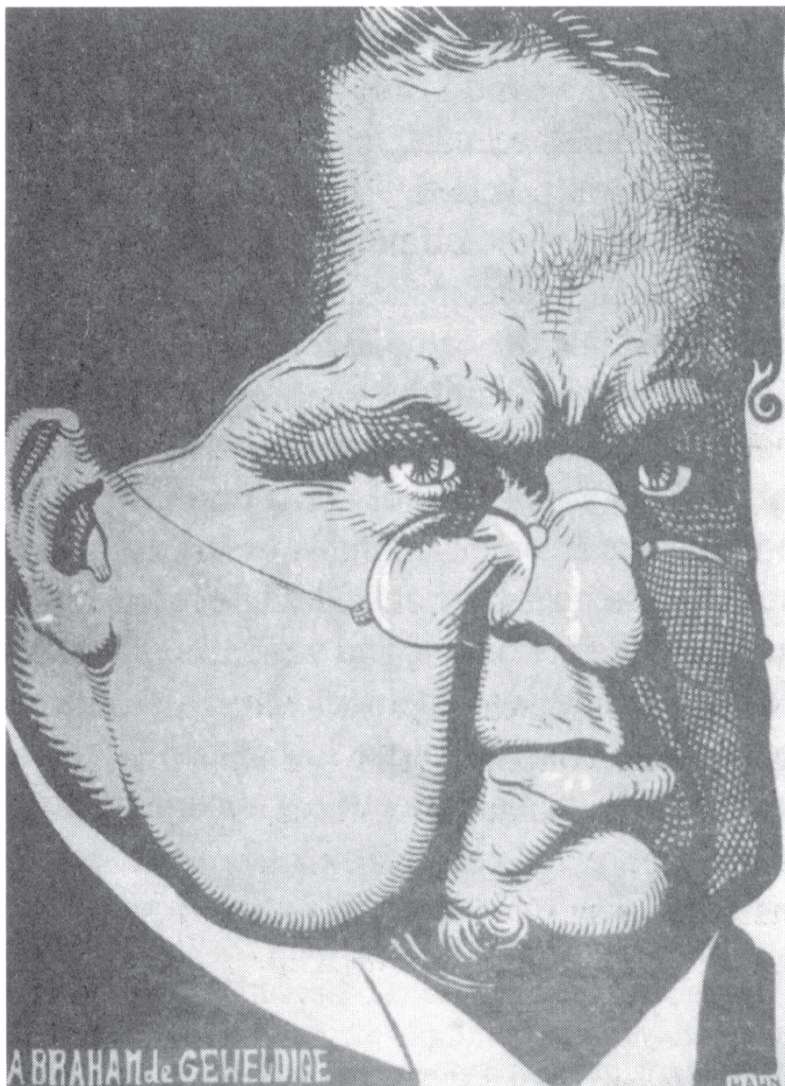


Christianity & Society

*A Quarterly Journal for the Application of Christian Principles
to Contemporary Society*

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Kuyper's conviction that there is a worldview implicit in each religious persuasion, as well as an underlying unity within a person's thoughts and beliefs, led him to conclude that in order to be faithful to Christ, the sovereign Lord, we should try to work out Christian ideas and plans of action in all spheres of life. Kuyperianism arose with the recognition of the coherence of things, the inter-coherence of our thinking and believing, and the unity of faith. This awareness drove Kuyper in his many-sided attempts to organise Christian scholarship and action and to develop alternative "Christian" approaches and institutions—all for the greater glory of God.

—Roger D. Henderson,
"How Abraham Kuyper Became
a Kuyperian," pp. 6–12

Christianity & Society is the official organ of the KUYPER FOUNDATION, a Christian educational trust founded in 1987. The Kuyper Foundation exists to promote a renaissance of Christian culture in society by furthering awareness of the implications of the Christian faith for every sphere of life, including the church, family and State. Its vision of Christian society was expressed in the words of Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch Christian theologian and Statesman, who said: “One desire has been the ruling passion of my life. One high motive has acted like a spur upon my mind and soul. And sooner than that I should seek escape from the sacred necessity that is laid upon me, let the breath of life fail me. It is this: That in spite of all worldly opposition, God’s holy ordinances shall be established again in the home, in the school and in the State for the good of the people; to carve as it were into the conscience of the nation the ordinances of the Lord, to which Bible and Creation bear witness, until the nation pays homage again to him.” The Foundation seeks to promote this vision of Christian society by publishing literature, distributing audio-visual materials, and running lecture courses and conferences. The Kuyper Foundation is funded by voluntary donations from those who believe in the cause for which it works. More information on the ministry of the Foundation can be obtained from the address below or from the Foundation’s web site.

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COVER PICTURE:
A caricature drawing of Abraham Kuyper

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EDITORIAL

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

by *Stephen C. Perks*

It is commonly assumed that Sodom was judged by God and destroyed because of the homosexual sin that was prevalent in the city. The very term “sodomy” refers to the sexual perversion perpetrated by the men of Sodom. Yet, although this terrible sin was indeed practised by the people of Sodom and is condemned in the Scriptures as an abomination (Lev. 18:22), an act of sexual chaos, the truth is that the Bible nowhere gives the prevalence of this sin as the reason for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In Gen. 18:20–21 we are told merely that “The LORD said: Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me.” And in Gen. 21:13 we are told that God would destroy the place because “the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD.” The fact that the angels whom God sent to assess the condition of Sodom immediately came up against the insatiable homosexual lust of the men of the city is then assumed to be the reason for the destruction of Sodom. This is perhaps an understandable reading of the text taken on its own. But like all texts of Scripture, it should not be taken on its own. We must interpret Scripture with Scripture, and it is when we do this that the whole sorry story of Sodom takes on a new meaning.

In Romans chapter one Paul clearly sets out the course of human apostasy and its inevitable conclusion. He tells us there that the whole of created reality bears witness to the glory of God. But men refuse to accept this. They deny the God of creation and seek to find the meaning and purpose of life somewhere else. But the only place that men can turn for such meaning beside God is the created order itself. Therefore they elevate some aspect of this created order to the level of an ultimate principle of explanation. In other words they place some aspect of the created order in the place of God and seek to explain the meaning and purpose of life in terms of that which takes the place of God. This is what idolatry is. It matters little whether such idolatry is of the gross superstitious kind, or the more pseudo-intellectual kind such as evolution, the basic principle is the same, namely the belief that the cause, meaning and purpose of the whole cosmos is to be found in the created order itself. This is so for all forms of paganism as well as modern apostate philosophy and science, since the gods of the ancient and pagans worlds were themselves aspects of the cosmos itself, which was considered eternal. The gods that the pagans believed had shaped the world were further up the chain of being, to be sure, but they were essentially still part of the same substance, the same reality as mankind and all other things. This world is all there is. There is no totally transcendent being who created the cosmos out of nothing. Therefore the meaning of the cosmos is to be found in itself.

As a result of this idolatry, this search for meaning in the created order itself rather than in the one who created it out of nothing, men became fools and exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:25). Therefore God gave men up to their own sin, to their own degraded passions, i.e. the lust for homosexual relations (Rom. 1:26ff).

The prevalence of homosexual sin in society, therefore, is not the cause of God’s judgement upon men for their sin. Rather, it *is* the judgement of God upon men for their sin. The very fact that society is afflicted with this sin of sexual chaos points to the judgement of God upon society for its idolatry and apostasy. Homosexual practices were common in the world of ancient paganism, and it seems that this pattern is repeated wherever society is in the grip of idolatry and apostasy. The blight of homosexuality upon society is God’s judgement against men for their idolatry, an expression of his wrath, not what initially provokes that wrath. The homosexualised culture is the end product of a society that has abandoned the God of Scripture and turned to idolatry in order to find the meaning and purpose of existence, and therefore the consequence of men being given up to their sin, to their own desire to be free of God and his will for their lives.

If as Christians we wish to see our society free of the blight of homosexuality, therefore, we must seek to understand the causes of God’s judgement upon the nation. Merely remonstrating about the evils of homosexuality will achieve nothing (though this does not mean we should not disapprove, and declare our disapproval, of such sin.) We must seek to understand what led to such a judgement being visited upon our society. The cause will be found in the nation’s spiritual apostasy from God, not in the gay bars of the homosexual underworld. And the remedy will be found in the repentance of the nation for that spiritual apostasy, not in the passing of laws proscribing homosexual activity. Of course this does not mean that we should not have laws proscribing homosexual activity. Homosexual acts are crimes in the Bible and our own legislation should reflect this fact. But merely re-criminalising homosexuals acts without seeking to remedy the national apostasy that led to God’s visiting this terrible judgement upon our society will not on its own solve the problem. We must take seriously the argument of Paul in the first chapter of Romans. Shutting our eyes to the truth he there expounds will not help us.

What light can the story of Sodom and Gomorrah shed on our situation. A great deal in fact. The Scriptures are given us that we might learn and understand God’s will for our lives and for our societies and nations, because as Jesus commanded, we are to disciple all nations to Christ, i.e. teach them to live in conformity with the will of Christ as revealed in his word, the Bible. That is our Great Commission from Christ himself (Mt. 28:18–20. cf. 5:17–20).

What then was the reason for Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction? What was their sin? We are told quite explicitly by Ezekiel that the sin of Sodom was fourfold, namely pride, excess, idleness and neglect of the poor and needy (Ez. 16:49). And to this is then added that the people of Sodom were “haughty” and “committed abominations” before the Lord (v. 50). Furthermore, we are told that the sins of Jerusalem were greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Isaiah likens Jerusalem to Sodom, saying to the rulers of Jerusalem, “Here the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; and give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your

doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgement [i.e. justice], relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Is. 1:10, 16–17)—i.e. make sure justice prevails and that the orphan and the widow are not oppressed in their affliction. In these Scriptures the sins of Jerusalem and those of Sodom, against which the comparison is made, are not exclusively sexual sins, e.g. the perversion of homosexuality, but the sins of pride, excess, idleness, injustice perpetrated against and a lack of regard for those in society who are least able to defend themselves against oppression, e.g. the poor and needy, orphans and widows.

Now it is clear that modern Western society, including Britain, is afflicted with the plague of homosexuality. The comparison with Sodom is therefore pertinent. But the comparison is not limited to this sexual sin. The pride and arrogance of modern Western society in its rejection of God and his word, the satisfaction with which it trusts in its own wisdom, and the ridiculing contempt in which it holds the law of God,—and such ridicule and contempt for God’s law is even to be found in the Church—is as heinous in the sight of God as the pride of Sodom, for which it was destroyed. The excess of bread, the satiety, to which reference is made by Ezekiel is explained in the book of Proverbs: “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Pr. 30:8–9). There is nothing sinful in riches *per se*, and prosperity is not a sin. Indeed God promised prosperity to his people if they would obey his law (Dt. 28). We are told that the Lord takes pleasure in the prosperity of his people (Ps. 35:27). But the problem with the sinful human heart is that it tends to forget who the author of that prosperity is. Men congratulate themselves and refuse to give the glory to God. They come to trust themselves and believe they have no need to turn to God. What has God done for them? Their own industry has brought them the wealth they enjoy. It is their hard work that has led to their prosperity, not the grace and gift of God. And so God is forgotten. Men trust in their own power. Both of these sins, pride and excess, condemned by Ezekiel as sins that brought the judgement of God upon Sodom, are characteristic sins of modern Western society. We should do well, therefore, to heed the lesson that the story of Sodom provides.

Next is mentioned by Ezekiel the sin of idleness. At this point it would be difficult and erroneous to say that this sin is characteristic of Western society generally, though doubtless it is characteristic of some elements within Western society (see below). The Protestant work ethic has had a significant influence in the Protestant nations in this regard. But it has not been retained in its original form. Instead this ideal has been secularised, emptied of its Christian meaning, so that it exists now more as an idol, a symbol of materialistic gain for its own ends. In this sense it is part and parcel of the culture of excess that characterises modern Protestant nations. British people who have jobs, for example, on the whole work a good deal longer than most other Europeans. Indeed, the long working hours demanded by many professions has led to these professions being called “totalitarian”—and there is some truth to this because this has been achieved at the expense of other important and God-ordained social institutions, e.g. family life. But the goal and

purpose of work is not the glory of God for most people. It is the excess of material benefits, the pursuit of leisure, stripped of all constraint by the moral law of God. The meaning of life is reduced to the mere satisfaction of human appetites: *excess!* The net product of human industry thus does not contribute to the glory of God and the building of his kingdom on earth. Instead it contributes to the culture of excess in which individual self-satisfaction is exalted as the highest human ideal, the chief aim of man. In this self-centred culture those virtues and social institutions that are necessary for the preservation and amelioration of human society in terms of God’s will for making are forgotten and lost.

Take for example the Christian ideal of the family. In Britain now the traditional ideal of the family is in the minority. There are now more childless and one parent families than there are heterosexual two parent families. A marriage is judged to be successful or unsuccessful on the basis of what each partner can get out of it. If one party decides that the marriage is no longer offering him the best satisfaction of his wants and desires, and someone else is found who can offer more or make him happier, the marriage can be dissolved easily. Indeed marriage is being abandoned altogether by many as an unnecessary bind. The plight of children traumatised by the loss of one of the parents when a marriage breaks up is seen as a secondary issue and divorce is justified by all kinds of specious rationalisation. But the consequences are usually devastating and long-lasting. It is much harder for the children of broken homes to make successful and lasting marital relationships when they become adults than those who have had a happy and stable family background. This is in part at least what Scripture means when it says that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation (Ex. 34:7). It will take generations for our society to escape the socially destructive effects of the divorce culture that is now developing in our nation. As a result of the abandonment of stable family life society has become dysfunctional. The Christian ideal of the family is the foundation of a well-ordered society. If the family becomes dysfunctional society as a whole will become dysfunctional. And this is just what we are seeing increasingly.

But what about the sin of disregard for the poor and needy? Of all the sins listed by Ezekiel this is the one that most provoked God to anger in the Old Testament. The people of Israel are condemned for this time and again. Relief of the oppressed, the rendering of justice due to the poor and care for the needy were more important to God, and therefore constituted a more pure expression of true religion, than all the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Temple cultus (Is. 1:11–17 cf. James 1:27). Surely this sin cannot be imputed to modern Britain with its high cost welfare State. The poor are provided for more than adequately in this system, are they not?

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is not so simple. There is of course a sense in which the answer to this question is yes. But there is also an important sense in which such an answer would miss the point and fail almost totally to take account of the issues that the Bible sets before us.

It is so often thought that the welfare State is the best method of providing justice for the poor and needy because it ensures that there is an ongoing wealth redistribution programme run by the State. In Britain on the whole it is

believed that this is how a caring society should behave, how it should provide for the poor. And it is believed by many Christians that State redistribution of wealth, i.e. the welfare State, in some form at least, is the closest approximation to, indeed the very incarnation of the Christian ideal of caring for the poor and needy that is set forth in Scripture as essential to the practice of true religion.

But it is precisely this notion that I want to challenge. The welfare society is not a caring society. It is a society that has abdicated its responsibility to care to the needy to the anonymous State. And the welfare State simply does not work, not only on the level of delivering real help for the poor, but in the way that it attempts to deliver that help. Indeed, in the very pursuit of this anonymous welfare State the function of the State, namely the public administration of justice, what the Bible calls doing judgement, is compromised, and the failure of the rulers to do justice is as severely condemned in Scripture as disregard for the poor. In fact it is the very failure to deliver justice that is condemned in the Bible as oppression of the poor. Such injustice may affect all classes in society of course, but those who are least able to defend themselves against it are the poor and needy, the orphan and the widow, i.e. those without economic power. For such people injustice is also oppression because they have no means of defending themselves against it. The redress for such oppression, the Bible tells us repeatedly, is the pursuit of justice: “seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Is. 1:17). But in Scripture the *magistrate* is never given the responsibility of establishing a welfare State or of pursuing enforced wealth redistribution programmes within society. Why? Because such practices are *unjust*, and it is *justice* that the Bible commands. In other words, two wrongs do not make a right. We may not overturn the justice due to one person in an attempt to secure the justice due to another. It is the job of the State to do judgement, justice, and it is the job of society at large, individuals, families and communities, to care for those who are genuinely in need. The responsibility of the State to provide justice may not be abdicated in order to usurp the responsibilities of individuals and families, nor may the responsibilities of individuals and families be abdicated to the State.

Yet this is precisely what has happened in our socialist welfare State. In this process justice has been turned on its head. The guilty are set free to pursue their reign of terror and violence in society, which is held accountable for the evil that criminals do, while the innocent are continually oppressed economically to provide for the lazy. Society is constantly fed the lie that “poverty causes crime,” and this mantra is deemed to justify the continuous wealth redistribution programmes that constitute the fraudulent virtue known as “social justice.” But such a system does not merely fail to do justice—i.e. righteousness (in the Bible justice and righteousness mean the same thing). Neither does it help the genuinely poor, i.e. the *deserving* poor. It merely creates an indolent underclass who are able to live off the sweat of others and enjoy their lifestyle of idleness and irresponsibility as a “human right” because it is supported by a perverse and politically correct human rights industry funded by its victims, the tax-payer. The result is a kind of perverse slave society, but one in which all the usual norms of slavery are stood on their heads. It is not the rulers and the middle classes who live off the slave labour of the underclass but

rather the underclass that lives off the benefits provided by taxation of those who create the wealth in society. Those who work labour at least two days each week (possibly a little more) in order to pay the taxes that fund the government agencies that provide this iniquitous system of handouts to the new leisured class in our society. The suggestion that the idle beneficiaries of this system should be made to do some work in return for their keep will bring down the wrath of our politically correct and tax-funded human rights industry. In this sense, therefore, there is in our society a significant measure of the sin of idleness condemned by Ezekiel as one of the causes of Sodom’s destruction. The welfare State has overturned the basic principle of biblical work ethics, namely that if a man *will* not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. 3:10).

The welfare State is at the heart of our national decline. It is not merely that the State-run welfare system is experiencing the adverse effects of the de-Christianisation of our culture along with other institutions. The welfare State is itself a substantial cause of this deterioration of our culture, which is at heart a process of de-Christianisation of society. It is not the only cause. But it is a major contributing factor in our decline. For example, the welfare State is responsible in large measure for the decline of the Christian ideal of family life, for the loss of the responsibility of parents for their children, and particularly for the loss of the father’s headship of his family, which has been transferred to the anonymous welfare State. Here again we see the loss of those virtues that create and sustain family life because responsibility is abdicated to the State. Such abdication of responsibility is not the characteristic of a caring society at all. The welfare State is an expression of a people’s desire to rid themselves of the virtues that characterise a caring society.

Furthermore, the welfare State has to be funded by taxation. Taxation on the scale necessary to maintain the welfare State confiscates the resources that the family needs in order to care for its own members properly, let alone care for others who need help. Such a system plunders the family’s financial resources to such an extent that the majority of families become dependent on the State in some measure. This in itself weakens the family, which is foundational to the whole structure of society. Indeed it makes the Christian family obsolete. The family is replaced by the ever bountiful State—bountiful to those who are its dependants that is, not to those who have to fund the tax bill for the irresponsible lifestyle of those who are dependants of the State. Increasingly the State takes the place of the family. Families that are taxed to pay for all the services that the State provides from a supposedly amoral, religiously neutral perspective are not able to provide for those in need in terms of Christian principles. (Of course such neutrality is impossible and the supposed amorality is immorality from the Christian perspective—witness the abandonment of Christian ethics in the spheres of education and health care, e.g. the crusade to abolish Clause 28 in schools and the growth of the abortion industry in the NHS).

