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EDITORIAL

TOTAL DEPRAVITY AND SOCIAL ORDER

by Stephen C. Perks

A participant in a BBC Radio Four religious programme several years ago stated that the doctrine of total depravity no longer has any credence in the Church and that only a few religious sects now adhere to it. Her point is well taken. Indeed, we could go further than this. Few of those who do give assent to the doctrine understand it or recognise its implications either for soteriology or social theory. Yet the Christian doctrines of total depravity and salvation and the Christian doctrine of social order are closely linked.

Of course the doctrine of total depravity does not teach, despite popular misconceptions to the contrary, that the non-believer is incapable of thinking or doing anything that is in itself good or virtuous (though it is true that God is the source of all goodness and that without the grace of God man is incapable of any good; common grace is therefore the source of all virtuous thoughts and actions of non-believers). Rather, it teaches that the Fall affected the whole of man's nature, including his intellect or reason and his will. The Fall was not limited to the "spiritual" condition of man. Total depravity, therefore, teaches that in all his thoughts and actions, the virtuous as well as the immoral, the non-believer thinks and acts in rebellion against God. As the apostle Paul put it, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Those who do not live by faith in God live in denial of God, in rebellion against him. By their whole lives they deny the God who demands their submission in the whole of their lives. Their very acts of charity and virtue, which are good in themselves, are put to the service of the idols they choose to worship instead of the God of the Christian Scriptures. In the whole tenor of their lives, in every faculty of their being and every sphere of their lives, they deny in all they think and do the God who demands that their lives be lived in his service and for his glory. Those thoughts and works that are good in themselves, therefore, are used by non-believers to deny God and glorify idols. The thoughts and works of those who deny God, refuse to repent of their sin and submit to his word, may often be in themselves virtuous and charitable, but the disposition of the hearts of those who do such works is one that is totally turned away from God, who is the author of all good (and the only one who is good, according to Jesus—Mt. 19:17). The non-believer is dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1) and cannot without the grace of God exercise faith (Eph. 2:8) or please God (Heb. 11:6).

In other words, the desire to be as God (Gen. 3:5, 22), determining good and evil for oneself without reference to God and his revealed will for mankind, colours the whole of fallen man's outlook, the whole of the way that he thinks about life and the world, and in everything he thinks and does he seeks to think and act independently of God. The whole orientation of his life is one of denial of God, and in all spheres of life this fallen orientation determines the way he lives. He sees the world and all things in it independently of God and seeks to think and live independently of God. His interpretation of the whole of life is a denial of God. It is not merely that the corruption of sin manifests itself in his morals and "spiritual" life; his will is in bondage to sin and therefore he uses his reason to deny God. His defection from God is total. It is in this sense that man is totally depraved.

The doctrine of total depravity, therefore, has profound implications for a Christian world-view. It affects not merely our view of man as an individual soul, his slavery to sin and inability to serve God, i.e. his lack of righteousness in God's sight, but also, for example, our understanding of how we should raise and educate our children, how we should as a society provide welfare for the needy, how we should organise our society politically and how we should deal with criminals. In short, it affects how we understand the faith as applying to the whole of life. Total depravity is a foundational doctrine for the development of a consistently Christian world-view, which is a particular view of the origin, nature, meaning and purpose of life based on the biblical doctrines of Creation, Fall and Redemption. The biblical doctrine of the Fall presupposes the Creation, and a particular view of the Creation (it is not consistent, for example, with a theistic evolutionary perspective), and the Christian doctrine of salvation presupposes the biblical doctrine of the Fall. Our understanding of the Fall, its extent and implications, will have a decisive role in shaping our understanding of salvation.

Mediaeval Roman Catholic theologians, for example, made a distinction between the image of God in man, which they believed consisted of his natural ability to reason and exercise free will, and the likeness of God, which they believed consisted of his original righteousness in God's sight.[1] This original righteousness or likeness of God was not considered part of the natural condition of man but a supernatural gift of God's grace, a *donum superadditum*, bestowed upon Adam in addition to his human nature. It was this *donum superadditum*, the supernatural gift of original righteousness, that was lost in the Fall according to this Roman Catholic doctrine.[2] The image of God, consisting of man's reason and free will, although weakened by the Fall, remained essentially intact and uncorrupted by sin.[3] This split the life of mankind into two different realms, the realm

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1. See Gen. 1:26. This faulty distinction can be found in the early patristic period. Tertullian, for example, considered the image of God as consisting in his *form*, and the likeness in his *eternity* (*On Baptism*, chapt. 5). Roman Catholic theologians subjected the two different words used in Gen. 1:26 (*image* and *likeness*) to an Aristotelian analysis in which the image consists in the *substance* and the likeness in the *accidents* of anything. Calvin rejected any distinction between image and likeness (*Commentaries on Genesis, ad loc., Institutes* 1.15.3).

2. William Hordern, "Donum Superadditum" in Alan Richardson (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1969), p. 99*a*.

3. According to the Roman Catholic theologians Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler. "The essence of original sin is the absence of grace, or of that supernatural elevation which was originally intended for man: this 'state of privation' really separates man from God and yet is not a personal sin of the individual, that is, is only to be called 'sin' in an analogous sense; it leaves unchanged all that man himself is by nature, although the whole concrete man is 'wounded' by the consequences of original sin and 'weakened' in his natural powers" ("Original Sin" in *Concise Theological Dictionary* [London: Burns and Oates, 1965], p. 330f.).

of nature and the realm of grace. Redemption takes place in the realm of grace not the realm of nature, which is largely unaffected either by the Fall or Redemption.

This denial of man's total depravity since the Fall means that human sin is not pervasive, that it does not affect the whole of man's thoughts, words and actions outside of Christ. In such a perspective the salvation that Christ purchased on the cross is not a total transformation of the natural life of man by the grace of God. Rather, it a kind of restoration of the *donum superadditum*, i.e. a supplement, needed to complete man, to bridge the shortfall between man as he stands as the product of nature and man as one who is righteous in God's sight. In this perspective man is able of his own will and abilities to accomplish much of what God requires of him, intellectually, morally, politically, culturally etc., but he is unable of his own abilities to achieve a state of supernatural righteousness in God's sight. God's grace is needed, therefore, for man to be able to understand those things supernaturally revealed in the book of Scripture. But the book of nature is open to all men, who, through the use of their natural abilities, are able to come to a proper understanding of it.

In this perspective man is not totally depraved, i.e. completely fallen, but only partially fallen. He is able by his natural abilities to achieve much, but needs the grace of God to bring him to perfection. This perspective is associated with Roman Catholicism and particularly with Thomas Aquinas and those who have followed him.[4] Thomas Aquinas taught that ". . . grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it . . ."[5] The gift of salvation, therefore, does not totally transform man's life and culture but merely perfects it. Man's natural life and culture are not deemed to be in need of complete transformation by the grace of God. And this is because they are not perceived as being completely fallen. The curse of sin has not corrupted them. Man needs saving from his sin, his rebellion against God and his unbelief, but this is seen as having a narrow application relating to the realm of faith. The Fall is seen in narrowly "religious" terms and those areas of life considered to be part of nature are effectively religiously neutral areas of life. In this perspective the Christian faith consist of a synthesis of nature and grace, the latter completing the former.

Except in those areas perceived as "religious" in the narrow sense of the word, salvation in such a world-view will not affect the social order of society. Since man is not totally depraved or totally fallen in every aspect of his life, and retains his natural abilities intact (e.g. the intellect or reason and free will), his culture and social order will not be transformed by the grace of God in Christ. It is only man's *spiritual* condition that needs to be corrected.

From this we see that our understanding of the Fall, its nature and extent, limits and shapes our understanding of the nature and extent of our redemption. If the Fall is total and affects every aspect of the life of man, then Redemption

must be total, it must redeem the whole life of man. There can be no area or sphere of human life or thought that must not be redeemed and therefore completely transformed by Christ. If the Fall is partial, if it affects man's moral inclinations but not his intellect, his ability to reason correctly, for example, and the natural life of man is not corrupted in the whole of its orientation, then Redemption is only partial. It does not transform the whole of man's life and culture, it merely perfects nature.

The view of the Fall mentioned above, that Adam's original righteousness was not an aspect of his human nature but a *donum superadditum*, a supernatural gift of grace in addition to man's essential nature, is a distinctively Roman Catholic doctrine. The Reformers rejected the Roman Catholic view of the Fall and taught what came to be known as the doctrine of total depravity. Nevertheless, it is clear that a perspective very similar to the Roman Catholic understanding of the nature of man and his fall into sin is adhered to by most Protestants and evangelicals today. Evangelicals are dualists. They see life as split into two different realms: spiritual life, which corresponds to the sphere of grace, and secular life, which corresponds to the sphere of nature. Nature does not need redeeming because it is not fallen. Conversion affects a transformation in the spiritual realm. But it does not essentially affect the realm of nature (secular life). One can carry on living life pretty much as one did before conversion in the realm of nature. The concern of the Church is with the realm of the supernatural (grace). And therefore congregations will be and often are warned not to get tied up with cultural concerns, with things happening in the world and with organisations. Their duty is to be at church as much as possible attending to the spiritual realm.

Even among those who consider themselves to be Reformed and therefore who accept the strictly theological dimension of the doctrine of total depravity, the implications of this doctrine for the whole life of man in those areas that fall outside soteriology and ecclesiology are practically neglected. When it comes to the education of their children, politics, social order, economics, art and culture generally the faith is largely seen as having no relevance. It certainly is not deemed to require a total transformation of these areas, which are seen as neutral from the religious point of view. Practically, Reformed believers on the whole today have adopted a world-view similar to that of the Roman Catholics. The Fall is not seen as having affected the whole of man's nature. His natural life remains largely unaffected by his fall into sin. Grace does not transform nature therefore, it merely completes it, and the natural life of man,—his family life, political life, economic life, the upbringing and education of his children etc.—remains unchanged, unaffected, untransformed by the word of God, since grace is seen as being relevant only to the supernatural aspects of life. e.g. faith, Church life, spiritual gifts etc. In spite of the retention of the verbiage of the doctrine of total depravity in the Reformed Churches, the truth really is that the doctrine is no longer understood nor its implications appreciated. It is confined to the realm of the spiritual and is seen as having no relation to the realm of the secular.

Arminianism is the dominant theology among evangelicals today of course, and Arminianism, like the Roman Catholic view of the Fall, denies man's total depravity since the Fall. But why have Reformed people embraced pietism with such enthusiasm? I suggest it is because they have,

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4. William Hordern, *op. cit.*

5. *Summa Theologiæ*, 1a. 1, 8. According to Aquinas, "The constitution of human nature is neither destroyed nor diminished by sin. The gift of original righteousness was totally lost through the sin of our first parent. The natural inclination to virtue, finally, is diminished by sin" (*Summa Theologiæ* 12ae, Q. 85, Art. 1 in A. M. Fairweather, *Nature and Grace* [*The Library of Christian Classics* Vol. XI (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1954)], p. 126). For a discussion of the philosophy behind Aquinas' views see Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought from St. Augustine to Ockham* (London: The Merlin Press, [1958] 1959), pp. 206–224.

unwittingly, embraced a basic premiss of Arminianism, namely, that man is not completely fallen away from God, that outside of the saving grace of God in Christ man is not totally depraved.

Of course Reformed people, especially TULIP people, will deny this. They hold to the doctrines of grace. Perish the thought that they should have adopted a basic premiss of Arminianism! But as Jesus said, "Wisdom is justified of [i.e. vindicated by] her children" (Mt. 11:19, Lk. 7:35). Why do so many Reformed believers deny the connection between faith and culture? And why are we to flee from the world that Christ redeemed and commissioned us to claim in his name into an irrelevant ghetto that denies any duty of the Christian to reform or transform the culture in which he lives? Why has the Great Commission been separated from the Cultural Mandate by Reformed believers in the twentieth century when historically they have gone together and been seen as inseparably linked, two sides of the same coin? By denying the necessary link between religion and culture Reformed believers have opened to door to the Arminian world-view. They still adhere to the terminology of total depravity, but the doctrine is a dead letter in practice; they do not believe that man's fallen nature, his defection from God, manifests itself in the totality of his life, i.e. in every aspect and sphere of his life and culture. If they did they would not send their children to be educated by non-believers, to be taught according to the basic premiss of secular humanism, namely that the world and everything in it exists and can be understood independently of the God who created it and whose creative will gives it its meaning and purpose. Man's depravity does not in their eyes manifest itself in the spheres of education, medicine, science, art, politics. In these spheres the natural life of man is sufficient. It does not need redeeming. Grace not does transform man and his culture completely, it merely perfects nature. In this sense most Reformed believers are practical Arminians, and their life and witness to the faith of the Reformers, which they claim to espouse, is in practice the antithesis of that proclaimed by the Reformers.

Yet when culture is abandoned by Christians and man's natural life outside of God is allowed to develop consistently according to its own principle, i.e. the principle of original sin in which man determines for himself what constitutes good and evil without reference to God's word, Christians throw up their hands in horror and bewail the terrible state of the world. But why? Culture is largely the external form of religion.[6] If we accept that people can be educated properly without reference to God by those who deny God and seek to live consistently in term of such a denial of God, the result will be that God is eliminated from our culture. The denial of God by the scientist and the triumph of evolution as the explanation of our existence is merely a symptom of man's desire to live consistently in term of his own fallen nature. The deplorable state of immorality in our culture is merely a symptom of the same desire. Likewise, if we eliminate God from our understanding of welfare and medicine the result will be massive welfare abuse and abortion on demand.

Is it really so difficult to see the connection between religion and culture? By their denial of the necessity of a Christian culture Christians have opened the door to the repaganisation of society. And their answer to this problem has too often been to retreat from the world rather than to preach the whole gospel to the whole creation and thereby bring the redeeming grace of God to bear upon the cultural life of the nation. But in adopting the same pietistic perspective those who claim to be Reformed but deny the link between faith and culture have become implicit Arminians, promoting an Arminian social theory that has helped to open the door to a world without God for the next generation, i.e. a culture in which God is relegated to a narrow sphere of life revolving round church meetings and personal piety and in which the gospel is seen as having no bearing on the greater part of man's life. Education, art, economics, welfare, medicine, law and order, vocational life are all seen as religiously neutral spheres of life. The result of this world-view has been the decline of our society from a culture that acknowledged and honoured God, however imperfectly, to a society that blasphemes and dishonours God with virtually every breath it takes. This decline has now entered the exponential phase of the curve and as a result our nation stands on the brink of Gehenna.

Our understanding of the Fall will affect our understanding of redemption. If man is totally depraved by the Fall, his sin, his denial of God and his insistence that he will determine good and evil for himself, will manifest itself in the totality of his life and works, in every sphere of his life and culture. In this case man's redemption must be equally total; it must embrace not only his individual spiritual life but his culture as well. If man is not totally depraved by sin, if the Fall is only partial, his sin will not manifest itself in the totality of his life and works. In this case the natural life of man will not need to be transformed totally by the grace of God, but only perfected. The gospel will be considered a "spiritual" addition to the natural life of man, a *donum superadditum*, and, to use the words of one preacher, "primarily concerned with the world to come."

But the Bible does not teach this. Rather, it teaches that man's fall into sin is total, that without the grace of God every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5; 8:21 cf. Rom. 1:18–32; 3:10–18; 8:6–8; Eph. 4:17–19; Titus 1:15–16). Man's natural life in the state of sin, therefore, does not need to be merely perfected. Redemption is not a spiritual addition to the natural life of man. The natural life of man needs to be transformed totally by the grace of God. Redemption is a complete recreation of man in the image of Christ: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, *all* things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). And if the believer in Christ is a new creature, this new creation must manifest itself in the totality of his life, and in his culture, which is the external outworking of his religion.

We forget this important doctrine at our peril, and when we do our society must suffer the awful consequences of our neglect of the gospel and our cultural mandate to bring all things into subjection to Jesus Christ (Gen. 1:28 cf. 2 Cor. 10:5). Of course, it is often not until the next generation and those that follow it that the full implications of this neglect become apparent, and this to some extent helps to explain the terrible consequences of the transgression of the Second Commandment, in which the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations (Ex. 20:5).

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6. For more on this subject see Henry Van Til, *The Calvinist Concept of Culture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic [1958] 2001)

Man's fall into sin is total. No area of his life is unaffected by his sin. Because man in the totality of his life is a sinner he seeks to deny God and suppress the knowledge of God in all spheres of life (Rom. 1:18–19). His sin, therefore, works itself out in the totality of his culture. Likewise, the salvation that Christ procured for his people by his life, death and resurrection is a completely new creation. It must, therefore, work itself out in the totality of man's life and culture. This fact has profound implications for our view of social order. Our society will produce either a culture that is moving towards the new creation in Christ, or a culture that is moving away from this, a culture of death (Pr. 8:36). A society that is moving towards the new creation in Christ will seek to order its life according to the standards of righteousness revealed in God's law. It will produce a culture that honours Christ and a social order that conforms to God's law because it recognises the comprehensively fallen nature of man's natural life (i.e. man's total depravity outside of Christ), God's grace in Christ as the only remedy for this condition, and God's law as the only sound basis of social order and peace in a fallen world. Where this is rejected society will deteriorate into a culture of depravity and death, which is what our society today is becoming.

This declension of our society into a culture of depravity will not be halted until the Church once again recognises the full extent of man's fall into sin and therefore the full and complete nature of the redemption that Christ has purchased for the world, and until the Church once again starts living in the light of this by seeking to transform the culture in which she lives by applying the light of God's word to every sphere of human thought and activity. We must preach total salvation to a totally fallen world.

The nature/grace schema of the Roman Catholic Church, which is so popular today even among Protestants and evangelicals, will not help us here. Rather it will hinder our work for the kingdom of God because it is a compromise with the philosophy of the world. The work of Thomas Aquinas was a self-conscious compromise with the philosophy of ancient paganism (Aristotle).[7] It was a hybrid, a syncretistic form of belief that stood in opposition to the biblical world-view grounded in the doctrines of Creation, Fall and Redemption. These doctrines form the foundation of a Christian world-view. Each of these doctrines was a scandal to the world of ancient philosophy, and they are still a scandal to the world of modern secular humanist philosophy and science. But they are inextricably linked. The abandonment of the biblical doctrines of Creation or Fall will alter our understanding of the nature of Redemption. The result will be a truncated gospel devoid of the ability to transform the whole life of man. Christ came to save the world, not merely to pluck brands from the fire. The redemption he accomplished on the cross was for the whole life of men and nations, and therefore his Great Commission to his disciples was and is to bring all nations into obedience to his word.

