standpoint you cannot possibly justify establishing the truth of a theory by its correspondence to the facts.

On a different tack, Popper sees the scientific enterprise as one of *trying to get nearer* to the truth. He says: “Although it [science] can attain neither truth nor probability, the striving for knowledge and the search for truth are still the strongest motives for scientific discovery.”²²

Popper’s science is thus a search for truth, and scientific theories are refined with a view to getting nearer to the truth. Even if we cannot arrive at the truth we can nevertheless, it seems, get nearer to it with our better theories.

There are numerous problems here, not the least being, What is the point of pursuing an impossible end? But there are far more important concerns. Popper’s process of *getting nearer* is suspect, and his concept of *nearer* is even more suspect.

As to the former, he claims that we get nearer by making better guesses. Better guesses are defined. They are those which stand up better to severe tests and attempts to falsify them. There are two problems with this assumption.

Firstly, he has not made good his case, and I do not believe he can, that statements which stand up to more severe tests are more truthful. Could not a very well constructed bad explanation stand up much better than a poorly constructed bad one—even a poorly constructed *good* one—in any court? Indeed, could it not conceivably stand up better in court than even a well constructed good one? Is not this task the very *raison d’être* of the court-room lawyer?

Secondly, Popper supposes that his better theories explain more facts, but history shows that theories are often replaced by theories that explain *less* facts. The Ptolemaic theory explained more than the Copernican theory by which it was supplanted; it just did not explain so neatly *from a mathematical point of view*.²³ And if the atomic theory of matter is better at explaining the facts than its predecessors why was it itself supplanted by poorer, less truthful, theories between the time of Democritus (circa 430 B.C.) and John Dalton (1766–1844)? On this point Kuhn’s arguments against Popper seem irrefutable. Kuhn argues from a wealth of historical detail—he was an acknowledged master of the historical detail—that one theory is supplanted by another because it is preferred for many, including social, political and religious reasons, not because it is more objectively truthful.

As to the latter, what can Popper mean by getting nearer to the truth? This spatial analogy has two very important criteria, *neither of which Popper supplies*. The first is an actual knowledge of the truth. The second is a means of measuring the distance between the thing that is near and the thing it is near to. How can we measure nearness without knowing

that which nearness is related to? If I wish to compare the relative nearness of two bees from their hive I have to know where the hive is. I also have to have some standard by which to measure the distance from the hive of each bee. Similarly, if I wish to discover which of two statements is nearer the truth I have to know what that truth is and I have to have a means of determining which of them is nearer to it.

But Popper not only does not know the ultimate truth, *he claims that he never can know it*. Even if he made a guess or conjecture that was absolutely true he would have no way of knowing that it was the truth. His scientific enterprise is scuppered even before it begins.

TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE

What shall we say then in support of a specifically Christian pursuit of science? And what can we learn from the work of Karl Popper, either by way of rejection or acceptance?

Firstly, and fundamentally, we must reject the idea that it is possible to begin with Popper’s dogmatic commitment to human rationality. Dogmatic, because neither he nor his school have ever subjected it to criticism, nor will they. Without doubt a genuine scientific pursuit will require of us that we engage in open and honest rational enquiry and debate. Our critical faculties must be exercised to their full. But they do not offer us a starting point. And every attempt in history to begin with man’s reason has ended in failure. From a Christian perspective we can say that this is the inevitable judgement of God upon man’s failure to recognise his limitations and the law of his creation. As we have already pointed out, even the step of positing reason as our starting point cannot be sustained without first pre-supposing reason as the starting point.

In fact, man never does begin by pre-supposing his autonomous reason. Behind this claim to the priority of autonomous human reason lies a religious starting point that determines what man thinks of himself, of the universe, and of his place in the universe. Reason is not neutral: it is wholly conditioned by this religious starting point. Jacques Monod, for instance, in his famous little book *Chance and Necessity* begins from the dogmatic position that the universe is through and through deterministic, governed absolutely by purely impersonal and inexorable laws. What happens, happens according to no plan; all is purely fortuitous, the product of chance.²⁴ This perspective assumes it can begin with a neutral reason but in effect nullifies itself. If that is all there is, then there is no reason. Monod did all his science, expounded all his theories in the light of this starting point. It governed the questions he asked as well as the answers he gave. All science is like this.

The failure of such a philosophy to give a coherent picture of the world has led to the modern impasse, to *post-modernism*—a movement that at least has had the good sense to recognise that the party is over. The modern humanistic “religion” that began with such hope at the Renaissance and spawned modern science²⁵ has led to nothing but pure

22. K. R. Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Unwin and Hyman, 1980) p. 278. But is this not grounds for remonstrating against the search for truth, not encouraging it as Popper does?

23. This was the import of much of the early justification for the idea of a heliocentric universe as opposed to a geocentric one. The mathematical model of the Copernican universe is far simpler than the Ptolemaic.

24. This antinomic duality of pure chance and pure determinism lies at the root of Monod’s thought.

25. I am aware that many of our readers will interject that it was Christianity that spawned modern science. Doubtless it could not have got off the ground without the Christian culture in which it was born. But it is thoroughly humanistic and, like humanism itself, the result of

relativism and pure nihilism. There is no longer any reason for anything.²⁶

What, then, should be the Christian's starting point? There is no doubt in my mind that this starting point is a specifically Christian world-view, and one encapsulated in the Dooyeweerdian phrase: *Creation, Fall, Redemption*. But if the reader believes that this formula begins with an immanent principle let it here be stated without hesitation or equivocation that this formula really and truly expresses at its deepest level a very definite and particular view of the nature of God, not discounting his relation to the cosmos. A formula that does not genuinely contain more than its few words superficially point to has become nothing but a slogan. We do not intend this.

Creation, Fall, Redemption implies a particular, indeed a distinctive, view of the origin, nature and meaning of the created universe. A Christian science must in any case begin with some view of these things, and we would maintain that such a science must be a *biblically-based* science. To begin anywhere else other than with the authoritative and final declaration of the Creator is totally unsatisfactory. To begin with the results of a "neutral" scientific enterprise is to put the cart before the horse; it is to concede that the cosmos itself provides its own answers to the riddle of its being and meaning. It is to concede that one aspect, at least, of the cosmos itself can act as an explanation of the cosmos.

The Christian message of the Bible denies from cover to cover that such a thing could be. Whilst reason, mathematics, physics, or even psychology, may *unfold* certain aspects of the cosmos or at the least explain it in terms of a particular but limited perspective, there can be no doubt that Holy Scripture posits no final explanation of the universe within the universe itself. Only God himself—the Creator—has that kind of unicity. He alone is the unifying principle of all things for—as Scripture affirms—*Thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created* (Rev. 4:11). This Authorised Version translation could be more aptly translated as: *You created all things, and they both were created and now continue in existence solely in terms of your will*. There is nothing within creation to which all things may be referred, but ultimately all things must be referred back to God their creator, who made them, as he himself claims, in six days out of nothing.