The practice of the Christian faith is intimately bound up with care for the poor and healing of the sick: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). We are commanded not only to preach the gospel of the Kingdom but to heal the sick also (Mt. 10:7–8; Lk. 9:2, 10:9). But care

for the poor and healing of the sick that disregards God's will for the individual, the family and society at large is not really care at all, nor is it healing. It is idolatry, and idolatry enslaves men rather than freeing them. Welfare and health care that is stripped of all reference to God's will for man is ultimately cruel.

What then is the answer to this situation? Christian work ethics must be brought back into our care for the poor. Christian charity should not be divorced from Christian work ethics. The separation of charity from Christian work ethics is the legacy of our godless State welfare system, which is, as a result, subject to massive abuse. The provision of welfare, education, health care etc. in our society must be restored to those God-ordained institutions responsible for these things—the family, the individual, and the Church, which can apply the biblical principles necessary for these spheres of life to function in a godly way. The amelioration of our society requires the practice of the Christian virtues. Such is not facilitated by State funding and organisation of welfare. Rather the reverse is true. State welfare has a deleterious effect on the practice of the Christian virtues and therefore on the practice and influence of the faith in society. We must begin replacing the welfare State mentality with a Christian understanding of what it means to be a caring society, i.e. with a perspective that links care for the needy with Christian work ethics, because both are essential to man's well-being. Christian ethics must also be restored to the practice of medicine. This means not only that abortion, euthanasia etc. must be opposed and made illegal, but that the model of human nature that is used in the diagnosis and treatment of illness should be a Christian one, that we should start with an understanding of man as God's image bearer and vicegerent and work from these principles in seeking to heal men. These developments will not take place in the godless welfare and health care programmes run by the modern secular State. Christians and Churches must, therefore, begin their own welfare and health care programmes that function in terms of Christians ethics, a Christian model of man as created in God's image and a Christian model of the social order that God requires of our society.

The welfare State is not a system of justice, and therefore it is not consistent with righteousness. It is a denial of the righteousness that God demands of individuals and of society because it negates the responsibilities required of the individual, the family and the community, thereby rendering virtue obsolete. Thus in the Church, for example, virtue has been replaced by "piety." The good Christian is the one who behaves piously, not the one who practises the Christian virtues, since these are largely now obsolete in our society. The State has usurped our duty to act virtuously. It cares for the poor and needy on our behalf, provides education for our children and health care for the sick, takes in the orphans and provides hand outs for widows—all of which were at one time functions of the individual and the family, and where these were unable to provide, the Church. But that was when this nation was a Christian nation. We no longer look to God for these things any more. The all-powerful State has taken the place of God. It is our new religion. Our idolatry is virtually complete. The State has claimed for itself a position and an importance in our lives and society that belongs to God. But unlike the Christian God, it cannot deliver what it promises. The growth of the State has gone hand in hand with the decline of the Christian faith, increasing breakdown of order in society and the growth of the culture of irresponsibility and crime described above.

The godless, indulgent, proud and immoral culture in which we live is a modern Sodom and Gomorrah. And the judgement of God is already upon us. Our society has been given up to its own sin. The plague of homosexuality is testimony to that fact. It is time that the Church woke up to the reality of the situation and faced up to the spiritual apostasy that has provoked God to pour out his wrath on our society. Instead a kind of deadening slumber has fallen upon the Church. What will it take to waken the Church out of this deep sleep, to impress upon her once again the high calling of the Great Commission and the social and political responsibilities that this commission entails? I do not know the answer to this question. But whatever it is, it will most likely be, given the current state of our nation, a rude awakening. *C&S*

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by *Stephen C. Perks*

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HOW ABRAHAM KUYPER BECAME A KUYPERIAN^{† 1}

by R. D. Henderson

IN this article² I shall attempt the task of explaining how and why Abraham Kuyper, unlike so many of his fellow students at Leyden University in the late 1850s, did not end up as a “liberal” theologian, a “dead orthodox” minister, or a “culture-fearing” pietist, but instead became the founder of what is rather cryptically known as “Kuyperianism.”³ As a provisional definition let us say that a person is a Kuyperian if he or she, like Kuyper, seeks to act upon the conviction that “there is not a square inch in the whole domain of human life of which Christ, the Sovereign of all, does not call out ‘Mine!’”⁴

Although he was considerably more than this, Abraham Kuyper was at least a Christian scholar. Because he lived in one of Europe’s smaller countries it is easy to view his Christian political, scholarly and journalistic accomplishments as those of a big fish in a small pond. Yet his actions and the great clarity with which he articulated the ideas behind them have caused his influence to spread far beyond

the borders of The Netherlands. (There is now a Dr. Abraham Kuyper Association in Korea.) His example motivated Dutch immigrants in setting up Christian educational institutions in North America (such as Calvin College and the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto) and encouraged various thinkers (such as B. B. Warfield and C. Van Til). Through his lectures at Princeton University (1898), his writings (a number of which were soon translated into English) and through the work of other (Dutch) Reformed people, his influence has spread to U.S. evangelicals offering them the idea of “Christ the transformer of culture.”⁵ Kuyper’s work serves as a significant model of Christian scholarship, thought, and organised activity, and as such is a source of instruction.

I shall place my discussion of how Kuyper became a Kuyperian within the following contexts or scenes. The first of these is Kuyper’s family background and the course of his early life. A second offers a glimpse of his goals and achievements, indicating what Kuyperianism meant in practice. A third sketches the background to Kuyper’s “conversion,” namely his early university years and his relationship with his fiancée. The last portrays the attitudes and discovery which made him break with “liberalism” (in all of its forms) and convinced him of the necessity of Christian action on many fronts. At the end of the article I will draw some conclusions and give a brief evaluation of Kuyper’s ideas and achievements. A word about my method: in reading the accounts of Kuyper’s early transitional phase, such as the one found in his own autobiographical *Confidentie*,⁶ I wondered to what extent they had been stylised to fit a later self-image. With the recent publication of many of his early letters, in *Abraham Kuyper: De jonge Kuyper (1837–1867)* [“Abraham Kuyper: The young Kuyper (1837–1867)”]⁷ one more way is now available of checking his later statements, at least for self-consistency, with earlier ones, especially since some of the letters were written a matter of days after the events they describe. These sources are supplemented by various other letters, writings and published early sermons. Hence I have relied primarily, though not exclusively, upon a comparison of

[†] This article first appeared in *Christian Scholar’s Review*, Sept. 1992. As this magazine is difficult to obtain outside the USA we have decided to republish it for a wider audience. Our thanks go to the author, Roger D. Henderson, for kindly allowing us to do so. Dr Henderson now teaches at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, USA. He has also written an excellent introduction to the development of Herman Dooyeweerd’s thought entitled *Illuminating Law: The Construction of Herman Dooyeweerd’s Philosophy, 1918–1928*. He may be reached at the above address or via rogerh@dordt.edu.

1. Without question the “presuppositional” thought of Abraham Kuyper has become extremely influential—some would say dominant—in evangelical scholarship. Yet most Christian scholars not of the Reformed persuasion know rather little about Kuyper himself. In this essay, R. D. Henderson addresses the question of “how Kuyper became a Kuyperian,” drawing heavily on some recently published early correspondence of Kuyper’s.

2. This essay is the result of research work being done for a dissertation at the Philosophy Department of the Free University, Amsterdam. It has benefited considerably from criticisms made by Peter Heslam of Oxford and Harry Van Dyke of Redeemer College. The translations from the Dutch are mine.

3. In the absolute sense this task is impossible on principle. In my view, its impossibility does not arise from a lack of historical source material or the like, but because no combination of explanatory factors (e.g. historical, social, psychological, economic, aesthetic, etc.) can ever fully explain the course of a human life. God alone comprehends the mystery of human history, and yet it is profitable to study praiseworthy persons in order to imitate in our own unique way the good things they stood for.

4. This quotation is taken from Kuyper’s address given at the opening of the Free University, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (“Sovereignty in [its] own sphere”) (1880). It has not been published in English.

5. George Marsden refers in his article, “The State of Evangelical Christian Scholarship” (*The Reformed Journal*, September 1987), to “The triumph—or nearly so—of what may be loosely called Kuyperian presuppositionalism in the evangelical community” (p. 14).

6. *Confidentie: Schrijven aan de Weled. Heer J. H. van der Linden* (Amsterdam: Hoeverker and Zoon, 1873) (hereafter cited as *Conf.*) This was a sketch of his early life written in the form of a (long) letter to a friend.

7. G. Puchinger (Franeker: Wever, 1987).

statements made by Kuyper himself under a variety of circumstances and at different times.

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

Abraham Kuyper was born on October 29, 1837 in a small town at the mouth of the river Meuse, near Rotterdam, called Maassluis. His mother, Henrietta Huber (1802–1881), had worked as a governess before becoming a teacher at a girls' boarding school in Amsterdam. Kuyper's father, Jan Frederik (1801–1882), was a pastor in the State-organised Church (*Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk*) but had come from an uneducated family in Amsterdam.⁸ In 1841 the Kuyper family moved from the parish of Maassluis to that of Middelburg, the provincial capital of Zeeland. After eight years in Middelburg they moved once again, this time to the university town of Leyden. Here the young Abraham received a good education, learning both ancient and modern languages at school. He proved to be an excellent pupil and gained the highest honours. At the time of his graduation from secondary school, for instance, he was valedictorian and spoke on a topic of his choice. His address displayed his keen interest in (German) literature, history and theology. The title of his speech in German was *Ulfila; der Bischof der Vösi-Gothen und seine Gothische Bibelübersetzung*.⁹ In the fall of 1855 Kuyper began studying theology and literature at Leyden University. By 1858 he had finished his first degree, passing exams in literature, philosophy, and classical languages *summa cum laude*.

It was at this time that Abraham first met Johanna Hendrika Schaay (1842–1899) to whom he was soon to be engaged. Johanna was sixteen at the time, and Abraham was twenty-one. Johanna, whose father was a stockbroker, lived in Rotterdam. During their five years of engagement (1858 to 1863) Abraham and Johanna corresponded regularly, leaving an extensive record of their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Their letters are an important source for understanding Kuyper, his character, and the development and changes in his thought during his theological training.¹⁰ In 1863 they were married, shortly before Kuyper became pastor in Beesd.

As a young student at Leyden University in the late 1850s, Kuyper was subject to the growing influence of "modern" German and Dutch theology with its new theories about the nature of religion and Scripture. One of the most important theologians at Leyden was J. H. Scholten (1811–1885). Although he respected Scholten greatly, Kuyper did not feel nearly as close to him as to his literature professor, M. de Vries (1820–1892), an eminent scholar of Dutch language and literature. De Vries proved to be an invaluable inspiration to Kuyper and in 1859 suggested that he try to enter a competition announced by the theology

department of the University of Groningen for the best essay comparing J. Calvin's and J. 'A Lasco's views of the Church.¹¹ Kuyper took up the challenge and worked hard, almost compulsively, for several months in hope of winning the prize. This meant that his time with Johanna in Rotterdam had to be cut even shorter than usual. Finally, in 1860 his labours were rewarded by winning the prize: a gold medal and with it, much honour. Kuyper was left exhausted, and shortly after receiving the prize he began to suffer some kind of head pains, making it almost impossible for him to study. This condition persisted for many months, causing him much grief and worry about the possibility that he might not gain the highest evaluation at his coming final exams. Nevertheless, Kuyper completed his degree in theology (*kandidaats*) in December 1861, *summa cum laude*; by September of 1862 he had turned his prize-winning essay into a doctoral dissertation.

Besides his constant financial worries (Kuyper's family was not well-off) his great fear in life was that of being stuck in a small church parish somewhere in the countryside for the rest of his life. This helped fuel his restlessness and his uncompromising study habits. Kuyper's early letters also reveal that he had an untempered will, absolute determination and relentless desire to succeed. He was often unhappy with himself, ill-at-ease in the university world, and disappointed with his fiancée's slow intellectual development. In 1863, shortly before being called to his first parish of Beesd, a small village between two branches of the Rhine, Kuyper underwent what he calls a "conversion" as a result of reading a novel by Charlotte Yonge called *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853). His four years in Beesd (1863–67) were a period in which he "worked out his salvation with fear and trembling" among the devout, though uneducated, people of this district. It was a time of unlearning some of what he had learned at university, rethinking the essentials of Christianity, and putting together the rudiments of Kuyperianism.

Besides this, Kuyper continued his earlier efforts of tracking down the writings and letters of 'A Lasco, through correspondence with and occasional trips to the great libraries of Europe. In 1866 he published a two-volume work containing over one thousand pages of writings, hundreds of letters and an extensive introduction to the life and work of 'A Lasco. While the work was well received, especially by Church historians, it did not bring him nearly as much attention as a small pamphlet he wrote the following year.

The pamphlet Kuyper published in 1867 was entitled: *Wat moeten wij doen, het stemrecht aan ons zelve houden of den kerkeraad machtigen? Vraag bij de uitvoering van Art. 23* ("What should we do, exercise the vote [in calling pastors] ourselves or authorise the church council? A question about the implementation of art. 23").¹² In thirty-four pages it discussed a topic of great interest at the time: the question as to the basis, defence and limitations of authority, in and over the Church, between the State and the Church, as well as between other institutions or entities. Much of the strength

8. Having learned English from foreign sailors, Jan Frederik was enlisted as a young man to translate tracts for an English Methodist missionary, one A. S. Thelwall (1795–1863), who had come to Amsterdam to bring the Gospel to the Jewish people. Appreciating the young man's talents, Thelwall and his Dutch associates arranged for the financing of his further education and training for the ministry.

9. "Ulfilas, Bishop of the Visigoths, and His Gothic Translation of the Bible."

10. A large selection of these letters has recently been published in G. Puchinger's *Abraham Kuyper: De jonge Kuyper* (1837–1867) (Franeker: Wever, 1987) (hereafter cited as *De jonge*).

11. J. 'A Lasco (1499–1560) was a Polish born Protestant Reformer, preacher and theologian. He was a close acquaintance of Erasmus and Cranmer. He travelled extensively, holding positions in both Holland and England.

12. (Culemborg: A. L. Blom, 1867) (hereafter cited as *Wat moeten wij doen*). This manuscript was rejected by the first publisher to whom Kuyper offered it. Discouraged, he decided to throw the piece away. Only his wife's prodding encouraged him to try again.

of the essay comes from the historical background Kuyper sketches in the process of arguing his points. It combined his learning as a Church historian, his skill as an orator, and his strong conviction as an orthodox Christian.¹³ His words struck a deep chord of resonance in a wide but as yet unified audience.¹⁴ The tract received many favourable reviews and was probably responsible for his being called later that year to the large parish of Utrecht, another university town.

One of the reasons Kuyper's treatise had such an impact was the work done previously by the senior statesman G. Groen van Prinsterer. For many years Groen van Prinsterer (1801–1876) had been an activist for Church reform and a solitary confessor of Christ in the political arena. He prepared the way for Kuyper by mobilising the evangelical wing of the Church, through his years of writing and struggle in Church and parliament. During the first decade of Kuyper's and the last of Groen's public career they worked together on a variety of projects and committees. A brief exchange of letters took place between Kuyper and Groen in 1864, but it was not until 1867 that their correspondence shows signs of a growing affinity for one another. Kuyper probably read some of Groen's writings in the important years 1864–1867.¹⁵ Although the venerable historian and political writer affected the course of Kuyper's life and thought deeply, his direct influence began only toward the very end of Kuyper's transitional phase, which is the focus of this article.¹⁶ (Other influences upon Kuyper, e.g. philosophical ones, are not examined in this article because they played a secondary role in forming Kuyper's thinking, in comparison to the early experiences and factors discussed below.)¹⁷

KUYPER'S GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

As to the general course of Kuyper's life and thought, I will now summarise some of its main features. Before his death in 1920 at the age of eighty-three, Kuyper had published innumerable scholarly works, pamphlets, newspaper editorials, and sermon collections, as well as several volumes of

13. This pamphlet is important for the purposes of this article because it marks Kuyper's transition from "liberal" to "confessional" Christianity and addresses themes which became key elements of Kuyperianism.

14. In reviewing the pamphlet, P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye mentions that Kuyper, "who was initially an adherent of the Leyden School of theology, now places himself with the orthodox party—which is the fruit of independent research and personal experience." This was quoted by Groen van Prinsterer in a letter to Kuyper, April 4, 1867. Their correspondence has been published under the title: *Briefwisseling van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer met Dr. A. Kuyper 1864–1876*, A. Coslinga (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1937). It fills nearly four hundred pages. Now also in J. L. van Essen, ed., *Briefwisseling van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer*, Vol. V (1990).

15. Groen sent Kuyper a copy of his major work *Ongeloof en Revolutie* in 1867. This work is now available in English with an extensive introduction and commentary by H. Van Dyke: *Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1989); cf. pp. 55, 83, 267.

16. I have been preparing a separate article about Groen van Prinsterer. In it I discuss Kuyper's relationship with him in detail, particularly in connection with the origin and development of the so-called "principle of sphere sovereignty."

17. This is not at all to say that there are no important philosophical or intellectual influences which worked upon Kuyper, but they go beyond the scope of this paper.

parliamentary speeches. His personal correspondence was also extensive, revealing a constant flow of ideas, plans and projects. He was an aggressive organiser active on many fronts. In 1867 he made his first plans to form an association, the *Marnix Vereeniging*, for the study of Reformation history in the Netherlands. He was active in The Christian National School Union which worked for the freedom of confessional education. Recognising the need for a well-organised political union, in 1879 he set up the country's first formal political party.¹⁸ In 1880 his Association for Reformed Higher Education realised its goal of founding a Christian university, the Free University in Amsterdam. He helped set up the *Gereformeerde Kerken* (Reformed Churches) whose membership was formed from the people and congregations who, mournfully, felt forced to leave the State-organised Church in 1886. He helped focus attention on the plight of the working classes by publishing on the issue¹⁹ and by arranging a conference in 1891. Some of his other noteworthy areas of activity found him serving as chief editor of a national daily newspaper for five decades, as an influential theologian and educator, as a member of parliament (he quit as a pastor and became an elected MP in the 1870s) and as prime minister (1901–1905). He was driven from power in 1905 in the aftermath of a railway strike.

Kuyper made significant long-term contributions towards a restructuring of State and society along pluralistic lines, respecting not only individuals and corporations but also communities of faith or persuasions.²⁰ According to him, these persuasions constituted the basic trends in State or society, such as Protestant, Roman Catholic, socialist, and each was entitled to organise freely and act publicly on a "level playing field." Each persuasion was entitled to have certain institutions of its own, for example schools and labour associations, which were to receive equal treatment from but were not to be meddled with by the State. No one community could claim to represent the national community as such. Every person belonged first of all to a persuasion contributing to the State. Hence, no group could rightfully claim that its goals and the state's goals were one and the same. While institutions such as Church or synagogue should not have control over the State, as persuasions the different communities were fully entitled to exercise their influence upon it. Kuyper believed this would vastly increase everyone's opportunities to express and live out his or her convictions in all the areas of life. The open confrontation of convictions, he thought, would show forth the truth of revealed religion all the more.

