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# The Journal of Christian Reconstruction



Symposium on  
Politics

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## The Journal of Christian Reconstruction

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*Symposium on Politics*

Gary North, Editor

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A CHALCEDON MINISTRY

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# THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

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This journal is dedicated to the fulfillment of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1—to subdue the earth to the glory of God. It is published by the Chalcedon Foundation, an independent Christian educational organization (see inside back cover). The perspective of the journal is that of orthodox Christianity. It affirms the verbal, plenary inspiration of the original manuscripts (autographs) of the Bible and the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ—two natures in union (but without intermixture) in one person.

The editors are convinced that the Christian world is in need of a serious publication that bridges the gap between the newsletter-magazine and the scholarly academic journal. The editors are committed to Christian scholarship, but the journal is aimed at intelligent laymen, working pastors, and others who are interested in the reconstruction of all spheres of human existence in terms of the standards of the Old and New Testaments. It is not intended to be another outlet for professors to professors, but rather a forum for serious discussion within Christian circles.

The Marxists have been absolutely correct in their claim that theory must be united with practice, and for this reason they have been successful in their attempt to erode the foundations of the noncommunist world. The editors agree with the Marxists on this point, but instead of seeing in revolution the means of fusing theory and practice, we see the fusion in personal regeneration through God's grace in Jesus Christ and in the extension of God's kingdom. Good principles should be followed by good practice; eliminate either, and the movement falters. In the long run, it is the kingdom of God, not Marx's "kingdom of freedom," which shall reign triumphant. Christianity will emerge victorious, for only in Christ and His revelation can men find both the principles of conduct and the means of subduing the earth—the principles of biblical law.

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# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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*Gary North*

There are supposedly 40 million Bible-believing Christians in the United States, people who affirm their faith in the infallibility of the Bible. A voting bloc of 40 million people, if they acted as a unit, would be large enough to control the political life of the country. Yet it is obvious to anyone that the United States is dominated by the forces of secular humanism. The humanists have driven the Christians from every visible field of potential combat: schools, courthouses, legislatures, bureaucracies. Even if there were 80 million so-called Bible-believing Christians, it is unlikely that their presence, in and of itself, would alter the basic direction of U.S. political life.

Consider the state of North Carolina. It is supposedly in the heart of the Bible belt. Its population is overwhelmingly decentralized; it is the eleventh largest state in the Union in terms of population, yet it has only one city over 300,000 and two more over 100,000. It is a state whose small-town population is overwhelmingly fundamentalistic in religious preference. Yet consider the tax code of the state regarding charitable deductions:

You Can Deduct Gifts To...

Churches, Red Cross, Boy Scouts, American Cancer Society, etc. The deduction for such contributions is limited to 15 percent of the adjusted gross income on page 1, line 11 of the return.

Gifts to the State of North Carolina or any of its political subdivisions or any of their institutions, or agencies and to nonprofit educational institutions or hospitals located in North Carolina are deductible without limit (6).

The secular humanists who run the State of North Carolina, in cooperation with the secular humanists who operate the hospitals and private universities (such as Duke University), have worked out a very good deal for themselves. They have set up a totally discriminatory tax

code which subsidizes secular humanism at the expense of churches and other Christian enterprises of a charitable nature. But so few Christians give over fifteen percent of their adjusted gross income to any charity, let alone the church, that there is no reaction from the loyal political lemmings in the pews. They could control the state, yet the tax code reveals only too clearly who is really in control of politics in fundamentalist North Carolina.

How did this come about? In the North, it was the preaching of the {2} so-called Social Gospel, which had been preceded by the Abolitionist movement, that turned the theologically liberal churches to political action. Many fundamentalists had been led by the perfectionist preaching of Charles G. Finney and others in the West (meaning, in our era, the Midwest) into the Abolitionist crusade, and from there it was a short hop to the Social Gospel. The disillusioned conservatives who remained conservative turned inward, partially in response to the rising “prophecy conference” movement and books like the popular *Jesus Is Coming*, by “W. E. B.” Pietism replaced the older concern for voluntary social welfare, which Alexis de Tocqueville had pointed to in the early 1830s as one of the distinguishing marks of American democracy. The concern for preaching, soul-winning, church growth, and Sunday schools steadily replaced the broader social and political concerns that had once caught the attention and sacrifices of American Christians. The theological liberals became political liberals, and the theological conservatives became political retreatists. The battle went to the liberals by default.

In the American South, the Civil War had taken its toll. The older leadership, which had been educated, conservative, and Christian (Anglican and Presbyterian), lost its position after the war, and especially after the mid-1880s. The populist “rednecks,” with their newly discovered Jim Crow rhetoric, steadily replaced the experienced, educated leadership which had attempted to keep peace in race relations. The new men were fundamentalists, if anything. They did not have the broader vision of Christian civilization which had motivated the pre-war Southern politicians. (It should be understood that the majority of the pre-war leaders had been pro-Union, not secessionists, especially the military men like Lee, Jackson, and Jackson’s chaplain, Robert L. Dabney. The radical secessionists of South Carolina forced them into



the Confederacy, once Lincoln took the calculated risk of reinforcing Fort Sumter.)

The Civil War broke the strength of the older, traditional Christian leadership, North and South, and inaugurated a new federal sovereignty that has scarcely looked back. It was the turning point in American political history. The defection of the fundamentalists after the 1870s led to the triumph of the secular humanists. American fundamentalism changed the focus of concern in the churches. Preachers ever since have been expected to “preach the gospel, not dabble in politics,” which invariably means not take a stand in opposition to whatever political drift local fundamentalism has allowed the humanists to engineer. Secular humanists set the goals and tone of politics, and the fundamentalists either remained aloof or else took stands as political conservatives—a conservatism which itself was theologically neutral and ultimately humanistic. The voters in the conservative movement have generally been religious fundamentalists (including Bible-reading Roman Catholics), but the leadership {3} of the conservative movement has generally been atheistic (the economists), Jewish humanist (the Straussians), or Thomistic Roman Catholics (*National Review*). The conservatives have paraded under the secular banners of Natural Law or neutral human reason, neither of which is consistent with biblical revelation. So the humanists have dominated the terms of American political discourse.