This then must be our starting point. We cannot agree with the position of those within the Creation Research community—however much we admire their zeal to promote creation in opposition to evolution—who begin with creation itself and profess to deduce the origin and nature (and thus meaning) of creation from the created structure itself. It is *revelation* which establishes the nature of the origin of all things, not science. This is what the writer to the Hebrews meant when he asserted that it is by *faith*, not knowledge (*scientia*) that we come to know these things. Science must take this *as its given*, its starting point. Creation Research takes as its starting point the given of human rationality and an uncritically-presupposed scientific method. All things are referred back to these as that which gives them meaning; they themselves (rationality and scientific method)

a sick parody: the attempt to secularise Christianity, i.e. to strip it of all connection with God and to replace him with man.

26. Just look around at our modern Western culture and then try and tell me that this is not so.

are beyond the scientific enterprise, beyond discussion, beyond criticism. In effect they become the God who gives meaning to everything.

On the contrary the Bible speaks of Jehovah—the I AM—as the Bringer-Into-Existence of all things. Everything that exists is called into existence from non-existence by his will. All exists according to the plan that is in his mind. It all finds its unity and coherence purely in him. Unless we understand this we cannot begin to understand the cosmos, for we understand neither its purpose nor that which makes it a whole. And because God's plan cannot be reduced to the level of human creaturely understanding, it is ultimately impossible for us as creatures to have the absolute understanding of creation which modern science craves.

This brings us neatly to another point. A Christian scientific pursuit must abandon any claim to arrive at *the knowledge of the essence of things*. Our knowledge, at least our conceptual knowledge, must always be *analogical*. No one has expressed this more forcibly or with more clarity than Cornelius Van Til (though he has hardly done it comprehensively in relation to natural science). Thus:

Christian-theism says that there are two levels of thought, the absolute and the derivative. Christian-theism says that there are two levels of interpreters, God who interprets absolutely and man who must be the re-interpreter of God's interpretation. Christian-theism says that human thought is therefore analogical of God's thought.²⁷

What Van Til means by God being an interpreter is simply that he gives or proclaims the meaning of creation. As the Creator, according to whose plan all things came into being, he is able to give the absolute or ultimate meaning of things. Not that he gives it in the sense of conveying it to man (at least not in its wholeness for man is constitutionally incapable as a creature of grasping it), but in the sense that he decrees that thus it shall be. Genesis 1 is perhaps the best example of this. All creation, as it comes into existence, does so purely as the result of God speaking its nature. Nothing can exist but that which he defines. Its existence and its meaning are given together and inseparably in that one Word-Act, that is, the Logos (Jn 1:1—Word) in whom all creation finds its coherence (Col. 1:17).

Man is not able to do this. He cannot impute meaning to things; the meaning must first be provided by the Creator. Man's interpreting can therefore never be absolute. Nevertheless, he may legitimately seek to *discover* and articulate the meaning of facets of creation. Still this articulation cannot be done independently of God's prior articulation.

Modern science ignores this. Indeed, it seeks to obviate the priority of God's interpretation altogether. Hence it is not prepared to accept, for instance, that atoms and subatomic particles are analogous concepts, that is, ways of explaining what is going on without describing what is going on. Sure, most scientists will admit, generally, under pressure that such particles—miniature billiard balls—do not really exist but in practice they always think and speak as if they do. At least, the scientific community has always conveyed to the public mind that they should be regarded as physical realities. The analogical model is elevated to absolute reality, with dire consequences.

27. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1967) p. 47.

This is what we mean by saying that modern science seeks to arrive at *the knowledge of the essence of things*. But whereas Plato found his real essence in *ideal forms*, modern science finds them in *fundamental particles*. Problems with attempts to sustain this search have led inevitably to the idealisation of these fundamental particles. That is, they are no longer regarded as “material” in the common understanding of that term. They are as close to Plato’s real forms as one can get without admitting to it. In “knowing” these basic building blocks man claims to possess absolute knowledge of the structure of the cosmos. What he does not broadcast too widely however, certainly outside the scientific-philosophical community, is the raft of insoluble problems that follow in the wake of this claim to knowledge. Indeed, if one looks at the history of the development of atomic physics in the twentieth century what one finds is that theories changed not because of increasing knowledge but simply as a series of “fixes” to save the theory. Despite every effort to convey the contrary impression, Banesh Hoffman’s very readable *The Strange Story of the Quantum*²⁸ confirms this at every turn. Successive attempts to save the theory resulted in compounding the atom by increasing the number of fundamental particles. From the humble electron the number of fundamental particles has been increased to the point of embarrassment.²⁹ This scientific enterprise has not been about explaining and accounting for the facts but about explaining and defending an increasingly indefensible theory.

But whether as physical/material or as more ephemeral, these particles are regarded as the essence of reality and, knowing them, it is believed, we know the universe absolutely.

The reader’s attention must be drawn to the fact that these “particles” have never been *experienced*. All that is scientifically known about them can be reduced to mathematical relations. Modern science is highly reductionist. All reality is understood when its numerical relations are known. Popper too was always tempted by this agenda. He could not resist the temptation, in the second half of his *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, to express his theory in the language of a mathematical theory of probability.

A genuinely Christian scientific theory must, on the contrary, seek to do justice to the irreducible diversity within creation. It must recognise that from a human point of view, that is a creaturely point of view, it is impossible to arrive at a Theory of Everything. There is one; but it is known only to the Mind of God, for it is his plan for his creation.

Even in a non-fallen world the above would be true, and will be even after the Resurrection. However, the Fall introduced into the human condition another factor that the sciences must take into account. We can no longer regard the universe as being in a normal state. The Fall did not affect merely the ethical status of man himself but the whole structure of created reality. This ought to be obvious but it is often if not generally ignored and discounted. Nevertheless the Bible’s witness is exceptionally clear on the matter. Among other things the Fall affected the human race physiologically—consider the problems of disease, ageing and death, as well as the effect on women in childbirth (Genesis

3:16). These are most decidedly not natural facts but the direct consequence of sin. Consider, too, the effect on the biological world, especially as it relates to man. The ground is no longer as fruitful as it would otherwise have been as a result of the introduction of man’s disobedience (Genesis 3:17–19, but see also Leviticus 26:3–5, 20). Any country yokel can tell you that nettles are generally evidence of man’s presence; they are rare where man has not been cultivating the land. In the realm of geology we only have to consider the disruptive and dangerous nature of volcanoes, storms and floods. Humanistic thinking seeks to maintain that these are part and parcel of the natural order. Again, they cannot be understood outside of the facts of Scripture. Scientists every day build their theories of origins on the mistaken assumption that these and a host of other features of the created order are quite normal and natural. Because of this their accounts of that order are totally distorted and their enterprise proceeds apace along forbidden or futile paths. In his letter to the Christians at Rome the apostle Paul was fully aware of the cosmological impact of the Fall. He writes:

The whole creation waits expectantly for the unveiling of God’s children. For it has been reduced to a kind of futility; not of its own accord but as the direct result of him who did it, and who did it in the full expectation that one day he would deliver creation itself from its bondage to corruption and decay and make it a partaker of the glorious freedom of God’s children.³⁰

To conclude: It is not sufficient to baptise the humanistic scientific enterprise, to carry out the same task as the unbeliever but with the pretended claim that in doing so we are doing all to the glory of God. When we penetrate to the very root of what humanistic sciences are all about we begin to see that there is no way in which they can be accommodated into the Christian scheme of things. Humanistic sciences take as their starting point the quite dogmatic principle that the God of Holy Scripture does not exist. They may pay lip service to certain religious language but their attitude to the Sovereign Creator of Genesis 1 is radically hostile. If any “God” exists he must come within the parameters of their science, he must be no more than one object among many within the world that men can put under the microscope as any other in order to discover its nature.