Kuyper's abiding concern was the spiritual revitalisation of the Church and the re-Christianisation of the nation. In many ways he would achieve these goals during his lifetime. However, his overpowering style, uncompromising convictions and unrelenting mental powers spawned considerable antipathy in the wake of his success. Among the

18. In fact Kuyper re-organised the so-called "Anti-Revolutionary" party along democratic lines. As a movement it had already existed for fifty years under the leadership of G. Groen van Prinsterer.

19. For example, *De Arbeiderskwestie en de Kerk*. (The Labour Question and the Church) (1871), and his 1891 lectures later translated into English as *Christianity and the Class Struggle* (Grand Rapids: Piet Hein, 1950).

20. By "persuasions" (*richtingen*) Kuyper meant the major communities to which everyone belongs by virtue of subscribing to certain religious and intellectual tenets.

many people today in his own country who otherwise feel little sympathy for this stalwart (with his ideal of Christian action on many fronts) there are those who prize his devotional writings as a storehouse of much spiritual wisdom.

THE BACKGROUND TO KUYPER'S CONVERSION

As a pastor's child Kuyper knew a lot about Christianity at an early age. From what he says later we gather that he had a strong childhood faith.²¹ He respected his father and when the time came to choose his own course of study and profession he too chose theology and the ministry. At the time Kuyper entered Leyden University its theology department was known for its "progressive" or "liberal" orientation. After two or three years of study his childhood Christian faith had been replaced by a more enlightened one in which "moralism" and "intellectualism" (neology) largely supplanted traditional Christian dogma.²² By "intellectualism" I mean the position which sees development of the intellectual life as the highest good. This orientation also took the form of "moralism" which seeks the moral improvement of the person in the apprehension and nurturing of "the divine" in the human. Kuyper's intellectual position, which he assumed at Leyden, allowed him to interpret religion (including Christianity) as providing popular forms in which these goals could be pursued by ordinary people.

The newly published correspondence casts a fascinating light on this development. In many of his letters to Johanna we can see that he is trying to initiate her into this new way of thinking about religion, especially at the time she is preparing to make her public confession of faith. He wants her to see its human side and true nature, apart from all the forms and particularities each tradition puts upon it.²³ While she is doing her best to learn from him, a certain level of resistance is apparent in her attitude towards Kuyper's persistent theologising. At some points she defers to her own pastor, who was catechising her, and feels compelled to tell Abraham that she simply disagrees with him and does not want to discuss the matter any further at the moment.

As he embraced this new approach he perceived that it was a whole way of thinking, a comprehensive view which was at stake. Not surprisingly we see in his letters a fairly consistent line of thought manifesting itself in a variety of

contexts. We find, for example, that he no longer has room for the supernatural, the transcendence of God, the divinity of Christ, the afterlife, the last judgement, or the superhuman authority of Scripture. Jesus, he says, was merely a human being, although "the divine moral consciousness which is weak and sickly in us was at work in him in full force."²⁴ On another occasion he tries to make clear to Johanna that God should not really be thought of as out there beyond the stars (transcendent), but as really only manifest in us (immanent).

Realising the problems that this way of thinking would bring when he became minister in a local Church,²⁵ he sought new meanings in the old words. Hence, even though God had now become a purely immanent "moral essence" for Kuyper (*De jonge*, p. 147), he still speaks to Johanna about "desiring to live to the Glory of God," to stand in "his service," and to seek constantly "to make one another better and holier" (*De jonge*, p. 78–9). In another letter to Johanna, dated October 18, 1858, he explains that he believes God has created humans with "a divine capacity, i.e. with the capacity to become perfect or divine. By this," he continues, "I understand not rationality but religious ethical feeling . . . the rational and religious feeling in us is God" (*De jonge*, p. 59).

As time went on, the cynical climate of university theology left Kuyper's faith intellectually parched; yet on the emotional level he was still open, even vulnerable, to things spiritual. Besides emphasising the need to be more conscious and self-aware, he also stressed the importance of listening to one's own heart. Doing so seems to have played an important role in Kuyper's conversion.

KUYPER'S CONVERSION (1863)

The story is apparently straightforward. Abraham receives a book from Johanna, a novel by Charlotte M. Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe*.²⁶ He reads it and is struck by the similarity between the temperament of Philip, a character in the novel, and his own temperament. He sees and understands Philip's demise as resulting from pride, in contrast to the weaker character, Guy, who eventually triumphs by humble faith and trust in God. Kuyper is deeply moved, repents of his own selfishness and pride, and is converted.

Determining the precise nature of Kuyper's conversion is difficult. In many ways it appears to have involved a religious "conversion" in the sense in which evangelicals

21. See *De jonge*, p. 191 and Kuyper's sermon "Een Band Voor God Ontknoopt" ("A Tie Severed Before God") (1867) in the collection: *Predicatieën, in de jaren 1867 tot 1873, tijdens zijn Predikantschap in het Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerkgenootschap, gehouden te Beesd, te Utrecht en te Amsterdam* (Sermons given in the years 1867–1873 during his pastorate in the Netherlands Reformed Church, in Beesd, Utrecht and Amsterdam) (Kampen: Kok, 1913) (hereafter cited as *Predicatieën*) p. 241.

22. In Kuyper's own words, "Initiated into the academic world, I stood defenceless and unarmed against the powers of negation which, before I had suspected anything, robbed me of my inherited faith. This faith had not rooted itself deeply in my unconverted, self-seeking mind or temperament, and thus it dried up when exposed to the burning heat of the sceptical spirit." (*Conf.* p. 35). In a letter to Groen van Prinsterer, dated April 5, 1867, Kuyper says that the "modern instruction" at Leyden University caused him "to sink away into complete neologism for four years." In a parliamentary speech made many years later he repeats this: "For years I entertained these illusions of modernism," he says in a speech in parliament *Handelingen der Staten-Generaal. Zitting van 14 Juli, 1902, Eerste Kamer*. This was quoted in J. N. Van Der Kroef's "Abraham Kuyper and the Rise of Neo-Calvinism in The Netherlands," *Church History* (Vol. XVIII, 1948) p. 317.

23. See *De jonge*, pp. 77 ff.

24. Cf. *De jonge*, pp. 146–7, 59, 79, 108. He goes on to say that Jesus "is a man and nothing but a man and only as such is his existence important to me—the man Jesus was so great and so perfect, and I, too, am intended to be thus" (*De jonge*, p. 59).

25. He mentions this problem to Johanna in a letter in 1858 (*De jonge*, p. 60). Abraham also complains to her in a letter of December 7, 1862 that some Churches do not want pastors like himself who are not orthodox (*De jonge*, p. 172).

26. Charlotte M. Yonge (1823–1901) was a Christian novelist brought up under the influence of the Oxford Movement. She spent all her life at Otterbourne near Winchester, England. She received a deep sense of devotion to the Church from her father, a close friend of John Keble, a leading figure of the Oxford Movement. Remaining single, she propagated the Christian faith through her countless novels and by teaching Sunday school. It is interesting to note that the Oxford Movement, which flourished in the 1830s and 40s under the leadership of John Keble, J. H. Newman, and E. B. Pusey, was in part a reaction to theological "liberalism." It was a revival of Anglican high church piety inspired by a new Romantic ideal of primitive Christianity.

speak of this. The main complication, however, is that he also seems to have had a strong faith as a child. Nevertheless, it is clear from his letters and his own testimony that he had strayed a long way away from the faith of his childhood, at least intellectually, during his university period, and that his “conversion” marked a turning point in his life.

In describing himself prior to his conversion, Kuyper uses the expressions “self-satisfied,” “selfish,” “striving,” “thirst for glory,” “hardhearted,” “flippant,” and “egotistical.”²⁷ Although it is hard to tell to what extent these evaluations applied to him, his letters do reveal a rather obsessive concern for success and the future, unbridled ambition, and an easily wounded pride. But he was also simply strong-willed and highly-strung. As to misdeeds of a character more specific to himself, Kuyper says that he had constructed his own religion, endorsed false virtue, and wanted to come to God on his own terms. Religion was a subject of study and trifling discussion bereft of any notion of sin, or seriousness of life. It was part of a “cool, rigid philosophy” (*Predicatie*, p. 242). He characterises his student years as a departure, a detour away from the “simple and pious” faith he once had as a child (*De jonge*, p. 191, *Predicatie*, p. 241). Nevertheless, this childhood faith was not properly adapted as he grew up: it was left “too long without forming a transition to the world and to adolescence—and then came the shock—the childhood faith collapsed . . .” (*De jonge*, p. 192). Later he says, “My being brought to Christ did not come about as a gentle transition from a childlike piety to a blessed feeling of salvation, but required a complete change in my personality, in heart, will and understanding. This makes it understandable that the specific life circumstances which worked together to this end made a particularly deep impression on me and with my conversion determined the direction which my spiritual life had to take” (*Con.*, p. 35–36). In a letter to Johanna he confesses that he once tried to destroy that same picture of God in her which he himself had possessed during his childhood. “As a man,” says Kuyper, “I found that image again in the good Guy [the character in *The Heir of Redclyffe*] . . . He taught me how one, also as a grown man, could have a childlike faith” (*De jonge*, p. 192).

Yonge’s character Philip spoke deeply to Kuyper’s relentless striving for success, to his fear of failure and to his desire to be better than all his peers. He came to the conclusion that what he was anxious about could never be supplied or satisfied by any of his own efforts. He experienced Philip’s defeat in the story as “a judgement upon [Kuyper’s] own striving and character,” (*Conf.*, p. 41). Somehow Philip showed Kuyper his own spiritual poverty, bringing him to his knees and crushing his heart” (*Conf.*, p. 41–2).

Abraham speaks to Johanna about Guy as if he were a real person to whom he owed an incalculable debt. The contrast of the two characters struck Kuyper in an extraordinary way, breaking down his pride and “opening up [his] heart” (*De jonge*, p. 186). He gave up his attempts to order things in his own way and found a new openness and peace with God—a God he had not known in his own theological system. He now spoke of a God outside of himself, one who sometimes stood against him, one who spoke, acted and existed on his own terms. The recognition that his life had been going in the wrong direction was a humbling experience and Kuyper took it and its consequences very seriously.

27. *De jonge*, p. 186, *Predicatie*, p. 241, and *Conf.* pp. 40–41.

This meant that he had a lot of intellectual backtracking to do, especially in his thinking about God. The process was difficult and painful and came at a moment when he had to go on speaking and expressing what he believed, namely in his newly assumed work as preacher in the village of Beesd.

One aspect of this conversion is especially noteworthy. Through reflection upon his own experiences, Kuyper came to see an interconnection among the previous ideas or attitudes he had held.²⁸ He looked back upon himself not merely as a sinner haphazardly ignoring God and violating his law, but as one who had had his own starting point, worldview,²⁹ and principle of unity. In other words, there was an underlying pattern in his thought which manifested itself in all its elements. Kuyper expresses this in terms of there being a “line” or a “direction” in our lives and thought.³⁰ There are “two directions, two paths,” he claims, “open to everyone. Each has its own principle and in the systematic development from that principle, the one necessarily flows forth out of the other, which is a constant order of thought whose internal power and coherence really marks it as a life direction . . . starting from a . . . spiritual orientation of the human heart” (*Predicatie*, 1867, p. 239).

RURAL CALVINISM

This process of transition from a liberal to a confessional Christianity was assisted in an unusual way through his congregation in Beesd. There was a group of people there, mostly unlettered farmers, apparently known by some as the “malcontents” (*Conf.*, p. 44), who had a depth of faith and knowledge of Scripture which confounded the young pastor. They were rural Calvinists still living out of the Reformation tradition in this isolated district, nestled between two branches of the Rhine. These people held fast to the faith by insisting upon the use of the Canons of Dordt, the Heidelberg Catechism and the other articles of faith.³¹ In their ungrammatical speech Kuyper says he recognised the voice of the Genevan Reformer, with whom he had become familiar while writing his prize-winning essay.

In the course of his regular pastoral visits Kuyper came to the house of a young woman, only seven years his senior, who had been staying away from church and was at first

28. See *Wat moeten wij doen*, pp. 28–29, where Kuyper first speaks of “direction,” the “coherence of people’s ideas” and of “a man being a unity and living for his principles.”

29. The term “worldview” is taken from his farewell sermon given four years after his conversion, *Predicatie*, p. 238. The term, as we shall see later in this paper, became an important and regular item in Kuyper’s thought and vocabulary after 1867.

30. In his farewell sermon he publicly acknowledges that when he arrived in Beesd (1863) he did not have very much to give his (first) congregation since he had just come to a turning-point in his own spiritual development.

31. While few specific details are known about these people they formed one of many Bible-centred house groups (conventicles) which existed in The Netherlands at the time. Their place and influence was increased by the revival that began in Switzerland under the teaching of Robert Haldane in 1817, and which spread to The Netherlands in the 1820s, the so-called *Reveil*. Back in 1834, another congregation in a remote part of the far North of the country had helped its pastor in a similar way, to turn back to this confessional faith, viz., H. de Cock in Ulrum, Groningen. De Cock became leader of the Reformed people who seceded from the State-organised Church in 1834 (the *Afscheiding*). Many of his followers eventually emigrated to North America.

unwilling to receive him.³² When Kuyper enquired as to the reason for her absence she replied forthrightly that it was that he was not preaching the pure word of God. She went on to show Kuyper, her persevering pastor, what he had missed in Holy Scripture and in the Reformed confessions of faith. Kuyper reports that he had many such “discussions” with her and other members of this group, including the headmaster of the local school. He sensed the presence here of a Church which had stood the test of centuries. In these simple folk he encountered a cogent Christian faith, a seriousness of conviction and a “well-ordered worldview” (*Conf.*, p. 45) of the kind he had never met with before. They forced him to choose between “full sovereign grace,” as they put it, and the escape hatch of the free thought he had still been keeping open for himself. Says Kuyper: “Their obduracy became a blessing for my heart and the rising of the morning star for my life”; “I had grasped but had not yet found the Word of reconciliation” (*Conf.*, p. 45). The change was crowned and completed by a new and extensive reading of the works of John Calvin and other Church reformers.

Many things are remarkable about this story. First of all, it was people of the rural Netherlands (in the Betuwe region) who taught their future leader some of his most important lessons. Secondly, this experience cemented his affinity with them, “the little people,” who were to become his most faithful supporters. The bond between them and Kuyper was a source of mutual strength and encouragement, and continued so throughout his long career as preacher, teacher and national leader. Thirdly, this affinity with the uneducated country folk was not merely an external connection but took root in Kuyper’s personality, style and faith. He was willing to be taught by uneducated people who had conviction born of Scripture and wisdom born of life. They gave him more than the learned theologians of the university had done.³³

KUYPER’S DISCOVERY

Now we come to the final scene in Kuyper’s working out of Kuyperianism. While serving as pastor in Beesd, and still in his process of transition, Kuyper read a book just published (1864) by his former professor, J. H. Scholten, entitled *Het Evangelie naar Johannes. Kritisch Historisch Onderzoek* (“The Gospel of John: An Historical Critical Investigation”).³⁴ Reading this book gave rise to the insight and courage which he needed to break once and for all with his “modernist” past, freeing him from much of the power of the “liberalism” which he had previously imbibed. Kuyper tells us about this some years later, in a footnote to his critical treatise *Het Modernisme, een Fata Morgana op Christelijk Gebied* (“Modernism, a Fata Morgana on Christian Ground”).³⁵

As far as I have been able to reconstruct it, the story goes

32. Her name was Pietje Baltus (1830–1914). She followed Kuyper’s career with interest throughout the rest of her life, though she did not always agree with his political activism. Cf. *De jonge*, p. 207–211.

33. His basic orientation remained close to everyday life where God could be glorified through ordinary work. M. R. Langley expresses this for the political realm in his book title: *The Practice of Political Spirituality: Episodes from the Public Career of Abraham Kuyper, 1879–1918* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1984).

34. (Leyden: Akademische Bockhandel van P. Engels, 1864).

35. (Amsterdam: Hoeverker and Zoon, 1871) (hereafter cited as *Modernism*) This booklet has never been translated into English al-

like this. At the time that Kuyper was studying in Leyden (circa 1858) and attending lectures, his professor, Scholten, in spite of his “liberalism,” was still teaching the Johannine authorship of the Gospel of John. According to Kuyper, Scholten had given various reasons for holding this view, for example, “so historical were the persons, so internally cogent, so clearly did everything bear the mark of naturalness and authenticity” (*Modernism*, p. 73), that the Fourth Gospel had to have been written by the Apostle John. Given his close acquaintance with Scholten’s views and arguments it came as quite a shock to Kuyper to find that in his new book (1864) Scholten had totally changed his position on the authorship of John. Naturally Kuyper was interested in knowing how such a radical and swift change of views had come about.

Kuyper’s recent experience had taught him firsthand that there was more at stake in one’s view of God and Scripture than the results of scholarly study alone. In reading Scholten’s new book Kuyper was struck by this and by something Scholten said in the Foreword. Evidently, Scholten’s new position was influenced by a change in his worldview. “Professor Scholten himself acknowledges,” Kuyper writes, “that the main reason for his divergent results is the transition he had made in recent years from a Platonic to a more Aristotelian worldview,” (*Modernism*, p. 73, note 52). In this Foreword Scholten says that scholarship in recent years has seen a shift towards the empirical and away from ideal-historical and metaphysical constructions. He is interested in what really happened, interested in the historical Jesus and not in the stories told about him. The task of the historian is to examine critically the reports of facts. Scholten says that his views on John changed as he came to see that “the worldview of the Fourth Gospel writer . . . no longer fits into the frame of our contemporary worldview, which rests on an empirical basis” (*Het Evangelie naar Johannes*, [1864], p. iv).

Undoubtedly Kuyper interpreted Scholten’s statement in a different way than Scholten had intended, namely, as a basic religious attitude influencing the results of one’s academic work. Unlike Kuyper, Scholten was thinking only about the advancement and correctness of the new “empirically” based worldview which science now rested upon and not about the systematic implications of his statement. At this point, however, Kuyper seized upon the universal structural significance of what Scholten says, namely that a worldview is something which influences scholarship and in this case led Scholten to such a profound and rapid change in views. Kuyper states that, “Through the reading of this book, supplemented by my memories of his enthusiastic delivery of lectures, which made such a deep impression on me, the authority of modern criticism was undone for me” (*Modernism*, p. 73). In other words, he came to the conclusion that it was primarily a change in “worldview,” occasioned by what Scholten calls the new outlook “of our time” and the understanding that the outlook of the Gospel writer(s) was based on an antiquated worldview, that caused Scholten to see the Fourth Gospel in a new light and to draw a new and contrary conclusion about its authorship. “With this,” Kuyper notes, “Scholten recognizes an a priori as the guiding star of his criticism” (*Modernism*, p. 73).

though it was translated into German as early as 1872: *Die moderne Theologie (der Modernismus) eine Fata Morgana auf Christlichen Gebiet* (Zuerich: G. Hoehre, 1872).

Kuyper does not conclude from this, however, that Scholten is a poor scholar doing substandard work. Quite to the contrary, he concludes that Scholten has candidly, if inadvertently, disclosed something of vital importance about every scholar, namely that he or she is dependent upon a worldview. A worldview influences and helps the scholar to conceive and work out new theories and ideas. This recognition of what he calls the “a priori,” central role that worldviews play in scholarly activity gave Kuyper the courage he required to disagree with an older, more learned scholar like Scholten. By breaking with him he broke with “modern” theology as such. Kuyper’s discovery helped him to resist the powerful influence of the intellectual trends of his day.