It would be a mistake to imagine that all Christians have been silent in the political battles over the last century. We see the testimonies of men like A. A. Hodge, J. Gresham Machen, and R. B. Kuiper in this issue of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*. But these voices have been drowned out by the fundamentalists, both inside and outside their respective denominations, as well as by the political liberals who have taken over the educational institutions of modern Presbyterianism. The conservatives in the seminaries and colleges have tended to remain silent, diligently teaching within the narrow confines of their specialties, while the political liberals have become the presidents, deans, and most vociferous faculty members on the seminary and college campuses. The result has been predictable: the “neutralization” of the young conservative students, and the recruiting of the liberal political types by the presidents, deans, and department heads. All of this, of

course, has been silently subsidized by the parents, donors, and boards of trustees that nominally control the educational institutions, but who in fact abdicated here, too. The colleges, for three generations, have tried to buy phony prestige from secular accreditation boards and secular humanist universities, so they have forced their younger faculty members to go through the meaningless academic gauntlet of the “better” universities. The young men have had their faiths eroded, narrowed, and destroyed; the colleges have staffed themselves with the products of the humanist gauntlet. This process, sadly, has been going on since Harvard was built in the 1630s. So they built Yale to help counter the drift of Harvard, and they built Andover-Newton to counter the drift of Yale and Harvard, and Alexander built Princeton Seminary to counter the drift of all the colleges, and they built Westminster to counter the drift of Princeton Seminary. And every school has had one thing in common: the quest for humanist-trained and humanist-approved holders of humanist academic degrees. Yet in 350 years, the presidents, deans, and department chairmen have not been instructed by those paying the bills to clean up their compromising act. (In the free market, men get what they pay for; in the nonprofit academic non-market, men pay for what the elite decides they ought to receive.)

The pessimism of the modern conservative Christian community is understandable. These people have funded the humanists through taxes. They have supported the second-rate humanists in the Christian colleges with their donations. They have been told that victory is not an eschatological possibility. {4} They have been told that there are no specific, concrete standards of political action. They have been convinced by generations of defeat in politics that they are failures. On the one occasion when it seemed as though they had at last “won one,” he turned out to be a puppet of the humanist-dominated Trilateral Commission. They have tasted nothing but defeat for so long that they have become convinced that victory is a sinful dream, a kind of political pornography. One no more hopes for political victory than he hopes for a key to the local Playboy Club. After all, good Christians aren’t supposed to know what to do in either situation, and admitting that you do know what to do and enjoy doing it ... well, one just doesn’t. The decent Christian approach in both situations is supposed to be the

same: “Hands off! This is dirty!” Those who persist, especially those in the pulpit, face the possibility that their congregations will want to know where they learned to do such things, not to join in the “fun,” but to stamp it out.

The national political scene is hopeless at present. If a permanent change is to come, it must come from below. This means that the top will not be the training ground for successful political newcomers. They will have to receive their training and experience at the lower levels of government. You do not start out as a general. Or, in the words of a long-forgotten comedian, “I made colonel the hard way; I started out as a general.” Until Christians are willing to get excited about church members running for the proverbial dogcatcher, their political maturity will remain the stuff of daydreams.

What we need, then, is a new vision. *First*, we need confidence that the earthly future is ours. We must not start out with the operating presupposition that this is Satan’s world, or that the Satanic conspiracy has engineered every disaster which has befallen us—or worse, that every seeming victory has been a calculated manipulation by the Satanic conspiracy to get our hopes up. We must not, in short, ascribe total sovereignty in time and on earth to Satan. *Second*, we must be willing to master biblical law, since all law is ultimately religious, and if we are going to be in the legislation-creating business, we might as well pass biblical laws instead of anti-biblical laws. This means that there are standards in life, Christian political goals that by definition exclude anti-Christian political goals. This idea is anathema to all the antinomians of the churches, whose name is legion. The antinomians are the secret, though unwitting (half-witting), allies of the secular humanists. It is they, almost 40 million strong, who have turned over the reins of power to the humanists. The liberal political advocates on the Christian campus have promoted this transfer of power in the name of social relevance—a relevance totally at odds with the concept of case-law applications of Old and New Testament law—and they have voted for the secular humanists. They have been repulsed {5} by the gut-level conservatism of the average man in the pew (the same fool who has sent money and his children to the campus). But the pietists have been equally guilty, for they have argued that there is no earthly possibility of offering a biblical alternative, and besides, Christianity does not offer

any specific, concrete alternatives. The pietists have therefore neglected the most basic of all political rules: “You can not beat something with nothing.” *Nothing* is what pietism offers on a full-time basis. *Nothing* is the total commitment of pietism, the holy of holies of pietism’s earthly goals. *Nothing* is what pietism has specialized in producing for over a century. If you want to know what pietism has done for Christian civilization in general, and American political life in particular, the answer is clear: *nothing*.

Now we face the impending collapse of the culture of secular humanism. We have few skills and hardly any specific programs to offer in its place. You cannot beat something with nothing. So we are likely to miss a golden opportunity, an opportunity analogous to the one offered to Israel by God in the first weeks after the Exodus, namely, the immediate conquest of Canaan. We, like the Hebrews, have the mentality of slaves. Only Caleb and Joshua saw the vulnerability of the enemy, despite their giant bodies and sturdy walls (Num. 13:17–14:10). Like Caleb and Joshua, we must separate ourselves from the slaves in our camp. Of course, like Caleb and Joshua, we can expect the slaves to try to stone us (14:10). But we can live in this hope: they, like the Hebrew slaves of old, will die in their self-imposed wilderness; the Promised Land belongs to us. (But to play it smart, do not turn your back on the pietistic slaves in our midst, unless you want your head bashed in with a rock. And the ones carrying the largest rocks are either preachers or instructors holding Ph.D.’s from secular universities.)

The major issues of our day, we are told by the news media, are political. This perspective is basic to humanism, argues **R. J. Rushdoony**, because the means of establishing humanistic salvation are political. The lure of political action is therefore religious in nature. The State is seen as the new God on earth. The State’s will is the true reality in the mind of the humanist; the State’s will is determinative. Yet in the midst of the new political incarnation, we find a looming disaster, one described by sociologist **Peter Berger**: the destruction of American foreign policy. We are about to abandon Taiwan, as we abandoned our former allies, the “boat people” of South Vietnam. We have lost a central tenet of all political morality: you do not abandon your allies to the enemy. If you do it twice in a row, he says, you will have no

more allies. (Solzhenitsyn has been saying this for five years, and the humanist architects of American retreat have done their best to abandon him, though his great prestige has made this tactic impossible. Instead, he was invited to address the graduating {6} class of Harvard, 1978, to be hissed at, as well as applauded.)

**Tom Rose** makes an important point: in a federal system, the local magistrate has the power to oppose the unwarranted expansion of central power. This issue is not dead, despite its dormant position since the defeat of the South in 1865. Calvin and other Protestant Reformers held the view that the local magistrate could lead a lawful rebellion against ungodly central political power. Thus, concludes Rose, it is imperative that Christians take positions of leadership at the local level. Rose's essay covers numerous political precedents in early American history to prove his point.

But was the American Republic really Christian in the beginning? Can we legitimately appeal to our Christian past? Absolutely, wrote **A. A. Hodge** of Princeton Seminary almost a century ago. This was an American Christian nation from the beginning. Christians have a moral responsibility to preserve this Christian political status before God.