The Church must abandon the dualistic nature/grace schema and pursue a biblical understanding of the nature of Creation, Fall and Redemption. God's grace does not merely perfect a largely unfallen nature. Rather it transforms completely the natural life of man, which is totally depraved and in need of the grace of God in each and every sphere. The grace of God in Christ is a grace that claims the whole of man's life, including his family, his politics, his art, his business. No area of man's life or culture is religiously neutral. It either serves Christ or denies him (Mt. 12:30). *C&S*

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7. "Thomas [Aquinas] attempted to reconcile Aristotelianism and Christianity. He believed that Aristotelian philosophy was, in the main, true. Key Aristotelian concepts, such as the idea of substance and accident, are used in defining Christian doctrines—including the doctrine of the Eucharist. Among other things, Thomas accepted the entire Greek position with regard to the soul. On the other hand he correctly affirms that the knowledge of faith is supernatural and cannot be demonstrated by human reason; yet according to Thomas, theology is to refute the opponents of faith and elucidate and make probable the articles of belief by the aid of philosophical thought. For the Reformers, the Ockhamists successfully wrecked this synthesis of Thomas Aquinas whereby nature and reason lead through unbroken stages to grace and revelation" (David Estrada, "Letters to the Editor" in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. xi, No. 3 [July, 2001], p. 30*af*.).

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

by Michael W. Kelley

ON several occasions in his epistles the apostle Paul refers to something like *cosmic powers* (principalities, dominions, thrones, rulers, authority) which have a very important bearing on faith in Christ.[1] These different designations can perhaps all be summarised by the general term *the Powers*.

Before we can say more, we need to list the relevant texts:

Rom. 8:38f.—For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any *powers*, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Cor. 15:24–26—Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed ["dethroned," "rendered inoperative"] all *dominion, authority and power*. For he must rule until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Eph. 1:20f.—That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all *rule and authority, power and dominion*, and every title that can be given ["name that can be named"], not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Eph. 2:1f.—As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom [*exousia*—power] of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient [sons of disobedience].

Eph. 3:10—His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the *rulers and authorities* [*exousia*] in the heavenly realms...

Eph. 6:12—For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the *rulers*, against the *authorities*, against the *powers* of this dark world and against the *spiritual forces* of evil in the heavenly realms.

Col. 1:16—For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether *thrones* or *powers* or *rulers* or *authorities*; all things were created by him and for him.

Col. 2: 15—And having disarmed the *powers and authorities*, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

The first question that immediately arises is: what, if any, is the difference between the various terms Paul uses? Does each represent a distinct meaning, classification or function?

In fact, Paul makes no attempt to distinguish their meanings. We merely observe that he uses them in varying combinations, and more or less synonymously. At a few places they can be found heaped together in groups; otherwise, just one or two are mentioned. It is noteworthy, moreover, that no other author of Scripture employs terminology of this kind as does Paul.

A second and perhaps more important question comes to mind: does Paul have in mind personal beings or something that pertains to abstract and impersonal realities? Many have thought that Paul was referring to something like *angelic* beings. After all in several of the texts we read of a close relationship between the *powers* and either angelic or other *spiritual* agents—especially, e.g. the Devil and his minions. Modern scholars like to point out what recent research has allegedly brought to light, viz. that in Paul's day there was a considerable body of Jewish apocalyptic literature in which we find much discussion of and reference to similar ideas and terminology. These writings are said to expound *heavenly mysteries*, and to conceive of *thrones* and *powers* as classes of angels who correspond to hierarchies in heaven. Indeed, Jewish thought at this time showed a curious preoccupation with angels, especially with their influence over events on earth (one should consider the early thrust of the book of Hebrews). Angels were thought of as holding authority over natural occurrences and forces. In the Jewish mind, God was seen to rule his world through the intermediary of angels.

Is there any basis in Scripture for this sort of thinking? There is, of course, reference to the role of angelic powers and their relationship to earthly kingdoms in Daniel 10:13, 20. But, in the main, the current of thought is extra-biblical, at least, extra-canonical. Still, it is neither impossible nor unlikely that Paul may have borrowed terminology from this broader background. On this, however, we can only speculate. One thing does seems certain, and that is that Paul's use of these terms so seemingly casually and without the least attempt to explain himself suggests that his readers were familiar with this vocabulary as well, if perhaps not altogether with the conceptual background. And the fact that Paul could address them to a variety of Christian Churches in a diversity of locations indicates how widespread was the early Church's acquaintance with them. Even so, Paul's borrowing of these terms from the so-called Jewish angelology of the period should not necessarily imply that he meant the same things by them as did his Jewish contemporaries. But if it is possible that Paul gave them a different content than was currently maintained among Jewish scholars, what precisely was it? What did he intend by borrowing such terminology?

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1. For this essay I am much indebted to the excellent monograph by Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, PA, translated by John H. Yoder), 1977.

A. *The Powers and the Regulating Principles*

Although Paul mentions angels or other spiritual agents alongside thrones, principalities, authorities etc., we should not necessarily understand him to mean them to be interchangeable terms. In Rom. 8:38f Paul, while mentioning angels and powers together, includes other obviously non-personal realities alongside—e.g. present, future, life, death, heights, depths. These are not meant to be understood as angels, so why should his mention of *any powers* be necessarily so understood? In a passage that closely resembles Rom. 8, viz. 1 Cor. 3:22, Paul makes no mention of angels.

1 Cor. 3:22—All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future— all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

What is more, his language is strongly suggestive of things that have to do with our earthly existence. In the Romans text, his concern was to stress that, regardless of these realities which threaten us, they shall not come between us and Christ; that is, they shall not be able to separate us from Christ and the final goal he intends for us, which Paul, without further elaboration, simply defines as *the love of Christ*. In the Corinthians text, Paul seems to imply that these realities, properly understood, not only cannot subjugate or dominate us, but rather, through Christ, the situation is reversed, they become ours. The point is that these realities are not thought of as angels. They are, it would appear, realities which condition earthly life at the present time. Is it just conceivable, therefore, that thrones, dominions, powers etc., are also such realities?

Before exploring Paul's meaning in more detail, we should first examine a couple of related texts where his language, although seemingly different, nevertheless conveys ideas that are similar in nature. The first is found at Colossians 2:8, 13–23. In this text we encounter the phrase *basic principles of the world* (vv. 8, 20—*stoicheia tou cosmou*). What does Paul mean by this expression? This term, *stoicheia*, being difficult to translate, has raised considerable problems for students of Scripture. The context, at least, makes it clear that, whatever it means, it should be seen in connection with *principalities* and *powers* (v. 15). One gets the distinct impression that the principalities and powers are things which *rule* over man's life outside of Christ (*stoicheia* = rule or regulation). For Paul sees them as matters which have been *disarmed* in the cross and things to which we have died in Christ (v. 20). Clearly in some way they represent something that stands over against Christ, and have some sort of domination over us apart from Christ. Paul sees their manifestation in *human traditions* (v. 8), which give rise to *deceptive philosophy* and every sort of man-conjured notion of meaning, value and purpose. Furthermore, such cognitively constructed human value systems can become ossified as *codes* and *regulations* (v. 14) that demand unquestioned submission and obedience. Or there is the prevailing current of public opinion (vv. 16, 17) with its psychological pressures to conform to man-imposed mores, traditions and customs—the universally felt code of the group with its predilection for clan or tribal thinking. These are especially manifest in the sorts of social pressure that demand conformity in matters of solemn or ritual behavior, in other words, the core convictions, such as can be found either among Jews or Gentiles. Paul does not see the problem as strictly a *Jewish* one, although it is typical of Paul to reason

from the Jewish context by way of analogy. On the contrary, what we observe is that he calls these *stoicheia* the *commandments and doctrines of men* in general (v. 22)[2] which have *an appearance of wisdom*, but which, in reality, are nothing but *self-imposed religion*, *false humility*, and result in *a harsh treatment of the body* which, it is thought, is able to impose order and control on *the flesh* (v. 23).

It is obviously of great concern to Paul that the Colossian Christians be not deceived by these things and so led back into servitude to the *stoicheia* and become ensnared all over again in a Christ-opposing world-view. It is necessary that they see the issue of faith in Christ as that which puts them in opposition to the world and its value systems, and the reverse. Whenever these systems of value, which are connected to the *stoicheia*, rise up to claim authority over man, as seems inevitable from Paul's language, they become *powers* which seek to gain absolute sway over the minds of men in general, to control the way they think about themselves in the world, to shape their understanding of life and its purpose. Far from being *ad hoc*, they appear as social-psychological and ethical-rational structures which hold sway over man's social and cultural life. In this sense, they act as forms and shapes that exist beyond the choices and preferences of mere individuals. We need not doubt that every individual is born into and brought up in—pre-conditioned by—already existing social and cultural ideals. Perforce, they take on an aura of the sacred and as such are never to be questioned or disputed. They elicit from man all the quality and conviction of a faith.

Now it is in conjunction with this last feature that they become *principalities and powers* to which man believes he must conform if his world is not to plunge into chaos and confusion. They thereby become the vision of a reality in which man places all his hopes for well-being and prosperity. Paul says, and we shall consider this more fully later, that these powers were unmasked or disarmed in the cross of Christ. They were taken away and we were liberated from their dominance over us. We were under these *stoicheia* so long as we were outside of Christ. At that time we were subject to their domination over us. But, in Christ, we are set free from their constraint upon us. Yet the possibility does exist that we shall return to them and become conditioned by them once again.

A second text is comparable, viz. Galatians 4:1–11. In Galatians, as was probably the case for the most part in Colossians, Paul writes to Christians who were formerly pagans, that is, Gentiles. And, once again, we are introduced to the phrase *basic principles of the world* (v. 3), or, later, to what Paul describes as *weak and miserable principles* (v. 9). Paul characterises the former lives of these Galatian Gentiles before coming to Christ as one of *slavery* (v. 8). But, strangely, Paul does not speak of it as slavery to sin; rather, he calls it slavery to the basic principles of the world under which they, as all men who have not known God, were at one time cast because of sin. Interestingly, an important mark of this state, says Paul, is to be *under law* (v. 3f). At v. 3, Paul had already indicated that, as a Jew, he, too, along with all his fellow Jews, had been a slave as well. And in that condition, just like the Galatian Gentiles, he, and his Jewish brethren, had been under the control of the basic principles of the world. Back

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2. Keep in mind that Paul speaks of them as "stoicheia of the world," not simply as "stoicheia of the Jews."

in 3:23, Paul had described what he meant by that so far as the Jew was concerned. The Jew was *held prisoner by the law* for he was *under supervision of the law*. This language has given rise to a great deal of dispute. Was Paul condemning the law? Did he regard liberation in Christ as liberation from the law? If Paul equates being held prisoner to law as a form of being slaves to the basic principles of the world, then it would indeed seem that justification in Christ in some sense does set one free from law. For to be held prisoner to law, as he meant here, was to be in a state of tutelage or bondage, a situation far from the condition of sonship which redemption in Christ involves. To be in that situation is not to be self-directed under Christ; instead, it is to be commanded by an external set of rules which could never be truly obeyed, but which one's inner moral compass regarded as necessary to keep if one was to know and experience the absolute good. Indeed, law-keeping has come to be seen by Fallen men in general as the only possible form of achieving the good. And what a man ought to do, he surely can do! This attitude was productive of a man-centered moralism, for it derived from the conviction that man had the innate moral strength to live the well-ordered life.

What is more, since the law in its truly divine clarification was entrusted to the Jew, it was tempting to think that being Jewish mattered as much as following in every detail the uncompromising requirements of moral order exemplified by law-keeping. The law added the burden of group-think and group-exclusivity, and it was productive of a belief in one's superiority based on membership in the group. The Jew, besides his sense of moral superiority over men in general, thought that his blood-line made him special as well. But whereas the Jew saw all this as a badge of honour and privilege, Paul regarded it as a self-deception and a profound error because it had nothing to do with true faith. The Jew lived for the law and the Jewish nation. These were his regulating principles. He did not truly know the God whom no nation could possess nor man could please by the strength of his own natural endeavour.

To be held prisoner under law is, therefore, in Paul's mind, to cling to the Jewish understanding of the law. It is a form of worldliness because it amounts to being enslaved to the basic principles of the world. It is viewed, in other words, as an indispensable ethical demand of life according to this present world, one which man can and must keep to ensure the smooth functioning of life and to guarantee his well-being in all things. And the pressure to conform to law increases all the more as man comes to see it as corresponding to the inevitable order of the world, apart from which the world, let alone his own personal life, would fall into chaos and confusion. In this respect, it takes on for man a salvation meaning.

With this analogy of the Jew in mind, Paul comes back to his Gentile readers whom he regards as once having lived in the world under the control of the same mind-set, only as it corresponded to their pagan background. Thus, he speaks of them, as of all Gentiles in general, as being enslaved *to those who by nature are not gods* (v. 8). There is a profoundly religious dimension to the problem of being enslaved to the basic principles of the world. Man before Christ felt bound by the order provided by *the gods*, one which it was necessary to observe devoutly if one was not to upset his only system of security and well-being. Having experienced true redemption, these Galatians became sons and heirs through Christ

and recipients of a liberation from their false ideal of order and well-being and were brought under a new power, namely, that of the Spirit who, rather than oppress them under a crushing moralism, brings them now into contact with God in an altogether new way—as a Father. In other words, it is not simply the thought of God as one who merely demands conformity with his law, but now as a God whose righteous requirements are met in Christ and drawn upon as a Father who deals with sons. However, these same Galatians have come under the sway of certain Jewish influences which Paul says threatens to return them to their former condition of slavery, to put them once again in reliance upon the *basic principles* rather than upon Christ. And, says Paul, to do so is to turn away from the strength of the Father and to rely once again upon, indeed, to put one's hope in, that which is *weak and miserable.*

Our brief examination of these two texts would seem to make clear that man's life outside of Christ is ruled by a power or series of powers to which man seeks to render devoted service as if they were gods. In fact, they are simply *stoicheia*, the world's governing regulations which come to have predominance over us because they seem to order life aright, and following their requirements seems to offer the promise of the greatest well-being and security. However, Paul sees them as reducing us to a condition of slavery, for to submit to their authority and requirements is to be like a slave who does not act under his own freedom and independence but only obeys the dictates of his master. Such a person is not truly self-directed and motivated, but is driven and compelled by that which is outside him. Man may think that they give the strength to live as man ought to live—even a slave can feel comfortable and secure in his slavery—but they are *weak and miserable* so far as true life in any sense is concerned. Paul speaks of them in a variety of ways which, however, is not an exhaustive list: e.g. as time (present and future), space (height and depth), life and death, social customs and philosophies of men, public opinion and Jewish ritual observance, pious traditions and even the fateful course of the stars. Apart from Christ man is at the mercy of realities which spring from these basic principles, or seem to. They dominate him because he seeks to guide his life by them as if they were solid and permanent realities. Indeed, Paul even calls them *guardians and trustees*, for, no doubt, in a world in which sin would make human life utterly impossible, such ideals and principles seem to act like necessary social and moral forces which hold his world together and seek to preserve man from chaos and destruction. In the past, that is, before Christ came, all men lived this way out of necessity. It was inescapable. But through Christ we are delivered from the *stoicheia*, that is, we are set free from every idealistic system of order other than Christ himself. But Christ does not represent a new moralism. He does not enslave us all over again to an ideal of order which merely requires submission like slaves. Instead, he grants us the liberty to act as sons. Yet, like the Colossian and Galatian Christians, one often sees Christians at all times and places tempted to return to the basic principles and the powers they conjure up, to see them once again as a means of power and strength for life, to grasp at them as *an appearance of wisdom*. The sons of disobedience live in slavery to the ideals and values which they regard as objectively manifest in *the basic principles of the world*. Man regards them as showing him how to live virtuously. They become for him the truths of nature and reason, the bases for

his ideals of truth and justice. They seem attractive to his thinking and appear to set his world in the right order and on the proper path. But for the Christian who has been set free from them, to return is to leave Christ. That is why Paul says to the Galatians, "I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you" (4:11).

For Paul, the powers are very real and are not to be understood as having the same meaning that was attributed to them in the Jewish apocalyptic circles of his day, viz. as simply a reference to angels. Paul does not dismiss the thought of angelic influence entirely; indeed, he will show that there is a connection. But he prefers not to look at the expanse of this life as one that is simply manipulated from behind the scenes. Consequently, he downplays their presence and activity, and instead speaks of *stoicheia* or the basic principles of the world, which he regards as things that seem to structure reality, which, therefore, in other contexts he calls *principalities and powers, thrones and dominions*. And from the standpoint of the new reality in Christ, that is, in the light of the liberation brought by Christ, he sees all these old realities as forms of bondage. In doing so, he merely employs the jargon of contemporary religious usage, terms with which his readers were familiar.

B. *The Powers and Fallen Creation*

Thus far it would appear that Paul does not look favourably upon the powers. These powers represent a bondage from which Christ has come to deliver man. We might think of these powers, then, as the work and product of sin, and nothing more. In truth, the matter is much more complex. While Paul does stress the negative aspect, that the powers come to stand over against Christ, we should nevertheless consider that Paul does not view these powers as merely the offspring of sin and, thus, in their inherent natures opposed to Christ.

Col. 1:15–17—He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether *thrones or powers or rulers or authorities*; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Here it seems clear that Paul does not see these powers as the product of sin *per se*, but sees them as having their existence due to creation. However, Paul nowhere discusses these *all things* in the abstract. Rather, he will always insist on their being seen in their rightful relationship to Jesus Christ.