CONCLUSIONS

It is now time to return to the question posed at the outset of this article, How did Kuyper become a Kuyperian? Although I do not pretend to be able to answer this question fully, I have tried to show that the main source from which Kuyperianism sprang was Kuyper’s discovery that human obedience or disobedience to God expressed itself in terms of a direction, course or pattern of life. He first noticed such a pattern while reflecting on his own pre-conversion thought and action. During his period of transition from a liberal to a confessional Christianity, while living in Beesd, he started thinking about the derivation of such patterns. Sometime

around 1865 he came to the conclusion that they resulted from the influence of worldviews. While he did not define “worldview” at the time,³⁶ he associated it with a primary set of attitudes about God and the world expressed in (internally unified) answers to the basic questions of life. Hence, he saw religion and worldview as inseparable.³⁷ As such, religion necessarily involves a universal vision of reality which cannot be limited to a private realm but must play a crucial role in thought and action. This means that there is no neutral ground anywhere in life or society but that every terrain is occupied by a religious principle, Christian or otherwise.

Kuyper’s conviction that there is a worldview implicit in each religious persuasion, as well as an underlying unity within a person’s thoughts and beliefs, led him to conclude that in order to be faithful to Christ, the sovereign Lord, we should try to work out Christian ideas and plans of action in all spheres of life. Kuyperianism arose with the recognition of the coherence of things, the inter-coherence of our thinking and believing, and the unity of faith. This awareness drove Kuyper in his many-sided attempts to organise Christian scholarship and action and to develop alternative “Christian” approaches and institutions—all for the greater glory of God. *C&S*

36. He did not really do so until 1898 when he gave his famous Stone lectures at Princeton University, *Calvinism* (Amsterdam: Hoeveker and Wormser Ltd., New York: Fleming H. Revell company, 1899) later published as *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 12th ed.

37. Cf. “Wat moeten wij doen . . .” (1867) p. 30.

ISLAM—RELIGION OF VIOLENCE OR PEACE? SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

by *Christine Schirrmacher* †

AFTER the acts of terrorism in New York and the menace of further planned acts in Europe and the United States, we are asked to take a stand as to how we see Islam. People are shaken and feel helpless in the face of these events. Why in the world would someone do something like this? Is Islam a religion that teaches violence? Or are these deeds just the wrongdoing of some fanatical terrorists who misunderstood Islam and used it as an excuse for their actions?

It is right to emphasise that we should not make the Muslims as such responsible for acts of terrorism in general. Panic, prejudice and discrimination, as well as looking only

in one direction, will not help us to understand the background to these events. During this time it is very important to continue considering our apolitical, peaceful Turkish neighbour as our companion and fellow citizen, and not regard him as an enemy. Many Muslims themselves have condemned these acts of terrorism.

Turkey and Germany have traditionally had good relations throughout the history of the twentieth century. Germany has had a few colonies, but has never been a colonial power such as France or England have been, for example, so Muslim wounds from the past may be not as deep *vis-à-vis* Germany as they are with some other countries. And Turkish Islam is in many respects less political than Arabic Islam. Most Turkish Muslims live an apolitical life.

We cannot speak of *the* Muslims any more than we can speak of *the* Christians. The majority of the Muslims, i.e. 90 per cent, are Sunni Muslims, 8–9 per cent are Shi’ite, followed by several smaller groups such as the Alawites, Druze, Yezidis, Ahmadiyya, Baha’i or the Ahl-i haqq. Their

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dogmas and beliefs differ strongly from each other and from orthodox Sunni Islam.

In Germany Islam is predominantly Turkish and most Turks adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam. Of 3.3 million Muslims in Germany about 2.1 million are of Turkish descent (including minorities like the Kurds, Armenians etc.). Turkish Islam differs significantly from Arabic or Iranian Islam because of the official separation of religion and State in Turkey. And last, but not least, the majority of all Muslims worldwide do not live in the Arabic countries of the Near East, but in Southeast Asia, in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India.

Peaceful and violent passages in the Koran

The Koran contains verses that speak of peace, peace-making, forgiveness and God's grace, although these verses deal mostly with peace among Muslims themselves (49:10) or with peace that the (Muslim) believer will find in paradise. (56:26; 15:47). Other Koran texts speak of violence and even command it: "O Prophet! Make war against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal sternly with them. Hell shall be their home—a hapless journey's end!" (surah 66:9 and others). The unanswered question is: to whom is this command of violence directed and at what time or under what circumstances should it be applied?

Among Muslim theologians there is a broad variety of different opinions about the answer to this question: there are those who are totally against violence and refer to verses in the Koran that speak of a (peaceful) call to the Muslim faith, and there are those who think that after a certain period of peaceful testifying they may also apply methods of combat against non-believers. There are also groups that want to turn the structures of the Western world upside down, obtaining the same rights as the Christian Churches, but would reject the use violence as a means of achieving their goals.

Another problem is that Islam does not have any higher authority that is entitled to speak for all or most Muslims, and it does not have any written confession. Nor does it have any general council or creed that defines and specifies what is considered to be "Islamic" or "non-Islamic" which would be accepted by the majority or all of the Islamic groups.

Muslims and Islamism in Germany

The majority of the Muslims in Germany live and think apolitically. But among the Turkish Muslims there are also extremist Islamic groups that are under the observation of the German State. For the majority of the Muslims Islam is above all a religion and a way of life, a combination of religion, culture and traditions (religious laws, feasts and holidays). Many Turkish Muslims are secularised and hardly follow the "Five Pillars" of the Muslim faith (confession of faith, five daily prayers, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage to Mecca).

For Islamic groups represented in Germany and all over Europe, Islam has a political as well as a social dimension, which they hope to proclaim in Europe and worldwide. Their goal is to infiltrate society with their own laws and values and change Western society into an Islamic society by achieving equal rights with other religious groups before the law, by getting official recognition of Islam as the third

largest religious group and claiming and making use of all the freedom Western law guarantees them to live their lives according to the cultural and religious values of Islam. These groups are under observation by the German State because they express in their deeds and words their wish to create a new State according to the principles of the Koran and "sunna" (Muhammed's way of living, his decisions and opinions on various issues as they are reported in the traditions, the "hadith"). These ideals so clearly differ from the main ideals and values of a free democracy that these groups are considered enemies of democracy by the German State. Some terrorist groups have already had clashes and confrontations with German State authorities.

THE TEACHING OF JIHAD

The Arabic word *jihad* does not mean "Holy War," but "to make an effort," "to strive," i.e. to make an effort to spread Islam and the truth of the message of the Koran—as Muslims see it—on God's path. This "effort on the path of God" or "effort for the sake of God" (Arab. *jahada fi sabil allah*) can be interpreted as a peaceful proclamation of Islam as well as war and conflict.

What does the Koran teach about Jihad?

The Koran uses the word *jihad* in several places. The meaning of *jihad* can vary as to the time when it is used. In the "Meccan period," i.e. the early period of Islam and the years of Muhammad's first prophecies, about 610–622 A.D., when he still lived in his hometown of Mecca, the emphasis was on a peaceful proclamation of Islam. During this early period, Muhammad was desperately struggling for recognition and could not even think of the possibility of a violent encounter with the non-believers since in the city of Mecca his opponents were the vast majority while he was well aware of his own political weakness.

In the "Medinian period," after a group of the first adherents to Islam fled from Mecca to the neighbouring city of Medina in 622 A.D., the word *jihad* acquired a new meaning. Muhammad increasingly gained recognition and power in Medina, and in his new position as religious leader and military ruler he could easily go to war against three of the biggest Jewish tribes living in Medina and several Arabic tribes in and around the city. Here the word *jihad* came increasingly to mean "fight" or "combat." Surah 47:4 expresses this well: "When you meet in battle those who do not believe, strike off their heads and, when you have routed them, bind them in bonds. And afterwards either grant them freedom or take a ransom from them . . . As for those who are slain in the way of Allah, He will not suffer their works to perish." According to surah 49:15 the willingness to fight in the *jihad* demonstrates whether someone has true faith: "The true believers are those only who believe in Allah and his messenger, and never doubt, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere."

The Paradise for martyrs

The Muslim tradition praises *jihad*: "*Jihad* is one of the gates to Paradise," or "*jihad* is an act of pure devotion" (to Allah). Such verses seem to promise that the martyr may

enter Paradise because he has fought in the *jihad*. In many places the Koran seems to express the notion that when a martyr dies he may enter paradise straight away: "When you meet in battle those who do not believe, strike off their heads . . . And those who are slain in the way of Allah, He will not suffer their works to perish. He will guide them and improve their state, and bring them into the Garden [of Paradise], which he has made known to them" (surah 47:4–6).

Suicide commandos have always existed outside of Islam, e.g. the Japanese Kamikaze pilots in World War II. But Islam has a certain potential to produce suicide commandos because Muslim tradition promises that *jihad* is one of the gates to Paradise. Such promises express clearly the notion that suicide attacks are linked with eternal salvation, whereas a believer who has not engaged in *jihad* can never be certain as to whether he will really be saved or not, since Allah is almighty and unpredictable and the final decision is up to him.

Jihad in the time of Muhammad

There is no doubt among Muslim theologians that after moving to Medina in 622 A.D. (the *hijra*) Muhammad began waging war against those who did not accept Islam or recognise him as God's messenger. From 622 A.D. on, Muhammad considered the Jews to be the greatest enemies of Islam, but increasingly also the Christians and different Arab tribes who did not surrender to him were seen as enemies.

The Jews were regarded mainly as political adversaries by Muhammad. He considered them a menace because of their large numbers, and they brought ridicule on him because they did not accept his claim to be a messenger of God. He chased them out of Medina, killed several hundred men, even after they had surrendered, and sold many women and children into slavery.

For a long time Muhammad expected the Christians to accept his preachings. When his hopes were not fulfilled, his initial positive impression concerning their piety, love and humility turned to rejection. He now condemned the Christians because of their belief in the Trinity and the sonship of Jesus, which in Muhammad's eyes was polytheism and idolatry.

Since the number of the Christians was comparatively small, Muhammad did not attack them in battle, but only condemned them theologically, calling them "non-believers" who are awaiting the fires of hell: "Certainly those who say: Allah is Christ, the son of Mary, do not believe . . . Allah has forbidden Paradise to whoever ascribes partners to Allah. His abode is the fire. No one shall help evildoers. Those who say 'Allah is one of three' do not believe, for there is no God except One God. If they do not desist from repeating their word [of blasphemy], verily a grievous chastisement will befall those among them who do not believe" (5:72–73).

Muhammad acknowledged that Jews and Christians had received a revelation from God and consequently did not perceive them in the same light as Arab polytheists. But according to Muhammad, as time went by Jews and Christians had changed and falsified their revelation. The Koran also warns the Muslims not to have Christians as friends: "O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors. They are but friends and protectors

to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them [for friendship] is of them. Verily Allah does not guide wrongdoers" (5:51).

THE "HOUSE OF WAR" AFTER MUHAMMAD'S DEATH

In the eleventh century the famous Sunni Muslim theologian al-Mawardi developed a theory that has won wide recognition in the Muslim world and is still accepted today. Al-Mawardi divided the world into two parts: the "House of Islam" (Arabic: *dar al-islam*), where Islam and its laws are established, and the "House of War" (Arabic: *dar al-harb*), where Islamic rule has not yet been established.

This division is found neither in the Koran nor in Muslim traditions. In theory the "House of Islam" is in constant war against the "House of War." This is a just war, a *jihad*, until the "House of War" has been conquered and turned into the "House of Islam." The "House of War" has no right to exist as such side by side with the "House of Islam" and shall be transformed into the "House of Islam" as soon as possible.

Peace with the "House of War"

Muslim theologians hold that there can be a cease in fighting for a while, as the historic example of Muhammad shows, who at times when a victory seemed impossible made a peace treaty with his enemies. For example, the well-known "treaty of Hudaibiya" in the year 628 with the Meccans guaranteed a period of peace for ten years. But Muhammad did not feel obliged to keep this treaty, since in the coming year, 629, he realised that he could conquer his enemies and so broke the peace treaty at the battle of Hunayn. He was victorious and, finally, free to return to his birthplace, Mecca, which had previously been impossible because of the constant hostility of the Meccans. Obviously, Muhammad did not consider this treaty as something binding since it was only a treaty with "non-believers" from his point of view.

The invitation to Islam—Islamic Da'wa

Islam is a very active missionary religion that is continually inviting non-Muslims to convert to Islam. This "invitation" is also considered to be some sort of *jihad* because conversions mean extension of Islam. Today the call to Islam (in Arabic: *Da'wa*) goes out in form of literature and tracts given out at book-exhibitions and on student campuses in discussion groups at universities, by distributing the Koran, by pro-Islamic web-pages on the Internet, youth camps, sport groups, women's meetings, magazines, books, joining Christian meetings and trying to promote Islam there, visiting prisoners in jails and building friendships etc. Also special invitations to mosques at certain days and inter-cultural/inter-religious marriages are a tool to spread Islam because the wife in such a marriage often converts to Islam. In some countries, especially in Africa, social aid programs (schools, hospitals etc.) are restricted to Muslims or are only available for those who convert to Islam.

Extremist politically active groups who hold that the "call to Islam" is also directed to the West and apply the theory of the division between the "House of War" and the

“House of Islam” draw the conclusion that the time has come now for political action.

The position of the “People of the Book” (Jews and Christians) in Islam

Jews and Christians, the “People of the Book,” as the Koran calls them (in Arabic: *ahl al-kitab*), have always had a special position in countries conquered by Islam. They were considered “protégés” (in Arabic: *Dhimmis*), that is, they were not forced to convert to Islam personally but had to pay a certain amount of money as a poll tax (in Arabic: *Jizya*) and at times also a land tax (in Arabic: *haradj*). This was a way of buying freedom from the demand to convert to Islam (according to surah 9:29).

Many written sources tell us that the Muslim rulers tried hard to minimise the number of the Christian minority groups and to offer advantages to those who converted to Islam. Christians were always second class citizens, usually in minor positions, often humiliated and barely tolerated. They were never accepted as equal partners. In different Muslim countries and times Jews and Christians were treated differently. In some places they could sometimes live in peace. But usually there was pressure, few rights and sometimes violence against Christians—for example, the assault and murder of Christians in Indonesia and Upper Egypt, which were excused by the claim that Christians had provoked these conflicts by improper behaviour.

Because Christians and Jews and their “idolatrous” faith have no right to exist as such according to many leading Muslim theologians, because of Muhammad’s example of the way he treated the “people of the book,” because of the many Koran verses commanding the use of violence or the call to non-believers to convert to Islam, and because of the different theories and opinions of Muslim theologians resulting from all this, conditions under which non-Muslims live will be different in different Muslim countries. However, they will always have an underprivileged status in the Muslim world, and their human and civil rights will be curtailed or even threatened. The State does not always redress injustices perpetrated against non-believers. Although many Islamic countries are trying to clamp down on the activities of extremist Islamic groups because they are a menace even to their own governments, they are less eager to protect underprivileged groups as such.

JIHAD TODAY

If we apply the pattern used by Islamic groups to divide the world into the “House of Islam” and the “House of War” literally, then the Western world is probably considered to be the “House of War,” although this does not mean automatically that there has to be armed conflict. From the extremist point of view the non-Muslim world does not have any right to exist as such. This perspective is confirmed, in the eyes of the extremists, by the moral decay of the Western world.

“The House of the Contract”

There are also Muslim theologians who believe that Germany and the rest of the Western States are not part of the “House of War,” and can even be considered to be almost Muslim countries as long as Muslims are allowed to

practise their faith freely in these countries and have the same rights as other citizens. Other theologians think that today only a peaceful spread of Islam is legitimate.

Jihad of the heart and tongue

There is considerable controversy among Muslim theologians over the question of whether this war should be pursued today, and if so in what way. Some theologians, especially mystics and some Shi’ite theologians, believe that true *jihad* means that one lives one’s daily life according to the laws of Islam and takes its laws seriously. This would be the “*jihad* of the heart and of the tongue and of the hands,” which is, according to them, superior to the *jihad* of the sword.

The problem is the wide variation and contradiction in Islamic practice. For example: Muhammad’s treatment of non-believers, (peaceful preaching initially, then conquest); the existence of various Koran passages favouring either peaceful proclamation of Islam or military confrontation; the varying practices of Muslim rulers in treating non-Muslims; the lack of a higher teaching authority in the Muslim world; and also the continually changing internal and external political circumstances in the Muslim world. This has produced many different interpretations of the duty to engage in *jihad*. Politically active groups can justify their deeds by verses from the Koran that call the Muslim to engage in violence (*jihad* of the sword), while mystics and those who consider the inward search for God to be the very essence of Islam and emphasise the peaceful purposes of *jihad* can also claim to follow the “true” Islamic path.

TERRORIST ATTACKS AND THE WESTERN WORLD: DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF EAST AND WEST

Those who have heard Muslims condone the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, may be surprised at the emergence of some sort of alternative explanation among other Muslims, for example the belief that the attack was the work of Zionists or Mossad, the CIA, the American Mafia etc. “Now they want to blame the Arab world for the catastrophe,” one Egyptian said in an interview. And this is not an isolated case. It is the view of many Muslims in the Near and Middle East. It has been insinuated that America or Israel destroyed the World Trade Center in order to frame the Muslim world and provide America with an excuse to attack Islam. In the press there was even a notice stating that 400 (or 4000) Jews skipped work in the World Trade Center on September 11 because the Jews knew about the attacks beforehand.

The superiority of Islam

One of the reasons for such theories can be found in the Muslim or Near Eastern world-view, which differs significantly from the Western perspective. Already in the Koran we find the statement that the Muslims “. . . are the noblest community ever raised up for mankind” (3:110), thus separating Muslims from Christians and Jews. Muhammad is, according to the Muslims, the last and most important prophet, who was already proclaimed by Adam, Abraham, Moses and even by Jesus! Muhammad calls all, even the Christians, to convert to the true religion of Islam. Islam is

considered the first religion of mankind, which has existed from eternity and is the only religion that will exist in eternity because “the only true faith in God’s sight is Islam” (3:19).

Western society as a bad example

It is very hard for politically active Muslims to accept the fact that the West is more powerful than the Muslim world. The West has economic and the military power. According to some extremists the West is not entitled to be a world ruler, either for religious reasons or for moral reasons. Not for religious reasons because Christianity, with which the West is identified, is a religion that will only exist for a certain time, while Islam is the best, most reasonable, holiest, most moral and eternal religion, and most pleasing to God. And the West does not possess, for moral reasons, the right to rule the world, since Islamists are well aware of—as they perceive it—the omnipresent immorality of Western society (homosexuality, prostitution, abortion, divorce, families falling apart etc.). Therefore they conclude that Islam is the answer for such immorality. Western society is considered wicked, pluralistic and evil, a society which has no orientation and whose collapse is imminent.

In the eyes of many Islamic groups the West is ready to be conquered by Islam. They just do not agree on the means to be used to convert Western societies. Some want to accomplish this by peaceful proselytising, others fight for recognition and equal rights for Islam, and still others think that it is time to free the world of the “unfair” and “unjust” rule of the Western world, even if that means war.