Should Christians enter political life? Yes, says **Rus Walton**, but they had better be very careful. The art of politics is the art of compromise, and Christians should not compromise. Politics has proven so corrupting that good men have been dragged into the mire, or in the words of former Congressman Walter H. Judd, himself a former missionary to China, "There are a lot of people in Washington who succeed in rising above their principles." Why is it, Walton, asks, that so many Christians feel called to be Congressmen rather than more humble servants elsewhere in American politics? Is ego to blame? And if they are elected to high national office, what can they expect? My own essay gives my perspective, based on six months on a congressional staff: they can expect a life of endless defeats and temptations, for national politics is corrupted by messianic dreams of political predestinating. Too much rests on the competence of the Congressman's administrative assistant, and there is no one less reliable.

**John W. Robbins**, a co-staff member with me in Washington, zeroes in on the myth of American conservatism. There is one thing that can

safely be said of American conservatism today: it isn't Christian. Robbins cites the major premises of American conservatism, and finds that they are anti-Christian to the core. Like Robbins, **Rex Downie** points to the central tenet of much of the modern conservative movement: the belief in Natural Law. It is a false belief, concludes Downie, resting on the false hypothesis of neutral human reason, universal in scope. God's revealed law, not a hypothetical Natural Law, must be made the foundation of a Christian political order.

**Archie P. Jones** has produced a comprehensive critique of one of the two most important conservative political philosophical movements, the Straussians. (The other major movement in conservative political philosophy {7} is headed by Eric Voegelin.) The Straussians are rationalists, Jones says, and committed to a revival of Classical political philosophy. But Classical political philosophy was tyrannical, Jones points out, exalting the goodness of the Philosopher King, or the Great Man of history. The Straussians have consistently misinterpreted American history along Classical lines, neglecting completely the role of Christianity in the history of American political life. The Straussians are humanists, despite the fact that they claim to be against modern humanism.

Christian alternatives to the politics of secular humanism must be based on an understanding of the Bible's revelation concerning the proper function of government. **Jim West** provides a cogent exposition of Romans 13:1-7, the most important passage in the New Testament dealing with the civil government. He argues that the purpose of the State is to protect life and property, meaning human liberty. His rule is simple: "The regulative principle of the State is the regulative principle of the sword." It is therefore not an agency of positive economic action or wealth redistribution. The concept of the State in the socialist outlook is also simple: "We love you and have a wonderful plan for your life."

**R. B. Kuiper's** essay sets forth the political issue of the twentieth century: totalitarianism versus Christianity. He offers reasons why it is Christianity, and only Christianity, which is capable of challenging totalitarianism successfully. Kuiper castigates the conservative churches of America for neglecting the consistent and full-orbed preaching of the whole counsel of God, including social issues. The

great issues of our era are deeply theological, and Christians must contribute to the discussion of these issues. If the basic doctrines of the faith concerning the nature of God, man, and the civil government are not adhered to by modern society, then totalitarian governments will be the beneficiaries. Kuiper's essay appeared in 1948 in the *Westminster Theological Journal*.

**J. Gresham Machen**, the founder of Westminster Seminary, was a firm defender of Christian schools. His essay might easily have been included in the section on politics. He was completely opposed to the intervention of the federal government into educational affairs. His essay reflects the nineteenth-century classical liberalism of this defender of the faith—a perspective not shared in most of the seminary classrooms of the world today. Machen took a strong stand against Bible reading in secular humanist government schools, a fact that would amaze most supporters of “Christianizing” the public school system.

Finally, we are publishing the prize-winning essay by **Judy Ishkarian**. She won the \$100 review contest for her review of Otto Scott's biography of the oil entrepreneur, J. B. Saunders.

**1.**  
**SYMPOSIUM**  
**ON POLITICS**



# THE MYTH OF POLITICS

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*Rousas John Rushdoony*

Men usually find it easier to live in terms of myths than truth and reality, because the myth answers the dreams and hopes of man's being, whereas truth and reality command and compel rather than gratify man. In the myth, it is the power and the will of man which realizes itself. Basic to the philosophy of magic, from its more crude forms to its modern expression in Freemasonry, is the famous sentence, "As my will is, so must (or, mote, might) be." In reality, man is a creature, both sinful and limited, and the conditions of his life are *given*; there are boundaries to his ability to change reality. Not so in myth. Gerardus Van Der Leeuw (1890–1950) stated it clearly:

Either by mythical-magical methods therefore, or theoretically, man transforms the world into *his* world, and himself into its sovereign: this is the profound religious basis of all culture. But faith is essentially hostile to every form of domination of the world without exception, since it regards this as rivalry with God, as pseudo-creation whether magical, mythical or rational, and opposes itself also to culture, even to that which is recognized as essentially religious, seeking its own way to the world. It questions, in principle, all human control: even its own pronouncements, so far as these necessarily participate in culture, are immediately disqualified again by faith.<sup>1</sup>

We would say, more plainly, that myth and biblical faith are at radical odds with one another. The mythical-magical approach is to transform indeed the world into man's world, and man into the sovereign of that world. Biblical faith regards this attempt as in essence original sin, as man's effort to be his own god, knowing, or determining for himself, what constitutes good and evil (Gen. 3:5). Biblical faith begins with the acknowledgment of God as sovereign and continues with a life based on God's ultimacy, priority, and law as the condition of existence and its prosperity.

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1. Gerardus Van Der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 560.

The mythical-magical approach has sought many avenues of expression. Ancient myths, magical practice, secret and illuminist orders, and other such efforts have marked the history of this perspective. The mythical-magical method has often captured the instruments of Christianity, including the church, and God is then converted into a great and cosmic resource to be commanded by sovereign man. We then have, not only the {9} extremes of Pelagianism and Arianism, the power of positive thinking and possibility thinking, but prayer and works as means of compelling or commanding God. Historically, the mythical-magical method has permeated very diverse peoples, institutions, and religions. This should not surprise us: it is so expressive of original sin that it arises readily in every context.

The great and classical expression of the mythical-magical method is *politics*. In the political order, two major motives of man merge into one. *First*, there is the *religious motive*. Historically, the *sacred community* has been an important aspect of religion, and, very commonly, the state has been seen as the sacred and redeeming order. Man's hope of salvation is held to lie in and through the activities of the state. During history, far more commonly than the church, shrine, or temple, the state has been seen as the instrument and vehicle of man's salvation. Very often, the community, the state, the office, or the ruler have been declared divine. The old classical theory held that the voice of the people is the voice of God, *vox populi, vox dei*. Modern forms of this thesis include Rousseau's doctrine of the general will, belief in the democratic consensus, and the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The transition from the world of classical antiquity to the Middle Ages was a shift, but always a challenged one, from the state to the church as the redeeming agency and as the continuing incarnation of divinity in action. The modern world has witnessed the abandonment of the church for the state. In either case, of course, we must challenge and deny the concept of a redeeming institution, order, or society on biblical grounds.