For Paul, the crucified and risen Christ is both the ground and goal of creation. He is the key and secret of the whole realm of its existence and order. The universe was made *by* him and *for* him. This creation, says Paul, consists of two dimensions: a *visible* and an *invisible*, or *earthly* and *heavenly* part. We should understand this better, perhaps, by saying that creation has a visible foreground and an invisible background.[3] In other words, there is more to reality than merely meets the physical eye. Created reality is shaped and influenced by things we see, to be sure, but there is more to what we see than what merely comes into contact with us on the physical level. There is equally a non-physical dimension which the mind grasps but which does not just affect us *invisibly*, but touches our total existence.

Although Paul speaks of a duality in created reality, he does not mean there is a dualism or dichotomy. The invisible works in and through the visible, the heavenly through the earthly. Since these two sides to reality possess an unseverable connection, we might say that the invisible gives shape to and structures life in the realm of the visible. It is in the realm of the invisible as it structures all life that Paul seems to situate the *stoicheia*. As they are matters grasped by the mind, they thereby work to give shape to man's thinking and world-view. This working of the invisible which permeates the visible must also be seen as the realm of the *powers*. However, Paul insists that they, too, were created by and for Christ. This does not mean that they merely got their existence from his creative action, but more especially that they were made from the beginning to be subservient to him. They do not first originate in sin and afterwards are made subservient by redemption; they were created to serve Christ. What purpose were they meant to serve? Berkhof seems to think that they were meant to be instrumental in assisting Christ in making known his lordship over all things. This seems to be a reasonable assumption. And, we should add, they were meant to assist man in living in accordance with that lordship. In other words, they were meant to act as servants to both Christ and man. Man was meant to live in a structured and formed world, but the structures of his life were never meant to dominate him as they now do those who do not acknowledge by whom and for whom they were created in the first place. Paul says (v. 17) that all things have their being in Christ. This does not mean merely that they come into existence from him, but that he is at the centre of their being, their very activity and working in the world is nothing apart from him. They have a Christ-oriented purpose, and any purpose they have for man must be understood thus. If man seeks to separate them from Christ, they will cease to serve as helps or assistance to man and will come to have a lordship in themselves.

The powers operate, then, as the invisible or heavenly dimension of creation—the invisible which forms the underpinnings or support structure of the visible. They are not evil or sinful in themselves. They were meant to form the link between Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, whose interests Christ serves in the creation, and that creation itself. God, we might say, formed the invisible powers to act as instruments in his service through Christ. They are the means by which he unites the creation and upholds it within God's purpose. And they were meant to act as helps for man to bind him in God's love through Christ. They show man the way to know and serve God, that is, to form the framework in which his service could be carried out. They exist in order that his service of God would come to expression in a variety of richly cultural forms.

Why, then, did Paul, in Galatians, refer to these powers or regulating principles as *weak* and *miserable*? Why does he see the cross of Christ as that which disarms the powers and sets us free from them? The fact is, Paul sees the powers no longer as bonds between man and God but as having become, by reason of the Fall, forms and structures that separate us from God, and God from us. In themselves they are not that. Nevertheless, what God meant to be for us structures for our good and well-being have turned into instruments of oppression and systems of untruth which detach us from God in Christ and take control over us. These powers are not things, but the invisible aspects of things—the

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3. Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

rules and regulations, the ideologies and philosophies, the traditions and established customs and mores, the seemingly fixed order of life, based upon truth, justice and other meanings which form ideals in our minds and which, claims Paul, prevent us from seeing their falsehoods and distortions of the truth. In man's revolt from God, that which God intended to be for him an aid to fellowship with God and a rich experience of life in his kingdom has been transformed into that which holds him in a death grip. The powers cannot be removed or eliminated on account of sin, but they can be perverted. While not evil in themselves, they have become the instruments of evil purpose on the part of man, serving him in his rebellion, but at the same time enslaving him by their power over him. Fallen man likes to think of himself as free and autonomous, but he only acts under the persuasion of the powers, which he does not recognise. For Paul, the goal of redemption is not to be freed from the powers as helps, but only as that which dominates us, so that nothing may lord it over us except Christ, and that, in him, we may be lord over all things.

The powers originally belonged, then, to God's creation programme. But, we no longer know or experience them in this way. Our only connection to the powers is in the context of sin in which the invisible realm—the realm of the powers—has mysteriously become the opposite of its God-intended purpose. When Paul writes that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:39), not even *any powers*, it would seem to suggest that it is precisely the nature of the powers now to do just that. The powers, having ceased to serve as instruments or connections between God and man in creation and have instead become, as Paul said in Gal. 4:8, *as gods*. That is, they have come to assume not the role of servants, but of masters. They seek to behave as the ultimate ground of being, meaning and purpose, and to command the allegiance of both individual and society. They express themselves as sources of truth, justice, and all other orders of value and ethics. And, being gods, they obviously demand worship and obedience.

Nevertheless, although the powers have become corrupted and perverted from their original purpose, they still continue to fulfill a part of their intended function, that is, they still act as the underpinnings of man's life and society by acting to prevent complete chaos and disorder. This is why Paul accorded them a small measure of legitimacy when he spoke of them as *weak* and *miserable*. To some extent, they still operate as instruments for human life. But while they still serve to hold man's world together, at the same time, they hold it away from God. They insinuate themselves into man's mind as irreducible powers and serve to undermine any notion of a *higher* power. Nothing must be seen as more ultimate than the powers—they are our only gods! They have become what Paul in 1 Cor. 2:6 calls the "rulers of this age." That is, they seek not to be servants but lords in their own right, so that whatever legitimate purpose they continue to perform, they only add immensely to shutting man off from God.

In Eph. 2:1, 2 Paul points out how the formerly non-Christian Ephesians used to live—not just think or believe, but live. They lived, says he, in their transgressions and sins by following the Satan-influenced course of this world, and Satan possesses an express and unspecified control over the powers themselves and uses them to increase their anti-God strength. Paul speaks of Satan as being *the ruler of the kingdom*

[power = *exousia*] *of the air*. Compare this to 6:12. The expression *kingdom of the air* and *heavenly realms* should be viewed as synonymous. They are comparable to the *invisible* things, wherein are the powers, authorities, rulers etc. The fact that Paul places them in connection with *this dark world* and *forces of evil* does not make them to be products of sin, but instruments and servants of it. The so-called *rulers of this age* operate in conjunction with *the prince of the kingdom of the air*. They receive power from him who has great influence in the realms that dominate man. Man walks or lives by following after them and thence by submitting to the forces of this dark world. Such awareness of the situation makes it all the more important why Paul says that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ. In fact, Paul's message of redemption in Christ clarifies that a new situation has been brought about so far as Christ and the powers are concerned, and therefore what it means for man in Christ (Eph. 1:18–23). But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Despite the fact that the powers have come under the influence of sin and corruption, despite their subservience to the prince of the kingdom of the air to which all the sons of disobedience give their allegiance, they nevertheless continue to function in God's world as subservient to Christ. God continues to use them, despite the tyranny they now command, to prevent man's life and world from being completely overwhelmed by sin and its power to wreak destruction. Thus man lives in obedience to systems of ethical and social order, to programmes and agendas of right and wrong etc., although these ideals are deeply flawed and perverse and man prides himself that through them he is independent of God and his Christ. Whether we speak of a whole range of concepts like Church, State, politics, class, social conflict, national interest, public opinion, accepted morality, decency and civility, humanity, human rights, democracy, social justice, social welfare, education, science and technology, or any of the varying ideals which go to make up the characteristics of man's outlook on life, these things have their place in God's preservation of man despite man's commitment and attachment to these worldly concerns as the ultimate and only expressions of truth and justice, of what is right and wrong, of what is to be believed or not. Man's belief systems control and dominate him, he worships and serves them as if they were gods.

These worldly ideals, having *an appearance of wisdom*, stand in man's mind as *the law*. They are ethical absolutes. Unless we understand how the powers come to work in and control man's thinking, we shall never be able to understand Paul's great and adamant opposition to the law. Man's religious-ethical self-assurance sets him in opposition to God, and God to him. In other words, it is not only man's unrighteousness, but also, and perhaps more important, man's belief in his own righteousness that calls down God's wrath upon him.

Meanwhile, so far as this present age is concerned, the powers rule in God's purpose to give life a fixed pathway for man to walk upon and to prevent sin from working itself out to its ultimate conclusion, and this despite the fact that man boasts of his independence and righteousness in terms of them. They do, indeed, act as *guardians and trustees*. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the fixity of life under the powers works to separate man from the love of God in Christ Jesus. For Paul, to be under guardians and trustees is to be in the condition of a slave, not a son.

C. *The Powers and Redemption*

Given all we have said so far, is it conceivable to speak of the powers in relation to redemption? That is, can we speak of redeeming the powers, or can we only speak of being redeemed *from* the powers? In fact, Paul has something to say about the cross of Christ, his death, atonement, and resurrection, that are of great importance so far as the powers themselves are concerned. We already observed in Eph. 1:20, 21 that Christ's rising from the dead was not merely a return to life *per se*, but it involved a great exaltation—he was seated at the right hand of the Father in the *heavenly realms*. In other words, Christ was elevated above and given authority over *all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be named*. Christ becomes a *cosmic* Christ, having a lordship over all things that pertain to the creation as a whole. All things are placed under his feet and are now made to serve him, including the powers.

Another passage that bears on this point of view is Col. 2:13–15. There we read that Christ's atoning work not only freed us from the curse of sin and death, it also delivered us from the tyranny of the powers. Christ's atonement, then, involves more than the redemption of the sinner from personal guilt, it equally means liberation from bondage to the powers of the invisible or heavenly realms which, because of sin, have come to have absolute dominion over us.

Now the powers, as we said, are rooted in and arise out of the *stoicheia* which are manifest as basic rules and regulations, most especially of a religious-ethical nature. They are the deep-seated and ineradicable convictions upon which the world bases its ideals of life and activity in the world. At the core of all differences in the powers lies this central religious-ethical belief. The world order has its rules and requirements that control thought and behaviour, which assert themselves as concepts of truth and justice thought to be necessary to secure the good life for man. But Paul sees them differently. To him they are *the written code with its regulations—that was against us and that stood opposed to us* (v. 14). They are merely the rules that correspond to the *stoicheia* (v. 20). Paul sees the work of Christ on the cross as having a liberating effect upon us so far as these things are concerned. As he says, *Christ took it away, nailing it to the cross* (v. 14). What he has in mind does not just concern the Jewish understanding of the law, but he sees it as basic to the thinking of fallen man in general (see, v. 8). It's all humanism so far as Paul is concerned!

It is necessary to look particularly at v. 15. First, we read that by his atonement Christ *disarmed the powers*. Here we have a military allusion. That is, he took away their weapons. Soldiers who are armed have strength, but soldiers disarmed stand impotent. The disarming of the powers was the removing of what gave them strength. The weapon of power they possessed was the power of illusion and deceit (v. 8—*deceptive philosophy*). Their powers of deception were meant to convince men that they were not merely of this world, but that they were agents of a divine purpose, that is, they were *as gods*. They appeared to hold the key to certain happiness and security in life. They provided man with a dependable direction by showing him his duty and responsibility. Man felt small and vulnerable, but with these divine gifts he would be able to order his world and lift himself up with power and glory. However, Christ's atonement breaks through this allusion and deceit. It *unmasks*, that is, removes the false outer appearance of this ideal. Not the worldly powers, but Christ

comes to lift us up from our miserable smallness and to act as Protector and Securer of all life's goodness and happiness. The cross of Christ is a true liberation from the tyranny of worldly ideals and reveals a whole new Truth, namely, that in Christ alone is the pathway of life to be found.

Second, Paul says that Christ *made a public spectacle of them*. He openly exposed them. In other words, he brought their true nature out into the open for all to see. Man previously worshipped them as gods, or at least as endowments of the gods. He accepted their powers as unassailable. But Christ exposes this belief as founded upon deception. Christ's activity in the world, especially near the close of his life, shows openly that the powers, which gathered all their strength to oppose him, did not now exist for man's good, but their true nature was to enslave man. Rather than being instruments on man's behalf, they have become adversaries and the agency of man's separation from God. For Paul, this was especially obvious in the Jewish context, but it is no less true in the world at large. Christ's crucifixion is real atonement for sin, something that if the rulers of this age had truly understood they would not have crucified him. As it was, they thought they were getting rid of him. All of which shows how deeply they were steeped in illusion and deceit. This was their public exposure, and, in the end, all who so oppose Christ will in a like manner be brought to light.

Finally, Paul says Christ *triumphed over them*. That is, he led them in a triumphal procession—again, another military allusion. To march in a triumphal procession was how the Romans celebrated their victories over their enemies. The captured enemy was made to walk behind the chariot of the conquering Roman commander as they processed through the streets of Rome, to show that they are now in his power. This similar triumph of Christ over the powers is more the result of his resurrection than atonement, but his atonement makes it first of all possible. His resurrection is proof positive of the triumph of God's power in Christ over all earthly power, for no earthly power could achieve this goal on its own. This is real power, not the false illusion of power offered by the powers.

Christ's redemptive work does, then, have an impact upon the powers. Again, let us recall Col. 1:19f:

"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Christ's atonement sets the whole order of the cosmos at peace. This peace is with God, but it benefits man in all aspects of his life. Not only were all things created by and for Christ, all things were reconciled by him and for him as well. The discord, the domination and tyranny of the powers are included in this (*things in heaven*). Christ does not thereby destroy the powers, but sets us free from them as oppressive agents of a deceptive wisdom and returns them to their God-intended place in the creation. Once again, they are able to serve as links between God's love and man's life.

At this juncture, we need to guard against a misunderstanding. It would be easy to assume, based upon what we have just said, that, since Christ has brought reconciliation to all things through his atoning sacrifice, the powers in their ungodly working have come to a complete halt—or that they will come to a complete halt in this present age. This is not

what Paul means to affirm. If nothing else, experience should tell us that they are very much alive and continue to act in their oppressive and ungodly ways.

Yet, for Paul there is no doubt of Christ's triumph which stands complete in principle, and which will only be finally realised at the end. Here we must turn to 1 Cor. 15:20–26. Because of what took place in the cross and resurrection of Christ the godless dominion of the powers shall one day come to an end, completely and definitively. In the meantime, Christ is now engaged in subduing his enemies.

Unfortunately, these verses (vv. 25, 26) have been the focus of much misunderstanding. The enemies that Paul speaks of include all the ideals and principles of this world which have taken control of man's life and thought and dominate him as powers. It is through them that man arrogates to himself power sufficient to make life good and permanent, and by which he closes himself off from the voice of God. Paul means to say that Christ is now engaged in actively breaking their influence and releasing man once again to become God's willing servant and partner in creation. God's love can reach through to man and deliver him from the spiritual death that holds him in its grip. To the extent that this takes place, there we find *enemies* being defeated. But this should not be read as a cumulative operation—a kind of process of elimination—which at last arrives at the end of history when the only thing left to be defeated is death itself. It is rather an activity that goes on *until* the day that death is finally subdued in its total effect. What is more, it is an activity of Christ's that is not measurable in human terms or by earthly criteria, except in so far as men turn from idolatry to Christ. To defeat enemies is to snatch men from the grip of those things which drive a wedge between him and God, which Christ is now doing. This does not mean the powers go away; it means that among men everywhere, where they have been converted to Christ, the tyranny of the powers is broken and Christ's lordship takes over.

To many this passage speaks of *destroying* enemies, and certainly that is true so far as death, spiritual and material, is concerned. But is this all that this text implies? Should the word not rather mean *dethrone*?[4] Of course, physical death is not merely dethroned. However, the meaning of death is much broader in scope here than just biological death. The reign of the powers is a reign of death in and over man, because they close off all avenues to the truth. But Christ does not simply destroy the powers, rather he subjects them to his authority (*under his feet*). He removes them from their thrones over the consciousness of men. In themselves, they are not evil. But Christ alone will have the throne of creation. The point here is that this is a task that is not completed at once, but takes place over time. Not until physical death has been *dethroned* will all things finally be reconciled in reality and not just in principle. At the present, we can be sure, the powers continue to work their ungodly dominion over man and his life, otherwise Christ would not be actively engaged against them. But where Christ's saving truth takes hold in the hearts and minds of men, already there we begin to see the dethroning of the powers. At the same time, this is not something which takes place without our participation. Otherwise why would Paul write to the Colossians and Galatians to admonish them about not returning to the

4. *Ibid.*, p. 40

stoicheia? (see, finally, Eph. 4:17–24.) The Christian must struggle against the powers in his own thinking and acting, for they appeal to the *old self* in *deceitful* ways.

D. *The Powers and the Church*

The Church, then, is given both a duty and a privilege to take a firm stand against the powers. Indeed, the life of the Church itself is at stake, for the powers are still seductive and deadly. The stance the Church takes is by virtue of its fellowship with Christ, the Lord of all the powers. By and through him she comes to see more clearly the anti-God scope of the powers, and to expose their tendency to negate true life. One of the variety of gifts of the Spirit given to the Church in 1 Cor. 12:8–10 is the *discernment of spirits*. Spirits here does not immediately mean evil spirits or demonic agents, but the ideals and doctrines that appear in accordance with their working and which take control of human thinking and acting. These are the things that have to do with the invisible or heavenly realms, the realm of the powers. To *discern* them is to recognise and expose them for what they truly are—ungodly doctrines and lies which worm their way into the hearts of men and come to expression in conjunction with social and cultural forces and developments.[5] The exercise of this gift belongs to the work of *unmasking* them, which began with Christ and which he continues through his Church. By means of this gift, the Spirit works in and through his people to expose the unseen workings of *spirits* which lead men into bondage to the powers. It is so that men may be rescued from the powers, and also that believers may be strengthened in their struggle to break free and escape temptation to submit once again.

In our day and age, we have been witnesses to the spread of false and demonic ideals of life and society. The past century, for example, saw the rise of Nazism and Communism as colossal societies of hideous strength and power. It would be easy to imagine that because today these political monstrosities have been either crushed or minimised that, therefore, we need not concern ourselves about them any longer. We ought to consider, however, that these political systems were characteristic expressions of humanism and should, therefore, be seen as wholly in accord with the basic outworking of fallen man's consciousness. This fact has not changed. We should not doubt, then, that wherever humanism gains control and becomes the dominant outlook on life, some will always endeavour to create these and similar types of societies, for to humanists they are viewed as the only real power that can bring order and benefit to man. The devilish nature of humanism still thrives, in some places under the surface, but in other places with brazen visibility. The worldwide growth of militant Islam is an example of the latter. And although in the West we supposedly took a firm stand against the forms of tyranny represented by Nazism and Communism, we still discover a potent urge to revive these forms of society in our own midst.