The dilemma of the Muslim world

Another almost unknown mind-set of some Islamic groups lies in their deep-rooted feelings of inferiority to and humiliation by the West. The time of colonialism, which is seen as a direct continuation of the crusades, is still very present in the East’s memory. Many Muslims today consider the intervention of the United States in the Muslim world as a continuation or repetition of the past oppression. This idea seems to be confirmed when the United States supports different Muslim groups that are in conflict with each other—e.g. the US policy pursued during the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, when the USA supported the Taliban, who are now their adversaries. Even economic and infrastructural aid programmes are considered by these groups as a wilful humiliation inflicted by the West

One of the worst of these humiliations was the United States’ support for Saudi-Arabia in the Gulf War in 1991. It was a shock to the Saudi-Arabian population, especially those people who have no access to Western ideas or the Western lifestyle. The American soldiers entered their country as non-Muslims, as Christians, with Bibles, which are forbidden in Saudi-Arabia, and perhaps they brought alcohol, pork and blood with them, which would make the country ritually unclean. Perhaps some of them lived in extra-marital relationships, which are absolutely forbidden by Islamic law. As soldiers they did not respect the Saudi-Arabian clothing regulations, and even brought women soldiers along, who drove cars, something absolutely forbidden for Saudi-Arabian women at this time. Saudi-Arabia was in the dilemma of being in desperate need of the help of the West, yet at the same time it has to condemn the Western immoral lifestyle and the Christian religion.

Osama bin Laden gave an interview about the American intervention in the Gulf war in which he stated: “Without doubt, this underhand attack is a proof that Great Britain and America have been sent by the Jews and the State of Israel to split up the Muslim world again, to enslave them and to rob them . . . Now in the country where Mohammed was born and the Koran was revealed to him, we meet Non-believers everywhere . . . The situation is very serious. The rulers have lost their power. We Muslims should fulfil our duty, since the rulers of this region have resigned [themselves] to this situation. These countries belong to Islam, and not to those who rule here.” These words express the helplessness of the humiliated “victim” facing the “invasion” of an illegitimate power.

Pakistan is facing the same conflict now. Their military ruler Perwez Musharraf is trying to side with the West, but at the same time has to explain to his own people and Pakistan’s Islamic majority why he prefers to associate with a Western government instead of choosing the solidarity and Muslim brotherhood of Afghanistan.

There is no wonder that in the eyes of many Muslims Israel, as a Jewish State,—and the Jews are already harshly condemned and despised in the Koran—now under the protection of mighty America, is a real problem. This is so for Islam in general, and even more so for the extremists. Therefore conspiracy theories emerge that sound so illogical to the West. In order to understand this we need to take a look at the world-view of extreme Islamic groups.

The Near Eastern understanding of honour and disgrace

The Near Eastern understanding of honour and disgrace plays an important role in the Muslims’ way of thinking. The superiority of the West and the helplessness of the Muslim world is considered to be a loss of honour. We hardly understand in the West how important the concept of honour is in the Near East, and by what means this honour is endangered. Honour is more important than life. Women are responsible for the honour of a family. Through their behaviour they either maintain or destroy the honour of their families. If a woman has endangered the honour of her family, there is nothing she can do to get it back. Her husband, father, brother or uncle has to win the family’s honour back, and this is always connected with drastic measures, which may even include killing one’s wife, mother, sister or niece.

One example of a drastic reaction to public disgrace and loss of honour was demonstrated in an interview with the father of one of the suspected terrorists, one of the pilots of the aeroplanes that crashed into the World Trade Center. Muhammad al-Atta’s father, who was said to have lost touch with his son for one and a half years, got very angry and annoyed when he was confronted with the suspicion that his son could have had something to do with the hijacking of the aeroplanes. He had been seen the evening before in a bar, drinking alcohol. Impossible! “That would be the same as if a devout veiled virgin brought prostitutes into Egypt!” This allusion to sexuality makes clear to all Arab ears how deeply insulted he felt. Muhammad al-Atta’s father felt that he had lost face in public because of these direct accusations. Open disgrace because of suspicion uttered by the West will always cause very strong reactions.

Because in the Muslim world a family tries very hard not

to lose its honour—and no one can live without having honour—one of the family's defence mechanisms is to blame others for problems that would cause such a loss of honour. Unsolved problems and conflicts in the Near East (shortage of jobs, crisis in education, missing infrastructure, corruption, overpopulation, economic inefficiency) are blamed on the existence of the supposed conspiracy of the Western world against the Muslim world. It is believed that the West is trying to harm and even destroy the Near East. This is why we hear of the many conspiracy theories in connection with the terrorists attacks, which to non-Muslims sound illogical.

CONCLUSIONS

It is a fact that many crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity. Innocent people have been killed and the crusades cannot be denied. But these “religious wars”—so to say—have always been in contrast to biblical teaching as well as to the one who calls himself the “Prince of Peace.” Christian mission in its very essence should never be anything other than a loving invitation, through our words and deeds towards our neighbours, to the only one who can give true love to mankind. “He who lives by the sword, shall die by the sword” and “Put back your sword” (Mt. 26:52) are not just the last words of Jesus Christ before he was captured and put to death, but also underline the Christian message, which stands against all forms of violence and teaches respect for others. Yes, it even teaches one to esteem one's own brother higher than oneself!

Christians, sadly, have to agree with parts of the analysis of the illnesses of Western society uttered by Muslim theologians. But peace in society will never be achieved by means of the sword, through the repression of minorities and the establishing of Islamic law over mankind. Only when people find peace with God and with themselves will they also be capable of living in peace with their neighbours.

For terrorist groups on the other hand it is easy to interpret certain passages in the Koran as calls to violence and war against non-believers. They consider these passages to be valid for today, and find support for their views in the example of Muhammad's treatment of his enemies. At the moment these groups feel that the Muslim world is suffering from another “humiliation,” for which the decadent West is called to account.

As long as the West does not understand the categories in which these extreme Islamic groups think little can be done to avoid further attacks. In the last 40 years since Muslim workers have come to Germany and have grown to 3.3 million (because of their high birth rates and family reunification), we have not generally tried hard enough to understand the theological and ideological background of the different groups, and we have definitely not invested enough in personal relationships.

Initially the concept of the “guest worker,” who would sooner or later return to his home country, hindered the development of the necessary concepts for integration, but even when it became clear that the majority of the Muslims of the second and third generation living in Germany in the 80s and 90s would not return to their homelands we still did not change our attitude toward “guest workers.”

At the same time many Muslims became more and more reserved and withdrew from German society. In Great Britain a parallel society has already emerged. Muslims demand that Muslim citizens be judged according to Islamic law, not according to British law. Integration seems to have failed here.

It seems imperative that we start thinking in new categories, and to try to find new solutions for living together. Christians should think about how they can handle the challenge of Islam as it is being presented in Europe, cultivate relationships with others and get themselves well informed about Islam, as well as inviting their Muslim neighbours to meet the “Prince of Peace.” *C&S*

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A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE STATE (CIVIL GOVERNMENT)[†]

by Stephen C. Perks

Dt. 17:14–20; Rom. 13:1–7; Mt. 28:18–20

I. INTRODUCTION

IN Mt. 28:18–20 we are told that all power and authority¹ have been committed to Jesus Christ. This is perhaps one of the most widely known yet least understood statements in Scripture. Every Christian will immediately recognise it and be able to find it in the Bible. Yet it is one of the most ignored teachings of the Bible. Whole theologies are built on the negation of this very teaching. For example, I heard a sermon preached at a Reformed church recently in which the preacher assured the congregation that the Christian warfare is a matter of the “spiritual” life, that it is in the “spiritual” realm that we engage with evil powers and seek to stand for Christ and overcome by means of the gospel. The congregation was sternly warned not to get involved with “organisations” and “things happening in the world” because the faith had no relevance to such things. Rather, the Christian warfare was about a “spiritual” battle. Now, of course it is true that the Christian warfare is a spiritual battle, but this preacher had so defined what spirituality meant that he had created a vast chasm between the world that we live in and some imaginary “spiritual” realm that had no bearing on the everyday issues of life. This kind of dualism is very common in the Church. Yet it is predicated on a complete contradiction of Christ’s words in Mt. 28:18–20, because here Christ says that *all* power in heaven and *on earth* has been given to him. Nothing in the whole created order lies beyond his authority and power, the nations of this world and their governments included, and in confirmation of this the Scriptures tell us, prophesying of Christ, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the *government* shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the

Prince of Peace. Of the *increase* of his *government* and peace there shall be no end . . .” (Is. 9:6–7). In the book of Revelation this is confirmed: “The kingdoms of *this world* are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). And Christ commanded us to pray that his kingdom would come *on earth* and his will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10).

These are not obscure Scriptures. They teach that Christ came to conquer the whole of the created order and redeem this lost world. Christ tells us plainly: “All authority has been given unto me.” Christ is the only point in the whole of the created order where all power and authority is concentrated. No one else possesses such power in the created order, in heaven *or* earth. This power is not limited to the heavenly or “spiritual” realm; it is an authority that extends to every thing and everyone on *earth*. This includes all *political* authority.

Because Christ is the one in whom all authority in the whole cosmos is concentrated, all other legitimate powers, including all political powers, derive their authority in a delegated form from him. The authority of governments comes from Christ alone. It has to because there is no other point in the created order where such authority could come from. All authority has been given to Christ, and therefore any delegated authority must come from him and from him alone. All authority of governments, therefore, comes from God through Christ. Political authority does not come from the people, though this is not to deny the validity of representative governments. But we must get our first principles right. All political authority comes from Christ. *Who* may fill the office of civil ruler may legitimately be decided by elections, but the authority of the political ruler still comes from God through Christ, as the person in whom all authority in heaven and earth is concentrated, and therefore such political authority must be exercised in accordance with his will as revealed in his law.

Given the fact that Scripture so plainly teaches that this authority is given to Christ, it is a matter of wonder that so many in the Church see Christ’s authority as limited to the realm of the “spiritual” and deem his commission to his disciples to bring all nations under his discipline as not relevant to the world of human politics. Such an understanding of the Great Commission, however, is in truth a negation of it. However, the prosecution of Christ’s authority in the political realm is only one aspect of the Great Commission, by no means all of it. Before we look in more detail at the

[†] This article is substantially the text of a lecture originally given at Covenant College, Kwele, Petauke, Zambia on 30 May 2002 and subsequently at an Africa Christian Action meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, on 7 June 2002.

1. The Greek word used (ἐξουσία) means “1. *power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases, leave or permission* . . . 2. *physical and mental power; the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises* . . . 3. *the power of authority (influence) and of right* . . . 4. *the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will must be submitted to by others and obeyed, [generally translated authority])*” (J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon on the New Testament* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901], p. 225*af.*).

political implications of the Great Commission we need to look at how the Great Commission applies generally to the nations.

2. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SOCIAL ORDER

Christ commands us in the Great Commission to make disciples of the *nations*. In this command the term “all the nations” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) is the direct object of the verb *to disciple* (μαθητεύσατε).² What Jesus does not do here is to tell us to go and make disciples *from* all the nations. He does not refer to individual soul saving at all. What he says is that we are to convert the *nations*. It is the nations that are to be the disciples of Christ, not merely individual souls, brands snatched from the fire. Of course, this inevitably means that individual souls will be saved. There is no saving of the nation without the salvation of individual souls. But there is a difference between a command to disciple individual souls and a command to disciple the nations. The latter includes the former, but the former does not include the latter. It is possible to disciple individual souls from all the nations without disciplining the nations. It is not possible to disciple the nations without making individual disciples, without saving souls. It is important to understand that Christ commanded us to disciple the *nations*, not merely to make disciples *from* the nations. The disciplining of the nations that Christ commands us to engage in involves the whole nation: individuals, communities, society at large, including all its institutions and forms of government. No sphere of life is left out. The whole nation must come under the discipline of Christ, must live under his law and thereby conform to his will. If we are to fulfil the Great Commission we must understand that nothing less than this total transformation of society is necessary. The Great Commission is not merely a question of individual soul winning. And the faith that overcomes the world (1 Jn 5:4) is more than private devotions and Sunday worship. The Great Commission involves the transformation of the whole nation, the whole of society.

How is this to be achieved? What does a Christian social order look like? How is it structured and how is its structure maintained? We know that Christ has all authority over everything, over all powers and subsidiary authorities. But how does his authority structure society?

In the created order Christ’s authority is delegated in a limited form to several forms of government. But in none of these spheres or institutions is there a total delegation of Christ’s authority. Christ delegates authority to each of these institutions or spheres and the authority he thus delegates is specific to that sphere. i.e. appropriate to it and limited to its function. No single sphere or institution is given total authority. If it were it would be equal in authority to Christ himself, i.e. it would be equal to God in its authority. Now, we shall see that in the modern world this is just what civil governments (States) are increasingly doing, i.e. assuming total authority over society. But this is a form of idolatry because

it puts to State into the position of Christ, as the one in whom all authority is concentrated. The Christian must reject this outright and insist that all authority resides in Christ alone. He is the only point in the created order where all authority is concentrated. The Christian view of social order, therefore, must maintain that any delegated authority is limited, and that its limits are defined by the law of Christ, the word of God (the Bible). There is no single authority structure that possesses total authority over the nation. Only Christ possesses such authority. How does this doctrine work out in practice?

If we look at the diagram on p. 23 we see that Christ, in whom all authority in heaven and earth is concentrated, delegates authority, via his word or law, to each individual main sphere of life. There are four spheres here. These are the three institutions that are established in the Bible as the main forms of societal government (family, Church and State), plus the sphere of individual liberty and self-government. Each of these institutions has a specific role or function and an authority appropriate to it. Each receives its authority from God’s word, not from the any of the other spheres or institutions.

The spheres of family, Church and State are the main social institutions. The symbol of the power and authority of the State is the sword, i.e. physical coercion up to and including, where appropriate, the death sentence. This authority it has from God. But it is, like all delegated authority, only legitimate where it is exercised in accordance with God’s law. The symbol of the power and authority of the family is the rod and the symbol of the power and authority of the Church is excommunication.

This does not mean that these powers define these institutions. But they show the limits of their authority. A family is much more than the parents’ authority to punish a child, but the authority to use the rod of correction sets the limits of the parents’ authority. It shows how far the father’s authority extends, i.e. thus far and no further. The family or the father does not have the authority of the sword, i.e. he does not have authority from God’s word to execute his criminal offspring. A father must hand a criminal son over to the civil magistrate (the State) for that (Dt. 21:18–21). The father’s authority is permitted to go no further than the rod. This is in stark contrast to the Roman law of the Twelve Tables, for example, which permitted the father to exercise absolute authority over his family and slaves, granting him the right to kill those under his authority. The Bible denies this authority and power to the family. The family must hand a criminal son over to the State to be dealt with.

Likewise, the State may administer the death sentence in capital offences, but that is the limit of the State’s authority. The State does not have authority or power to excommunicate anyone. Nor may the State interfere with the family’s legitimate exercise of authority. It may only act where *crime*, as defined by God’s word, has been committed. The State may not, therefore, without illegitimately usurping the legitimate authority of the family, pass laws that ban the use of the rod in the physical punishment of children by their parents. In England the State has now banned the use of a rod in the punishment of children by parents. In Scotland this sort of secular humanism has gone even further and parents are banned by law from smacking their children. And there is an ongoing campaign to ban smacking in England also. Such law is illegitimate; it is unlawful law in the sense that English

2. *Μαθητεύσατε* is the aorist active imperative of *μαθητεύω* and means *be a disciple*. This verb is used in classical Greek only in an intransitive sense (H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* [Winona Lake: Alpha Publications, Sixth Edition (1884) 1979], p. 527). In the koine Greek of the New Testament, however, it is used transitively to mean *make a disciple of*, taking as its direct object in Mt. 28:19 πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, “all the nations.”

law is based on the Christian doctrine of the rule of law, which stipulates that all man-made law must conform to the higher law of God and reason (which of course amount to the same thing). The State may act where a crime has been committed, and therefore if a parent commits grievous bodily harm against a child the State may act, and rightly so. But the law already covers this and there is no need for laws banning smacking and the use of the rod by parents. Such laws are a direct attack on the law of God and the social order it is meant to create and maintain.

The Church is also limited in its authority. It may not use coercion or physical punishment of any kind. Its power is limited by the act of excommunication. If a member apostatises from the faith and refuses to repent after due admonition the maximum that the Church may do is excommunicate the person, i.e. refuse to accept him into the community of professing believers and deny him the privileges that belonging to that community confers. If he has committed crimes the State must punish him, not the Church. The Church is permitted to excommunicate unrepentant sinners. If the criminal repents of his crime the Church must accept him into the fold, even if the State must execute him for his crimes. The mediaeval doctrine of benefit of clergy is therefore contrary to the biblical order, an abuse of the Church's legitimate authority in which she usurps the authority and function of the State.

All such usurpation of authority, whether by the family, Church or State leads to tyranny, in which one institution with a limited role in society and an authority appropriate to that role assumes the powers and authority of other institutions. This inevitably means a loss of freedom. The modern State is the institution that now claims total authority over society, and in doing so it acts the tyrant and takes away our liberty. But the Church has been as guilty in times past. The mediaeval Roman Catholic doctrine of the Church claimed an absolute authority for the Church that was beyond her legitimate role.

In the Christian doctrine of social order each sphere is limited in the kind and degree of its authority so that no single institution wields total authority. Christ alone reserves that right to himself. Thus the Christian theory of social order maintains a balance or separation of powers that restricts the authority of any one institution.

In each of these spheres those who legitimately exercise power receive their authority from God, through Christ *via* his *word*. This last qualification is vital. These institutions do not have direct access to God for their power and authority. This authority comes ultimately from God of course, but it is mediated through Christ via his law, the Bible. Even the kings of Israel in the so-called "theocracy" were told to study the law so that they might do justice according to God's word. They were to look to God's law for their wisdom in executing justice, not to personal divine revelations from the Lord (Dt. 17:18–20). Such words came from God to the prophets, not to the kings, and kings were expected to listen to the words of the prophets, but even the prophets were under the rule of God's law (see Dt. 13:1–6). Again this demonstrates a division and separation of powers so that no one person possessed total power and authority. The Bible does not support the doctrine of the divine right of kings or its modern equivalent, the absolute right of elected governments with "popular" mandates. In fact the Bible contradicts this doctrine in the most forthright way. Authority,

even the authority of the State and the Church, is always limited and defined by God's law.

Each sphere therefore receives its authority from God through Christ *via* his *word*. Each has a limited function. The State does not raise children and must not meddle with the family's legitimate role and authority in this sphere. Neither does the Church execute public justice, though of course it does have a duty to proclaim the word of God, which addresses the sphere of public justice. The Church, therefore, has a role in calling the State and the family to obey the word of God and in teaching God's word to those who hold office in the State and to members of families. But the Church does not execute public justice on evil-doers. She proclaims the word of God and also demonstrates God's mercy in her care for the sick, for orphans and widows etc. The family raises children and provides for the welfare and education of its members, not the State. Along with a limited role in society each sphere receives an authority appropriate to it. This authority is limited in its nature by the function of the particular institution to which it is granted.