*Second*, the state has not only served as man's religious institution, but it has also been *the vessel for his mythical-magical faith and method*. The clearest expression of this mythical-magical aspect is first of all, the increasing *reliance on statist fiat*. The word *fiat*, and the idea, are of critical importance. We meet with God's fiat in Genesis 1:3: "And God

said, Let there be light: and there was light.” The fiats of Genesis 1 are the creation of a universe out of nothing by the sovereign word of God. God’s fiats are possible, because God is omnipotent and sovereign, and nothing is impossible for God (Matt. 19:26). All things are totally and absolutely under His control and government, so that God’s fiats create out of nothing.

The fiats of the state are imitative of God. They seek to create out of nothing, and they are manifestations of sovereignty, or the claim of sovereignty. Because God’s fiats require an absolute power and control, the state aims at a like absolute power and control, so that, wherever the myth of politics prevails, totalitarianism is a logical necessity. The forms of the total state may vary, but they will in every instance be similar in their inherent philosophy and theology.

Also basic to the divine fiats is an *absence of laborious effort*. The creation of Genesis 1 is in each case an instantaneous act, not a process. {10} Each day of creation week manifests fiat power, not laborious work. The mythical-magical method thus sees the solutions to man’s problems as *power, not work*. If sufficient power is concentrated into statist agencies, then all human problems will be solved, or, at least, solvable. Some politicians, and at least one president, have fostered a vision of the end of all poverty, disease, ignorance, and even death, given enough statist power and control. This is mythological thinking in the extreme. It rests on the assumption that power, on the human scene, can be a substitute for, or can create, capital. However, unlike God’s power, human power is neither self-generative nor creative. In particular, political power does not produce capital but rather requires its consumption. As a result, as political power and political fiats increase, capital decreases. The more nearly totalitarian a state, the lower its capital and its working capacity. However, as long as men believe in the myth of politics rather than the God of Scripture, they will call for more power to the state, and will increase the state’s destructive impact on capital and labor. This belief in power, not work, is basic to the mythical-magical method. It is an aspect of the belief that, “As my will is, so must it be.”

*Third*, in the mythical-magical perspective, man’s basic capital is seen as *status, not productivity*, because status means power. The mythical-magical method has a radically different belief in the necessary

ingredients for progress, and its perspective is sharply at odds with the biblical view. In biblical faith, character and work are basic to capitalization. In the mythical-magical perspective, moral character and work are divisive and oppressive, and, as a climaxing evil, anti-equalitarian.

To illustrate: A rookie professional basketball player, a substitute spending most of his time on the bench, is paid \$104,000 a year. A professional entertainer pointed out to me recently earns, at a minimum, several times that. Well and good. Both men are meeting a public demand, and those who enjoy their services are paying for them. Basketball players and entertainers are popular and respected people in our culture.

This is not true of others. Small farmers by the thousands work hard, hopeful of earning \$15–30,000 a year, and not always succeeding. They are commonly damned, in our area, as exploiters of farm workers, despite the fact that California farm workers are the best paid in the world. Their relationship to workers has become politicized, and, as a result, they are now villains in this political drama. A capable businessman, if he earns \$25–75,000 yearly, or if an executive earns as much as the basketball player, is again seen as an exploiter by many, and his role in the new mythology is as that of a villain.

The reason for this inconsistency toward farmer and businessman as against athlete and entertainer is that *the mythical-magical method and faith are hostile to production and idolize status*. The world of politics {11} is the realm of status, power, and fiat, whereas work and productivity belong to another realm. The very persistent success of work and productivity as against political impediments stimulates hostility against these “exploiters.” They represent an alien faith and an alien culture, and they are, in their persons and activities, an indictment of the myth of politics.

*Fourth*, in our era, the idea of myth has gained highly sophisticated if erroneous attention. The myth is seen as *life-giving*, as basic to primeval and primitive aspects of man. Freudian and other views of the unconscious stress the role of the myth in the mind and unconscious being of man. Because the myth is traced back into the far recesses of the unconscious, it is held to be *basic* and *real* as well as *life-giving*. Such a view rests on an evolutionary premise that power comes from below, from the primordial and the ostensibly powerful; it is held to be life-

giving because life and power supposedly come from below. Logically, such a view leads, as it has done, to a revival of occultism. It also leads to the irrationalism of the myth of politics. The myth, however, instead of being *life-giving*, is always *death-dealing*. Myths are the destroyers, not the preservers, of man.

*Fifth*, philosophically, the ancient magical principle, “As my will is, so it must be,” has come into its own in modern philosophy, beginning with Descartes, and especially since Kant and Hegel. The world is now will and idea. Van Der Leeuw defined the mythical-magical method as one whereby “man transforms the world into *his* world, and himself into its sovereign.” Modern philosophy has done even more than transform the world into man’s world: it has reduced the world to man’s will and idea, as in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Hegel held that the rational is the real, and this is a basic premise of the myth of politics. The autonomous rational plans of man, whether of Marxists, Fabian Socialists, or democratic planners, are *real* and need only formulation and power to be transferred to the physical world and society. If this rational plan fails to work, according to the rationale of the myth of politics, it is because of evil men, counterrevolutionists, capitalists, foreign influences, alien peoples, speculators, or some like and ostensibly demonic obstruction.

Such mythical thinking means that, because the rational is the real, and because the planner is by definition the rational and the real man, the obstructing people are both irrational and somehow not the real people. The “real” people agree with the plan, because the plan is rational, and the rational is the real. The result, in the name of reason, is legislation against the free market, against free speech, against free men in essence, and finally the totally “rational” slave state and the triumph of myth and unreason in the name of reason.

In our present day, the myth of politics is the most dangerous of all man’s myths. Of all mankind’s many myths, none has been more destructive. {12}

# THE “BOAT PEOPLE”: SYMBOL OF U.S. FAILURE

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*Peter Berger*

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Week after week, the small boats come out of southern Vietnam. Their cargo of desperation is a cross-section of the people. Half are children. The adults are young and old, professionals and peasants, former supporters of the regime of President Nguyen Van Thieu and individuals whose politics are limited to the desire to escape from the steel blanket of totalitarianism spread over their country since “liberation.” One supposes that they must know the risks. They keep on coming still, in the thousands.

Nobody wants them. On the high seas, ships pass them by (in flagrant violation of international law). There is no telling how many have already perished at sea—by drowning, by hunger and thirst, or by illness.

If they reach the coasts of one of the neighboring countries, they risk being pushed out to sea again at gunpoint. Or they may be thrown into dismal camps, often after being robbed, beaten, or raped. Only then do they have a chance—a very slim chance—of being selected for immigration to one of the Western countries.

The United States has continued to take some of them, albeit grudgingly; hardly anyone else has. Of all the horror stories in today’s world, the story of the Vietnamese “boat people” is probably the most horrible.