Whilst we appreciate the well-meaning defence of modern science by Christians and their bold attempt to find its origins in the Christian spirit of the Reformation era, we feel obliged to demur from their conclusions. Granted, Christianity was *essential* if science was to succeed. History testifies abundantly to that fact.³¹ But it was the *secularisation* of Christian themes, and not the direct application of them, that infused the bulk of modern science in its early days during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But that is another story. *C&S*

29. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

30. Romans 8:20, 21. My own rendering. It is not meant to be a literal translation or, on the other hand, a paraphrase. I am simply trying to draw out the teaching on cosmological decay and restoration that is perhaps not so clear, to most people, in the AV.

31. Perhaps the foremost champion of this line of thinking has been Stanley Jaki, a Hungarian-born Catholic priest of the Benedictine Order, and Distinguished University Professor at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, USA. Unfortunately Jaki misconstrues much of the Protestant approach to science by dogmatically relating it to Baconianism in toto. Partisanship on all sides is a serious hurdle to a better understanding of the rise of modern science.

28. Banesh Hoffman, *The Strange Story of the Quantum* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1963). Hoffman was not a journalist-writer but a serious scientist of the highest order who was a member of the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton and worked with Einstein and Infeld.

ANOTHER DEFEAT FOR THE COMMON LAW TRADITION

by Ruben Alvarado

THE election triumph of the Labour Party under Tony Blair signals the solidification of the sea change in British public opinion that has characterised the last decade or so: the triumph of rootless social democracy, combined with the jettisoning of Great Britain's cultural inheritance. There is nothing so obvious to the foreign observer (for example, Peggy Noonan's article "There'll Always Be An England?" dated June 8th, at opinionjournal.com) than that Britain, in particular England, is busy remaking itself in the shape of its Continental "partners" in the European Union. In so doing it is distancing itself further and further both from the United States and its own common-law tradition. For the European Union is the contemporary world's visible expression of the civil law tradition, which is fundamentally at odds with England's and America's common law tradition.

The leading idea of the civil law tradition is absolute sovereignty, the creator of law; the leading idea of the common law tradition is limited sovereignty, the guardian of the law. There is a fundamental war brewing between the proponents of the two traditions; this war has yet to reach full consciousness, but it is gaining strength as the forces of globalism, spurred primarily by the European Union, increasingly exert influence to shape the world along the lines of the civil law tradition. This is particularly visible in the aggressive advocacy of radical human rights doctrine (in particular the death penalty), radical environmental doctrine, radical egalitarianism, abortion and euthanasia, etc. Currently only the United States is offering any resistance to these ideas; its once faithful ally has virtually succumbed to the overwhelming pressure from across the Channel.

This is Tony Blair's triumph and shame: he has eliminated Great Britain as a common law power. He claims to have united head and heart, to have bridged the gap between self-reliance and providing for oneself, and caring for society's ills. What he has in fact accomplished is to establish the ideology of the civil law in the hearts and minds of the British public.

This ideology in its current form has its roots in German romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Hegel was its premier exponent. Hegel argued firstly that the establishment of civil society, focussing on the nuclear family and property rights, was a great triumph; but secondly, that this self-same civil society was built on a contradiction, a conflict of interests, that could only be resolved through the intervention of the State. In essence, Hegel argued that civil society, being rooted in egotism and self-interest, could not maintain itself, but needed the correcting mechanism of the State, the ethical basis of which lay in the common good, the care for the whole, in short the ethical substance lacking in civil society.

This whole ideology is based in the fundamentally flawed idea that civil society is somehow unethical because self-interested, and requires the ethical balm of the common good, provided by the State. But this notion must be categorically rejected. Civil society is not inherently unjust; on the contrary, it exhibits the essential nature of justice without which society cannot exist. This justice is what Aristotle called commutative justice; it ensures that one gets what one has coming to himself, that no one gets who does not first give, that agreements must be kept, that every crime must be matched with a strictly equivalent punishment. Thus, to take a contemporary issue, the death penalty is not only *not* unethical but a *requirement* of justice, because the taking of a life requires the payment of a life in return.

Is there any hope for Great Britain? That depends on what residual basis is left for the common law tradition in the population of large, and what leadership there is that can nurture this base and expand it. This requires firstly an accurate diagnosis of the situation. The Conservative Party did not lose the latest election because they didn't match the Labour Party in expressions of fondness and adulation for the public sector, caressing and sheltering it like a mistreated child; they lost because they failed to make the case *for* civil society, and its virtues of self-reliance, devotion, accountability, responsibility, and charity, and *against* the fundamental injustice (stealing by majority vote) and decrepitude of that essentially Stalinist approach to dealing with societal ills. Public services are not the answer, and in fact are more often than not the problem, or at least an exacerbation of the problem. The government can't fix problems people create for themselves. The only *public* ministry capable of accomplishing that is the diaconate, as an extension of Word and Sacrament. And that means that the issue is between theocracy and dictatorship.

"This has to be realized: that the choice in the future is not between democracy and dictatorship, nor between neutrality or no neutrality, but between Christianity and paganism, or in constitutional terms: between theocracy and dictatorship. If one does not realize this and thus does not consider the only possibility (theocracy), then without any doubt it will be the other (dictatorship)" [AA Van Ruler, *Dream and Form* (1947), p. 64].

This is what is at stake in the current struggle between the common law and the civil law traditions. But first there must come a recognition of the problem: that at bottom the struggle is a religious one, between Christianity and paganism. Only now, the pagans no longer are smearing themselves with animal fat, but with the perfumed ointment of human rights and the like. *And we simply have got to understand this. C&S*

Book Reviews

ETERNITY IN TIME: CHRISTOPHER DAWSON
AND THE CATHOLIC IDEA OF HISTORY
EDITED BY STATFORD CALDECOTT AND JOHN MORRILL

Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997, hardback
214 pages including indices, ISBN, 0-567-08548-1

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN J. HAYHOW

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON (1889—1970) was the twentieth century's great historian of the mediaeval church and its age. I don't remember where I first came across him—probably in a footnote here or there or somewhere. However, the quotations and citations that recommended him led me later on to locate and then read first *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture: A Way to the Renewal of Human Life* (Routledge 1960), then *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (Sheed and Ward 1950), then finally *Medieval Religion and Other Essays* (Sheed and Ward 1935). These were all second-hand copies located in dusty second-hand shops in Charing Cross Road, or purloined from second-hand lists. As far as I am aware none of Dawson's major works are available in print at this time.

Dawson's fame and ability as a mediaeval historian, have brought about the publication of two symposia: firstly, *Christianity and Civilisation: Christopher Dawson's Insights: Can A Culture Survive the Loss of Its Religious Roots?* (The Proceedings of the Wethersfield Institute, Ignatius Press 1997). Then secondly, there is *Eternity in Time*, the subject of this review.