5. A gift of the Spirit like the *discernment of spirits*, while it is given to the Church, is not merely for the sake of those inside the Church, nor is it merely in the interest of institutional Church affairs. To be sure, it is a great help to the members of the Church, but such gifts should be used to expose the workings of the Lie in all areas of life. Those with the gift of *discernment* recognise the workings of falsehood in matters such as economics, government and State, science, philosophy, indeed, in every area of man's life where the powers can take control.

The Church, then, will always be called to engage in struggle with these and similar forces. But by learning from those with the gift for the *discernment of spirits*, she demonstrates that she draws on the resources of her Lord who now sits enthroned over all things. This does not mean that it will be easy, for, increasingly, as man is seduced into submitting to the allure of the powers, he becomes ever more conscious of their anti-Christian tendency, so that his surrender to them takes on an intensifying warfare against Christ.

Meanwhile, for the Christian, life is reduced to modest proportions. He accepts life as good, but, nevertheless, sees that it is still cursed and broken, and so must never be unduly exalted. The Christian has the right to use this life, and to partake of all its treasures, but he is not *engrossed* in any of it (1 Cor. 7:31). He may freely and gladly accept the things God gives him, but he always keeps in mind that *this world in its present form is passing away*. The believer especially flees the world in all those ways in which men seek to deify it. Sadly, some who claim the name of Christ are drawn back into the world and become ensnared by its deceptive and seductive appeal (1 Tim. 4:1–5). They are led astray by false teaching to serve the spiritual ideals and values of man (which are said to be things taught by demons), and thus come once again under the domination of the powers. So it is necessary to be warned to avoid the world in its deceitfulness. For spiritual forces are at work to separate the Christian from Christ. In all things, the Christian must never become so enamoured with, so attracted to, the world and what it has to offer that he is tempted away from Christ. The Christian does not belong to anything in the world—not the nation, the State, the technology, the science, the money, the fame and entertainment, the health and prosperity etc. All these things are ours, says Paul, but unless we are Christ's they will become enthroned over us.

There is for the Church, then, a certain sense of withdrawal or distancing from the world—not so much in its use of the world as in her attitude towards its use. The believer in Christ does not live in the world merely to appropriate the world, for the powers are too strong and too deceptive. Besides, the world in its present form passes away. Only in Christ are hidden the resources of a new world that cannot pass away (and the believer is hidden with Christ in God). Yet this world must not simply be left to its own devices, but must be confronted with the *wisdom of God* (Eph. 3:7–11) which announces to the world that a new force—a new power— has entered history. Indeed, the Church's very existence itself is a sign that the unbroken dominion of the powers has come to an end. The people of God manifest a new source of allegiance, for the old allegiance to the powers has been replaced with a new allegiance to Christ. There is a new locus of resistance in the world to the powers and their tyranny over hearts and minds, for God has set the Church over the powers in Christ. "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). For this reason, Paul calls upon the Church to live in accordance with her new calling in Christ. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord" (Eph. 5:8).

In all her encounter with the world, with the powers which seek to control those in darkness, the Church is reminded that she does not ultimately strive against *flesh and blood* (Eph. 6:12), that is, against mere physical and tangible men, but against the powers they obey and worship, which take hold in their hearts and control the way they see life and the world. It is a serious warfare for which the Christian must be properly armed (6:11, 13) in order to take a stand *against the devil's schemes*. But is it armoury for the sake of offensive or defensive warfare? The Christian is not called upon to defeat the powers. This task is not given to the Church; it belongs solely to Jesus Christ. However, the Church does have a responsibility to engage in resistance against them, precisely because he takes offensive action against them. In all her struggles the Church resists in the power of her Lord (6:10), who provides the weapons to fight with confidence and certainty in his final triumph.

This would seem to give rise to the question: is it possible, as some people suppose, to *Christianise* the powers? May we say that, because Christ has *disarmed* the powers and *triumphed* over them by means of his cross and resurrection, it is therefore now the Church's responsibility to transform the powers into that which would serve Christian culture and society?

In the first place, we must remember that the powers are not *per se* un-Christian, that is, their existence is not due to sin. They were created by and for Christ. They have their existence in him, and by his redemption he is seated over them. The powers belong to him. But, in the second place, in the world in its present fallen condition, Christ does not restore all things at once to their perfect condition. The powers still act to entice men and to enslave them. They still seek to grow, in one fashion or another, into monstrous realities which tyrannise over whole societies and nations. In one manifestation of their working or another, they still seek to gain ideological domination over the way man thinks of his life and his world. Out of the variety of powers that exist there still is the tendency for one or more of them to seek to gain an absolute sway over men's minds and to inspire the centre of all of life. The Christian may and ought to work to resist their growth; he may and ought to expose their natures and seductive workings; he surely ought to claim that the world is subject to a higher power than exists in the world and that men ignore this fact to their ultimate peril—but, the Christian, for all his struggle, will often seem to make little headway, will often find it hard to turn men back from worshipping the powers, and will often be lured in that direction himself.

Still, the voice of the Christian is great in so far as it is in accord with Christ, and is therefore bound to have a transforming impact in all areas of life simply because Christ now rules over all things in the heavenly realms. But the powers in this present world are not completely done away, and the Christian should not suppose that a time will come in this present world when man will cease altogether to worship and serve the powers.

One last thing: it is, namely, that the *old* powers, having been dethroned, cannot be restored in their old form. We mean here, in particular, the old polytheistic nature religion that so dominated ancient man before Christ came into the world. When he came, however, he broke the hold of the old powers and loosened their grip upon mankind at large. He has exposed ancient man's worship of the powers of nature for the superstition that it is. He has even broken their hold over the hearts of men who do not necessarily acknowledge

Christ. What is more, with the creation of his Church, a new mankind has appeared who no longer offers worship to the powers. And it is largely by the creation of this new people who refuse to submit to the powers in their deified form, and who worship and serve the only true Lord of the powers, that a new centre of life has been brought to light. From the standpoint of this new centre, the powers have been weakened, have been softened, and therefore life has returned to a tolerable equilibrium.

In other words, we might say, the powers have been *secularised* or *de-mythologised*. They have been brought back to earth and de-commissioned as *gods*. And men everywhere, even those without any true belief in Christ, recognise the positive benefit to man's life that has been the result of the secularisation of the powers. Life, instead of its former constriction, has begun to open up for man in all its richness and variety. Being liberated from the powers, he is free to act independently and without unnatural constraint in his pursuit of life. He has learned that the authority which emanates from the powers and lays claim to his obedience is false; at least, it is modest and reasonable, not monstrous and totalitarian.

But while this is manifest especially in the Church, it spreads far beyond the Church. It comes to have an impact on mankind at large. It has especially been the legacy of the West. In other parts of the world, the struggle against the powers has lagged, but is nevertheless taking place there as well, mainly because people have seen the great benefits to Western man and wish to achieve the same results.

If, however, man accepts life, indeed, if he learns to cherish life with its new centre, in the context in which the powers have been *de-mythologised*, but he does not turn to or acknowledge Christ—that is, if he refuses to recognise who his true liberator and deliverer is—if he should come to take for granted the liberty he enjoys, without being delivered from the sin which enslaved him in the first place, then a dangerous situation arises, a situation in which although one demon has been cast out, seven more unclean spirits will certainly return to take up residence.

Ironically, we have witnessed the rise of precisely this situation in the past few centuries of modern history. With the dethronement of the old powers man was freed to encounter nature as an object of study and exploitation. Vast new insights and advantages came to light and continue to spread their magnificent glow as a result. Man learned to see the world through rational methods, to discover how nature works and to see the many ways it can help to improve his living conditions. He need no longer fear the mysteries of the world or see them as animated with spirits and gods. Life could be made to open up in all its dimensions and reveal its treasures for man. But in this endeavour, man became proud of himself; he did not acknowledge that Christ had made these things possible. Indeed, he blamed Christ, or at least Christianity, for having bound man in superstition and ignorance to begin with, from which, thanks to his reason and progress in science and technology, he was at last freeing himself.

However, as this mind-set took hold, the new benefits of man's labours and industry began to emerge, once again, in the form of powers. Instead of treating science and rationality as tools and servants, man elevated them into absolutes, and, thus, scientism and rationalism came to life.

In other areas, similar occurrences could be observed.

Man found that technology gave him new forms of power for destructive, as well as constructive, purposes. He learned to organise this power, to shape it into national and Statist ambitions. All over again, man, despite his claims to be free, was becoming the slave of the *stoicheia* which were being raised into powers.

Whenever the spirit of unbelief increases as a result of man's life having become greatly improved on account of the dethronement of the powers, it marks a rise once again of the powers, only no longer in their older forms. Indeed, after Christ, the powers cannot return as they once were. But, if they return, they emerge in conjunction with the working of *Anti-Christ*, the spirit of apostasy. That is, they return as *counterrevolutionary* powers which attempt to overthrow the reign of Christ. But as Christ has become the new centre, he cannot be replaced by a simple appeal to the old gods. Men can only attempt to replace Christ by subverting him. This they will do by pretending to speak in his name or by endeavoring to plagiarise his actions in the world (see Mt. 24:4, 23f), and so deceive people into believing that what they do has the approval of God. We should recognise it as characteristic of all forms of ideology which have all originated in the Christian West and the propaganda methods by which they are communicated. Men will speak the language of morality so as to convey their vision of what is good and bad, just or unjust, in order to break down resistance and capture the hearts and minds of men everywhere. They will act with self-conscious intent to unseat Christ and to re-arm the powers.

Moreover, where Christ cannot be attacked directly, he will be attacked indirectly, that is, he will be attacked in his people. The attempt to subvert Christ will also mean the subversion of his Church, if possible. Every effort will be bent to undermine the faith for which she stands, or at least to silence her attempts to communicate it in the world. In the thinking of anti-Christian man, the world must be *de-Christianised*. But he cannot lead men back to the older forms of paganism. The dethronement or secularisation of the powers has been of too enormous a benefit. So he must claim to offer the true pathway to total secularisation. Here we face a deception, for secularization to anti-Christ means that all things *religious* must be attacked and eliminated from social and cultural life. But the religious is the one thing that cannot be eliminated, only perverted. The appearance of having removed the religious is merely meant to mask the truth that humanism itself is simply the new religious *point d'appui* and that its secularising agenda is the product of a hidden religious motive.

Once a programme of anti-Christian secularisation takes hold more or less in the consciousness of the masses, the message which the Church communicates to the world can no longer be a simple and pious moralism. Where every attempt to de-throne Christ is at work, an appeal to simple ethics will fail, because the secularising power will always co-opt the ethical point of view. The Church must confront the world with the full prophetic message in her possession. She must resist where the attack occurs: in science, in education, in politics etc., but with the weapons which the Spirit provides, for she is but a servant of her Lord and has no power of her own to count on. Moreover, the Church cannot profess one thing and live differently; she must be consistent in her witness in both word and deed. Finally, the Church cannot be merely interested in her own welfare, but must

have Christ's truth as her motive and goal. Any success which might be achieved against the powers, any success at their possible *Christianising*, always remains partial and temporary. Until the final enemy is destroyed (i.e. *dethroned*) the Christian's warfare against the deification of the powers continues. But, during that time, the Church presses on in the confidence that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. *C&S*

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In Praise of Constantine and the Reformed State

by Esmond Birnie †

Summary

". . . the most basic issue today with regard to civil government is whether nations and governments should be self-consciously and explicitly Christian . . . If the answer is no, and over a thousand years of Christendom was simply a colossal mistake on the part of Christians, then Western Christians should continue adjusting to the modern world, oppose certain moral evils as just one more special interest group, and maybe try to carve out a secure niche from themselves somewhere."

—Elliott (1989)[1]

Most evangelicals in the UK today would answer Elliot's question with a "no" because they think that Christendom was not only flawed in practice but also a dangerous error in principle.

My contention is that this modern evangelical consensus needs reassessment. Whilst not denying that Constantine's Christendom was flawed in its application I doubt if we can dismiss the possibility that the modern State, like its Old Testament predecessor, does have some God-given role and duty to uphold certain standards of righteousness.

Contemporary British evangelicalism tends to exclude such a possibility by adopting public theology's equivalent of the mess of pottage; "principled pluralism." The difficulty for principled pluralism is that no State can really tolerate complete religious pluralism. Principled pluralism may not be sustainable in the long run. Either secularism or one of the non-Christian faiths will advance so as to destroy the level playing field or the Christians, *assuming* they take seriously the Gospel injunction about being salt and light, will upset the apple cart.

I do not think Scripture allows us the liberty to discard the idea of the State as "God's servant to do you good" (Rom. 13:4 NIV) and also as one who commends those who do right (1 Peter 2:14). Therefore, I give a qualified commendation of Constantine and Christendom though I accept there may be legitimate debate as to how to best apply Romans 13:1–7 etc. in the early twenty-first century.

The captivity of the Church?

Martin Luther wrote of the Babylonian captivity of the pre-Reformation Church. Today we have the view that that Constantine's "conversion" of the Roman Empire to Christianity was a sort of captivity to idolatry of the State, a disaster which the Church took long to recover from if indeed it has ever fully recovered. It is certainly true that God and his Kingdom on earth does not need the State as some sort of prop (John 18:36). Indeed, too close association with the State apparatus was sometimes positively harmful to the Church. Power really can corrupt and absolute power can, as Lord Acton feared, corrupt absolutely. Once the Church was linked to State power it did, on occasions, use such power to persecute Christian minorities and/or representatives of other religions. As European history developed and the modern nation States began to arise then the Church could easily slip into the role of being the handmaiden of this or that variety of nationalism. In short, some Christian commentators have painted a picture of, ". . . corruption coming into the once pure bride of Christ and the church being saddled with the wrong understanding of church-state relations."[2]

Four traditions:
Evangelicals on Church and State

I suspect that the negative view of Constantine's Christendom is also prevalent amongst evangelicals in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, though in each case the reasons for this will be different.[3] However, in the USA there are still vocal exponents of some notion of a Christian State. There are in fact four different national historical traditions and hence literatures on this subject.

In England the debate in recent years has crystallised

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1. D. H. Elliott, in S. S. Smith, (eds), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Philipsburg : Presbyterian and Reformed, [1989]), p. 182.

2. D. A. Robertson, "Church and State: Good neighbours and good friends," in C. Graham (ed.), *Crown Him Lord of All* (Edinburgh: Knox, [1993]), p. 40.

3. Welsh readers must excuse my ignorance of the ecclesiology of the Principality.

around the issue of whether the Church of England should retain its established status.[4] For good or bad this question has got mixed up with a range of wider concerns: the New Labour agenda of constitutional reform since 1997 (e.g. devolution and reform of the House of Lords), the position of the monarchy in general and the standing of Prince Charles in particular, the meaning of Englishness (as opposed to Britishness) and the nature of multi-culturalism in the modern UK.

The Scots have also had an established Church, albeit in a Presbyterian format and with a different relationship to the Westminster Parliament, since the 1688–89 constitutional settlement.[5] Over those centuries there have been disputes as to the extent of State patronage over the Kirk. As in England there are many voices, both within and without the established Church, who would say that establishment is a privilege the Church of Scotland should not retain. As in England there may be some feeling that a *Protestant* established Church is an anomaly when the Roman Catholic Church seems to be the largest single denomination in membership terms and certainly the most self-confident.

The Ulster and Irish situation too has its peculiar features. The conservative-Reformed theological view, which in previous eras would have been prepared to take a stand on the position that the State is God's magistrate with a divinely mandated role, seems, for all practical purposes, to have opted out of doing public theology. ". . . we have now created the category of political Protestants in order to identify a viewpoint that is often unaware of Calvin, Knox or Luther while claiming allegiance to the Reformation via support for a collection of uniquely Northern Irish prejudices."[6] The conservative-Reformed viewpoint in Ireland was hitherto often tied to the Orange Order and there now seems to be a reluctance to defend the latter but also an unwillingness to present anything else.[7]

Other evangelicals have come to perceive the historical attachment between Protestantism and the state of Northern Ireland (and political unionism) as an ultimately regres- sive phenomenon and one source of the problems which became pressing after 1969.[8]

Within the Reformed and evangelical community in the USA there is a diversity of views as to the desirability of a "Christian State." The argument that the State should be religiously neutral and simply hold the ring for the plurality of faiths and denominations has been seen as a positive outworking of the First Amendment ("separation of Church and State"). However, with varying degrees of rigour there are also exponents of a Christian America or even a theonomic (i.e. one applying the Old Testament law) or confessional State (i.e. applying a national covenant). The debate continues as what was the "authorial intent" of the Founding Fathers. Did they really envisage a secular State or were they simply concerned to avoid the type of religious persecution which had disfigured previous centuries in Europe?

Constantinian flaws

Constantine's religious work was indeed flawed. As Gibbon argued there appears to have been a fair degree of political calculation in his conversion.[9] That conversion was also confused and, as indicated by some aspects of his subsequent behaviour, part of what was only a gradual turning away from paganism.[10] And, yes, the practice of Christendom was deeply flawed.

It was not long before the Church was turning the instruments of State power against other Christians who were deemed to be unorthodox[11] as well as pagans and Jews and (in due course) Muslims etc. It is, ". . . a melancholy truth . . . the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissentions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other, than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels."[12] Starting with the struggle against Arianism, and running through the Crusades, wars of religion were common throughout the period of Christendom. It was also the case that the official recognition of Christianity was accompanied by a good deal of nominalism (prior to Constantine's conversion the Chris-

4. See J. Rivers, "Disestablishment and the Church of England," in M. Schluter (ed.), *Christianity in a Changing World* (London: Marshall Pickering, [2000]), pp. 62–80, for some arguments against disestablishment. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, who comes from Wales where the episcopalian Church was disestablished by the last Gladstone government, is said to favour disestablishment.