These boats bear a message. It is a simple and ugly message: *Here is what happens to those who put their trust in the United States of America.*

Let there be no misunderstanding on this. This message does not necessarily lead to the judgment that the American war in Indochina

was a just war after all; I, for one, believe now as I believed then that it was not just. But that is quite beside the point. Rather, the point is we extricated ourselves from that war as callously as we waged it. This more recent callousness must weigh more on the conscious of those who opposed the war than of those who supported it.

All of this is terrible enough in itself. But it now appears that the abandonment of those who trust us is becoming a habit. *We are getting ready to do it again—this time in Taiwan.*

The logic of the abandonment of Taiwan is, once again, the logic of *Realpolitik*. The practitioners of this logic are the same types (and sometimes, indeed, the very same individuals) who got us into Indochina and out again.

Poring over the ivory chessboard of geopolitics, they have now concluded that Taiwan is expendable in some grand strategy of triangulation, in which they play off Peking against Moscow. {13}

Is this strategy plausible? Perhaps it is, or perhaps it is yet another delusion; by its very nature, this kind of logic is a game of chance. In any case, it has nothing to do with morality.

If there is one universal, indeed primeval, principle of morality, it is that one must not deliver one's friends to their enemies. And if there is one maxim in which morality coincides with politics, it is that a nation that breaks its solemn word twice will never be trusted again. But there are more specific moral considerations in the case of Taiwan.

It is an authoritarian regime, to be sure. Compared to mainland China, it is a Switzerland of civil liberties. Compared to other authoritarian regimes in noncommunist Asia, its record on human rights in recent years is not bad. Taiwan's record is even better in the area of social and economic rights that concerns those on the left: its prosperity has not been limited to a small upper crust, but has been distributed in what, for a third-world country, is a remarkably egalitarian manner. In abandoning South Vietnam we had the excuse of its fairly odious regime. There is no such excuse in Taiwan.

Those who would not abandon Taiwan range across the American political spectrum. There is, of course, the Carter Administration, with its splendid rhetoric on human rights (there has not been one word about China from the pulpit in the White House). There are the liberals, in Congress and elsewhere, whose passion for moral denunciations

concentrates on the most easily accessible targets—which are authoritarian allies rather than authoritarian adversaries. As for the conservatives, their righteous fervor at the moment is directed at Panama, that most terrifying challenger to American *machismo*.

Nor should it be forgotten that it was not Jimmy Carter who toasted Mao Tse-tung in the Great Hall of the People and who issued the Shanghai Communique in 1972.

Then there are the leftist intellectuals, those who still deny that there are concentration camps in Vietnam and those who admire the great humanistic experiment of Maoist China. And, finally, worthy of special mention, are the China experts who keep telling us that the patience of the Peking leadership is about to run out over Taiwan.

As has been clear time and again, these are people who do not even know who is in charge in Peking right now, let alone who will be in charge tomorrow, and whose authoritative pronouncements on Chinese events can be shown up by any reporter who hangs out in the right bars in Hong Kong.

The small boats are coming out of southern Vietnam today. Tomorrow they may come out of Taiwan. They will haunt the American conscience. They carry the shame of our betrayals. They may turn out to be the signals of our destruction. {14}



# ON RECONSTRUCTION AND THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

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*Tom Rose*

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If it can be said that Americans ever had a national dream, their dream can be summarized like this: America, as a republic, was established and dedicated to the proposition of protecting and enhancing man's individual freedom and self-responsibility before God, with the emphasis of civil government being local self-determination.

Note that *the idea of civil government is essentially theological in nature, because it presupposes a transcendent rule of law which serves as a norm for both the rulers and those who are ruled.* It is thus law which makes and establishes the civil authority, and not the reverse. But note in addition the two main points of civil government in America which make American civil government unique:

- (1) Man, as a free and self-responsible individual, stands *directly and personally* before God.
- (2) The nature and source of power of the civil authority are primarily *local and self-determined.* (That is, it is widely dispersed geographically and federal in character, as contrasted with a centralized unitary authority in which authority and power flow from the top down.)

It was with these objects in mind that the Articles of Confederation of 1777 (ratified in 1781) and the new Constitution of 1787 (ratified in 1789) were drafted and ratified by the individual states as separate and independent political entities. Anyone who does not understand these objects does not understand the Christian character of American civil government. The central government that was established by the Articles of Confederation and continued by the Constitution of 1787 was *not* established by the people acting directly either at the individual state level or as homogeneous mass throughout the original thirteen

states. Rather, our general government (the national government) was the product or offspring of the compacting parties, the states, which acted as sovereign political entities and who derived their political sovereignty from their citizens. In effect and in reality, the American national government is the *creature*, and the compacting states are its *creators*. It is extremely important that Americans keep this important fact of history always in mind. {15} That the above cited goals and structure of American civil government are solidly biblical only emphasizes the historical fact that the American Republic was indeed founded as a self-governing Christian nation.

The extent to which the whole federal structure of American civil government, from the local to the national level, was influenced by the Bible is little understood, and even less appreciated, in this day and age. But it is an undeniable fact that the early settlers at Jamestown and Plymouth (and especially at Plymouth) patterned their civil polity according to biblical precepts as comprehended and understood by the Protestant churches of the Reformation.

When Moses's father-in-law, Jethro, observed that Moses was spending too much time and energy handling petty disputes (Ex. 18:13), he admonished Moses:

Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves (Ex. 18:19–26).

Here we see a clear biblical pattern for a federal structure of government rather than a centralized one. It is obvious when we consider that the Israelites, even at this time, numbered from 1.5 to 2.5 million, that Moses could not have personally selected the rulers of thousands, fifties, and tens. Rather, he simply confirmed and formalized the *already-existing hierarchy* of the local leadership of tribes and clans that the people themselves had set up. In short, Moses's action simply endorsed formally the two governmental concepts of *local self-rule* and *federalization*. Here we also see the concept of higher law—that the civil authority is simply a *distributor* of God's law rather than a *source* of law in and of itself, for the local rulers were to be men “such as fear God.”

Our colonial forefathers were astute students of the Bible, for they used God's holy word as their guide and rule in establishing every aspect {16} of society; especially civil government, for they had suffered under the perversion of biblical teaching called “the divine right of kings.”

The concept of local self-government is solidly New Testament also, for Paul advised Titus to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5), and he advised Timothy that the elders who rule should be counted worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17).

The biblical flow-of-power concept that our colonial forefathers set up, in both their churches and their civil governments, is this: *power flows directly from God to the individual*, who in turn voluntarily compacts with other God-responsible individuals at the local level in establishing both church and civil polity. In the church authority is vested in a local body (the elders), who are *ordained of God but elected by the people*. Thus, self-government arises from following biblical precepts.