The first essay is a good introduction to the main features of Dawson's life and career, told by his daughter, Christian Scott. There follows a series of essays that discuss the Catholic idea of history and various aspect of Dawson's philosophy of history. Now, unlike other modern historians, Dawson saw the work of the historian as more than the mere mastery of technique: "the mastery of techniques of historical criticism and research although important will not produce great history, any more than a mastery of metrical technique will produce great poetry. For this something more is necessary—intuitive understanding, creative imagination and finally universal vision transcending the relative limitation of the particular field of historical study" (p. 13).

The reader may have noticed how modern historical writing tends to be are long, exhaustive, amply footnoted and minutely detailed. That modern biographies don't come less than 600 to 700 pages in length. While this does not mean that these works are without their use, the over-arching message is exhaustiveness. But technical exhaustiveness is not necessarily good history. History writing is more then technique. Understanding, imagination and a vision of the world are as vital to good biography as they are to good historical writing.

The central theme with Dawson is that he sees the religious roots of cultures and of history as indispensable to their being understood. This is brought out well by Fernando Cervantes (p. 64), who says this about Dawson's view of secularisation of the West: ". . . Dawson . . . saw in this process a sharp dualism between religion and culture which was at the root of

secularisation and consequently the devitalisation, of Western culture, and 'which was largely responsible for the separation of higher education from its spiritual roots in the life of people, so that our idea of culture has become a sublimated abstraction instead of the expression of a living tradition which animates the whole of society and unites the present and the past.'"

Dermot Quinn reminds us that Dawson "acknowledge(d) . . . the 'Kingship of Christ' as a principle of revolutionary importance for the political as well as the moral order" (p. 69). History is inescapably religious. This is where Van Tilian Reformed Christians can appreciate Dawson. Can a Protestant benefit from Catholic Dawson? I believe the answer is yes. The main reason is that Dawson sees history as religious to the core. For this reason his interpretation of the mediaeval period is an important one—even if we reject the manifestations of Dawson's Catholicism. All too often Protestants have under-valued the importance of the mediaeval period for our Western development. It is impossible to comprehend the Reformation without the background of mediaeval church and culture. A reading of Dawson would help to restore the importance of that period in our thinking as Protestants.

Dermot Quinn explains why Dawson is important as a mediaeval historian: "The importance of those centuries was 'not be found in the external order they created or attempted to create, but in the internal change they brought about in the soul of Western man.' Dawson loved Langlands' great visionary poem Piers Ploughman, thinking it 'the last . . . most uncompromising expression of the mediaeval ideal of the unity of religion and culture'" (p. 81).

The mediaeval period saw the growth and decline of a church and society imbued with the faith—even with all its weaknesses, misinterpretations and moral failings. Dawson's contribution was to draw our attention to the lessons of this important period in our history as the Church of Christ. These essays should spur us to go and read Dawson himself in dusty, worn second-hand tomes. C&S

HEAVEN IS A FAR BETTER PLACE
BY ERYL DAVIES

Evangelical Press (1999), ISBN: 0-85234-423-6

REVIEWED BY JOHN PECK

THE author of this book is Principal of the Evangelical Theological College of Wales, a widely travelled conference speaker, and author of several other books. His motive for writing the book is that he has found very little literature on the subject of "heaven," and therefore sought to fill a serious gap. In the process he seeks to take account of various conflicting theological ideas relevant to the subject.

He begins by seeking to demonstrate that in the Scriptures "heaven" is not just a state, but a place. It is the place where God

dwells, and from which he visits his creation in which he is omnipresent as its Creator and Sustainer, and to which he came in the person of Jesus Christ to die for the sins of mankind. It is also the future home of the elect, a place to which they go immediately at death to be with the Lord and see him as he is. It is a place from which unbelievers are excluded, being condemned to unending punishment in hell. Pursuing further biblical images, he has further brief chapters on heaven as the hilltop of life's climb, a sabbath rest, a city and a country.

Theologically the book is thoroughly within the orthodox Calvinistic-Puritan tradition, quotes almost exclusively from that tradition, and in terms of that tradition it is beyond criticism. It is, for the most part, simply written, with an unmistakable enthusiasm for the subject.

Nevertheless, the reading of it made me deeply unhappy, which was particularly disappointing because I had suffered a personal bereavement at the time, and hoped to be uplifted by it. To begin with, there is a preoccupation with heaven as a place, "not merely a condition or experience" (p. 51), followed by the repeated question, "where is this place called heaven?" We are led to expect an answer that will be important for our faith. But then we are told "it is a spiritual one, other-worldly and radically different" (p. 56), "not spatial or temporal" (p. 70). Well, I can't think of a place that isn't spatial at least! But then we're told that it is beyond our understanding, so the whole discussion is fairly pointless. It's not that Dr Davies is not conscious of metaphor; it's just that he seems unable to enter into it. There's no poetry here, and you can't talk about heaven without poetry.

One of the problems of the book is that it keeps adopting the style of the scholar, but doesn't fulfil its promise. There are citations of the original languages, but often nothing of significance comes of it. There is the use of technical language such as "imputation," "eschatological," "reductionist methodology," alongside of language which is disturbingly naive such as a laboured explanation of how there will be plenty of room in heaven for us (p. 117f.). His frequent citations of other writers (from a fairly narrow theological range) are often accompanied by rather lofty judgements about their correctness which grate somewhat.

Sometimes there is what promises to be a dialogue with alternative views, but the most serious alternatives are missing: for instance in discussing the question "who will go to heaven?" three viewpoints are presented, all without distinction branded as "universalism," including one he calls "evangelical universalism." Now there are many (like myself) who hold the view that there are people who are saved by the fact that they know themselves to be sinners but also believe in a God who loves them and has made provision for this, without having heard the sound of the vocables "Je-sus." We do not believe that everybody will be saved, or that nobody will go to hell; we believe the Scriptures, quite seriously. Dr Davies does not seem aware of this possibility, so his refutation is unconvincing.

In dealing with the subject of hell, Dr Davies seems to believe that unending suffering for all those who have not even heard the gospel is something that we will witness without distress in heaven. There is no awareness of the possibility that "eternal" is an adjective which takes its quality from its subject. So the Old Testament acclamation "O King, live for ever," (which has koine Greek equivalents) patently refers to a full earthly life span; just as a servant with a bored ear (Ex. 21:6) serving "for ever" is not about eternity. What of the possibility that *aion* may not be always a time-word, but about a different dimension of existence? Or that perpetuity is normally applied to the means of judgement rather than the objects or the experience of it. There is no discussion of the problem of how beings separated from God might exist apart from the source of

their existence for ever (unless God is going to keep them alive purely for the purpose of exacting an infinite penalty, for, in many cases, never having heard the gospel). My problem is not what Dr Davies professes to believe. After all, it may be that the difficulties with it that I and very many other sincere evangelicals have are indeed due to sharing a defective world-view. It is that he seems blissfully unaware of those difficulties, and leaves us with a vision of God which is, quite frankly, revolting to our moral sense.