5. See D. Wright, "More Lutheran than Genevan," in M. Halteman and A. Thomson (eds.), *Seek the Welfare of the City: Church and Society in Scotland and Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, [2002]), pp. 83–92.

6. T. McKearney, "Ulster Unionism," *Other View*, Winter 2001, pp. 14–15. The thrust of his argument is that those of Reformed background should be republicans, thus recreating the alleged alignment of Reformed and republicans in Ireland in the run-up to the rebellion of 1798. Where I would agree with McKearney is in the extent to which many modern Protestants in Northern Ireland are largely unaware of the Reformed tradition on the role of the State.

7. There were always a few exceptions to this conservative-Reformed/Orange linkage; see N. Wilson, "Covenanters and the Orange Order," *Lion and Lamb*, Summer 1997, p. 10–14, for a representative of the Covenanter tradition which stood apart from Orangeism. For a contrasting approach see SPRING (1999), *Jesus is Lord: A Christian Critique of Pluralism*, Paper no. 2 (Society for the Promotion of Reformation in Government, Dunadry). Presbyterian Church in Ireland, *Presbyterian Principles and Political Witness* (Belfast: Publication Department of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, [1994]), whilst providing a summary of the moral and theological issues around the Troubles does not really address the relationship of Church and State.

8. "It is also wrong to argue that Northern Ireland should be shaped by the particular ethos of Protestantism. The truth is that a Protestant State is not a Christian State—whatever that might be," A. Thomson, *The Fractured Family* (Belfast: ECONI, undated), p. 26. See, also, ECONI, *For God and His Glory Alone* (Belfast: Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland [1988]).

9. After two and a quarter centuries the "stately style" (Churchill's description) of Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin [1995]), is still monumental. Although Gibbon strove to be fair by being driven by the evidence he seems to have been poorly disposed to Constantine given that he viewed the latter as a destroyer of the original, humanist virtues of the old Roman Republic. For a contrasting, modern viewpoint, see J. J. Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* (Harmondsworth: Penguin [1988]).

10. The delay in his baptism until his death bed was not untypical of the period. For at least some time Constantine seems to have regarded the Christian God as *primus inter pares* amidst a selection of pagan deities. His Toleration Decree spoke of, ". . . whatsoever Divinity dwells in heaven," Norwich, *ibid.*, p. 45.

11. Of course, some of the dissident groups *were* unorthodox. This was the crucial period for the formulating of Trinitarian Christianity (a process in which Constantine himself played a sometimes positive role). None of this is to deny that Augustine and others like him went too far in using, "compel them to come in . . ." (Lk. 14:23), to justify State repression.

12. Gibbon, *op cit.*, Chapter XVI. However, since around 1800 the balance of terror against Christians has come from clearly *non*-Christian sources.

tian proportion of the Empire's population has been estimated as under 10 per cent).[13] In the millennium following AD 300 European history was marked by further mass and sometimes flawed conversions.[14] Even in those cases where it might reasonably be supposed that Christendom existed and the majority of the population were Christians, most commentators have focused on the limitations of what was produced (see Marsden's judgement on Puritan New England).[15] In fact, critics of Constantine often feel the Reformation simply confirmed the old, flawed model, "The Reformers replaced a Holy Roman Empire with a Holy Protestant Empire."[16] The early American Roger Williams (1604–83) who attempted to secure religious toleration in some of the American colonies summarised the critique of Christendom by saying that, "Christianity fell asleep in Constantine's bosom."[17]

IN PRAISE OF CONSTANTINE

And yet, for all of the above, God did, at the very least, permit Christendom to develop and perhaps he did use it to accomplish his good purposes. "In my opinion, however, it compares favourably with pre-Christian paganism and with post-Christian degeneracy."[18] Between 300 and about 1800 most European States gave at least some acknowledgement of God.[19] Would the modern evangelical critics of Constantine seriously suggest that things would have been better if there had been a pagan State throughout this period? Would they, for example, want to use a time machine to undo the work of, say, Alfred the Great or Charlemagne to ensure that we could now return to uninhibited Celtic or Teutonic paganism (with its accompanying savagery)?

O'Donovan argues that claims that the fourth century Christians were selling out to power politics lack, ". . . historical justification . . ." and are ". . . simply wrong."[20] He further argues that for all the flaws in Eusebius' attempts to justify Constantine there was a healthy desire in the apologist and his contemporaries to follow up the victory on the cross by the conversion of the Empire.[21]

Certainly, the period since 1800 has been characterised by the detachment of the State from Christian constraints alongside increased lawlessness. In the twentieth century, even without counting the World Wars and the lesser conflicts, the despotic or totalitarian State (which was also almost always post- or anti-Christian) proved to be the greatest killer in history. Up to 100 million people were liquidated in the persecutions of Hitler, Stalin, Mao and the other tyrants.[22]

THE DANGEROUS MYTH OF THE NEUTRAL STATE

The modern critics of Constantine and Christendom may well say that they do not wish for an *anti*-Christian State, simply a neutral one. However, is this at all possible? Along with other observers I contend that this is not a real option. Can there really be full equality for, and full expression of, *all* religious beliefs and practices? Smith, a proponent of principled pluralism, seemed to think there could be.[23] Even the most liberal of Western democracies have not tolerated Mormon polygamy, Islamic theocracy with its *sharia* law or religions which promote child sacrifice.[24]

Principled pluralism, the idea of a neutral State as umpire holding the ring for competing faiths, is fundamentally flawed. It may, for example, represent an error in logic; an attempt to derive an "ought" from an "is." It is a descriptive truth that there is a plurality of religions in all modern, Western societies but it is a mistake to further assume that this implies that this is also the way things should be. I doubt if such pluralism is desirable (Jn 14:6) and the ultimate objective for our societies (Phil. 2:10–11). Principled pluralism may at best be a transitional phase rather than a sustainable outcome. It operated for a short period in some late nineteenth/early twentieth century societies probably only because of the continued weight of inherited Christian moral practice. In more recent decades as that inheritance has been depleted and as the challenge from other faiths plus aggressive secularism has become more marked, principled pluralism looks most likely to lurch into either authoritarianism or chaos.[25]

An example of atheist assertiveness was provided by R. Windemute's 2001 Oxford Amnesty Lecture, ". . . a separation between law and religion is a defining principle of every liberal democracy. Without this, there can be no freedom of conscience and religion, for the beliefs of the religious majority will be imposed on others through the vehicle of law . . . Religious texts or doctrines must be excluded from legislative and judicial debates because, unlike secular laws,

13. Gibbon, *op. cit.,* Chapter XV, agreed with Origen that the proportion was low and perhaps about 5 per cent.

14. For example, of the Russians in 988 and of the Saxons in 772–804.

15. G. Marsden, "America's 'Christian' origins," in M. Noll, N. O. Hatch and G. M. Marsden (eds), *The Search for Christian America* (Wheaton Il: Crossway, [1983]).

16. D. Porter (1996), "Protestantism—Negotiating the Future," *Lion and Lamb*, September, pp. 3–5.

17. But for a thorough critique of Williams see S. C. Perks, *A Defence of the Christian State: The Case Against Principled Pluralism and the Christian Alternative* (Taunton: Kuyper Foundation, [1998]).

18. H. O. J. Brown, in Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 131. I would be careful about pursuing this line of argument trying to read out God's purposes from the way history has actually developed. There is the danger of the possibly fallacious argument that because things *are* a certain way that is also the way they *should* be. At the same time, O. O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge University Press [1999]), p. 193 argues that the pre-Nicene Church was indeed triumphalistic and unashamedly so—principally about their mission to see the faith established throughout Europe.

19. O'Donovan, *op. cit.*, p. 195 dates Christendom between the 313 Edict of Milan and the 1791 First Amendment to the USA Constitution.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 216. 21. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

22. P. Johnson (1992), *Modern Times*, Phoenix, London, p. 788.

23. S. S. Smith, "The principled pluralist response to national confessionalism," in, Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

24. The principled pluralist G. J. Spykman concedes that you cannot always tolerate the intolerant (in Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 270).

25. J. Coffey, "How should evangelicals think about politics? Roger Williams and the case for principled pluralism," *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. LXIX (1997, January), No. 1, p. 56, concedes that principled pluralism becomes problematic when there is a diversity of markedly different moral theories within a society. For example, I assume that all principled pluralists would insist that the State should enforce the law against murder. Yet this begs the question of how murder is to be defined. Should we, for example, retreat to the pre-Constantinian Roman practice whereby infanticide was regarded as acceptable, or move "forward" to a brave new world with widespread euthanasia and abortion?

they rely on an inaccessible, extra-democratic source of authority that cannot be challenged . . . People worldwide will gradually be persuaded of the correctness of the ideals of liberal democracy . . . Partnership rights of same-sex couples are human rights, and will convince most people in the end."[26] Christian exponents of principled pluralism often criticise what they deem to be the political triumphalism of those fellow Christians who would wish to see the State apply Christian standards. It would seem to me that the alternative to Christian triumphalism is often the triumph of atheism.

Unless the State is disciplined (however weakly) by some sort of acknowledgement of its subordinate position relative to God history suggests it will take upon itself the trappings of divinity. "The state is the march of God through the world," wrote Hegel.[27] The outworkings of Hegelianism in either its most vicious forms, such as fascism and communism, as well as the apparently more benign welfare State attempting to deliver health, prosperity and welfare to all, imply a belief in a State verging on the omnipotent and omniscient. One way that the modern pluralist State can seek both to stamp its quasi-religious authority as well as try to maintain public order is by attempting to enforce a sort of multi-faith ecumenism or syncretism. Wales, for example, has already seen the first meeting of a Inter-Faith Council and now a formal Council chaired by a Minister of the Welsh Administration is proposed.[28]

Most tellingly, the "neutral" State is not compatible with the biblical emphasis on the lordship of Christ in all the spheres of life (Mt. 5:17–18, Mt. 28: 18–20; Ps. 2:7–9; Rev. 1:5). Admittedly, there is the parable of the wheat and tares (Mt. 13: 24–30) which is something of a favourite for principled pluralists but this parable is mainly telling us that until the end of time neither the Church or society as a whole will consist entirely of Christians. This no more implies that the State should be religiously neutral than it implies that the Church should be![29] Curiously, the proponents of principled pluralism argue for Christians to exercise their influence on political practice.[30] There is a contradiction in this because if such Christians were "too" successful they would end up upsetting the supposed neutrality of the State and the foundations of principled pluralism.[31]

God's minister

What then is the abiding truth in the notion of Christendom and Constantinian Church and State? Rom. 13:6 tells us that the State is to be God's minister. In Heb. 8:2 Christ is called a "minister" (*leitourgos*) of the sanctuary. Significantly, Paul uses the same word *leitourgos* in the context of Romans 13. The key question is what does this mean in practice? In working towards an answer I am guided by the following

principles: both Church and State have delegated authorities under God; the State has its own sphere of operation separate from that of the Church; the State cannot and should not try to enforce change in individual religious *belief* (it can and should set some limits on what sorts of religious *practice* can be tolerated); the Church establishment principle is still valid; and the State as an agent of God's common grace should seek to promote a sort of righteousness though this is of a lower-level, civic (because "outward" rather than "inward") type.

(1) *Acknowledging that it is God's minister*

A basic point is that the State should make some acknowledgement of Christ's lordship. There can be (and has been) some debate on how this might be done (notably, in sixteenth and seventeenth century Scottish, English and Irish history in terms of the covenanting principle).[32] For countries with a written constitution there should be some clause in that document referring to Christ as the source of sovereignty (the constitutions of Canada, Australia, Germany and the Republic of Ireland already point in that direction and, perhaps, in the future the constitution of the USA could be similarly amended).[33] In the UK context constitutional practice nods to the authority of Christ in the coronation oath of the monarch who is also head of the established Church. At her coronation Queen Elizabeth was handed a Bible and was told that this provided the basis, ". . . for the government of Christian princes." (Significantly the oath, the monarchy and the establishment of the Anglican Church are all likely to be contested in coming years.)[34]

(2) *Separate spheres*

The Bible seems to establish that *both* Church and State have their own delegated authority and responsibility from God (Mt. 22:21). It is probably notable that in Old Testament Israel there was some differentiation between the persons and offices running the Church and those running the State (Ex. 18 and 22: 28, Lev. 8, 2 Chron. 26:18, Ezra 7: 24–25 and, for the New Testament view of the authority of the Church, see Mt. 16:9, Mt. 18: 17 and Heb. 5:4). As the Westminster Confession (Chapter 23, para. 3) put it, "Civil authorities may not take on themselves the ministering of God's Word and the sacraments or the administrations of spiritual power."[35] I would therefore argue that we should indeed have such a "separation of the Church and State" though emphatically not a separation of the State from Christ.

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26. "A fight for equal love rights," (2002, March 8), *Times Higher Education Supplement*, p. 8.

27. K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London: Routledge, London [1999]), vol. II, p. 31.

28. Evangelical Alliance (2002, April 19), *PQ*, p. 4.

29. See G. Bahnsen, in Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 26–27.

30. See G. J. Spykman, "The principled pluralist position," in Smith , *op. cit.*, pp. 78–99.

31. Coffey, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–62, seems to envisage a principled pluralist *secular* State and yet at the same time is open to Christianly-inspired pieces of legislation being introduced on a case-by-case basis. This looks like trying to have one's cake and eat it.

32. See W. Edgar, "The national confessional position," in Smith (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 178–97.

33. For examples of constitutional Statements on the ultimate sovereignty of God see Rivers in Schluter (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 62–80. For various views on the amendment of the US constitution see Edgar, *op. cit.*, and G. De Mar in Smith (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 201.

34. ". . . Christianity was probably the single most potent force in making the monarchy, turning it from warrior rule to a lasting institution, but . . . [the] . . . attempt to apply this to the future will not do" (J. Champlin (2002, May 31), "Allegiance to duty in a realm of the capricious," *Times Higher Education Supplement*, pp. 21–5).

35. D. T. Temple and P. Robinson (1990), *The Westminster Confession of Faith: An Authentic Modern Version* (Lisburn: Burning Bush Publications).

(3) *Not coercive but with a realistic view of (Christian) democracy*

With the limited exception of his cleansing(s) of the Temple (Jn 2:15, Mk 11:15) Christ eschewed the use of force during his first coming. He clearly discouraged the disciples from the use of the sword (Mark 14:47–48). He seems to have inferred the same to Pilate (Jn 18:36). Given all this the State should not be engaged in enforcing membership of the visible Church generally or any Church denomination in particular.[36] Thus any such change away from current secular, liberal democratic practice should not come about by force and would require a national revival.[37] In other words, we should work within our democratic system as it is currently constituted though this would leave open the question whether this existing system would be compatible with the Reformed State in the long run.

Certainly, the principled pluralists and other Christians need to be sensitive to the danger of practising a civil religion which gives a blank cheque to *all* aspects of modern democratic politics.[38] I also think it would be worthwhile to re-examine why previous generations thought it appropriate to apply theological tests to the "rights" to vote or hold public office.[39] Similarly, after over a century of experience it could be fruitful to evaluate both the strengths and weaknesses of so-called "Christian democracy" in both its Catholic expression (as in post-war Germany and Italy) or its Calvinist variant (notably Kuyper and his successors in the Netherlands). In both cases there seems to have been more evidence of downgrade of the Christians to secular practice than the reverse. Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party may have drawn much of its strength from what sociologists would identify as the "pillarisation" of Dutch society into separate Protestant, catholic and socialist compartments and that pillarisation may now have broken down.[40] Kuyper laboured mightily and rightly for the application of a Christian worldview to all aspects of society but it does seem that as with the kings of Old Testament Judah the reforming zeal of one generation could not be maintained faithfully in the next.[41]

Although the Christian Democratic movement should probably be given some credit for the reconstruction of continental western Europe and particularly the so-called German economic miracle after 1945 there are doubts as to how far it was or remained distinctively Christian.[42] The Christian Democrats in Italy are now more or less defunct having dominated most of the fragile governments in that country since 1945 though, with apologies to Voltaire's comment on the Holy Roman Empire, one might think that they were neither particularly Christian nor democratic. By 1976 the group of Christian Democratic Parties in the European Parliament had designated themselves the European Peoples' Parties. At the national level too there was the perception that the Christian label was not a vote- and election-winner. Christian Social-Christian Democratic Union (CSU–CDU) candidate for the 2002 German Chancellorship elections Edmund Stoiber went so far as to appoint an unmarried mother Katherina Reiche as his shadow cabinet representative on family issues.[43]

(4) *Church establishment*

Whatever reservations there may be about the practice of the Anglican Church or, indeed, the Church of Scotland since the 1688–89 settlement, there should be an established Church and this should be Reformed in doctrine. I accept the establishment principle as defended by Thomas Chalmers' 1838 Lectures.[44] The existence of such an established Church, alongside the formal acknowledgement by the State of the sovereignty of God, would act as an appropriate and powerful witness to the truth. This is the right thing to do and, fundamentally, the kind one also. That is, such a State would be part of God's provision of common grace. It would not contribute to the salvation of souls but it could be used to make this life less of a "small scale hell."[45] Interestingly Chalmers believed that in the absence of a strong established Church the Church would retreat from areas which were not middle class. The twentieth century experience of Britain suggests that he had a point. Such a Church should not have any legal rights to proscribe or limit the religious beliefs

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36. Grudem, W. (1994), *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: IVP [1994]), p. 892.   37. Perks, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

38. O'Donovan, *op. cit.,* p. 225 makes this point very strongly.

39. For a comment on the practice in New England see A. Nevins and H. S. Commanger, *The Pocket History of the United States*, (New York: The Pocket Library of the United States [1959]), p. 24, and for the early arrangements in Massachusetts see J. K. Martin, R. Roberts, S. Mintz, L. O. McMurry and J. H. Jones, *America and Its People* (New York: Harper Collins [1993], p. 53.

40. The theory was that the Dutch would meekly stay within their Catholic, Protestant or socialist pillar and their elected representatives would then build a consensual, cross-party and cross-pillar coalition. Arguably, with the development of a more secularised and individualistic society this way of doing politics became out-moded. Hence, according to some commentators the rise of anti-system parties such as that of Fortuyn (*Times Higher Education Supplement* (2002, May 10), "Test of tolerance in a liberal land," p. 23). That said, the most recent elections in the Netherlands (2002) have produced a Christian Democrat-led coalition and one can only hope that Premier Balkenende will indeed deliver the distinctively Christian approach to certain policy issues which some commentators have identified him with (see *The Times* [2002, July 22], "Putting Christian back in democracy," and *The Economist* [2002, July 13], "The Netherlands' Jan Peter Balkenende," p. 41).