The concept of federalism is applied in a practical way when local churches voluntarily band together in mutual Christ-centered fellowship to establish higher courts: first, local churches establish presbyteries, then presbyteries group into synods, and synods combine to form general assemblies. While the higher church courts rule on matters referred to them, according to the Reformed understanding of biblical federalism the flow-of-power is *not* from God to the higher courts, to the local church elders, and then to the people. (This would be a form of centralism.) But, rather, the power at higher court levels is *delegated* from the local body of elders. Thus, the biblical flow of governmental

power is from God to individuals, to the locally elected board of elders (“men such as fear God”), who then seek a consensus of thinking from *other* men “such as fear God” at the higher courts they themselves established. Thus the higher courts hold only a *delegated* and *advisory* position. So, if the men in the higher courts err and stray from God’s Constitution (i.e., the Bible), then the local elders are free—nay, they are *bound* by their personal allegiance to God and by their governmental responsibility to the *local church members* who elected them—to continue true to God’s Constitution. God’s law is higher and must be followed, regardless of what men say.

If necessary to maintain the purity of church doctrine and practice, the local board of elders must even be willing to lead their local congregation out of the apostasy (anti-constitutionalism) they find at the higher-level courts: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). Note that such a leading out would not be a lawless rebellion, but the true lawful practice of biblical Christianity at a *governmental* level, for the action would not be taken by individuals acting in isolation, but by the *duly elected body of elders* who constitute the *local church’s lawfully constituted government*.

In civil law, this type of governmental action by an intermediate body is {17} known as *interposition*. This same governmental concept of lawful representatives interposing themselves between the people and a higher level of government which they consider in error is also applicable in civil government. It has implications that are especially important to Americans today, as we shall soon see.

This biblical flow-of-power concept, from God to the individual and thence to locally elected representatives, was recognized by all the churches that came out of the Reformation. Thomas Witherow, professor of church history in Londonderry, in his 1856 book entitled *The Apostolic Church*, wrote:

The first chapter of Acts supplies us with an instance of the assembled men and brethren appointing to office one who was both an apostle and a minister. The fourteenth chapter shows that the elders of the congregation were chosen by popular suffrage. The sixth chapter furnishes an example of the whole multitude of the disciples choosing seven men to be deacons. On these three facts, clear and irresistible, we found the principle of POPULAR ELECTION. The conclusion

that follows from this evidence, we find it absolutely impossible to evade, namely—that in the Apostolic Church the *office-bearers were chosen by the people*.<sup>2</sup>

The Act of the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland (held at Edinburgh, February 19, 1645) reads thus concerning the establishment of local church government:

As there were in the Jewish church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the church; so Christ, who hath instituted government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church, hath furnished some in his church, besides the ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the minister in government of the church. Which officers reformed churches commonly call Elders.<sup>3</sup>

The famous Westminster Confession of Faith, which was reported finished with full Scripture proofs of each separate point on April 29, 1647, specifically pointed out that higher church courts are subject to error:

All synods or councils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both (31.4).

But perhaps the Christian Reformed Church is most explicit in illuminating the fact that governmental power flows from Christ to the individual, to the local elders, and thence to the higher courts. Articles 26 and 27 of the Church Order state: {18}

The assemblies of the church are the consistory, the classis, and the synod. Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; *the authority of consistories being original, that of major assemblies being delegated* (6, italics added).

That the character of local self-rule and federalized structure of the Reformation churches greatly influenced American civil government cannot be denied.

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2. Issued by the Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1967, 38.

3. 571–72.

While it is true, under our *presently* existing state and general constitutions, that the flow of governmental power goes from the individual citizen to the state, and thence to local subdivisions and the national government, it is important for Americans to recognize the *original priority of local* government in our federalized structure. This fact is too often overlooked by historians and political scientists, who tend to present American government from a false unitary perspective (unitary government being the situation in which governmental power flows from the central government at the national level to the various subdivisions).

R. J. Rushdoony correctly emphasizes the *local* character of self-government in America:

The states ... had their independent existence as Christian republics prior to the Revolution. They retained their prerogative without diminution, sharing *none* of it with the federal government. They did, however, in varying degrees, share that prerogative with their constituent units, *the counties*. The counties, very often, adapted the law to their specific requirements. The reason for this was an obvious one: America represented a series of settlements by religious and ethnic groups, so that each area had and has its specific religious and ethnic orientation....America was *colonized* by various groups who congregated in sections of cities and specific rural areas *out of choice*. This fact reinforced the basic localism of the American civil structure.

The Revolution was actually a defensive war waged by the colonists against parliamentary troops.

To understand the significance of that invasion, it is necessary to recognize that the American civil structure was, almost from its inception, a *Protestant restoration of feudalism*. To the colonists, as to the barons who wrested the Magna Carta from King John, English liberty meant feudalism in essence, *localism as against centralism, contractual government as against absolutism*. Almost at once, the colonies gravitated to localism and contractualism....A large degree of *autonomy* was accorded each town in Massachusetts as early as the General Court of 1636 because of the steady insistence of local self-government. Local officers became locally elected....The thirteen colonies were free and independent States under their feudal lord, George III. They were not under parliament but had their own legislative bodies and their internally independent structures. The colonies had the right and power to issue their own money, a right which {19} parliament sought to

destroy....A state empowered to control and coin its own money is an independent state.<sup>4</sup>

Just how far America has strayed from our original Christian principle of a decentralized and self-governing republic can be seen in a recent incident: A state official of Oklahoma recently advised the people of Tulsa that the Environmental Protection Agency of the U.S. Government was not pleased with that city's failure to submit a suitable plan for air pollution control. And if a suitable plan was not submitted within a year, the official warned, the EPA would impose "sanctions" to bring the recalcitrant city into line. One threat made was to block the city's industrial development; another was to withdraw federal funds for highway and water construction projects.

Note the ironic switch: the political *creature* now has the temerity to dictate to its *creators*! Thus is the federal character of the American Republic destroyed in the same way that some apostate church denominations work to assume primary rather than *delegated* authority in their higher courts!

This switch—the shift in power from the local and state levels to the national level—is plainly evident in all fifty states and in innumerable communities. It has been made possible by the *unlimited taxing authority* which the states unwisely granted the national government via the 16th Amendment in 1913. It was further enhanced by ratification, in the same year, of the 17th Amendment, which changed the *election of senators* from by the various state legislatures to by the people directly. This Amendment radically altered the original structure of the American Republic and practically eliminated the influence of the states as independent political entities in the national Congress. And, finally, the shift in power has been further solidified by passage of the *Federal Reserve Act*, which created a central bank (the Federal Reserve System). This Act made it possible for the politicians and bureaucrats at the national level to engage in massive and continued deficit spending, thus insidiously transferring the control of privately created wealth from citizens into the hands of governmental rulers.

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4. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1965), 5–7.