While some of the profoundly serious issues of election and eternity are dealt with fairly superficially, the naivety of approach results in some comparatively trivial discussions. The lengthy discussion about heaven's locality is one; another is whether "heaven" is intermediate or final—which is rather like arguing about whether a gift of a million pounds is coming in cash or by cheque. There's also a slightly distasteful discussion about whether there will be rewards in heaven. It might have helped to be told that you certainly won't be rewarded if that's what you do good deeds for . . . What is so frustrating about all this is the fact that the first chapter is one of the clearest expositions of the eternal gospel that I've seen for quite a while. I'd like to recommend a version of it reprinted as an evangelistic booklet. For the rest, surely heaven is better than this. *C&S*

FOUR VIEWS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

BY MARVIN PATE

Counterpoints Series, Zondervan, 1998

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN J. HAYHOW

TO READ some theology and historical theology materials would lead one to believe that theological positions are consolidated, tight views held by large majorities in absolute agreement. However, the deeper one goes in understanding historical theology the more one realises that there are indeed diverse views. For example the Westminster Divines were by no means a group with a totally unified understanding of the statements they produced. Neither were the Church fathers, the Reformers, the Puritans or the men that followed him. Take the US Presbyterian tradition: there are obvious differences between the approach and views of men like R. L. Dabney, Charles Hodge and James Henley Thornwell, as well as a great body of agreement. This means that historical theology becomes a tremendously complex study (see Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Christian Tradition* Vols. 1–5), where broad generalisations become less and less useful. It is naive for us to think that there has even been a consolidated body of total agreement historically—however, that does not mean that there has not been a broad consensus on the main things. The same is of course true of eschatological views, and now even of the sub-views within the broad camps of Pre, A- and Post-Millennialism.

In spite of all this, broad categories are useful, even if limited in their usefulness. Zondervan have tried to pull together a range of perspectives on controversial issues amongst Christians. This one is on the Book of Revelation. Four views are represented:

Preterist—Ken Gentry

Idealist—Sam Hamstra Jr.

Progressive Dispensationalist—C Marvin Pate
Classical Dispensationalist—Robert L Thomas

These equate to Post-millennialism, A-millennialism, and the last two are Pre-millennialist, proving the point that there

are now different species of dispensationalism. I am not going to interact with each author and interpretation because that is not possible in the space here. Each view sincerely aims to take this difficult and complex book seriously. The A-millennial interpretation tends to see the book speaking to the broad sweep of the new covenant history from the resurrection of Christ to the Final Judgement.

There is something commendable here—the Church needs a word now. Hamstra says: “You don’t need a prophetic vision of a day you will never experience in this life. At this moment in your struggle with sin and evil, you need a hope-filled word from the Lord. You need the Apocalypse of John now” (p. 98). On the other hand the Dispensationalist schools emphasis the futuristic perspective.

The key to the book must however not be our sense of what

we need now, but the terms of Scripture itself—here are some pointers:

vi. shows that the scope of the book (at least for the most part) is “things that must shortly take place” (vi).

v7. “Behold he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him . . .”

The focus here is seen in the light of Daniel 7:13 where the coming on the clouds is referring to the ascension, not the final return.

The first chapter forces us to look for an “immediate” set of events that fulfil this prophecy to first-century readers. This is the strength of Gentry’s contribution—clearly rooting the meaning of the text in its original context and upon its own terms. This, in my opinion, makes the Preterist interpretation the most attractive, and a sound basis for future study. *C&S*

Letters to the Editor

A REPLY TO MICHAEL PETEK
by David Estrada

Dear Sir

IN answer to Mr Michael Petek’s letter (*C&S* Vol. XI, No. 2) I will say that much of what he says in his letter has no direct bearing on what I wrote in my article on the *Joint Declaration* (*C&S* Vol. XI, No. 1). As a matter of fact, he raises some questions and levels certain objections which are totally foreign to the central theme of the *Declaration* and to the content of my article.

I wish to remind Mr Petek that my main contention against the *Declaration* centres around the Roman Catholic and Lutheran conclusion that both Churches have always defended the same position on the doctrine of justification, although their respective perspectives have been stated differently. The basic point I try to make in my article is that in spite of the claimed agreement between Catholics and Lutherans, doctrinal differences still persist and that a careful examination of the Document shows that what Lutherans and Catholics say about justification is not the same thing.

The doctrine of justification by faith alone was for Luther the sum and substance of the gospel, the heart of theology, the central truth of Christianity, the article of the standing or falling church. For the Reformers, justification is conceived as a declaratory and judicial act of God distinct from sanctification, which is a gradual growth in holiness. Faith, on the other hand, is conceived as a fiducial act of the heart and will, distinct from theoretical belief and blind submission to the church. In justification, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner. Man receives justification only through faith, that is, by believing in Jesus Christ as the all sufficient Saviour and Redeemer. He is our righteousness. Faith does not justify by itself but only because Christ makes himself present in us through it. Although faith is not to be considered as a *work* in relationship to our justification, it remains the source and fountain of *good works*. Faith, in the biblical sense, is a vital force which engages all the powers of man and apprehends and appropriates the very life of Christ and all his benefits. It is the child of grace and the mother of *good works*. These are not the condition, but the necessary evidence of justification—not the root, but the fruit

of the tree. The same faith, which justifies, does also sanctify, and it is ever “working through love” (Gal. 5,6).

According to the *Declaration*, Catholicism “also sees faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place. Persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the Word and believers in it” (5). In my article, I argue that in justification there is no biblical warrant for equating *infused righteousness through baptism* and imputed *righteousness through faith*. It is on this assumed identification that I object to the *Joint Declaration*. Justification, and therewith all of salvation, is given to men through faith alone, *sola fide*. For justification and salvation depend only on God’s mercy; and this can be received only in an act of faith. Although faith is an act of man, which is oriented to the Word of promise, it is not an act which he either should or can produce by himself; rather God creates it through the Word. God the Holy Spirit works faith in a man through the preaching of the Word. Faith is not the result of human exertion; it is not man’s own product but rather God’s wonderful creation in him.

That Mr Petek does not stick to the main point of my article, or to the central theme of the *Joint Declaration*, is apparent from what he says on the Eucharist and the alleged nominalism of the Reformers. According to Mr Petek “the key event of the Reformation which occasioned the rupture of communion was the controversy over the Eucharist.” This thesis is not historically correct. The key issue of the Catholic and Protestant controversy was the doctrine of justification by faith. The *Joint Declaration* correctly affirms that both Catholics and Lutherans “share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God’s saving action in Christ . . . The doctrine of justification . . . is more than just one part of Christian doctrine: It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other” (4). The sacrament of the Eucharist is not once mentioned in the *Joint Declaration*.

On the Eucharist, Calvin accepted the symbolic meaning of the words of institution; he rejected the corporeal presence, the oral manducation and the ubiquity of Christ’s body. But at the same time, he strongly asserted a spiritual real presence and a spiritual real participation of Christ’s body and blood by faith.

He laid great stress on the agency of the Holy Spirit in the ordinance. With the rest of the Reformers, Calvin rejected the Roman view that the sacrament operates by virtue of a power within itself *ex opere operato*. In Luther's eyes, such a view made the sacrament mechanical and magical.