41. It is a very interesting question in its own right why several examples of "post-Kuyper Kuyperians" seemed to be more squeezed into the mould of a particular ideology than able to successfully critique such ideologies using Christian presuppositions. Why, for example, did Kuyper's own grandson join Hitler's *Waffen SS* during the Second World War (J. McGoldrick, *Abraham Kuyper God's Renaissance Man*

[Darlington: Evangelical Press (2000), p. 224]). By 1971 the Free University of Amsterdam (Kuyper's foundation) had discarded its commitment to Calvinism (see McGoldrick, *ibid*, pp. 221–2). It is not clear what Kuyper would have made of the writings of B. Goudzwaard, a contemporary Dutch economist and politician, but his worldview approach seems rather similar to old-style social democracy combined with zero-economic-growth-environmentalism, *Capitalism and Progress* (Toronto: Wedge [1979]).

42. See, for example, J. E. Birnie, "Christianity and the social market economy in Britain, Germany and Northern Ireland," *Journal of the Irish Christian Studies Centre*, vol. 5 (1994), pp. 34–44.

43. See *The Economist* (2002, July 6), "Unwed mother as family guardian," p. 42.

44. Chalmers' *Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches* in T. Chalmers, *The Works, Vol. XVII, On Church and College Establishments* (Glasgow William Collins [undated]), pp. 187–356. Chalmers himself was a free market economist but he argued that the Christian Church could not be the subject of a voluntary or free trade approach given that one could not rely on the "demand for righteousness" to spontaneously arise hence producing a corresponding "supply side" response). Although Chalmers stressed the maintenance of a Reformed, Protestant established Church he did not regard such as incompatible with the political emancipation of Catholics (see R. F. G. Holmes, *Thomas Chalmers and Ireland: A Bicentenary Lecture* (Belfast: The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland [1980]).

45. A phrase of Augustine's, I think.

of other Christian Churches or faiths.[46] However, in order to make its established position meaningful I would suggest that it receive part funding out of general taxation (Ezra 7:24, Is. 49:23). This suggestion might seem controversial but the current practice through government grants to schools, Lottery funding for historic buildings, State aid for so-called "community relations" and tax covenants implies that some (though not all) Christian groups get funding ultimately derived from tax-payers.

The demarcation of roles between the Church and the State will always raise tricky questions. The Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 23, para. 3), for example, stated, ". . . the civil government does have authority and is obliged to assume the responsibility for: preserving unity and peace in the church, maintaining the purity and completeness of God's truth, stopping every form of sacrilege and heresy, preventing or reforming errors and abuses in worship and church discipline . . ." It might appear hard to reconcile this very wide remit with any distinction of Church and State. There are, I think, the following possibilities:

(i)   this latter part of Chapter 23, paragraph 3 should be interpreted in the light of the preceding part of the paragraph (which did outline a principle of separation of roles) and, indeed, other parts of the Confession which emphasised freedom of conscience.[47]

(ii) Notwithstanding the position may be adopted by some Presbyterians or Calvinists today, the Presbyterians of the 1640s were fundamentally averse to any separation of Church and State which permitted freedom of conscience. Perhaps they wrongly ascribed too many roles to the State.[48] Milton complained, "new Presbyter is but old Priest writ large." It is probably significant that the position that Cromwell and John Owen in the 1650s were struggling towards in face of opposition from both Presbyterians and Anglicans was an established Church which was Calvinist and yet reasonably comprehensive and one which was relatively tolerant of dissidents.[49]

(iii) If the Church fails in its God-given role then maybe the least bad option is for the State to intervene to correct this? (This does assume that the State would be capable of doing so which is also to assume that the State would be taking its own Christian ethos seriously.)[50]

(5) *Civic righteousness*

I repeat, the State should not attempt to make people Christian by the sword (as if that were possible)[51] but, as in the Old Testament, it does have the God-given role and duty to point to standards of righteousness and justice. As Calvin wrote, "We must hold on to the principle that magistrates are appointed by God for the protection of religion and of the public peace and decency, just as the earth has been ordained to produce food."[52] Or, as Murray put it, the State has the role of, "guarding, maintaining and promoting justice, order and peace."[53] This does prompt the question, how can the State perform such an exalted role?

Most fundamentally it should treat the Ten Commandments (along with the broader and more detailed Mosaic Laws as illustrative examples in application) as having continued validity for both Christians and non-Christians (Dt. 4:6–8; 1 Kg. 10:9; Pr. 8:15; Ps. 72 and 82). Grudem puts it this way, "It is right for Christians to persuade governments to make laws that protect families and property and the lives of human beings . . . [to prevent] . . . things that violate the Ten Commandments. These things are far different from requiring belief in certain types of church doctrine."[54] Of course there are problematic areas in doing this. Notably, the position from which we must start, which is a society which has been thoroughly de-Christianised in its standards and practice for several generations (this has some bearing on how far we should apply the Mosaic sanctions).[55]

CONCLUSION: AIM HIGH AGAIN

Perhaps above all we need to get away from defeatism and small ambitions. Evangelicals, at least in the West, are now relatively small in numbers (S. Hauerwas has put it in colourful terms, "God is killing mainline Protestantism in America—we goddamn deserve it")[56] but, in the grace of

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46. Though the Christian State as much as the contemporary liberal democratic one will always face the dilemma of defining the limit at which religious practice becomes too gross to tolerate (e.g. child abuse or sacrifice).

47. This option was favoured by the Scottish commentator Shaw who was writing in the 1840s (R. Shaw, *An Exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith* [Fearn: Christian Focus Publications (1992)], pp. 245–7).

48. This is the view of S. C. Perks (1995), "The Westminster Assembly and Church Discipline," *Christianity and Society*, Vol. V, No. 2, pp. 12–17.

49. A system of Triers and Ejectors who were a mixture of lay and Congregational, Presbyterian and Baptist clergy tried to maintain the doctrinal consistency of the established Church (A. Fraser, *Cromwell Our Chief of Men* [Frogmore: Granada Panther (1977)], pp. 402–3). The aim was, ". . . an establishment surrounded by self-supporting nonconformist churches tolerated by the state" (C. Hill, *God's Englishman Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* [London: Penguin (1990)], p. 180). J. Buchan summed it up this way, "Outside this state system there was liberty for dissenters to form congregations of their own, the so-called, 'gathered Churches.' Quakers were ruled out as blasphemous, but there was little heresy-hunting, Episcopal congregations which met quietly were not disturbed, and even Catholics were not molested provided they gave no public offence," *Oliver Cromwell* (Bungay: Richard Clay, Reprint Society [1941], p. 375). For Owen's own tolerant approach see P. Toon , *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen* (Exeter: Paternoster Press [1971]), p. 132.

50. According to Shaw, *op. cit.*, Chapter 23, paragraph 3 assumes that the civil magistrates are themselves Christians.

51. According to Rivers, *op. cit.*, p. 66, "Religious freedom is a fundamental principle of the state simply because the attempt to promote Christianity through the deprivation of external goods distorts the gospel and is counter-productive . . . Although it depends on a highly contentious understanding of truth and religious commitment it [i.e. the English Reformed approach and its subsequent development by Milton and Locke] still provides the most resilient defence of religious liberty." According to G. Bahnsen, who was a leading theonomist until his death in the mid 1990s, "The law does not grant the state the right to enforce matters of conscience . . ." *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Nutley NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed [1984], p. 427).

52. From Calvin's commentary on I Timothy quoted by Robertson in Graham (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 41.

53. J. Murray, "The relation of church and state," in *Collected Writings* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth [1976]), vol. 1, p. 253.

54. Grudem, *op. cit.*, p. 893.

55. This touches on the large debate about so-called "theonomy" (how far the detail of the Mosaic laws can and should be valid today?). On this question see, for example, J. E. Birnie (1997), "Testing the foundation of Theonomy and Reconstruction," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 8 26.

56. Quoted in P. Johnson (1997), *A History of the American People* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson [1997]), p. 810.

God, that could change. In any case, part of the reason of the small influence of evangelicals on the political development of modern Western society is that we have stopped thinking seriously about what we are aiming for. Schaeffer put it this way, "The basic problem of the Christians in this country in the last 80 or so years in regard to society and in regard to government is that they have seen things in bits and pieces instead of totals."[57] We currently work within a liberal and secular democratic system. Democracy has certain strong points but also certain moral weaknesses. Evangelicals should use this thing of the world whilst not being possessed by it (1 Cor. 7:31). *C&S*

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57. Quoted in Robertson in Graham (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 39.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ:
A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION [†]

by Benjamin Shaw [‡]

And Jabez was honourable more than his brothers: and his mother called his name Jabez saying, Because I bore him in pain. And Jabez called to the God of Israel saying, Oh that you would indeed bless me, And you would multiply my territory, And your hand would be with me, And you would keep me from evil, lest I cause pain. And God brought that which he asked. (1 Chron. 4:9–10)

SINCE Bruce Wilkinson's book *The Prayer of Jabez* became a runaway best seller it has gotten a great deal of attention, from both Christian and secular publications. The secular publications have focused on the book as a publishing phenomenon, or on the demographics of the purchasers, or even on the question of what this book says about modern American notions of spirituality. The Christian publications have focused on the theology of the book, or its lack of theology. But little attention has been directed to the brief passage from 1 Chronicles from which the book takes not only its starting point, but allegedly its substance.[1]

A Brief Exposition

A literal rendering of the Hebrew, clause by clause, reads as follows:

9a *And Jabez was honorable more than his brothers:*—The Hebrew uses the Niphal of the verb *kabad*. This also appears in the description of Shechem in Gen. 34:19, of Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6), and of Abishai and Benaiah (2 Sam. 23:19–23). The description given here of Jabez is proleptic, because the reason for his honour has not yet been given.

9b *And his mother called his name Jabez saying,*—The name Jabez is actually nonsense in Hebrew, the root ʿabats not occurring elsewhere. Hence, we expect that the explanation will involve paronomasia.

9c *Because I bore* him *in pain.*—The explanation, as expected, is a play on words. She has rearranged the root letters of pain (ʿatsab), perhaps expressing the hope that this would undo the pain of his birth. The language here (I bore in pain) intentionally alludes to Gen. 3:16 (in pain you shall bear sons). She has recognised the reality of the curse in her own life, and hopes for the undoing of it in the life of her son.

10a *And Jabez called to the God of Israel saying,*—This is the introduction to the prayer. The language is common for prayer in the Old Testament (see, for example, Ps. 22:3; 34:7).

10b *Oh that you would indeed bless me,*—This is the first petition. It is as vague and undefined in Hebrew as it is in English. The remaining petitions define the manner of blessing. The opening *'im* commonly means "if," but is a "particle of wishing" in contexts such as this.

10c *And you would multiply my territory,*—This is the second petition, giving the first sense of definition to the general plea for blessing. The context probably places Jabez in the generations after the initial entry into the land under Joshua. Thus, in asking that God multiply his territory, Jabez is not asking for more real estate, as Wilkinson alleges.[2] Instead, Jabez is asking for God's help to take the territory that had been allotted to him. As the information in Joshua 13–20 makes clear, the land was divided among the tribes, with each tribe to divide up the land among the families of the tribe, and these then responsible to drive out the inhabitants from the land. That Israel as a whole did not do this is one of their great sins, the consequences of which the Book of Judges describes.

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1. This includes Roy Zuck's review in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (2002): 112–17. While he does make some exegetical comments, his focus is on Wilkinson's book, and not the Biblical passage.

2. A similar construction is used in Num. 26:54; 33:54; 35:8 to refer to the apportioning of the land according to the size of the tribe, family, and father's house. Thus the reference of Jabez's prayer is not to God giving him more land, but rather, since he had been apportioned a large area, to be able to take it and control it.

10d *And your hand would be with me,*—This third petition makes more explicit the request of the second petition. Jabez asks for God's power to assist him in his task of taking territory. The image of God's hand as his power against his enemies is common in the Old Testament, particularly in the narratives about the Exodus and the conquest.

10e *And you would keep me from evil, lest I cause pain.*—This (literally, "to do from evil") is clearly an idiom in the Hebrew. The idiom does not seem to be used elsewhere, but the sense seems clear enough. The final clause is the most disputed. Zuck rejects the NKJV rendering "that I may not cause pain" on the basis that the verb stem of *'atsab* here is Qal, not Piel or Hiphil.[3] However, the transitive Qal is well-attested in such passages as 1 Kgs 1:6 and Is. 54:6. It is also the case that in many places there is no clear distinction between the meaning of the Qal, Piel, and Hiphil of *'atsab*. Further, the transitive Qal makes better sense in the context. Jabez had received his name because he had caused pain in his birth. He asks, then, that that causing of pain not be characteristic of his life.

10f *And God brought that which he asked.*—This concludes the little episode of Jabez. God honoured his request and brought it to pass. The statement implies that the fulfillment of that request took place over time, and was not immediate.

Biblical-Theological Reflections

There are two primary aspects to this little narrative hidden among a string of genealogies. The first has to do with Jabez's name. The second has to do with his prayer. Each of these two aspects ties into the larger flow of biblical redemptive history in three particular areas. First, they tie into the account of the Fall and its effects. Second, they tie into the kingdom and its works. Third, they tie into the development of the Messianic hope.

The Naming of Jabez

The naming of Jabez takes the reader immediately to the story of the Fall and curse in Gen. 3. It affirms two things with that allusion. First, the curse is still in effect. The included explanation of the name makes that clear. Jabez's name, involving a rearranging of the letters for the word "pain" expresses a hope for the undoing of the curse, much as did Lamech's naming of Noah (Gen. 5:29). Second, the faithful are still looking for the seed promised to Eve. The preservation of the explanation of Jabez's name would have provided encouragement for the same hope through the ages between the time of Jabez and the recording of the story by the author of Chronicles in the post-exilic period. It would then have provoked its new audience to that same hope—an undoing of the curse. Third, Jabez is of the line of Judah, which, according to the Blessing of Jacob (Gen. 49), was the line from which the king would come. This makes an implicit connection between the coming of the king and removal of the curse.

The Prayer of Jabez

As with the allusion of Jabez's name to the Fall, the request for blessing also alludes to the undoing of the curse.

3. Zuck, 114.

Blessing, after the Fall, is usually contrasted with cursing (see, for example, Gen. 12:3). The prayer of Jabez also tells us something of the Old Testament understanding of the work of God's kingdom. The work of the kingdom is to bring about what God has already promised to do. It involves human effort, each one carrying out the task appointed to him. Jabez had been allotted a large territory, and Jabez prays for God's help to accomplish that task. Notice that Jabez's prayer is first of all based on the promises of God. Jabez prayed for those things that God had already promised to give. Prayer, as Jabez understood it, was not for the purpose of getting things from God, but rather for the purpose of provoking God's aid to accomplish those things he had already promised to do through the labours of his servants. In that sense, prayer also conforms the saint to the will of God. If the saint intends to pray for what God has already promised, he must know what things God has promised to give. In the case of Jabez, he knew that God had promised to give them the possession of the land, and that he had promised to provide Israel with the power to accomplish that end. Thus the failure in the period of Judges was a failure of faith. Israel as a whole neither knew God's promises regarding the land, nor did they press him to accomplish his promises through them.

There is a third consideration in the prayer of Jabez. That is found in Jabez's last request. Here he asked that he be kept from evil that he might not cause pain. It is true that the Hebrew word *ra'ah* may mean physical calamity or natural disaster, as well as moral evil. However, both the prayer itself and the larger context of the Books of Chronicles argue that it is the moral sense that is in view. One of the points made throughout the narratives in Chronicles is that many of the kings of Israel/Judah started out well, but at some point committed a moral evil that had disastrous effects on the people as a whole. For David, while the account of his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah is omitted, his sinful census is included (1 Chron. 21). The apostasy of Solomon is largely omitted, but the Chronicler does mention the fact that peoples who should have been driven out of the land still remained (2 Chron. 8:8). The folly of Rehoboam is mentioned. As one follows the narrative through 2 Chronicles, time after time, the moral failure of the king has dire consequences for Israel. In 2 Kings it was especially the sin of Manasseh that brought Judah into the exile (2 Kgs 21:11 and parallels). The Chronicler, however, notes the general apostasy of the people, and their rejection of the prophetic word as the cause for the exile (2 Chron. 36:14–17). Apparently Jabez recognized the human tendency to moral failure, with the negative effects not only for the individual but also for others. (This, as Jabez's mother recognised, is part of living in a fallen world). Hence Jabez prayed for God to keep him from moral evil, that he might not cause the attendant pain on others. It is this that made Jabez more honourable than his brothers. His concerns went beyond himself, to include the success of God's kingdom. The readers of Chronicles would have recognised this significance of Jabez's prayer in the larger context of the book.

Contemporary Applications

The story of Jabez contains more than his prayer. It also contains the explanation of his name. The former reminds the reader, the modern one as well as the ancient one, that

we live in a fallen condition, in a fallen world. Unlike Jabez, and the first readers of Chronicles, we live in a time when their hope for deliverance from the captivity of sin has been realised. We live in the light and the power of Christ. We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness "into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. 1:13). Thus we are named Christians, after Christ, who has undone the curse of sin.