All these institutions or spheres must function according to God's word. The authority they exercise is not autonomous or sovereign, it is the authority of God delegated to each sphere via his word and therefore each sphere is entirely dependent upon God's word for its legitimacy. Each sphere derives its functions and authority from God's word. For any one of these spheres or institutions to claim a total authority, a total sovereignty, so that it sets itself up above the others and seeks to control them, as modern secular States do, is an act of rebellion against Christ, to whom they owe an absolute obedience, and an attempt to usurp his unique office as the one to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been committed by God the Father. All who do this are setting themselves up as *idols*, rivals to Jesus Christ. States that behave in this way will perish, the Scriptures tell us (Ps. 2).

Besides these three institutions or spheres, there is a fourth sphere. This is the sphere of the individual and individual liberty. This is the sphere where the other spheres or institutions have no authority. Not only does no individual institution control the whole of society; neither do all these institutions together control the whole of society. Where the authority of family, Church and State cease there is individual liberty. This sphere of individual liberty is a very extensive one. Neither the family, the Church nor the State are responsible individually or together for enforcing the whole of God's law. Much of God's law requires personal self-government and falls into the sphere of individual responsibility.

Each individual sphere operates on the other spheres only in accordance with its God-given function. Thus, a crime committed in or by the Church is investigated by the State, not the Church, but the State does not thereby interfere with the Church's legitimate freedom. If the Church refuses to let the State investigate crimes committed by the Church she interferes with the proper functioning of the State. Likewise, the State has the duty to investigate crimes committed by family members but it does not have the right to interfere with the role and legitimate authority of the family or tell the family how to organise its affairs.

This view of social organisation is based on the doctrine of *sphere sovereignty*, which is associated with Abraham Kuyper and the school of thought that he helped to develop. But we must not think of these spheres as being sovereign in them-

selves; rather they are recipients of the sovereignty of God as this is delegated to and limited for each specific institution. Kuyper first systematically set down this doctrine in a series of lectures given at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898, which were published as *Lectures of Calvinism*. This view, however, is a systematic statement of biblical principles.

3. THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE STATE

In this article we shall be looking specifically at the institution of the State, i.e. the civil magistrate, and its sphere of authority. What does the Bible tell us about the role and authority of the State or civil magistrate?

(1) First, the State (civil magistrate) in the Bible is defined by the public administration of justice. Kings and rulers are charged by God's law with the task of doing justice, judgement, i.e. punishing crime. In pursuance of this office the State has a duty to protect those under its authority from crime committed within the nation by members of the society over which it exercises a God-given rule in the political sphere, and also from crimes committed against those under its protection or against the nation as a whole by individuals outside the nation and by foreign organisations and nations; and where such crime has been committed it has a duty to bring to justice and punish those who have committed the crime. In doing this, however, the State must act according to law at all times, and the law under which it acts must be framed according to the *Christian* principle of the rule of law. The Christian doctrine of the rule of law is that all man-made law should conform to the higher law of God, and this basic principle was, for centuries, a principle of both English common law and equity. This definition of the State includes the executive, legislative, judicial, diplomatic, military and law enforcement agencies necessary for the State to carry out its task properly.

This definition of the State as *a ministry of public justice* is based on biblical principles, i.e. it is a systematic statement based on the functions of rulers as described in Scripture. This is evident if we look at the history of the development of the State throughout the Bible.

Before the Fall, of course, there was no State since there was no sin. An ideal world in which there were no sin would not require a State. The function of the State is a negative one: to restrain certain kinds of evil and punish those who commit such evil acts. It seems also, however, that there was no State after the Fall and prior to the Flood, even though sin had entered into the human race. In the cases of Cain and Lamech (Gen. 4:15 and 23–24) there was no State to bring them to justice for their crimes, and Scripture seems to suggest that no-one was authorised to do this since we are told that “The LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him” (v. 15). It seems further that Lamech, recognising this, used it as a precedent for his denial that anyone should bring him to justice for his crimes. It is, therefore, reasonable to conjecture that it was just this absence of institutional restraint on human sin exercised by society that led to the dire state of wickedness before the Flood. God intervened in this situation and judged the antediluvian world, saving only Noah and his family in the process. In the covenant that God then established between Noah and all his posterity (i.e. the whole of humanity to the end of time) God promised never to judge the world in this

way again, but required instead that man himself put to death those who commit murder. Certainly, the death penalty is established for the first time in the covenant made with Noah after the Flood (Gen. 9:5–6). This seems to be, therefore, the first beginning of the institution of the State, i.e. the public administration of justice. It is to be noted that the rationale for this, the reason for the first beginnings of the State, was not welfare, education or the equal distribution of wealth in society, but quite simply the restraint of crime and the punishment of criminals, i.e. the public administration of justice (judgement).

This same principle is evident as we follow the progress of the development of the State as it is given us in the biblical record. In the Mosaic period judges are appointed to deal with matters of justice, i.e. judgement, among the people (Ex. 18:13–27; Dt. 1:13–17; 16:18–20). When kings are anointed to lead the people they are charged with the task of doing justice, judgement (1 Sam. 8:4–5; 2 Sam. 8:15; 1 Kg 3:7–12; 2 Chron. 19:5–11; Ps. 71:1–2; 82:1–4; Is. 1:10, 17). After the Babylonian captivity when the people returned to the land of Israel their rulers were charged with making sure that justice was done and that judgement was made according to God's law (Ezra 7:25–26).

The most important and fullest statement of this principle, however, is given us by the apostle Paul in Romans 13:1–7. This is the *locus classicus* of the Christian doctrine of the State. Here we are told that the magistrate (i.e. “rulers,” the State) is a minister of God to execute justice (God's wrath, v. 4) upon those who do evil. For this purpose the State bears the sword. Paul drives his argument home by repeating himself: “for this cause [i.e. the public administration of justice] pay ye tribute: for they [i.e. rulers] are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing” (v. 6). What Paul says here, “attending continually on this very thing,” defines the purpose of the State, namely the punishment of evil-doers. According to Blass and Debrunner's *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* the term (ἀὐτὸ τοῦτο) translated as “this very thing” in the AV means “just this (and nothing else).”³

This severely limits and defines the role of the State. It is not the duty of the State or magistrate to act as a ministry of welfare, education, transport or anything else. The sole duty of the State is the administration of justice, “just this and nothing else.” It could not be clearer. When the State exceeds the boundaries of its God-given role and authority and takes upon itself functions for which God has ordained other forms of government, e.g. the family, which has the duty to provide welfare and education for its members, it denies men their true liberty under God. In so doing it becomes a tyrant.

(2) Second, the State is to execute justice, judgement, in terms of *God's* law. He is the “servant of God,” a “minister of God,” Paul tells us (v. 4). He is a “revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” Whose wrath is this? The magistrate's own? Of course not. The whole context of the passage is that the magistrate is one who executes *God's* wrath upon evil-doers as God's *servant*. The context of the passage is not some nebulous idea of natural law. The magistrate is not there to execute the will of the people or the will of the

3. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 151a.

majority of the people. The magistrate is the *minister of God*, the one who applies the judgement of God, as revealed in his law, to those who do evil. He is accountable to God and must execute judgement according to God's will (Dt. 17:18–20).

(3) Third, in the pursuance of its legitimate function as a public ministry of justice the State has the right to collect taxes.⁴ But again, it is clear from what Paul says in Rom. 13:6 that the taxes collected may be used only for the purpose of enabling the State to perform its divinely ordained function as a ministry of public justice. “For this cause pay ye tribute” says Paul, i.e. the administration of public justice. The State is not authorised by God's word to collect taxes for the purpose of redistributing wealth within society or for providing welfare, educational or other services unconnected with its sole duty to administer justice. The collection of taxes by the State is legitimised by Scripture, but only for this specific purpose. For the State to collect taxes for other purposes that lie outside this limited role is a transgression of the Eighth Commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” which the State is charged by God's word with enforcing. In doing this the State acts outside its God-given authority. The fact that it does have a God-given role and that in the discharge of this role it has divine authority to collect taxes does not justify the collection of taxes for anything else. Paul offers no support or warrant in this passage of Scripture to governments that act outside their God-given role as ministers of public justice.

(4) Fourth, the Bible also restricts the State's ability to amass the kind of power and wealth necessary to establish totalitarian government (Dt. 17:16–17). It is also clear from 1 Kings 21:1–24, the case of Naboth's vineyard (cf. Lev. 25:23–28; Ezek. 46:18; Num. 36:7) that the State has no right of eminent domain, i.e. sovereignty over all land in the nation with the right of expropriation (e.g. compulsory purchase), which was the basis of mediaeval feudalism and still remains a basic feature of modern humanist and especially socialist political ideology.

It is clear from this that the State, i.e. the civil government of the land, is severely restricted in its functions and powers and may not encroach on the legitimate functions of other God-ordained institutions and governments (family, Church and individual) without rebelling against God and ultimately bringing itself under his judgement.

4. REFORMING THE MODERN STATE

Unfortunately, this is precisely what is happening in the modern world. The Christian concept of a limited State with a specific function, as one form of government (the political) among others, is not a widely accepted political ideal. Even among those who regard themselves as politically conservative the State is usually deemed to have a much wider function than that of impartially administering public justice. Christians must resist this and seek to reform society. The Great Commission demands the disciplining of the whole

4. The terms Paul uses are *phoros* (tribute) and *telos* (tax). Some commentators understand the distinction between these words to refer to direct and indirect taxes (e.g. C. E. B. Cranfield and C. K. Barrett). The word translated “tribute” by the AV, however (*phoros*) means “that which is brought in by way of payment, tribute . . . properly payments made by subjects to a ruling state, as by islanders and other Greeks to Athens” (H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: The Clarendon

Press, 1901], p. 1689a). According to Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, however, “the word can sometimes be used for more gen[eral] levies, services, or payments, Plat. Polit., 298a; Plut. Anton., 24 (I, 926b), including those which strictly fall under the concept of *telos*” [i.e. taxes—see below] (K. Weiss, “*phoros*” in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich [eds], *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], Vo. IX, p. 78f.). Thus, according to Leon Morris, “Paul is probably using the word in a general sense for any kind of tax, but his choice of the word is interesting” (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], p. 466, n. 41). This opinion is confirmed by the fact that the New Testament seems to use the words *phoros*, *telos* and *kensos* (*census, assessment, tax*) as synonyms (see Mt. 17:25; Mk 12:14; Lk. 20:22). The word translated “custom” (*telos*) in the AV means “that which is paid for state purposes, a toll, tax, duty” (Liddell and Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 1539b).

nation, and this includes, though is by no means limited to, the function of the State. Here we face a problem, particularly in Britain, although I suspect this problem is more widespread than Britain. And it is this: that very often Christians, seeing that society is turning away from God and being repaganised, have lobbied governments to reform society by using the machinery of State to correct the ills they see around them. The problem is that in requiring the State to act in this way they have lent credibility to the apostate State's claims of total sovereignty and authority over society, and have therefore helped to promote an idolatrous political ideal.

An example will help here. Education is the responsibility of the family. But the State has usurped the role of the family, at least for most families, and now provides State education services funded by taxation. This restricts the freedom of the family to provide for itself and forces it into dependence on the State. Even if private education is still available most families cannot afford it because of the high taxes they have to pay to fund State education. Most families cannot afford to pay twice for the education of their children, at least not unless they are prepared to make sacrifices elsewhere (of course Christian families ought to be prepared to make such sacrifices, either by paying the extra costs for a Christian schooling, or by means of home schooling their children, which in Britain is the only viable option for most Christian families anyway). Private education therefore tends to be restricted to the wealthier members of society. The same happens in other spheres, e.g. welfare. Most individuals and families are taxed so heavily to pay for State welfare that their ability to fund private Christian alternatives is severely restricted. The greater part of society is therefore forced into some form of State dependence in terms of health care, welfare and education.

Lobbying government to establish and fund Christians schools or to reform the current system to make it more Christian will not overcome this basic problem. Such reform would not be successful anyway (it has been tried repeatedly in Britain and has not yet worked—the whole system is now aggressively secular humanist in its philosophy and has no time for Christianity anyway), and even if it were it would still leave people dependent upon the State.

The only answer to this situation that is consistent with a Christian view of social order is for the government to privatise the whole of the education and welfare systems. This would then put these social services back into their proper spheres of operation,—the family, the Church and the individual—leaving the State free to pursue the administration of justice in a more biblical and rational way. What

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SOCIAL ORDER AND AUTHORITY



C R E A T E D O R D E R			
J E S U S C H R I S T / W O R D O F G O D I N C A R N A T E L O R D o f a l l t h i n g s / p o s s e s s e s a l l a u t h o r i t y i n h e a v e n a n d o n e a r t h			
W O R D O F G O D I N S C R I P T U R E L A W O F G O D O V E R			
M A I N S O C I A L I N S T I T U T I O N S O R S P H E R E S			
S T A T E	C H U R C H	F A M I L Y	I N D I V I D U A L
Public ministry of justice (punishment of evil-doers) Limit of delegated authority: death penalty (“the sword”)	Great Commission, public ministry of the word, healing of the sick etc. Limit of delegated authority: excommunication	Marriage, raising of children, welfare and education etc. Limit of delegated authority: the rod	Personal liberty/self-government
<p>In Kuyper’s own schema the family is subsumed under the sphere of society (see <i>Lectures on Calvinism</i> [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, (1931) 1976], p. 79). However, society does not constitute an authority structure in itself, but is rather the interrelationship of the spheres of family, Church, State and the individual. The family, however, does constitute an independent authority structure instituted by God’s word, along with the Church and the State. There are of course many other associations and organisations in society but these are not institutions in the sense that the State, Church and family are institutions, namely, divinely established and therefore <i>necessary</i> constituents of a Christian society that derive their authority directly from God’s word and are thus not derivative of any of the other spheres. By contrast, organisations such as voluntary associations, educational establishments and business enterprises, which derive their functions from the family and/or the individual sphere; the army and police force, which derive their functions from the State; and denominational missionary societies, denominational theological colleges and Church schools, which derive their functions from the Church, possess their authority mediately from the particular spheres to which they owe their existence; i.e. they are not independent spheres in their own right and therefore they have no sphere sovereignty of their own, only an authority devolved from the particular spheres under which they are subsumed. This is not the case with the institutions of Church, family and State, which have an original independent authority derived not from any of the other spheres but directly from God’s word. These are primary institutions, established by God, from which other social organisations and associations derive their being, functions and authority.</p>			

Christians should *not* be doing therefore is lobbying government to provide services such as education according to Christian criteria, i.e. Christian schools. That is not the function of the State. Christians should be lobbying government to restrict itself to pursuing the role that God has assigned it in Scripture and limiting its collection of taxes for this specific role. This would vastly reduce the tax burden on everyone in society, enabling families to make provision for themselves and also enabling them to support Christian charities and Churches in making provision for the less fortunate in society, i.e. in providing a *Christian* safety net for the poor.

This will of course demand a great deal of sacrifice for Christians. But this is what Christ has called us to. We are to pick up our cross and follow Christ, and our commission is to disciple the nation, to bring it under the discipline of Christ, and this includes all the social functions of the various institutions that make up the nation. Unless Christians are

willing and prepared to start providing Christian alternatives in these spheres of life the State will not be reduced to its proper function and we shall continue to live as slaves of the modern State. Reforming the State is only one part of our task. Society consists of more than the State, and unless we are prepared to fulfil our responsibilities as families and Churches for ourselves the State will continue growing in size, will continue to limit our freedom, and we shall continue paying more and more taxes. Requiring the State to fulfil our responsibilities for us will not produce a Christian society; it will merely continue to lend credibility to an already idolatrous concept of the State.

There is an important role for the State but it is limited, and it must conform to the Christian ideals given us in Scripture. Only then will the Church, the family and the individual be free and able to make their proper Christian contribution to society. The modern State plays God much of the time and Christians have become complicit in this

because they have not sought to pursue a rigorous Christian ideal for social order. But in neglecting this they have failed to see that they have neglected the Great Commission and that the inevitable effect of this has been the repaganisation of society. Along with this our freedom to preach the gospel and live the Christian life in its fulness has been curtailed.

CONCLUSION

In the correct ordering of society the function of the State is negative, to restrain crime and punish criminals according to the principles of justice set forth in the Christian Scriptures. In doing this the State creates a climate in which the family, the Church and the individual can be free to develop their vocations positively according to God's word to the

glory of God and the benefit of society. A Christian view of the State thus requires a recognition of the proper functions of each of the social spheres and respect for their legitimate authority.

Reform of the modern State requires: first, limitation of the State's activity to its God-ordained function as a public ministry of justice; and second, that those spheres or institutions whose roles have been usurped by the State stop abdicating their responsibilities to the State and start fulfilling their proper functions in society. This kind of reform will mean a significant upheaval in the way that the Church thinks and lives. This will involve a great deal of sacrifice as Christians begin making those changes to their family and Church lives that God's word requires. But without this sacrifice of obedience neither our own nation nor the world as a whole will be won for Christ. *C&S*

IS TEXTUAL CRITICISM TO BE FEARED?

by *Jean-Marc Berthoud*

TEXTUAL criticism is a subject all too often ignored in evangelical and confessionally Reformed circles. In a general way textual criticism—what Germanic theological jargon calls “lower criticism” to distinguish it from a pretended “higher criticism” which has for quite some time laboured at the literary deconstruction of the Bible—is quite well received in Christian circles which still remain attached to the doctrines of the infallibility and authority of the Bible.

To speak in a general way, higher criticism with its panoply of methods, its search for the sources of the text under consideration, its hypotheses as to the dating of the books of the Bible, on the divergent theologies of Paul, John, Peter, its speculations on the form of the texts, and so on, is still considered by these traditional circles with certain suspicion, even though they too often afford these critics more attention than they deserve. But this is in no way the case for lower criticism (or textual criticism), the presuppositions of which have been adopted for the establishment of the Greek text of most of our modern translations of the New Testament. Thus many passages in our French Bibles are printed enclosed in square brackets and the notes which accompany the brackets are often marked by indications according to which such and such a passage is not to be found in the oldest manuscripts or in the best manuscripts. The reader who, struck by such indications, would like to know more is, to say the least, left unsatisfied by the absence of reasons given for such apparently arbitrary affirmations. Why, he may ask, should a manuscript of the oldest type (i.e.

of the fourth century) written in Greek capitals be necessarily considered better than a newer manuscript of the ninth century written in small type? Is a *Jehovah's Witness Bible* dating from the beginning of the twentieth century necessarily better than a *Colombe Bible* printed at the end of the twentieth? Must one deduce that the criterion of time should be considered absolute? What is the basis for such remarks?

The first method of establishing the text of the New Testament we shall consider is that utilised for the first time (in its modern phase) in 1516 both by Erasmus in Basel and at the same time in Spain by a team of biblical scholars under the direction of Cardinal Ximenes. These two texts were established from the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament according to the textual tradition we now call “Byzantine.” The second method, which is commonly called the “eclectic tradition” took off essentially following Tischendorf's discovery in 1859 of a very ancient text of the New Testament in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. The conclusions he drew from this discovery were confirmed by the contemporary revelation of a very similar manuscript long hidden in the Vatican Library. This text, which came to be known as the “Vaticanus,” also originated from the fourth century Alexandrine tradition. This method has since held a dominant position in academic circles. The first school of textual criticism, that inaugurated by Erasmus and Ximenes, is today almost completely unknown even in evangelical and Reformed academic circles desirous of being faithful to the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

Let us briefly indicate a number of factual errors in the position defended by the advocates of the eclectic method of textual criticism.