Mr Petek makes also a strong point on the supposed influence of nominalism on the Reformers. This has been a repeated allegation in the course of history. In his *Antidotes to Trent*, Calvin already refuted this accusation levelled against the Reformers in their understanding of the doctrines of justification, sanctification and the sacraments. When the Fathers of Trent made their pronouncements, the most important Protestant confessions had already appeared, and in the light of those doctrinal standards it was clear that the Reformers understood the above doctrines in a very *realistic* sense. In the doctrine of justification, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the sinner is not presented in terms of a mere nominalistic transaction, but as a profound and vital spiritual *reality* affecting the whole life of the believer. The same must be said with regards to the other doctrines. Together with the Ockhamists, what they rejected was the "*philosophical realism*" of Scholastic theology and all the Platonic implications it entailed. The nominalistic rejection of *epistemological realism* on the part of the Reformers cannot be extended to the soteriological sphere either. On matters of biblical doctrine, Reformed theology is *realistic*. Consequently, it is unfair to accuse the Reformed position of being nominalistic in *doctrine*. The Roman Catholic theologians of the *Joint Declaration* do not level such an accusation against the Lutherans.

Furthermore, it is neither theologically nor historically correct to circumscribe the nominalistic question within the realm of Protestantism. In Mr Petek's view, "the Reformation would not likely have occurred but for the influence of nominalism." Let us not forget that already in the early Middle Ages the debate of nominalism and realism was a candescent issue. Upon this, as a matter of fact, hinged a secular theological battle within the Catholic Church. The Platonism of the realism of the eternal ideas—in all its varied forms—was very much questioned by the nominalist trends of thought in the Medieval Church. In the fourteenth century, William of Ockham carried the banner of nominalism to its final conclusions. Against the Platonism of the realists, Ockham held that "no universal is a substance existing outside of the mind." The universal is a symbol representing conventionally several objects. Nevertheless, contrary to what Mr Petek seems to hold, the *epistemological* views of Ockham never became central in the thought of the Reformers. In favour of a biblical theology, they disesteemed much of the cognitive question posed by Ockhamist epistemology.

Mr Petek states that "nominalism was the dominant philosophy at the universities at which Calvin and Luther did their higher studies." I would like to remind Mr Petek that, with the exception of Spain, nominalism was prevalent in European philosophical and theological thought. Ockham's nominalism penetrated deeply into the religious Orders. Its influence was felt not only in the Franciscan Order to which Ockham himself belonged, but also in the Dominican and other Orders. The same can be said of the leading European universities: they were also immersed in the polemics of nominalism, and they were *Catholic* universities. Luther studied at the University of Erfurt, one of the best Catholic universities in Germany. Although at that time the University of Erfurt had not yet been invaded by Renaissance influences, nominalism was taught there. Luther refers to Ockham as "my dear master," and proclaims with pride "I am of the Ockhamist faction." Nominalism was also taught at the Catholic institutions of Pforzheim, Heidelberg, and Tübingen, where Malanchthon and other

Reformers studied. The same can be said of the University of Vienna, where Zwingli studied. It was in these and other universities where Roman Catholic theologians also studied. It was not nominalism, but the study of the Bible that caused the Reformers to part from Rome.

While in Paris, Calvin also breathed the nominalistic trends of thought of the time. It should not be forgotten, on the other hand, that while there, he also studied at a school supposedly free from nominalism: the Collège Montaigu. At that time, the Collège Montaigu was under the direction of Noël Bédá, who had instigated the condemnation of the writings of Luther by the Sorbonne in 1521. It was there that Calvin studied Peter Lombard, the great theologian of the *Sentences*; there he also studied St Bernard, St Augustine, and other great masters of the past. Far from being an exceptional trend of thought, nominalism was strongly entrenched at Paris, Oxford and many German universities.

It is true, on the other hand, that in several aspects Ockham paved the way to the Reformation. One of Ockham's main preoccupations as a philosopher was to purge Christian theology and philosophy of all traces of Greek necessitarianism, particularly of the theory of the essences, which in his opinion endangered the Christian doctrines of divine liberty and omnipotence. Indeed, Ockham dug the grave for scholasticism, with all its dialectical intricacies and subtleties. He thought reason to be useless as a foundation of Christian doctrine. He considered that his predecessors had obscured or overlaid Christian truths with false metaphysics. In the so-called proofs of God's existence, for example, Ockham maintained that they owed their validity, not to any philosophical argument which could be adduced in their favour, but to the fact that they were truths of faith, taught by Christian theology. In regard to the Church itself he strongly attacked papal absolutism. According to Ockham, popes could be and had been heretical, admitting the same possibility of error in general councils. The authority of the Church's teaching was to be based on that of the Bible. Popes and councils may err, but the written Word is sure. In these and other matters, Ockham's views found a favourable response on the part of the Reformers. But on other matters, such as the importance of works and merits in salvation, and the role of human free will on spiritual decisions, the Reformers flatly rejected his views.

Mr Petek regards the "stuff" of the *Joint Declaration* as "high theology," and asks what effects "dizzy heights of sophisticated theology" can have on the practical day-to-day living of the Christian life. To this we respond that if the *Joint Declaration* contains "dizzy heights of sophisticated theology," then, what shall we say about the language of traditional Roman Catholic Scholastic theology? What about the lengthy and intricate discussions around original righteousness and superadded grace (*justitia originalis* and *donum superadditum*); rudiment of conscience (*sinderesis*); preparatory grace freely given in particular effects and grace as an abiding principle of character (*gratia gratis data* and *gratia gratum faciens*); merit from the proper use of nature and merit on the basis of the supernatural grace (*meritum de congruo* and *meritum de condigno*)? What about the traditional *quaestiones* of Lombard's *Sentences* with their *membra, principalia, partes, tractatus, dubia, ad finitum*, and the *quod non* or *quod sic* of the conclusions and the following *responsio* of the author or the *corpus* of the article? Both the Humanists and the Reformers stigmatised Scholasticism as empty formalism, untheological speculation, subtle and pedantic, in contrast with the practical and religious theology based on the Bible.

It must be admitted that since *Vatican II* the theological language of Roman Catholic pronouncements and declarations has reached a clarity of expression totally unknown in the past. If the *Joint Declaration* is nothing but "dizzy heights of

sophisticated theology,” not much is left for a coherent discussion of the rational aspects of the Christian faith. Biblical theology addresses man in the totality of his being, which means that all his faculties are affected by its message, including, obviously, his thinking capacity. There is a rational element in our faith, and to this element the Apostle Paul appeals in his epistles, “in which [says the Apostle Peter] are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (II, 3,15). For the Apostle Paul, “heights of theology” are not incompatible with the demands of practical holy living. On the contrary, the heights of Christian doctrine are to be conducive to a deeply committed life of sanctification and good works. In his epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, Paul focuses on the very core of the doctrine of justification by faith through the imputed righteousness of Christ; and in both epistles “the heights of Pauline of theology” lead to a long list of Christian duties and obligations.