But, in a certain sense, the prayer of Jabez, like his name, also retains significance for us. In some sense, it teaches us to pray. It teaches us that real prayer is that which dares to demand from God what he has already promised (cf. Heb. 4:16). It means that we need to learn from God what he has promised, that we might pray rightly, and that our prayers might indeed be answered with something other than "No," or "Maybe." It also warns us of the dangers of our own moral failing. Such failings do not affect us alone, but all those with whom we are connected. It also reminds us that we are often involved in the answers to our own prayers. God did not give Jabez victory over his enemies while Jabez stood on the sidelines and watched. Jabez took part in the battle. Though we are now in the kingdom of Christ, yet we remain in warfare (Eph. 6:10–20), but dependent on the power of God for success in that warfare. Finally, it teaches us the importance of patience in prayer. God brought about what Jabez asked, but not in one year (Ex. 23:29–30; Dt. 7:22–23). *C&S*

Book Reviews

STRAW DOGS
by John Gray

Granta Books 2002, 246pages, £12.99
ISBN: 1-86207-512-3,

Reviewed by Matthew Wright

As a general rule, it is always best to stay away from so-called "popular-insert-name-of-discipline-here" books. They rarely go into sufficient depth for the reader to fully understand the issues involved, while at the same time convincing him that he now knows everything there is to know about the subject. Not all popular non-fiction is like that—think of Franky Schaeffer's excellent *Addicted to Mediocrity*—but it cannot be denied that the enterprise as a whole resembles a few little gems buried in a steaming pile of manure.

Unfortunately, the influence which these books have on people is usually in inverse proportion to their intrinsic worth. Christians for some reason seem to be particularly drawn to this form of literature—their shelves are quite literally *littered* with works which are little more than American pop-psychology with an easy-swallow Christian coating.

You are unlikely to find John Gray's *Straw Dogs* on those bookshelves, however, for the simple reason that many evangelicals are wary of reading anything they can't find in the local SPCK book shop. There are plenty of good reasons why you shouldn't read this book, but this isn't one of them.

Not that *Straw Dogs* is in any sense unreadable. On the contrary, I couldn't put it down. It has something of the dreadful fascination of *Pop Idol* or *Big Brother*—you know there's something fundamentally barmy going on, but you just can't help looking. Its central thesis—the kind of thing that gets first year philosophy undergrads with stringy beards all excited—is that human beings are no more than animals that have an elevated opinion of themselves. This elevated opinion is the product of Christianity and its secular off-spring, humanism.[1] But the idea that human beings are essentially different from other animals, and that they have some measure of control over their own destiny, Gray writes, is little more than an illusion. Darwinism should have indicated to us that ideas of progress and of conscious human direction in history are the products of fantasy. Now on that point I quite agree; it is surely one of the most powerful testaments to the enduring influence of Christianity that such a "fantasy" is still widely embraced. And apart from Gray's simplistic—and entirely wrong—equation of the Christian and humanistic concepts of man, I must admit that the argument he presents here is a valid one: *if* the Darwinistic concept of man is correct, *then* man has no reason to accord himself a status higher than other animals. What I find intriguing about this book is not so much this argument itself, but the train of absurdities and inconsistencies which Gray finds necessary to maintain it.

Such an outlook naturally has profound implications for our modern way of life. If humanity (which of course is an illusory concept) does not really have the elevated position it has hitherto been accorded, then its impressive success in terms of population growth should be seen rather as a disturbing plague on the face of the planet. We are just "an exceptionally rapacious primate" whose success is merely the product of chance evolution.

However, Gray takes a pessimistic view regarding the future progress of mankind. The effects of overcrowding will assure the end of high population growth. Our downfall will be aided by the unstoppable development of the technology of warfare.

Regular readers of this journal may hear echoes here of the "deep ecology" discussed by Bertrand Rickenbacher.

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1. To avoid confusion in the remainder of this review, it should be kept in mind that when Gray uses the word "humanism," he means the view that man has a distinct and unique place in the universe.

Gray, however, believes it is vain to fight against the development of technology in the manner of the environmentalists. The idea that humans cannot control their evolutionary destiny is a double-edged sword. To think that we can fight technology is a tacit accommodation of the humanistic view of man. Technology, as Gray points out quite correctly, is as much a part of mankind's nature as the beehive is of the bee's. The environmentalists advocate a doctrine of salvation which is incompatible with the reality of man's helplessness in the face of the evolutionary process. If we are really to live consistently with a view of ourselves as no more than another animal, our hope must not be for a world in which man becomes the wise steward of nature, but for a world in which he has simply "ceased to matter."

Once again, the validity of Gray's argument here is not in question. This is indeed the rational conclusion to which any deterministic theory of evolution must lead. What is surprising is that in the remainder of the book Gray's attempts to work out a consistent view of man and of morality stumble against his own "humanistic" values.[2] Although he insists that "human life has no more meaning than the life of the slime mould," he seems to be unable and unwilling to really follow this through.

This first becomes evident in the second chapter of the book, in which Gray deals with the problem of consciousness, selfhood, and free-will. Gray wants to challenge the belief in these three as essential attributes of human nature. He is particularly taken with the philosophical views of Schopenhauer on this subject, who, says Gray, made "the first and still unsurpassed critique of humanism." Schopenhauer, who appears to have been strongly influenced by Indian philosophy, held that the idea of the individual self is an illusion. Human beings are only "embodiments of universal Will." In Schopenhauer's philosophy, there could be no room for history, because history implies that there is some meaning to events. Nietzsche in this respect represents a step backwards from Schopenhauer, because he still maintained some hope for human history in the form of his "super-man."

The implications of all this for human action are, of course, profound. If we deny the centrality of consciousness in human life, we must of necessity deny that we have free will; and this means that we cannot be held accountable for our actions. Gray cites the neurological research of Benjamin Libet to support this. Libet found that the electrical impulse in the brain which initiates an action happens half a second before the conscious decision to perform that act. This means, of course, that the "conscious decision" is only the effect of an unconscious cause. It cannot be the product of a free will. As Gray says, "The knowing I cannot find the acting self for which it seeks." The self is, in fact, merely a chimera, a complex interaction of ultimately fragmentary moments which have no substantial unity. It is comparable to the communal organisation of an ant colony. At first, Gray suggests that we cannot escape this illusion of self: "there is no self and no awakening from the dream of self." But he quickly contradicts this with the following statement: "Formerly, philosophers sought peace of mind while pretending to seek the truth. Perhaps we should set ourselves a different aim: to discover which illusions we can give up, and which

we can never shake off. We will still be seekers after truth, more so than in the past; but we will renounce the hope of a life without illusion. Henceforth, our aim will be to identify our invincible illusions. Which untruths might we be rid of, and which can we not do without?" (p. 83).

Now at this point I begin to wonder whether what Gray requires is a good philosophical reply, or just a nice strong cup of tea and a lie down in a dark room. Why are we suddenly "seekers after truth" if we are really no different from other animals? And how on earth is it possible for a being supposedly assailed by illusions to determine what is and what is not an illusion? Surely once we have identified our "invincible illusions," they *are* no longer illusions.

Having decided that John Gray does not actually exist, John Gray proceeds in the next chapter to work out the implications of this for morality. You will not be surprised to find that morality does not really exist either. The idea that there should be some kind of universal rule for human behaviour is nonsensical for Gray. It is just an "ugly superstition" invented by Christians.

To prove this point, Gray discusses a number of fictional and historical examples in which people cast off the conventional norms of morality. For example, he tells the following true story: "A sixteen-year-old prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp was raped by a guard. Knowing that any prisoner who appeared without a cap on morning parade was immediately shot, the guard stole his victim's cap. The victim once shot, the rape could not be uncovered. The prisoner knew that his only chance of life was to find a cap. So he stole the cap of another camp inmate, asleep in bed, and lived to tell the tale. The other prisoner was shot." (p. 89)

Gray continues to list historical examples of genocide, and racially-motivated murder in the case of the Ku-Klux Klan, all of which are intended to prove that morality is "a convenience, to be relied upon only in normal times." But I have to confess I fail to see the argument. At the end of his list of examples, my immediate reaction was "so what?" All he had done was to give plenty of instances in which people had acted *immorally*. The Christian (and perhaps even the Enlightenment-humanist) idea of a universal morality does not imply that people *will always act morally*. To show that people have acted immorally is a direct proof that there *is* a universal law.

So how does Gray propose we live? As an ultra-determinist, his only answer can be that "the ethical life means living according to our natures and circumstances. There is nothing that says it is bound to be the same for everybody, or that it must conform with morality." He concludes the chapter: "Morality is a sickness peculiar to humans, the good life is a refinement of the virtues of animals. Arising from our animal natures, ethics needs no ground; but it runs aground in the conflicts of our needs."

Now I am firmly of the conviction that such an attitude does not deserve the dignity of a logical refutation. People who believe this kind of thing threw reason out of the window a long time ago. People like John Gray do not need logical argument: they need a *cure*. The best we can do is ask them to really live out their lives according to their principles. They will soon run aground. And it seems even our non-existent, amoral John Gray did not neglect to preface his book with the standard notifier: "John Gray has asserted his moral right under the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work."

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2. It is also worth remarking that such an attempt *in itself* is ridiculous if man is what Gray says he is.

In chapter three, Gray continues with a discussion of the concept of salvation. And when someone opens a chapter with a sentence like ". . . no one can say what was humankind's original sin, and no one understands how the suffering of Christ can redeem it," it's hard not to indulge for a moment in a big smug grin. Nevertheless, Gray does have some important insights in this chapter regarding the humanistic concepts of salvation. He is quite right that there is a tendency in humanism to seek salvation in science, in the control of nature. For Gray of course, this concept of salvation is as meaningless as the Christian one.

It is odd, then, that he seems to be so supportive of the removal of prohibitions on drug use. Drug use, he says, "is a tacit admission of a forbidden truth" (despite having argued a few pages earlier that the idea of truth is a Christian fiction). The tacit truth is that there is no salvation, and so it is better to escape salvation through the "artificial happiness" of drugs. But surely this is just another concept of salvation? It is quite a different idea of salvation to the Enlightenment-humanist idea of progress, to be sure, but it is a doctrine of salvation nonetheless. If we are only animals, why should we seek to escape *anything*? Gray is right that animals use drugs for pleasure, but not to escape "a forbidden truth."

The remainder of the book is much the same of this kind of thing, and it would be tedious to carry on pointing out Gray's inconsistencies. But I think it only fair to say that although this is an *absurd* book, I also found it very enlightening. There is a strong element of truth in Gray's assertion that humanism is really a secularisation of Christian themes. Humanism borrowed the ideas of morality and salvation from Christianity, but its removal of the biblical God from its system really can only lead to the chaotic worldview of John Gray, who realises the problem but is just as incapable of escaping it. In a way, perhaps we should hope for more of this kind of philosophy. It is, I think, a clear sign that humanism is collapsing under its own weight. *C&S*

THE NEXT CHRISTENDOM: THE COMING OF
GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY
by Philip Jenkins

Reviewed by Bruce Dayman

Forecasting is always a risky business. We all know and have heard of disasters in the economic world such as dot.com companies, etc. and that gold doesn't look like such a bad investment today. "Never buy a straw hat in summer" (contrary investing) is a piece of good advice. Philip Jenkins, contrary to the modern secular media, has given many good reasons why Christianity, like gold, may produce huge future dividends, and that the cold winter of liberalism may turn out to be like Enron.

The Next Christendom is a book about the growth of Christianity worldwide. Christianity is growing and it is growing fast. That growth is happening in the Southern hemisphere. The center of gravity of Christian religious life is moving from Western Europe and North America to Latin America, Africa and southern Asia. Christianity has become a global religion and over the next 25–50 years will become, if not the largest, one of the largest faiths in the world. If this sounds like a postmillennial dream, then a caveat, "All that glisters is not gold."

Jenkins draws heavily, yet not exclusively, from missiologist Andrew Walls and demographer Dave Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Using their research, as well as his own extensive observations, he states, "We are currently living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide" (p. 1). The largest Christian communities are to be found in Africa and Latin America. Not Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London and New York but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa and Manila and they are growing.

Jenkins gives us plenty of statistics to prove his point. Currently, there are 2 billion Christians alive today, about one-third of the planetary population. The bulk of believers are found in Europe, totalling 560 million. Latin America comes next with 480 million, Africa has 360 million and Asia 313 million. By the year 2025, without counting gains or losses through conversion, there will be around 2.6 billion Christians. Then Latin America will have 640 million, Africa 633 million, and Asia 460 million. Europe with its 555 million will have fallen to third place.

These statistics are based on birth rates alone. The people of Europe are not even replacing their current population. Growth rates are historically low due to birth control including abortion. In contrast there is a population explosion equalling the growth of Islam amongst southern Christians. By 2050 only one-fifth of the world's 3 billion Christians will be non-Hispanic Whites. "The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning" (p. 3).

How have the media missed this? Well, quite simply, because they have bought into the modernistic view that the missionary impulse was based on an ignorant paternalism. Repressive Victorians trying to spread moralistic Western inhibition on more liberal native populations is an urban myth that seems to be dying. Christianity has been seen as cultural leprosy and an arm of colonialism. Once colonial governments were withdrawn, the media speculated that religious manifestations would cease.

In reality, missionary converts passed on what they received. Christianity was accepted because it was true. Jenkins gives many examples of why there must have been a great deal more to Southern Christianity than the European-driven mission movement. While Christianity spread coincidentally with imperial expansion, it did not stop with its collapse. In fact, "it was precisely as Western colonialism ended that Christianity began a period of explosive growth that still continues unchecked, above all in Africa" (p. 56). Since 1965 the Christian population in Africa has risen from about a quarter of the continental total to about 46 percent. This is stunning growth indeed.

"The Day of Southern Christianity is Dawning"

The composition of African churches is mainly Roman Catholic and Anglican while Methodists are also well represented. In Uganda alone, Anglicans comprise thirty-five to forty percent of the population. Independent churches make up less than one tenth of all African Christians. Jenkins on

numerous occasions compares modern Africa to medieval Europe. When the political bonds to the existing colonial powers ended, Christianity became attractive because it no longer implied submission to a foreign political yoke. In fact a number of Episcopalian congregations from North America are technically part of the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Rwanda, what Jenkins calls "White soldiers following Black and Brown generals." (p. 204)

In Latin America the Roman Catholic Church is still the largest. But perhaps what may not be so surprising is the growth of Pentecostalism. One in five Christians worldwide is neither Protestant nor Catholic nor Anglican nor Orthodox. Religious observers differentiate between Protestant and Pentecostal because of the growing divergences in faith and practice. The reliance on direct spiritual revelations versus biblical authority alone places Pentecostals at a distance from Protestants. Also, Pentecostalism is attractive to the poor while Protestantism draws middle class believers. Third World Christianity is becoming steadily Pentecostal whether inside or outside the Roman Catholic Church (p. 67). Chile, Central America and Brazil have Pentecostal majorities. The sale of anointing oil, blessing by remote control (TV), demonic deliverance from witchcraft, demons, bad luck, bad dreams, all spiritual problems, as well as the promise of peace and prosperity draws many. These must seem valuable when contrasted to the financial fraud and sexual abuse in mainline churches.

It is similar in Asia, where Roman Catholic charismatics are strong in the Philippines. South Korea, where there are three times more Protestants than Roman Catholics, is considered one of the great Christian success stories of our times. There are twice as many Presbyterians there as in the United States. However, the charismatic influence is very evident. In China, where the underground house church movement thrives, figures are harder to establish. Conservative estimates range from twenty to fifty million Christians while some would say one hundred million, equal to the number of Buddhist adherents.

Jenkins lists the common positive features of Southern Churches (p. 77). They are:

1.   Similar economic circumstances, i.e., alternative (to State) social systems providing health, welfare and education.

2.   Radical communities—a sense of family, fellowship and belonging.

3.   The pervasive role of women, if not as leaders, then as devoted followers. They can also find qualified male partners in church.

4.   Needs are met that cannot be met by secular society, nor by established Churches—material support, mutual co-operation, spiritual comfort, and emotional release.

5.   Miracles—God intervenes every day directly. Evil is located not in social structures but in types of spiritual evil which can be effectively defeated by believers. This is not an escapist mentality and produces real observable results. Conversion is seen to affect the whole life from ethics of work and thrift to family and gender relations.

The Rise of the New Christianity

In 1900 Northerners outnumbered Southerners, 2.5 to 1. By 2050 that number will be almost exactly reversed. In order for a nation to maintain its population base, the birthrate must be 2.1 children per woman. In Europe it is currently 1.5. Most Southern nations are very fertile with some reaching 6.8 to 7.3 children per woman. The solution for Northern nations is mass immigration. Due to the ageing population and abortion there is a huge demand for workers to maintain economic supply for social programmes in Europe and America. In order to understand the future impact of Southern Christianity on the North one only need do the maths.

Another important fact is that the world is becoming more urban. Eight out of ten of the largest cities are Southern. Today the world is forty-five percent urban. By 2025 it will be sixty percent and sixty-six percent by 2050.

It is therefore very necessary to understand what kind of Christianity the Southern nations are embracing. Once again the author provides a list (pp. 88–89) by which we can define what a Christian is in any given localation. He states:

1.   We can't be too precise—a Christian is someone who describes himself as a Christian, who believes Jesus is not merely a prophet or teacher but the Son of God, the Messiah. He doesn't question doctrinal details.

2.   Official figures (however implausible) are accepted.

3.   Predominant religion of the culture indicates the tradition of the culture.

4.   Religious trends do not develop logically.

Even though this is a very broad definition of what is Christian the author gives us some interesting scenarios. He states that Christianity spreads in spite of our preconceived prejudices against such things as colonialism, Western missionaries, etc. He backs this up by saying that Sub-Saharan Africa's eight most populous states have around two hundred million Christians. This could double in twenty-five years displacing Europe as the chief Christian heartland. In Uganda alone, the growth rate is twenty-seven percent after accounting for the devastation AIDS has caused. Its birth rate is four times that of the European nations. Currently it is composed of forty percent Protestants, thirty-five percent Roman Catholics and ten percent Muslims (p. 91).

The Philippines, which are eighty-five percent Roman Catholic, will have 130 million Christians by the year 2050. There are currently 1.7 million Roman Catholic baptisms per year. This is larger than the combined Roman Catholic nations of Europe, i.e. France, Spain, Italy and Poland.

Brazil, whose population is seventy-five percent Roman Catholic, is seeing rapid Protestant growth. Currently at twenty per cent it could grow to fifty percent. Yet it is Pentecostalism that is seeing the largest growth. When you look at the types of Christianity thriving in the South it is plain to see that they are very different from the European and North American mainstream.