It is wrong, for example, to affirm, as is commonly done in these circles, that scholars have only recently begun to take an interest in the biblical quotations of the Fathers as well as in those found in lectionaries (anthologies of liturgical texts drawn from the Bible). To prove the contrary one has only to examine the impressive researches in this field of the greatest opponent in the nineteenth century of the new critical method, John William Burgon (1813–1888). Burgon, in opposition to his eclectic colleagues—scholars like Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and their numerous disciples, who consistently based their work on the texts of the Alexandrian tradition and in particular the two oldest complete manuscripts of the New Testament, the Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus—made the fullest use of all the patristic documents available to him. This included quotations of the Bible from the writings of the Fathers and those found in liturgical lectionaries in use in the early Church. It is his exemplary knowledge of the latter which enabled him to give an explanation of the fact that the text of the account of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:53–8:1) is not to be found in a small number of ancient manuscripts of the Gospel of John, and is placed in another section of this Gospel. As Burgon has admirably demonstrated in his “Pericope de adultera,” the essential reason for the absence of this passage in certain manuscripts and its introduction elsewhere in others, is the fact that these manuscripts were not texts figuring in copies of the New Testament but in liturgical lectionaries, selections of biblical texts to be read during the celebration of Church services.¹

We must here add that our remarks are solely addressed to the critical study of the manuscripts of the New Testament, for which there exists an impressive number of variants, and not to the manuscripts of the Jewish Tanak (our Old Testament), for the latter was exceptionally well preserved by the Masoretic textual tradition.

This brings us to our second point. It is wrong to establish, as some do, an imaginary dialectical opposition between a “scientific” camp on the one hand—the defenders of the eclectic method—and, on the other, a “fundamentalist” party, defending the traditional attitude. The latter, we are told, is made up of dogmatic adherents of the received, ecclesiastical or traditional text of the New Testament. These two tendencies are usually opposed one to the other. Others, in a typical Hegelian manner, seek to resolve this opposition by a synthesis, a type of compromise solution, thus attempting the reconciliation of the irreconcilable. If they continue to accuse the traditional position for its pretended “dogmatism,” they also attack the eclectic method for its pretended dictatorial methods, seeking as it does to impose by force on all the results of the so-called scientific logic, establishing thus a kind of intellectual tyranny on all schools of scholarly thought. Those who favor this dialectic solution accuse the advocates of the so-called “scientific” method of practicing a type of intellectual terrorism.

But what makes such a dialectical solution quite impossible is that the scientific-fundamentalist opposition is in itself

false. In fact, there has always existed (and there still exists) two schools of textual criticism of the New Testament. Both hold to strictly scientific pretensions. Their methodological principles are, however, very different. They are in fact thoroughly antithetical.

(1) The eclectic method in question can be described as follows. A variety of differing texts, considered to be of equal value, are examined by the textual critics without any kind of doctrinal *a priori*, but following a number of specific technical rules. Doctrinal positions are considered partisan, but methods are neutral. From this variety of readings (hence the word “eclectic”) they pick, in terms of the methods used, what they consider to be the most correct reading of the passage under consideration. They seek thus to reconstruct the original text (considered lost) of the New Testament. The text of the New Testament is thus placed at the same ontological and epistemological level as any other literary text. For the advocates of the eclectic method there is no essential difference between the Bible and any other book. The great figures of this tradition are such eminent scholars as Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, Nestle, Aaland and Metzger.

This tradition explicitly rejects the presupposition which founded the older school of textual criticism. For, according to the traditional school, the Holy Spirit has been (and still is) objectively active in history so as to effect the very real preservation of the authentic (original) text of the New Testament. The Holy Spirit thus protects the New Testament text from the weakness and the malice of men as well as from the attacks of the Devil. As Jakob van Bruggen points out, this method is today universally accepted.

One can even say that the modern textual criticism of the New Testament is based on the one fundamental conviction that the true text of the New Testament is at least not found in the great majority of the manuscripts . . . This rejection of the traditional text, that is the text preserved and handed down in the churches, is hardly written or thought about any more in the 20th century; is a *fait accompli* . . . A critical investigation of the reasons for rejecting the Byzantine text soon encounters the difficulty that this rejection is accepted as a fact in the 20th century, but not defended as a proposition.²

The philosophical origins of the eclectic method are to be found in the rationalist spirit of the Enlightenment. It is one of the intellectual fruits of modern autonomous thought, i.e. thought freed from the constraints of the word of God but freed also from the obligation of submitting its methods to the very nature of the object studied.

(2) The other tradition, amiably baptised by its critics with the expression “fundamentalist rationalism,” also claims to defend clearly defined scientific principles. However, placing their methodology under the authority of the teachings of the New Testament, these defenders of the traditional method also submit their methods to the nature of the object they are studying. In fact they take with methodological seriousness the infallibility and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. Thus, for them this book has a specific and unique character. This requires an appropriate and unique method of study. This fact places all those who study this very special book in a systematically Christian perspective, in a

1. John William Burgon, “Pericope de adultera” in: *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (Collingswood, NJ: The Dean Burgon Society, 1998 [1896]), p. 232–265.

2. Jakob van Bruggen, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1988 [1978]), pp. 11, 14.

position which forces them to use a method appropriate to the specific ontological and epistemological status of the Bible. For the Bible itself states that its ultimate author is the Holy Spirit and that this divine author is also its constant preserver.

Here we can do no better than to quote the very enlightening remarks of the Calvinist textual critical scholar, the great connoisseur of these questions, Edward F. Hills. He was trained at Westminster Theological Seminary, sitting under the teaching of John Murray, Edward J. Young and Cornelius Van Til. He later pursued his academic career at Yale and Harvard. Here is what he writes:

Thus there are two methods of New Testament textual criticism, the consistently Christian method and the naturalistic method. These two methods deal with the same materials, the same Greek manuscripts, and the same translations and biblical quotations, but they interpret these materials differently. The consistently Christian method interprets the materials of the New Testament textual criticism in accordance with the doctrines of the divine inspiration and providential preservation of the Scriptures. The naturalistic method interprets these same materials in accordance with its own doctrine that the New Testament is nothing more than a human book.

And Hills adds,

Sad to say, modern Bible-believing scholars have taken very little interest in the concept of consistently Christian New Testament textual criticism. For more than a century most of them have been quite content to follow in this area the naturalistic methods of Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort. And the result of this equivocation has been truly disastrous. Just as in Pharaoh's dream the thin cows ate up the fat cows, so the principles and procedures of naturalistic New Testament textual criticism have spread into every department of Christian thought and produced spiritual famine.³

Hill's work is but the culmination in the twentieth century of a much older tradition of study of the manuscript texts of the New Testament. This tradition was at the same time both rigorously scientific and based on coherent methodological presuppositions in harmony with the Bible's own teaching on the question. This textual tradition was eventually called the "Ecclesiastical tradition of textual criticism" for it was based on texts received as being authentic, and thus authoritative, in the Eastern Orthodox Church. To this tradition belonged such eminent scholars as Cardinal Ximenes of the Complutensian School in Spain, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Robert Estienne (editor of the Stephanus Text), Theodore of Beza, the Dutch Elzeviers (who established the Textus Receptus), John Owen⁴ and David Martin,⁵ the famous reviser of the French Bible in 1707. This version, which was recently re-edited in Dallas by a Pentecostal missionary organisation, is one of the rare editions of the French Bible today available which is based on the Ecclesi-

astical tradition of the biblical text. The situation is different in English where the King James Version is readily available, in German where Luther's Bible is constantly republished or even in Spanish where the Reina-Valera version is easy to find.

This Ecclesiastical tradition of textual scholarship was ably carried forward in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both in England and in the United States. Amongst the eminent figures who stand out in this little known school of textual criticism we find such names as John William Burgon,⁶ T. R. Birks,⁷ E. Miller,⁸ F. H. A. Scrivener⁹ in the nineteenth century. Then in the twentieth such men as Edward F. Hills,¹⁰ Wilbur N. Pickering,¹¹ Theodore Letis¹² and Jakob van Bruggen of the Theological Reformed College of Kampen in the Netherlands.¹³ A revised critical edition of the traditional text of the New Testament is today again available in an edition established by Zane Hodges and A. Forstad.¹⁴

The traditional or ecclesiastical position defended by this school is not only based on a scrupulously scientific study of the texts, but on the self-conscious conformity of the method adopted to the standards of the Reformed Confessions. Here is what the Westminster Confession affirms:

The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical.

At this point is indicated the following biblical reference Mt. 5:18, to which we could add Rev. 22:18–19:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add

6. John William Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, [1871]) with an important introduction of 50 pages by Edward F. Hills, "The Revision Revised" (Fort Worth, Texas: A. G. Hobbs, 1983 [1883]); *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospel Vindicated and Established* (Collingswood, New Jersey: Dean Burgon Society Press, 1998 [1896]); *The Causes of the Corruption of the Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels* (Dean Burgon Society Press, 1998 [1896]).

7. T. R. Birks, *Essay on the Right Estimation of Manuscript Evidence in the Text of the New Testament* (London, 1878).

8. E. Miller, *A Guide to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London, 1886).

9. F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (London: George Bell, 1894), 2 vols.

10. Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines, Iowa: The Christian Research Press, 1984 [1956]); *Believing Bible Study*, CRP, 1991 [1967]; "Introduction" in John William Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors).

11. Wilbur N. Pickering, *The Identity of the New Testament Text* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980 [1977]). Of this book D. A. Carson writes in his book, *The King James Version Debate*, "The most formidable defense of the priority of the Byzantine text yet published in our day." John Wenham wrote in the *Evangelical Quarterly*, "It is not often that one reads a book which reorients one's whole approach to a subject, but that is what this has done to me."

12. Theodore P. Letis (ed.), *The Majority Text: Essays and Reviews in the Continuing Debate* (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, [1987]); *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind* (Fairhill, Philadelphia: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformational Biblical Studies, 2000).

13. Jakob van Bruggen, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Premier), 1988 [1978].

14. Zane Hodges et A. Forstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson).

3. Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended* (Des Moines, Iowa: The Christian Research Press, 1984 [1956]), p. 3.

4. John Owen, "Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text" in John Owen, *Works*, Volume XVI, *The Church and the Bible* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976 [1658]), pp. 281–421.

5. La Sainte Bible qui contient le Vieux et le Nouveau Testament, expliquée avec des notes de Theologie et de Critique sur la Version ordinaire des Églises Reformées, revue sur les Originaux, et retouchée dans le langage . . . par David Martin, Deux Volumes, Folio, Amsterdam, 1707.

unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book¹⁵

And in that last of Reformed Confessional Confessions the *Helvetic Consensus Formula* of 1675, we can read in the First Canon:

God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His Word, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. (Rom: 16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by the craft of Satan or the fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have, to the end of the world, a “sure word of prophecy” and “Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass.” (Mt. 5:18)¹⁶

A certain number of clarificatory remarks are here in order:

(1) The textual problems raised by a certain number of manuscripts (less than 20 per cent) only concerns the New Testament for the text of the Old Testament was so carefully copied by the Massoretic scribes that very few errors were introduced.

(2) The immense majority—between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of the manuscripts of the New Testament currently available, which are texts of the Ecclesiastical tradition of the Eastern Church in miniscule letters—are in all essential points unanimous. Only very minor different readings remain.

On this last point Wilbur Pickering writes:

The argument from statistical probability enters here with a vengeance. Not only do the extant MSS present us with one text form enjoying an 80–90% majority, but the remaining 10–20% do not represent a single competing text form. The minority MSS disagree as much (or more) among themselves as they do with the majority . . . Or to take a specific case, in 1 Tim. 3:16 over 300 Greek MSS read “God” while only eleven read something else. Of those eleven, two have private readings, two have a third reading, and seven agree in reading “who.” So we have to judge between 97% and 2%. It is hard to imagine any possible set of circumstances in the transmissional history sufficient to produce the cataclysmic overthrow in statistical probability required by the claim that “who” is the original reading.¹⁷

What is little known is the complete dead end into which the eclectic tradition of textual study of the New Testament

15. John H. Leith (ed.), *The Creeds of the Churches* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), p. 196.

16. J. Gaberel, *Histoire de l'Église de Genève depuis le commencement de la Réformation jusqu'à nos jours* (Genève: Cherbuliez, 1862), Vol. III, p. 496. John H. Leith (ed.), *Une traduction anglaise du Consensus Helveticus se trouve dans, Creeds of the Churches* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977 [1963], pp. 308–323.

17. Wilbur Pickering, *Op. cit.*, p. 118–119. Just to consider the French versions of this passage, the Colombe edition of the Bible gives the Arian reading found in an exceedingly small number of manuscripts “He who was manifested in the flesh,” and this without the slightest explanatory comment. This replaces the majority reading (97% of the manuscripts) which all give the Orthodox formula: “God was manifested in the flesh.” This is the reading we find in the Martin, Ostervald and Trinity Bible Society French translations.

has today pushed itself. No-one in these circles considers any longer that by the use of these critical tools, of almost universal acceptance in Academia, one can ever hope to discover the authoritative original text of the New Testament. It is this methodological uncertainty which Jakob van Bruggen describes in considering the desperate situation in which the eclectic editors of the New Testament find themselves.¹⁸

This again means an acquiescence in a consensus-text which has been determined on the basis of uncertainty. This time no mean from three modern text-editions, like the older Nestle, but the mean of the opinions of five modern textual-critics, Aaland, Black, Martini, Metzger, Wikgren together have established a text by majority-vote. It is clear from the Textual Commentary of Metzger on this text, that there are many readings which have been chosen only by the majority of the Committee. That they did not unanimously arrive at a text is also not surprising. At present there is no certainty concerning the history of the textual tradition . . . Thus the agreement concerning the text-edition to be used camouflages the uncertainty which prevails during the fixation of the text.¹⁹

(3) The age of a manuscript does not by itself necessarily guarantee either its quality or even its authenticity. As we have already shown the ancient manuscripts written in capital letters such as the Vaticanus or the Sinaiticus, dating from the fourth century, are not, by the sole consideration of their antiquity, good texts of the New Testament. This is equally the case for the numerous papyri discovered in the sands of Egypt during the course of the twentieth century. The majority of these fragments of the New Testament represent in fact very defective copies. It may well be that the astonishing preservation of the Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus texts is essentially due to the fact that, as defective copies, they were never put to liturgical use and were thus never destroyed by constant practice. Such a physical preservation occurs similarly with a *Jehovah's Witness Bible* resting unused on the shelves of a Christian home from which it is never taken down for family worship. It would obviously be preserved much longer than the orthodox Bible in constant use for personal and communal worship.

(4) We may now raise the decisive question: Is it possible to exclude faith from any truly scientific research on the New Testament?

The tradition of textual criticism which pretends to the exclusive methodology appropriate to the scientific study of the New Testament tradition which goes from Lachmann and Tischendorf to such modern scholars as Nestle, Aaland and Metzger and includes the work of men like Westcott, Hort and Tregelles,—not forgetting the prestigious name of Warfield²⁰—affirms categorically that faith is here *not* in any way necessary. Indeed, in their view, the intrusion of considerations relative to faith in textual studies would automatically disqualify the scholar who had the temerity of adopting

18. The reference here is to the Third Edition of the Greek Text of the New Testament published by the United Bible Societies.

19. Jakob van Bruggen, *The Ancient Text of the New Testament, op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

20. See B. B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1893), where the great defender of the inerrancy of the original manuscripts of the Bible capitulates totally before the specious arguments of Westcott and Hort as to the variants in the manuscript tradition. See here the first two chapters of the collection of articles by Theodore P. Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind*, p. 1–58.

such a position from the respect of the authorised scientific community. In this they adopt the immanent perspective which is that of modernity, a perspective which considers the Bible as it would any other book. Thus, in this view, the study of textual criticism, whatever the text might be, dispenses with the scholar's faith in its effort to establish by scientific means the true text of the New Testament. These scholars function intellectually as if this text did not in fact proceed from the revelatory action of a transcendent God, manifesting in this way his divine supernatural power. The holiness of the Divinity was thus communicated to the very character of the written text in which we find God's revelation, which we rightly name the Holy Scriptures. Thus, this methodologically atheistic scholarly tradition implicitly affirms that the text of the Scriptures in no way needs for its very preservation from the attacks of the Devil, from the destructive malice of men and from the natural weakness of copyists, the protective and preserving action of the Holy Spirit.

Things are very different with regard to the Ecclesiastical method of textual criticism. Here, in what we must unashamedly call the truly scientific study of the manuscripts of the New Testament, the Ecclesiastical method directly takes into methodological consideration the supernatural character of the object of its research. We have seen how the textual tradition of the ancient Church, resurrected by the labours of humanist scholars at the time of the Reformation, and carried forward by the Burgons, the Scriveners, the Hills, the Hodges and the Pickerings of the past two centuries, integrate into their truly scientific study of the sacred text, respect for the marvelous supernatural manner in which our sovereign God revealed and preserved (and continues to preserve) these sacred writings. For God indeed keeps them free from the errors produced by a false science which rejects the sacred character of the object of its study. In fact, in this particular domain, so-called academic scholarship systematically refuses to place God within the very workings of the scholarly mind. It is here that we must carefully heed the apostle's warning: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2: 8).

CONCLUSION

Let us end with a question. What can be the use of the most absolute doctrine of the inspiration, infallibility and inerrance of the original manuscripts of the Bible (such as that taught by B. B. Warfield, for example) if the text in our hands is not entirely worthy of our trust?

In opposition to the doubts, which the deceitful practices and the errors of a science which excludes all knowledge of God from the methodology it has adopted for the study of the Bible might raise in our minds, let us quietly declare that this book in our hands, inspired and preserved by God, is indeed what it affirms to be: the very word of the living God. For God has watched with such care over the transmission of his holy word through the ages that, in spite of the falsifications produced by those who put themselves in the place of the Holy Spirit as judges of what in this book is of God, and what is not of him, we can still today hold in our hands God's very revelation to men. In spite of the numerous new French translations of the Bible—to speak only of the French speaking world—based on uncertain texts it is, by God's grace, still possible today to find translations grounded on the traditional text of Holy Scripture, as originally inspired by God and as it has, over the centuries, been received and preserved in the Church. Thus, with the presence in our midst of the Martin, Ostervald and Trinitarian Society²¹ French translations of the true text of the Bible, it is possible for men to read in French the infallible witness of God to the thoughts he chose to reveal to men for their salvation.²² C&S

21. *La Sainte Bible, Version Martin 1855* [1707] (Dallas, Texas Association Biblique Internationale, 1980); *Bible Version Ostervald* (1996) (Bodhuin, Laon: C. N. Baughman); *La Sainte Bible* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society).

22. This does not mean that the currently available versions of the Bible based on the eclectic text (Colombe, TOB, Darby, Segond, Osty, Crampon, Jerusalem 1956, etc) do not permit their readers to know God and his thoughts for men. We must again repeat that these versions, based as they are on partially uncertain texts, cannot have the certainty of those founded on the Majority Text as it has always been received in the Greek Churches of the East.