The Reformers made the clear exposition of the biblical truths one of their great concerns. Both in their doctrinal writings and in their preaching, the Reformers achieved an unprecedented clarity and simplicity of language. The doctrinal standards and confessions of the Reformation are remarkable testimonies of biblical depth and, at the same time, of plain and clear language. The sermon was prominent in the Reformation; the exposition and application of the Word of God became the chief part of the divine service. In this Luther set the example: he had an extraordinary faculty of expressing the profoundest thoughts in the clearest language for the common people. It has been said that the *altar* is the throne of the Catholic priest; the *pulpit* is the throne of the Protestant pastor. The Roman worship is complete without a sermon. Moreover, before Vatican II, the Mass was performed in a dead language, and the people were passive spectators rather than hearers.

With the “nominalist philosophy of Luther and Calvin,” Mr Petek associates “scepticism about metaphysics.” Can we really consider the *Joint Declaration* as “sophisticated theology” and, at the same time, vindicate the value of metaphysics? Much of scholastic metaphysics falls in the obscure realm of the subtle and intricate. In Scholasticism, besides “sophisticated theology” we find “sophisticated philosophy.” The Reformers saw in Scholastic philosophy a strong element of pagan thought, which was detrimental to the biblical message. They could not accept the role of fallen reason in the attainment of spiritual truth. According to Luther, reason is a gift of God, a dowry from the Creator to humanity. It is reason that constitutes the essential difference between man and other living beings. Reason is the source and bearer of all culture; it has discovered all arts, sciences and law. Fallen man, however, misuses reason and its legitimate accomplishment. Fallen reason must be renewed by redemptive regeneration. To resort to Greek thought in order to frame Christian theology is to overlook the effects of sin on fallen reason.

I find Aquinas’s thought wholly stimulating and I hold him in sincere respect, yet I must part with him in the role he concedes to Greek thought in the framing of Christian theology. Thomas attempted to reconcile Aristotelianism and Christianity. He believed that Aristotelian philosophy was, in the main, true. Key Aristotelian concepts, such as the idea of substance and accident, are used in defining Christian doctrines—including the doctrine of the Eucharist. Among other things, Thomas accepted the entire Greek position with regard to the soul. On the other hand, he correctly affirms that the knowledge of faith is supernatural and cannot be demonstrated by human reason; yet according to Thomas, theology is to refute the opponents of faith and elucidate and make probable the articles of belief by the aid of philosophical thought. For the

Reformers, the Ockhamists successfully wrecked the synthesis of Thomas Aquinas whereby nature and reason leads through unbroken stages to grace and revelation. Once again, for the Reformers the core of doctrinal argument was not metaphysics but the Bible.

The *Joint Declaration* omits all reference to the matter of ecclesiastical authority. However, Mr Petek inserts the question of papal authority and refers to the Reformer’s identification of the “man of sin” and the “Antichrist” with the Pope. This identification of the Reformers, I do not think is correct. St John is the only biblical writer who uses the term “Antichrist,” but by it he means the Gnostic heresy of his own day, which denied the Incarnation. He regards this denial as the characteristic sign of Antichrist, and speaks of him as being already in the world; indeed, he speaks of “many antichrists” who had gone out of the Christian churches in Asia Minor. The Pope has never denied the Incarnation, and can never do it without ceasing to be Pope.

Although in disaccord with the Reformers in their identification of the Pope with the Antichrist, the ground-motive of their identification is understandable. In the eyes of the Reformers, both in doctrine and in conduct, the Popes of the Renaissance fell short in reflecting the teaching and holiness accorded to men who claimed to be vicars of Christ on earth. In his pilgrimage to Rome, Luther saw nothing but worldly splendour at the court of Pope Julius II. Money and luxurious living seemed to have replaced apostolic poverty and self-denial. In the age of the Renaissance the Catholic Church had been so secularised that even the Popes did not disdain to make alliances with the Turk against the Christian monarchs of Europe. Julius II bent his energies on the aggrandisement of the secular dominion of the papacy by means of unscrupulous diplomacy and bloody wars. The chief pre-eminence of Leo X, of the house of Medici, lay in his ability to squander the resources of the Holy See on carnivals, war, gambling, and the chase. Sixtus IV was a despot of an Italian city-state. Alexander VI was guilty of the darkest crimes of depraved human nature; he was a rake whom even Catholic historians regard as an unspeakable disgrace. When the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew reached the Vatican, Pope Gregory XIII celebrated a solemn *Te Deum* at St. Peter’s cathedral. In the history of these Popes, writes Leopold Von Ranke, “we find the most perfect contradiction of Christendom.” These were some of the popes that occupied the Vatican chair during the Reformation. The Reformers equated particular popes with the Antichrist because of their evil lives and unfaithful doctrinal teaching. In support of his views on the Eucharist, Mr Petek appeals to the position of the Greek Orthodox Church. I would like to remind Mr Petek that on the matter of the authority of the Pope, the Greek Church, long before the Reformation, charged the Bishop of Rome with usurpation, and she adheres to her protest to this day.

Mr Petek’s concern for the matter of “the day-to-day ways of living the Christian life” does not seem to realise that in the immoral and wicked lives of a goodly number of Popes, not only an exemplary model of Christian conduct is absent, but that a pattern of *aberrant nominalism* is present. In the person of the Pope, the office is distinguished from the man and infallibility does not rest on impeccability. In the doctrine of imputed righteousness, the accusation levelled by Catholicism against the Reformers was that it did not have a direct bearing on the *real* life of the believer. Yet, in what concerns the papal office, Rome disassociates the high claim of apostolic succession with the moral conduct of those who supposedly are the Vicars of Christ on earth.

For the Reformers, the main concern was the recovery of uncorrupted Christianity. And this could only be achieved on

the grounds of biblical authority. Protestantism maintains that the Bible, as the inspired record of revelation, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice—in opposition to the Roman Catholic thesis of Scripture and ecclesiastical *tradition*, interpreted by the hierarchy. The Scripture is the record of the apostolic witness to Christ, and as such it is the decisive authority in the church. Since the apostles are the foundation of the church, their authority is basic. No other authority can be equal to theirs. Every other authority in the church is derived from following the teaching of the apostles and is validated by its conformity to their teaching. Its self-validity necessarily includes its self-interpretation. As Luther repeatedly affirmed, “the Bible is its own light. It is a grand thing when Scripture interprets itself.” Luther uses self-interpretation of the Scripture and interpretation through the Holy Spirit as synonymous expressions. *C&S*

Dear Sir

One can always find room for criticism of any other movement. Christians are like politicians in this regard. If it is not their particular experience or theological persuasion, they will search every nook and cranny to find grounds against someone else’s testimony, usually very convincingly.

Towards people, like myself, who are Pentecostal *by experience*, these people have a built in opposition. Instead of targeting Satan and all his works they target God’s people. If the Pentecostal person is of Satan then I must be the most deceived of Christ’s disciples because I have moved in this realm for 35 years of my 45 years in Christ’s service.

I was one of the leading figures in F.G.B.M.F.I. when it started in Scotland. I have met some of the H.S.B. people and was very impressed with their real joy and spirituality. I have more recently been in “Toronto Blessing” meetings and, on the whole, was happy with what I saw and heard.