An important question that Jenkins raises will most likely be raised many times over the next number of years. Given that religion is more enthusiastic and immanentistic in the Southern hemisphere, is it essentially reviving pagan practices? There is an emphasis on the supernatural such as prophecy, dreams, visions, ecstatic utterances and healing. Given a world where only one Christian in five is non-Hispanic White, it stands to reason that the views of the minority will cease to claim mainstream status. The author is quick to add that however much Southern Christianity has diverged from older orthodoxies, it has in almost all cases remained within very recognisable Christian traditions (p. 108). In fact he goes as far as to say they are more committed

in terms of faith and practice than the North with its secularisation (p. 94).

Culture and contextualisation are introduced with little discussion of the hermeneutical problems associated with the subject. He asks whether we have to reject our entire cultural history when we become Christians. He compares the spread of Christianity in Europe, which adopted Gothic architecture, as well as the unconscious absorption of cultural norms by Western Christians, to what is happening in the South. It is doing what is natural given their physical and cultural environment.

Another issue that will be of concern to Protestants is the burgeoning growth of the Cult of the Virgin. Mary, the woman clothed with the sun, is an absolutely central symbol. Some consider her a co-Saviour figure and a mediatrix. Some Latinos and Philippinos would even support her as the fourth member of the Godhead. Marian apparitions in Rwanda, Kenya and Cameroon are taking place in the Coptic Church. If Northern views become less and less significant this will have repercussions as the new century progresses.

Accommodation to cultural norms raises the issue of syncretism. Magical practices in Africa, as well as polygamy, divination, animal sacrifice and initiation rites, circumcision and veneration of ancestors are being retained in some Churches. Third world audiences have always accepted the supernatural, spirits and spiritual powers. Jenkins states, "If there is a single key area of faith and practice that divides Northern and Southern Christians, it is this matter of spiritual forces and their effects on the everyday human world" (p. 123). Europeans have been traditionally cessationists and Bultmann went as far as to demythologise the Scriptures. The rationalism of Western civilisation is coming under more and more scrutiny by conservative scholars. That is hopefully a good thing.

In the South Christ is viewed as the Source. The Churches are very poor and modern medicine is beyond the reach of most of the poorest people. Christianity provides competition against its animist and spiritist rivals in Africa and shamanism in Korea. The biblical world-view is based on spirits, healings, exorcism and proof of Jesus' Messiahship. The Kingdom of God is considered to be present in the here and now as well as in the future (p. 128). Spiritual warfare is accepted as normal and there is a strong emphasis on continuity with ancestors who have died, i.e., meaning Christians of all ages. Long periods of probation and catechism before becoming a Church member take place. Baptism is accompanied by exorcism which is an act of divine rescue from a failing pagan world.

The author gives a helpful insight by referring to the pre-Nicene literature of the European conversion period stating that Africans and Asians in particular can be compared to the Roman Empire (p. 135). While Southern Churches may appear sect-like now they will become more mature and formal in the future. Churches have given way to sects and they in turn become Churches. They in turn grow into new lively sects. The cycle consistently repeats. Jenkins contemplates whether these Churches won't eventually secularise following the European model but concludes: "For the foreseeable future, then, Southern churches should continue to offer a powerful and attractive package for potential converts both North and South. They can plausibly present themselves as modern day bearers of an apostolic message that is not limited by geography, race, or culture, and claims of signs and wonders will serve as their credentials" (p. 139).

The Crusades Again

After spending some time describing how Southern Christianity expresses itself in various ways politically, the author moves to the third and final theme of the book. It is a subject that has become very apparent since September 11 (911). The burgeoning growth of Christianity will place it in direct conflict with militant Islam. The modern secular press again gets a failing grade in not giving the full picture of the Islamic world. Political correctness binds the Western secular media so much that nations like the Sudan, where slavery is public policy, rarely if ever make the evening news. Human rights violations in many Muslim countries should be exposed.

Africa is especially precarious. Over a third of a billion Christians have equal counterparts in the Muslim faith. Nigeria is walking a razor's edge. In the recent past ethnic cleansing has taken place against Christians in Armenia (Turkey), Muslims in Crete, and is not unknown in Egypt and Iraq. Jenkins' belief that Christianity will have a homogenising effect in the global South may be somewhat naïve. Still the author has done us a service by giving an intelligent appraisal of the realities that exist. He doesn't excuse Christianity for the brutality it has committed; nevertheless, he makes the point that Islam is historically much more violent.

The Islamic Middle East is becoming more homogeneous with each passing year. In a move to preserve social programmes while having declining birth rates, pluralistic Europe will open its doors to seventy million immigrants for the economic benefit they will bring. This will increase the Muslim population from one per cent to twelve per cent. The European Christian nations are mainly pluralistic while Muslim nations aim for homogeneity. This will produce an increasing pressure on public policy in Europe. Of course other faiths like Hinduism and Buddhism also will add another irritant to the already volatile mix in this century.

In Asia many of the skirmishes that have made headlines during the past decade have revolved around Islamic persecution of Christians. In East Timor during the 1990s Christians were being massacred and expelled. In Indonesia and Malaysia, where Islam is the defining political force, persecution of Christians has taken place. In Europe we have already seen calls for the death of Salman Rushdie and Muslim demonstrations in Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Discontent among the Muslim minority in Russia, along with rich oil resources, may be a tempting target for Muslim neighbours to the south and east.

United States support for Israel is becoming an increasing stumbling block to the Muslim world as we can see from the furore surrounding Iraq and Saddam Hussein. This is an important fact since Muslims could outnumber Jews one hundred to one by 2050 A.D. The fact that United Nations inspectors are even in Iraq looking for weapons of mass destruction should disturb the most dedicated pacifist.

Closing Thoughts

This book covers three main themes. First, the change of locus from Northern to Southern Hemisphere is due to rapid population growth. Secondly, that an older more conserva-

tive, form of Christianity is being embraced in the South, yet the impact of Charismatic and Pentecostal movements is part of its vitality. And, thirdly, the confrontation between Islam and Christianity will continue to escalate as the growth of both faiths continues.

Philip Jenkins has written a book that is being well received by conservative Christians and is pushing scholars to reconsider their settled assumptions about Christianity being irrelevant in a postmodern world. In some cases it is considered the most influential book of the year. I am already reading essays that have incorporated Jenkins' forecasts into their theses. I anticipate that the book will continue to foster somewhat of a paradigm shift, but particularly in missiology. Yet the implications for theology and religious practice are also striking.

The Southern church is more traditional in both theology and moral teaching. This gives encouragement to Northern conservatives. However Jenkins is careful to portray the changes as something happening "outside the box." The Western dichotomy of liberal and conservative doesn't do justice to the practices and attitudes of the Southern churches.

For instance, take the explosive growth of Pentecostalism. While Jenkins draws heavily on illustrations and statistics from the Roman Catholic traditions, it is an inescapable fact that this twentieth century movement has become pervasive worldwide. What kind of impact will this have for those in mainline Churches? Jenkins doesn't touch this question but assumes the status quo will remain.

Still, though Jenkins' has a "big tent" view of Christianity, it is an important question to those in the Reformed tradition. Their tendency has been to try and clean their fish before they catch them. What may be a great opportunity lies before them. Since so many have come to the Faith in the South there will be a great need for teaching. This is the area that resources should be focused on, resources that are already limited. Why not focus on what has historically been the strength of Reformed churches, namely doctrine and worldview?

Westerners also have another advantage that can be offered: money. The harsh reality of Southern Christianity is that it is desperately poor and repulsively downtrodden. Groups such as the Children's Hunger Relief Fund provide interest free loans to Third World businessmen and clean water wells to impoverished villages. They are excellent models to Northern Christians. The success of these programmes has also opened many doors for teaching Christian doctrine as well as winning a warm reception from national leaders.

The fact that more missionaries are being exported from the South and that the North is their destination is reason for reconsidering our strategy. Instead of only planting Churches, we should start schools, colleges and vocational training facilities. The opportunity to influence the leaders of nations has never been greater. The success of house Churches in China and Korea, a movement started in China by Presbyterian minister John Nevius in 1870 and by Presbyterians in Korea in 1890, needs scholarly attention for use at home and abroad. (See his book, *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*, 1958, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 92 pages). Korea has the two largest Churches in the world, one is Presbyterian and the other Assemblies of God.

The Christian origins of equality before the law, the rule of law, habeas corpus, self government, protection for women and children, etc., all take on a new light when we look at the desperate needs that exist in nations run by demagogues. Only nations with a strong Christian heritage will have the goods to supply. While the secular societies such as Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia and Red China find their way into the ash heap of history and Western nations increasingly become disillusioned with Modernism, the Bible and Christian tradition have unprecedented opportunity to impart authority to citizens to resist tyranny and establish godly rule. One thing is for sure: Northern Churches cannot afford to ignore a spiritual explosion of this magnitude. While orthodoxy can never be an option, thinking "outside the box" is no longer an option. *C&S*

DICTIONARY OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT PENTACHEUCH
Edited by T. Desmond Alexander & David W. Baker

NEW DICTIONARY OF THEOLOGY
Edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson & David F. Wright

Reviewed by Stephen C. Perks

The subtitle of the *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* sums it up really: "A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship." Unfortunately, the scholarship in the articles I consulted is not up to much. Despite its 954 double-column pages it is surprisingly inadequate. When I saw the publisher's advance notice information for the book it looked interesting. The reality is disappointing even by the standards of the studied irrelevance that usually passes for academic fare these days. Most of the article I consulted seemed to take a lot of space saying nothing much at all. This is the sad state of modern "scholarship" across the humanities on the whole.

For example, in the article "Fall" we are told that "it is better to describe the disobedience of Eve and Adam as one of defection, deviation or transgression. Using 'Fall' language may lead to misconstruing biblical data" (p. 285f.). There is an interesting reversal of the order in which the two names "Adam and Eve" are usually spoken here, "Eve and Adam," which, though it may seem at first blush a trifling point may also indicate something more serious, since although Eve sinned first, Adam was held to account as the one who had the headship over his wife, a hard piece of patriarchal "biblical data" that does not fit well with modern feminist and politically correct "Christian" scholarship. A Freudian slip perhaps? The author goes on to tell us that "nowhere in the Bible is the term ['Fall'] used to describe the events of Gen. 2–3" (p. 290f.). Neither does the Bible use the term Trinity. Does this mean we should be better off not using the term? My suspicions were confirmed when I read

the "Concluding Observations," among which was the following: "Worst of all, sin produced alienation between God and humans, between humans and their environment, between human and human, and even in the depth of their own being, the alienated self "(p. 291). Hum! "The alienated self." "The so-called classic view of the Fall" the author tells us "did not receive adumbration until the time of Augustine." One thing is for sure though, it was around a long time before Sigmund Freud and his disciples foisted their theories about the alienated self upon the unsuspecting world.

The article on the Fall I came across by opening the book randomly. The following one on "Prophets, Prophecy" I went looking for. Unfortunately, this was also disappointing. Given the etymological uncertainty of the term *navi* ("prophet") the author of the article seems to have abandoned any attempt at investigating its relevance and goes off straight away into "defining prophecy in terms of the typical social role or function performed by individuals identified by their societies as 'prophets,' 'seers' and the like" (p. 662).

Now, it is not that I disagree with the idea that a consideration of the social role of the prophet should be taken into account in seeking a proper understanding of what a prophet is. It is very important. But it is surely a mistake to leave out all consideration of the etymology of the term. It is at least as important to know what the term used means as it is to know what typical social functions the prophets performed, especially in view of the fact that the prophets did not all have identical social functions. In fact they sometimes had widely differing social functions. Abraham, Moses and Elijah were all prophets, but they had differing social roles. What is the common denominator that makes them prophets? A definition of "prophet" merely in accordance with the typical social function is likely to be inadequate, as indeed I believe it is in this article.

A symptom of this problem is the author's explanation of the fact that Abraham is called a prophet in Scripture when he exercised no function that can be identified as typically prophetic by the "social role" approach to defining the prophet. Abraham was a prophet who, according to this definition, never prophesied. This is not an inconsiderable problem for an approach that seeks only to understand the prophet in terms of his typical social role. The author's answer to this problem is to argue that Abraham is called a prophet because he was an intercessor (Gen. 20:7). Alternatively, he proposes, we could see Abraham as "imbued with divine power that poses a risk to any who offend or assault him (cf.1 Kings 2:23–25)" (p. 664). This is of course a preposterous idea since it contradicts the plain facts of "biblical data," namely the fact that the Jews ill-treated and murdered the prophets (Mt. 23:31–35). But the author thinks this alternative explanation unlikely, however, not because it contradicts the historical fact of the Jews' persecution of the prophets, but because "Abraham is never labeled 'holy man' or a 'man of God'."

A much more fruitful line of investigation, it seems to me, could have been pursued if the author had given more weight to the meaning and origin of the word "prophet" (*navi*). Despite the inconclusiveness of the etymology "It is a good, and now widely held, hypothesis" writes B. D. Napier "that the lost Hebrew root is related to cognate Akkadian and Arabic words meaning 'to call' or 'to announce'. Shall we then taken the etymology, itself hypothetical, however plausible, in an active sense and understand the underlying meaning of the noun as an 'announcer'? . . . Or is the passive sense primary? Is the prophet . . . one who is called?" ("Prophet, Prophetism" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1962], Vol. 3, p. 897a). The prophets were people who received a definite divine call.

This fact is demonstrable quite apart from the meaning of the word *navi*. But those who are thus called by God are called to announce the word of God. The calling of the prophets meant both that they were divinely called and that they must therefore fulfil that for which they were called. It seems to me that this fact of calling is itself what constituted one a prophet. It is the fact that the prophets were called by God that provides the common denominator and should therefore be seen as basic to our understanding of what a prophet was. Those who "prophesied" without this commission, this divine calling, were false prophets whom God had not called. Whether a prophet had been called by God was pivotal to whether he spoke in God's name. A prophet without a call from God was by definition a false prophet.

This is borne out time and again in the Old Testament. The false prophets were people who presumed to speak for God but had received no calling from God to do so (cf. Jer. 14:14–15; 23:21; 29:9). By contrast the prophets of God were called by God to this task, and often this is the first thing they tell us. They did not choose this for themselves but were called to it by God. God chose those who would be his prophets, not man. It was not something one took upon oneself. The calling itself was essential. This basic element of calling fits all cases, including Abraham. Abraham was a prophet because God called him, not because he interceded for anyone. His life was the prophetic message, the conduit through which God would proclaim his salvation to the world: "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; 18:18 etc.). The prophets were those who received a divine call to proclaim the word of God, whether by deed or word.

The article on "Creation" begins: "Comparisons between the biblical and ancient Near Eastern views of creation can be made on several different levels" (p. 155). The whole article proceeds by this method. Here's a taster for you:

"Egyptians were more interested in that which was metaphysical than in that which was physical . . . As the sky goddess, Nut is portrayed arching her body over the disk-shaped earth. She is often supported by the hands of the god of the air while the earth god, Geb, lies prone at her feet. This is not a structural representation. The Egyptians did not believe that one could step on Nut's toes or throw a rock and hit her knees. Instead, the portrayal communicates important truths concerning what Egyptians believed about authority and jurisdiction in the cosmos. These are functional truths not structural truths. And though they may not represent structural truths, they represent what to them was reality. The cosmos functioned by means of the gods playing out their roles. Whatever the physical structure of the heavens, it was of little concern to them. To describe creation was to describe the establishment of the functioning cosmos, not the origins of the material structure of the cosmos. Structure was irrelevant. In Akkadian literature the assigning of functions . . . was of central importance in the original creation as well as in the continual renewal of creation . . . Since Israel had no revelation that would alter their cosmological model, it is not surprising to find that they

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Contrary to much popular opinion, economics is not a subject that is religiously neutral. The way the economy works is intimately bound up with fundamental issues of right and wrong, and what one judges to be right or wrong is itself intimately bound up with one's religious perspective. Furthermore, the Christian Scriptures give specific and abiding rules about how men are to behave economically. It is the calling and duty of the Church to address *all* areas in which God has revealed ethical norms for human behaviour. Immoral economic behaviour must be addressed and challenged by the Church no less than immoral sexual behaviour. God has given laws to mankind governing both realms of activity. It is necessary therefore that the Church should bring the moral teaching of the Bible to bear on the economic issues that face modern society. If Christians are to do this effectively, however, they must be informed. Ignorance of the economic realities upon which so much of life depends will vitiate the Church's ability to speak prophetically in this area and call the present generation back to faithfulness to God's word.

conformed to the consensus of the day. God did not use a revised cosmology to communicate all of the important differences in cosmogony" (p. 163, 166).

These three articles seem to be pretty much representative of the book. I'm afraid I find this kind of "scholarship" poor and exceedingly dissatisfying. It seems to consist mostly of a rehash of the various different interpretations that have been made of the subject under consideration by liberal scholars and evangelicals eager to follow their methods, seasoned by a good overdose of obligatory references to other Near-Eastern cultures, beliefs and practices. Doubtless, there are limits to what can be achieved in a short dictionary article. But this does not necessitate mediocrity nor following the latest fads of secular scholarship, which to me seems to be the overriding characteristic of this volume. I'm afraid my overall judgement on the editors and publisher of this book is: "Could have done much better!"

The publishers did do much better with their *New Dictionary of Theology* published in 1988. Despite the fact that most of the articles in this volume are considerably shorter than those in *The Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, they are also considerably more informative and useful—unless of course what you really want to read about in a dictionary of the Pentateuch is Near Eastern comparative religion (though personally I should have thought a dictionary of

Near Eastern comparative religion would have served that purpose much better). Perhaps a comparison between these two dictionaries is unfair in that the subject matter is very different, the *New Dictionary of Theology* advertising itself fairly accurately as a "concise yet comprehensive coverage [of] biblical, systematic and historical theology." Nevertheless, given that the prices are almost the same, the *New Dictionary of Theology* is better value for students who want fairly short introductory articles.

Both books are perfect bound, although the they seem to be of a fairly good quality for perfect binding. Nevertheless, a sewn binding would have been better, and it seems to me that this should really be taken into consideration when manufacturing expensive books that are meant for long-term reference. Both books are fairly large and will lie open on a desk on their own without having to be kept open by aids (an invaluable feature of any reference book of this nature in my opinion). *C&S*

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