Book Reviews

A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN IRELAND

BY ALAN ACHESON

Dublin: Columba Press and APCK, 1997,
295 pages, hardback, ISBN 1-85607-210-X

REVIEWED BY CRAWFORD GRIBBEN

FOR a church that is older than that of Canterbury, with a vested interest in demonstrating its continuity with the church of St Patrick, the Church of Ireland has had a curiously ambivalent relationship with its history. History, in

Ireland, is the basis of identity; and, since 1922, the construction of Irish identities has grown increasingly complex, with ecclesiastical allegiances sometimes cutting across distinct cultural, linguistic and ethnological ideals. The Church of Ireland's mission straddles a political border as well as the border of two communities with radically divergent relationships to the Irish past. In such a context, the writing of history is a potentially dangerous and divisive occupation.

But there are also tensions within the institution which straddles these borders. The Church of Ireland is a broad church, and competing elements within the church's administration struggle to articulate their understanding of its true identity. In that struggle too, history is a key factor. Thus the

Church's traditional reluctance to engage with its past must be understood as an expression of its crisis in identity and sense of mission in the present.

But Ireland is changing; the older boundaries are increasingly blurred. Confessional nationalism is waning, at least in the Republic; and the "evangelical resurgence" in the Church of Ireland bears a distinctly liberal stamp. Thus the issues that plagued Irish ecclesiastical historiography are no longer as divisive or decisive as they once were within the established church. Perhaps these are the reasons why Church of Ireland historiography is only now beginning to take off.

Until very recently, the standard history of the post-Caroline period has been the third volume of Walter Alison Philips (ed.), *History of the Church of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: OUP, 1933). But the return to the study of the Irish reformation in recent years has heralded a wide range of scholarly discussions. Contributions by academics like Alan Ford, Richard Greaves, Raymond Gillespie, Kevin Whelan and Kevin Herlihy, to name but a few, have opened up the experience of being "Church of Ireland" in the early modern and modern periods. Alan Acheson was involved in the beginnings of this movement—the basis of this book's research was laid in his PhD thesis on the history of evangelicalism in the established Church (Queen's University of Belfast, 1967). Acheson writes now to popularise the most recent developments in this field.

This is why the publication of his book is so important. He writes with care and precision, and helpfully documents his intention to express his Church's "reformed faith and catholic heritage in spirituality, worship and pastoral care, in philanthropy and mission, in relations with other Irish churches, and in her contribution to the worldwide development of Anglicanism . . . God, the renewal of spiritual life, and the character of the evangelical revival are . . . germane to the purposes of the present volume, together with as much of ecclesiology and biography as space will allow" (p. 14–5).

Acheson's history begins with the remodelling of the Caroline church after the 1660 Restoration and notes the sense of crisis that the Glorious Revolution brought. William of Orange was known as a Calvinist, and his settlement in Scotland had demonstrated some sympathy for the Presbyterian cause. The Irish bishops of the day had no idea that their fate would not follow that of their Scottish brethren. Not for the first time, the Church found herself caught between intransigent Roman Catholicism and exultant Presbyterianism—with the strong ambitions of an established church in the waiting.

But the Church maintained its monopoly on power, and labelled these nonconformists either "papists" or "dissenters." Relationships with these other communions were often strained, and the Church, aiming at uniformity throughout the island, oscillated between techniques of coercion and persuasion. Annual sermons commemorated the 1641 Rebellion and warned the faithful of contemporary Catholic danger. But there was to be no pan-Protestant alliance to fend off the Roman threat. Presbyterianism, after the Glorious Revolution, was established in Scotland and tolerated in England, but in Ireland it was made illegal. Irish Toleration Acts were frustrated in 1692 and 1695, and passed narrowly only in 1719. Presbyterian worship was now legal; but Presbyterians were isolated from society until 1780, for the 1704 Test Act limited public office—in government, university, or

army—to conformists. Similarly the Consistorial Court of Armagh declared mixed marriages to be invalid when performed by a Presbyterian minister—a decision overturned only by Acts of Parliament in 1841 and 1844. Both papists and dissenters, however, found that legal restrictions were often subverted by practical leniency at a local level. Certainly the Huguenots enjoyed official indulgence. Although many of their number remained aloof from the established church, forming independent churches with Reformed pastors, the prominence of the Huguenot graveyard in Dublin city centre testifies to the crucial role these "Protestant strangers" played in the development of Ireland's Reformed consensus.

It is also remarkable that a church so committed to uniformity should be in the vanguard of liturgical innovation. In the early period, the traditional medium of praise was the metrical psalm, usually sung from Sternhold and Hopkins' 1560 compilation, or the New Version of Brady and Tate published in 1696. Hymnody was officially introduced in 1703, when Queen Anne's authorisation legitimised an existing liturgical preference. The Church was slower to realise its ideal of weekly communion; even city churches failed to centre sufficiently on the sacrament.

The eighteenth century was a difficult time for the church. The deadening influence of the Enlightenment—including the Hell Fire Club in Dublin—was balanced by a pietist revival. John Cennick led the Moravian missions in Ireland and the interest of Lady Huntingdon established chapels that retain their independent evangelical ethos alongside their Anglican identity to the present day. Contemporary writers recorded that the Irish church had not degenerated to the point of the English. Jonathan Swift claimed that Trinity students were better trained than those who had studied at either Oxford or Cambridge. John Wesley in 1756 noted that the communion service he attended in Trinity College chapel surpassed any he had witnessed at Oxford: "scarce any person stirred or coughed or spit from the beginning to the end of the Service." One student who could very well have attended that service would have been Wesley's later sworn enemy, A. M. Toplady, who graduated from Trinity in 1760. His conversion in a Wexford barn, listening to the preaching of a semi-literate Methodist, was one signal of the influence which Trinity students would have upon the development of the English church. But despite numerous successes, the evangelicals were losing influence: "Many of the appointments to the episcopal bench in the second half of the century were of men known primarily for their secular achievements" (p. 82).

The evolution of the Irish church throughout the eighteenth century took place against the backdrop of massive demographic changes. There are difficulties in obtaining reliable statistics: the 1861 census was the first to analyse the church allegiance of the Irish population. Nevertheless it seems clear that Ireland's population explosion was matched by a declining proportion of Protestants: in 1695, the Dublin population stood at 47,000; in 1733, it stood at 123,000, while the proportion of Protestants remained around two-thirds of the total. By 1798 Protestants formed 30 per cent of the total Dublin population.

The impact of the 1798 Rebellion—in which papists and dissenters united to challenge Ireland's social and cultural institutions—had a huge impact. As the Rebellion developed, its initial Protestant influence was eclipsed, and signifi-

cant numbers of Church of Ireland buildings were ransacked by mobs of Roman Catholics.

It is ironic, therefore, that the Union of 1801 was so supported by the Roman Catholic institution: “The Roman Catholic bishops, out of their dread of revolution, welcomed the Union; the Ulster Presbyterians for the most part opposed it” (p. 72). Ireland began the nineteenth century with closer ties than ever to Britain, and, like Britain, Ireland enjoyed an evangelical ascendancy between 1845 and 1895. Their dominance had been preceded by an evangelical resurgence, and the formation of Bible and mission societies. One Bible society printed Coyne’s edition of the Douai Bible—an official Roman Catholic translation sponsored by the bishops but unusually devoid of interpretive notes. This edition was printed at the request of leading Protestants and Roman Catholics concerned for the dissemination of religious knowledge throughout the island, and was later to be endlessly reprinted as the basic translation used in Protestant mission to Roman Catholics. But such advances were imperilled by an encyclical of Leo XII which denounced the “effrontery” of translating the Scriptures into the vernacular!

But the nineteenth century was also to be marked by massive emigration—not least in response to the devastating Potato Famine of the 1840s. Between 1820 and 1851 some half million Irish had settled in England. But many other Irish people were engaged in Christian service overseas. Perhaps surprisingly, these organisations were maintained as much by High Church Anglicans as evangelicals. Thus, between 1873 and 1913, an annual average of 26 Trinity men received English orders, and 45 per cent of all Trinity graduates in orders were working in England or overseas. But, as Acheson notes, “the paradox of the 19th century was that the church lost the political battle only after she had regained the commanding heights of spiritual and moral authority” (p. 110). In 1870, at the mid-point of the evangelical revival, came the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, a pivotal concession to radical demands for Irish home rule.

With disestablishment, the Church was stripped of her finances. She lost her endowments, her lands, palaces and incomes. An astonishing campaign of sacrificial giving put the Church back on her feet, and the institution began to cultivate as a virtue its new found freedom from State control. Popular evangelicalism developed a taste for increasing liturgical innovation—more hymnody, the introduction of Harvest festivals, choir festivals, and the extension of the ecclesiastical electorate to women in 1930. But this was also the period of the decline of evangelicalism. The aristocratic support that underpinned the evangelical revival seemed not to extend beyond the end of the nineteenth century. Evangelicals developed a tendency to move apart into isolationism; Acheson defines this primarily in the adoption of Low Church causes—such as opposition to the new “Roman collar”—and a movement towards the suburbs and identifiably middle-class attitudes towards poverty. More might have been said at this point of the failure of Irish fundamentalism and the success of the type of popular evangelicalism associated with St Kevin’s Dublin, where T. C. Hammond ministered and Alex Motyer, and other future theologians, worshipped.

The partition of Ireland brought the Church’s institutionalism to a crisis. Its traditional identity as a church

“by law established” retained some sense of loyalty to the British crown, which remained residual in Dublin congregations into the 1950s, when services were held commemorating the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Ecumenical developments were slow to emerge. Notorious massacres of Cork Protestants in 1922 scarred the Free State’s Anglicans, and the bishops’ opposition to partition, based on the fear of Home Rule and the post 1880s Roman Catholic revival, became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Church of Ireland population in the twenty six counties fell from 249,535 in 1911 to 164,215 in 1928: an astonishing 85,230 members had been lost in 15 years, due mostly to emigration and Roman Catholic restrictions on mixed marriages.

Yet the last few decades have witnessed a resurgence of evangelicalism in the Church of Ireland and with it a move away from a “West Briton” mentality in its members in the Republic. But just as the Church has changed, so has the definition of “evangelical.” The last third of the twentieth century was another period of ecclesiastical experimentation. Changing attitudes towards the centrality of the Eucharist among evangelicals highlighted a less Word-centred sense of ministry. This increasingly ecumenical worldview was marked at Trinity in the 1970s: the Roman Catholic Church ended its ban on its members studying at the college, and in response the Church of Ireland ended the affiliation of the college chapel, creating Ireland’s only ecumenical chapel in 1973. Liturgical innovations have meant decreasing visible unity. Evangelicals seemed content to use the *Alternative Prayer Book 1984*, despite the fact that it did not include the Thirty Nine Articles and made no mention of them in its preface. In 1990 the decision was taken to ordain women to the priesthood, some twenty years after the bishops had first indicated that they had no theological objections to the practice. But still Church membership declined. In the period 1971–81, smaller denominations—Acheson does not say which ones—gained 25,000 members while Church of Ireland membership fell by 52,846. In 1996 the number of Anglican clergy in Ireland was almost half that of 1947.

Thus the conclusion of Acheson’s book is highly paradoxical. His closing paragraphs portray a church apparently embarrassed by its past. Although writing from a broadly evangelical point of view, his history of the Church makes little reference to doctrinal changes. Indeed, the omission of the Thirty Nine Articles from the APB 1984 seems merely a metaphor for the eclipse of doctrine and proposition from the Church as a whole. Acheson’s discussion of the ordination of women issue is revealing: “Evangelicals in the Church of Ireland generally did not confuse church order with biblical essentials, as did many in England and Australia, and eschewed also the rigid, systematic theology revived in other reformed traditions in Ireland. Again, they did not organize on party lines, for their primary loyalty was to the Church of Ireland . . . Generally (though by no means universally) Evangelicals shed the arrogance previously exhibited towards men and women of other traditions, and abandoned their earlier isolation” (p. 254). The assumptions are illuminating: church order and biblical essentials have no overlap; rigid, systematic theology must only be deplored; belief that other mainstream churches present a false view of salvation is merely arrogance; and isolation can only be wrong. These are the assumptions of the new “evangelicalism.”

The question that this reviewer is left with does not

concern the quality of Acheson's research or writing. Both are excellent, and his concern to popularise the history of the Church of Ireland can only be applauded. Neither does it concern the fairness of his presentation of Anglican evangelicals, although readers might also find value in comparing his treatment with Warren Nelson's recent biography of T. C. Hammond. Rather, my concern is that the APB 1984's exclusion of the Thirty Nine Articles is foundational evidence for the trend to which the Church of Ireland's most basic failures can be traced. Acheson has provided a detailed and compelling presentation of his Church's often glorious past. But if its heritage of doctrine disappears, then the Church of Ireland can be neither catholic nor reformed. And that is what makes this book such tragic reading: the Church that is older than Canterbury has bankrupted its legacy for the future. *C&S*

PROTESTANTISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY:
BRITAIN AND IRELAND, c. 1650–c.1850
EDITED BY TONY CLAYDON AND IAN McBRIDE

Cambridge University Press, 1998, hardback, \$65.00, xii plus 318 including index, ISBN 0-531-62077-5

REVIEWED BY CRAWFORD GRIBBEN

In October 2000, the Runnymede Trust, a government think-tank concerned with questions of race and nation, issued a report that generated an unprecedented political storm. Criticising the common identification of "Britishness" with a particular racial type, it interrogated the place of national and racial identities within the contemporary United Kingdom. As the press picked up on their conclusions, government leaders and outspoken spin doctors were pulled into the debate. And yet, at the heart of the discussion, one salient fact remained true. No-one was more English than the royal family; yet the English royal family has not been English since the eleventh century. The Plantagenets were Norman; the Tudors were Welsh; the Stuarts were Scots; the Hanoverians were Dutch; and the present occupants of the palace were German—until they changed their name to Windsor. At the very heart of British identity, there lies an ambiguously internationalist icon.

Of course, as the above slippage from "Britain" into "English" reveals, the concept of "Britishness" has often been identified with one constituent in its collective identity. But racial characteristics are only one of the factors commonly identified with Britishness. Common language and common law are only two of the many variations on this theme. Above all else, however, historians are pointing to a distinct religious identity at the heart of the historic construction of Britishness. But what is this "construction" of Britishness? One of the most compelling conclusions reached by recent historical debate on this subject is the assertion that national identities are never "given" but are always constructed over time across a range of cultural debates. As the title of Benedict Anderson's epoch-making study suggests, nations are "imagined communities," negotiated centres of shared loyalty appropriating the allegiances of diverse peoples. Anderson and others have pointed to the rising "print

capitalism" at the end of the eighteenth century—the extensive circulation of newspapers in the face of the French threat—as the means by which notions of Britishness were inculcated, as diverse peoples throughout Scotland, England and Wales imagined themselves as a Protestant collective pitted against a Roman Catholic "other." It is this assumption that the essays gathered by Claydon and McBride seek to examine. Their collection begins with an editorial introduction, which usefully outlines the development of academic interest in questions of national identity. In this essay, Claydon and McBride offer a critique of the prevailing motifs in this field, arguing that recent studies have made national identity too modern; that recent studies have tended to exaggerate the impact of religious faith upon the formation of national identities; and that recent discussions have tended to exaggerate the dichotomy between the national "self" and the "other" against which that self was constructed. They outline the importance of the "elect nation" concept, as an imagining of the nation which continued to exist long after the eclipse of the Puritans through whom it was popularised. Yet they question how the elect nation concept could ever act as a vehicle for national identity when the majority of the nation's members were excluded from its terms. Nevertheless, they are certain, Britishness was founded upon a shared Protestantism.

As the other essays reveal, however, the identity of national Protestantism was itself debated. Haydon notes in his essay that Anglicans often sought to appropriate Protestant legitimacy, branding Methodists as being in the pay of Rome. Jeremy Black's essay notes that just as concepts of national Protestantism were debated, so were concepts of the "other" against which the nation was defined: the exclusion of dissenters from the body politic effectively barred their participation in, or identification with, the nation. Steven Pincus charts the uneasy relationship between national Protestantism and the growth of secularism in the eighteenth century, noting that "Nationalist revolutionaries often claim to be recovering national traditions when they are in fact inventing them" (p. 103). Tim Harris wonders how helpful national identities are anyway, when prominent individuals have often had a multi-kingdom identity. In any case, John Wolfe notes, ideas of national Protestantism seemed to wane after the granting of Catholic Emancipation in 1829. At the heart of the millennialist debates of the 1830s was the painful realisation that Britain was no longer a "Protestant nation."

Covering two centuries and three nations, the collection cannot avoid certain common difficulties. There appears to be a lack of clear organisation in the book. Many of the papers overlap each other; the concept of the nation itself is not defined until p. 78. Nevertheless, this is a valuable collection of essays from leading thinkers concerned to understand the most fundamental concept in modern political discourse.

Nations are undoubtedly invented fictions. But lest this should sound like an attack upon Protestantism, or the history of the United Kingdom, readers should remember that scholars of Irish literature are among those who have found the concept of "imagined communities" most stimulating. For, if there was ever an invented nation, that nation is modern Ireland. Whether we find it in the politics of de Valera, who presented Ireland to itself as a Roman Catholic, Gaelic-speaking nation, or in the literature of Synge and

Yeats in the Celtic Revival, idealising the third-world conditions of the Irish hinterland, Ireland is a nation grappling with the mythology of an invented history and a constructed culture. The “Irish theme bar” is the icon of a wider ferment. Perhaps the Runnymede Trust should move to Dublin. *C&S*

GOVERNMENT BY POLEMIC:
JAMES I, THE KING’S PREACHERS AND THE
RHETORIC OF CONFORMITY, 1603–1625
BY LORI ANNE FERRELL

California: Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1998,
ISBN 0-8047-3221-3

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW VOGAN

THE literary historian P. MacCullough has maintained that sermons were the predominant literary genre at the Courts of Elizabeth I and James I. Government by Polemic extends that awareness of the importance of sermons, especially court sermons, during the Jacobean period. However much it may gall the literary critic, as Ferrell puts it “Sermons, not masques, were the major organs of political self-expression at the Jacobean court” (p. 10). Revisionist history of the period has tended to emphasise the Calvinist consensus of the English Church that reigned in the late Elizabethan period through to the end of the reign of James I. The Jacobean Church of England has been seen as an epitome of the so-called *via media*, a central idea in Anglican historiography. It began, however, as a politically convenient ideology.

Royal propaganda claimed that James governed by moderation but Ferrell reveals a fascinating study of government by polemic in these court sermons. James needed to counter Calvinist opposition in Parliament to his pro-Spanish foreign policy and this was reflected in the English Church. A subtle movement began to assert that a broader doctrinal and ceremonial complexion was necessary. Best known of these court favourites, perhaps is Lancelot Andrewes whose anti-Calvinism and liturgical obsessions were also most pronounced. Loyal obedience to the king and the issue of kneeling to receive communion could be made conveniently interchangeable. A culture of flexibility towards non-conformity previously had prevailed but there now emerged a policy and rhetorical strategy of isolating “extremism.”

James found that this policy could be effective in Scottish as well as the English Church. Both Presbyterians and moderate Puritans could be identified as dangerously seditious. The Accession Day court sermons provided the perfect opportunity to compare the two Churches and lambaste “extremists.” James I’s *realpolitik* extended to using the Gunpowder Plot as a means of shielding loyal Roman Catholics while attacking Puritans as almost more dangerous than “papist” plotters. In summary this is a valuable study showing how anti-Puritanism developed into anti-Calvinism in the period that led up to the Civil War. *C&S*

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WHAT IS BEHIND THE OPPOSITION TO AMERICA?

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