That these three radical political changes took place in 1913 makes that fateful year one of the blackest in the history of our Republic. The 16th and 17th Amendments and the Federal Reserve Act combined (we can almost say colluded) in 1913 to practically assure the future growth of a highly centralized and absolutist civil power in what was once a Christian republic.

And with the passing of this almost unlimited taxing and money-creating {20} power into the hands of people at the central government, the American people have been subsequently conditioned financially to look to the national government as their Great Provider. They now turn to Washington for the meeting of all their material needs and to solve all their problems. In short, the American people have eschewed Jesus's instructions to pray to our heavenly Father for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11), and they have allowed the national government to become their god. In fleeing self-responsibility, they have set up the national State as their secular god. As a people Americans have become idolatrous! When the Old Testament Israelites turned idolatrous, judgment was never long in coming. Can we likewise hope to escape God's retributive judgment?

The burning question which now faces concerned Americans, especially *Christian* Americans, is this: What can be done about the disturbing unbiblical growth of absolutist and tyrannical civil government in America? What can be done to reclaim the original American Christian dream of individual freedom and self-responsibility before God, which is the underlying principle upon which our American Republic was founded?

Faithful preaching of the saving gospel of Christ is, of course, part of the answer. But it is not the whole answer, for it is only too evident that many truly born-again Christians blindly and ignorantly support the aggressive growth of humanistic civil government that we have been witnessing during this century. And why do they lend such support? Because they fail to see at least two things:

- (1) the anti-Christian, pro-humanist thrust which underlies the present trend toward absolutist unitary government in its aggressive attempts to manipulate and control citizens with the goal of ushering in an earthly utopia, and



(2) the fact that the civil authority, as well as individuals, can and does break God's immutable commandments, "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not covet."

The English Puritan, William Perkins (1558–1602), was well aware of this second point when he wrote:

If it should fall out that men's laws be made of things evil, and forbidden by God, then there is no bond of conscience at all; but contrariwise men are bound in conscience not to obey.

The two failures cited above focus on both a great lack and a great challenge which devolve on the organized church and on those charged with its pastoral care. Not only is there a need to *preach* salvation by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, but to carefully and systematically *edify* the saints *in the practical outworking of such faith in every aspect of life and culture, including the institution of civil government.*

America needs in the worst way stalwart preachers and expounders of the faith who will carefully and systematically instruct the people in the {21} biblical principles of civil government and who will fearlessly oppose as *anti-biblical* the current growth of despotic and tyrannical civil government at *any* level, but especially at the *national* level, where it is now concentrating into a Babel-like power. As colonial America was prepared and conditioned for freedom over 200 years ago by faithful and courageous Christian preachers who carefully and systematically related the gospel of Christ to civil liberty, so a similar challenge and opportunity now face church pastors today. Will they rise to the challenge? The high and holy calling of showing men the way of eternal salvation must, if it is to be a practical theology, include the logical outworking of that faith and salvation in society. And an essential part of such biblical instruction should be devoted to *bringing the institution of civil government into conformity with God's holy law.* Louis Berkhof wrote:

The civil law is simply the application of the moral law to the social and civil life of the people in all its ramifications.<sup>5</sup>

Our founding fathers clearly saw the inescapable relationship between biblical theology and civil government. They would have been

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5. *Systematic Theology*, 298.

shocked to see our modern trend of secularizing the state. In his Farewell Address George Washington advised his fellow countrymen:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert the great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigations in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge in the supposition that morality be maintained without religion. Whatever be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.<sup>6</sup>

A grassroots rebellion against the federal income tax is now sweeping across America. Are the rebels subversive rebels, or are they as yet unrecognized patriots? Regardless of how one answers, the people in tax rebellion are reacting against the blatant immorality of a government which has long been engaging in the sins of coveting another's property and indulging in massive legal theft by taxing and redistributing citizens' hard-earned wealth via statist-controlled handouts and subsidy programs.

Tax rebellion by individuals may perhaps prove to be the most direct and effective manner of denying an aggressively totalitarian State the funds {22} which supply its very life blood. But there is a clear biblical principle which Americans have not yet used to restore the American Republic. This biblical principle is the aforementioned principle of *interposition* or *nullification*—the very practical step of having an intermediate level of government *interpose* itself between an oppressing ruler and the oppressed people.

Perhaps the clearest application of this biblical principle is found in 1 Kings 12:1–24, where the elders of Israel appealed on behalf of the people to King Rehoboam to reduce the burdensome taxes his father Solomon had imposed on the populace. When he unwisely refused, the

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6. Farewell Address, September 17, 1796.

cry of the elders was, “To your tents, O Israel!” Their interposition and the negative response of the king to rule in accordance to God’s higher law led to a God-ordained tax rebellion, that is, a *legal* rebellion.

The principle of governmental interposition is inherent in the biblical principle of local self-government. It is a feudal (contractual) principle. This same principle of interposition was used by the colonial legislatures in America to seek redress from King George III of England. When the legal interposition of the colonial legislatures failed, the colonies declared their independence: “To your tents, O Americans!” Thus the American Revolution was a *legal* and an *orderly* resistance against tyranny.

The sentiment, “Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God!” is certainly biblical. It is clearly taught in 1 Kings 12:1–24, and this biblical principle speaks clearly to Christians today who are concerned about the growth of an anti-Christian absolutist State in Washington, D.C.

Is there not in these States United of America [*sic*] even one State Assembly, not even one board of county commissioners, not even one city council who will interpose themselves, as did the elders of ancient Israel with Rehoboam, between the growing tyranny of our national government and the long-suffering, overtaxed American people? This route of governmental interposition should still be tried before Americans individually “go to their tents” in tax rebellion.

Now, the principle of governmental interposition, in addition to being *scriptural*, is also decidedly *constitutional*. It is inherent in the very concept of local self-determination, a solid American governmental principle.

American history is rich with practical applications of governmental interposition. It was first invoked, since we became an independent republic, in 1798 by Kentucky and Virginia (the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions) to oppose the Alien and Sedition Laws that were passed by Congress that year. It was also used by the Hartford Convention during the War of 1812, and with success by South Carolina in 1832 to oppose a higher tariff law that Congress had imposed. Massachusetts and some other New England States applied the principle in the 1850s to negate the more stringent Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. And it was only the breakdown {23} of the biblical principle of governmental

interposition which produced the tragedy of the Civil War in 1861. And since that time the way toward the growth of a highly centralized, absolutist State in America has been all too evident.

Let us look more closely at the rich heritage of governmental interposition provided by American history and what happened when this important governmental principle finally failed to be applied.

### *(1) The Declaration of Independence (1776):*

The American Revolution, as I stated above, was *not* a lawless rebellion against authority, as some historians claim. Rather, it was a *legal interposition* of one lawfully elected level of government (the colonial legislatures) against a king who insisted in obdurately breaking his feudal contract with the colonies.