For some years I was involved in the “Glory” movement in South East and Central England, and North East Scotland. That was some thirty years ago. I would not exchange those experiences for some of the spiritual death that is on offer today. If it were to start up again I would be there with my tambourine! All these were Pentecostal type movements, or if you prefer it, Charismatic.

In Pentecost I have met some of the most Christ like people, with a generosity and love that could only be generated by a rich communication with God’s Scriptures, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Their spiritual songs and choruses were full of joy and God’s word. The present day choruses being sung everywhere (unfortunately) are but poor reflections of what I have known. All my experience in Pentecost did not negate my love of Reformed doctrine nor have I ever felt it threatened its foundations.

I have said all this in preparation for what follows; my appreciation of Peter Burden-Teh’s articles. I trust he’s not of the type that my first two paragraphs describe.

In his articles Peter Burden-Teh has done a splendid job of research into this subject to the point that one sees danger to the Church of Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ told us “by their fruits we would know them.” Gumbel seems to bend over backwards to bring in testimonies of people whose “fruit” would not bear examination, in order to give authority to his course.

There are too many referred to for me to mention here. Sufficient for most of us is the fact that Tom Forrest is one whom Gumbel accepts as a brother because he is supposed to be “Charismatic.” Now he may genuinely be so, “as the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” but I will repeat our

Lord’s words again—“by their fruits shall ye know them.” We must make not the mistake of assuming their experience as faulty. Otherwise any of our failures would be our own downfall. But Gumbel makes a generalisation about being “Charismatic” that is as dangerous as can be. I have known Pentecostals whose experience was genuine, but whose lifestyle did not measure up to the standards of holy living. However, if we take away “Pentecostal” and put in another denominational tag we could no doubt match Forrest in errors though with a different bias. I gather that Gumbel’s sincerity is not in question. His gullibility seems to be the problem.

I have not read Gumbel’s book *Questions of Life*, and I hope not to need to, because Peter Burden-Teh has done that for myself and others. The obviously thorough way this has been done precludes the necessity of personal investigation and facilitates my ability to warn others. This I have already done. If I have any problem it is possibly the difficulty of persuading any of those involved in the course to look more critically at what they are involved in, Ezek. 3:17.

Everyone seems so desperate to show a lost world that Christ is the answer that they are grabbing at every passing straw. I would suggest the answer is in just preaching “The Kingdom,” Luke 4:43. But that subject would need another letter.

Finally, a big thank-you Peter for a job well done.

J. Faulds
Girvan, Scotland

Sir,

Although I accept your analysis of why Christians often fail to make any lasting impact on our current pagan culture, I cannot help wondering if there is another factor: failure to think in the long term. At the same time, they are still right to put “saving souls” high on the agenda, simply because unless souls are saved there can be no hope of reformation of society. If there simply aren’t the Christians there to live out the Christian faith in their particular niche of society then there won’t be any Christian witness!

Have you ever noticed that whenever there is any preaching on the subject of Josiah’s religious reforms it tends to focus on the following areas. One is the discovery of the book of the Law, and how it showed the king where they had gone wrong. Or else it might focus on how thorough a job he made of cleaning up the religious life of the nation. But I have never yet heard one aspect addressed, viz. why did it peter out so quickly after his death? Here are my own observations. First, he seems to have forgotten that he wasn’t immortal: as such, it was incumbent on him to groom his sons in general and his successor-designate in particular to carry on where he left off. If that meant some of his public work of reformation having to be either left on the side or else delegated to others, then so be it. Second—though this is less clear from the biblical record—he seems to have allowed himself to be drawn into the local power politics of the time: Assyria flickering out, Egypt and Babylon now about to contest for the mastery of Palestine. Although he was right to discern the future importance of Babylon, to go about it by challenging the Egyptians on the battlefield was foolhardy; Babylon was quite capable of taking care of Necho! As it was, his death in the battle cut short even the reformation he managed. Although his religious reforms were not without effect—a list of personal names on the Lachish Letters, where these names are theophorous, fails to list a single pagan deity—the verdict must be “could well have done better.”

On the matter of home schooling, I came across the

following article in *USA Today*, February 4, 1999. Its main thrust was on why home schooling's hidden virtues had made it grow to the point where it wasn't just "freaks and geeks" but people who were quite normal who were doing it. Here are some of the points, as outlined by William R. Mattox, Jr. First, home-schooled children tend to interact more with people of different ages, something that is not only more like the "real world" outside but reduces the degree to which children get compared with those of their own age. Late developers thus avoid being stigmatised as "learning disabled" or "slow learners." In fact, test scores on home schooled children showed 30–37 percentile points higher than for other students. Second, home schooled children tend to identify socially with their family rather than their peer group. Instead of seeing themselves as a tribe apart they see themselves as members of an intergenerational family. This makes for them knowing more readily what are the bounds of acceptable behaviour, but also frees them from the supposed need to match or outdo what their peers do, or the need to somehow navigate the turbulent social scene at a conventional school with what David Guterson calls "its cliques, rumours and relentless gossip, its shifting alliances and expedient betrayals." Another researcher has found that home schooling offers particular advantages for adolescent girls. As for the supposed social disadvantages, i.e. not mixing with so many children, as has been indicated this can actually be a plus.

In similar vein, Kate Heusser, who won £500,000 in a TV contest, declared in an article in the *Daily Express*, November 9, 2000, that she couldn't have done so if she hadn't boosted her own knowledge by educating her two sons at home. Indeed, there is an organisation called Education Otherwise which helps out with some of the organising. Apparently there are some 20,000 home-educating families in Britain.

Notice that I have not mentioned religion so far in the equation. However, home schooling does offer most of all the opportunity for Christian parents to raise their children in the Christian faith; they can vet all the teaching material to make sure it doesn't slip in any matter that will tend, in the long run, to adulterate and destroy their children's faith.

The *Express* article gave some interesting information covering the inevitable questions. Is it legal? Yes; the relevant Acts of Parliament only stipulate that a child has to receive an education "suited to their age, ability, and aptitude," to quote the 1944 Act. One does not have to be a qualified teacher; nor is one tied to the national curriculum, and Ms Heusser used past exam papers to introduce her older son to them. Isolation? That is where Education Otherwise provides something of a support group. And while the whole business is time-consuming, it is very much an education for the parents as well as the children. Home-educating parents are not required to inform their Local Education Authority; however the LEA can (and sometimes does) make informal inquiries about how the child is progressing, and may ask for samples of the child's work. Only if they are not satisfied will they be likely to make a compulsory school attendance order in respect of the child.

Nor must the potential of the Internet be underestimated, though the quality of the material on offer will vary from site to site. Furthermore, it would not be ideal for a child to sit all day in front of a computer screen.

More recently, there seems to have been an article in *The Times* which attacked what it called the "ghettoisation" of children by their being educated in religiously based schools. I myself haven't read the article; I only learned of it this evening [14th March] courtesy of Adventist News Network, which sends me a weekly newsletter. The writer, a reader in philosophy at London University even suggested that religion be taught alongside magic and astrology as aspects of mankind's former ignorance (his position, not mine). In reply, one of our

leaders described Anthony Grayling's article as intolerant in tone, seeming to advocate that all children be taught together, but with secular values only.

Yours faithfully,
Barry Gowland

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