Even a cursory reading of the Declaration of Independence shows twenty-seven specific points which the colonies claimed King George III broke in his feudal contract with them, thus negating his right of rule. Just before listing these specific points, the Declaration states:

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.

### *(2) The Constitutional Power of Impeachment (1787):*

The giving to the House of Representatives the sole power of impeachment, as the duly elected representatives of the people, is a constitutional application of the biblical principle of government interposition. (See Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution of the United States of America.)

### *(3) The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions (1798):*

When the national Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, many loyal Americans felt that Congress had overstepped the powers that the States had so very carefully delegated to Congress in the Constitution of 1787. The State Legislatures of Kentucky and Virginia carefully deliberated the issue and passed what are known as the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions:

(a) On November 10, 1798, the Kentucky Legislature declared:

Resolved, that the several States composing the United States of America, are not united on the principles of unlimited submission to their General Government; but that by compact under the style and title of a Constitution for the United States and amendments thereto, they constituted a General Government for special purposes, delegated to that Government certain definite powers, reserving each State to itself, the residuary mass of right to their own self-Government; and that wheresoever the General Government assumes undelegated powers, {24} its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force: That to this compact each State acceded as a State, and is an integral party, its co-States forming as to itself, the other party: That the Government created by this compact was not made the exclusive or final judge of the extent of the powers delegated to itself; since that would have made its discretion, and not the Constitution, the measure of its powers; but that as in all other cases of compact among parties having no common Judge, each party has an equal right to judge for itself, as well of infractions as of the mode and measure of redress.

(b) And on December 21, 1798, the Virginia Assembly passed a similar resolution (and later clarified and reemphasized it in a subsequent resolution passed on January 7, 1800). In the December 21 resolution the Virginia Assembly declared:

... and that in the case of a deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of other powers, not granted by the said compact, the States who are parties thereto, have the right, and are in duty bound, to *interpose* for arresting the progress of evil, and for maintaining within their respective limits, the authorities, rights and liberties appertaining to them (*italics added*).

In short, what the States of Kentucky and Virginia did was to interpose themselves as political entities between the general government and their respective citizens to protect them against what the legislatures regarded as an unconstitutional arrogation of power. This was the first example of governmental interposition since the new Constitution of 1787 was ratified by the states. Kentucky and Virginia both declared the Alien and Sedition Acts as unconstitutional and, therefore, null and void in their states. The legal interposition of one governmental level between a higher level of government and the people can thus lead to *nullification* of an act of tyranny, which is defined as the application of unlawful force or the unlawful application of lawful force. In a self-governing republic like these United States of America, tyranny is equiva-

lent to the arrogation of unconstitutional powers by the ruling authorities at any level of government.

In *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos: A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*, which first appeared under the pseudonym of Stephanous Junius Brutus in 1579, a tyrant is defined thus:

We have shewed that he is a king who lawfully governs a kingdom, either derived to him by succession, or committed to him by election. It follows, therefore, that he is a reputed tyrant, which, either gains a kingdom by violence of indirect means, or, being invested therewith by lawful election or succession, governs it not according to law and equity, or neglects those contracts and agreements, to the observation of which he was strictly obliged at his reception. All of which may well occur in one and the same person. The first is called a tyrant without title: the second a tyrant by practice.<sup>7</sup> {25}

The writer of *Vindiciae* gave advice that modern-day Americans might well heed. He warned that “a tyrant the more he is tolerated, the more he becomes intolerable,” and that “tyranny may be properly resembled to a fever hectic, the which at first is easy to be cured, but with much difficulty to be known; but after it is sufficiently known, it becomes incurable. Therefore small beginnings are to be carefully observed, and by those whom it concerns diligently prevented” (196).

#### (4) *The Hartford Convention (1814–15):*

Early in 1814 many local governments (towns) in Massachusetts presented memorials to the state legislature setting forth the dangers that the War of 1812 exposed them to. They suggested the appointment of delegates to meet with delegates of other states for the purpose of developing a united effort to protect the mutual interests of the New England states. Accordingly, delegates from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont, representing local conventions in their respective states, met at Hartford, Connecticut, from December 15, 1814, to January 5, 1815.

The Hartford Convention resolved:

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7. *Vindiciae*, part 3 (London: Bell & Sons Ltd., 1924), 181–82. Reprinted by Peter Smith, Gloucester, MA, 1963.

That it be and hereby is recommended to the legislatures of the several states represented in this Convention, to adopt all such measures as may be necessary effectually to protect the citizens of said states from the operation and effects of all acts which have been or may be passed by the Congress of the United States, which shall contain provisions, subjecting the militia or other citizens to forcible drafts, conscriptions, or impressments, not authorized by the constitution of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

The legislatures of Massachusetts and Connecticut sent commissioners to Washington to urge submission of amendments to the Constitution, but the war had ended before they arrived, and the whole matter was ignored. But the Hartford Convention is important in at least two respects:

First, it shows the principle of governmental interposition applied at both the *local* and the *state* levels.

Second, it shows that the northeast (as well as the southern and western) states accepted the legality and the constitutionality of a governmental concept that was forcefully wrenched from American civil polity in the Civil War.

We see here, and will see below, that the principle of *interposition* or *nullification* was widely accepted by all sections of these United States up to the Civil War. In the era of statist centralism which has resulted from the forceful overthrow of this biblical and legal principle, the concept has {26} come to be considered only a quaint historical oddity. But, the question is *not* whether the Civil War has once-for-all forcefully buried the concept; rather, the question is: *Is the principle of governmental interposition biblical?* And if the answer is yes, as I believe it is, *then the principle holds for all times and all places*, and Christians should recognize its validity.

### (5) *The Protest of South Carolina and Georgia (1828):*

When the U.S. Congress passed a high tariff in 1828, known as the “tariff of abominations,” to protect New England from foreign competition, Governor Taylor of South Carolina denounced the tariff and urged the legislature to declare it unconstitutional and to provide

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8. William MacDonald, ed., *Select Documents Illustrative of the History of the United States, 1776–1861* (London: Macmillan Co., 1901), 205.

for testing its validity in the courts. The Protest of South Carolina declared:

The Senate and House of Representatives of South Carolina, now met and sitting in General Assembly ... in the name and on behalf of the good people of the said Commonwealth, solemnly protest against the system of protecting duties, lately adopted by the Federal Government, for the following reasons:

...6) Because, whilst the power to protect manufactures is no where expressly granted Congress, nor can be considered as necessary and proper to carry into effect any specified power, it seems to be expressly reserved to the States, by the tenth section of the first article of the constitution.

7) Because, even admitting Congress to have a constitutional right to protect manufactures, by the imposition of duties, or by regulations of commerce, designed principally for that purpose, yet a tariff, of which the operation is grossly unequal and oppressive, is such an abuse of power, as is incompatible with the principles of a free government, and the great ends of civil society, justice, and equality of rights and protection....

Deeply impressed with these considerations, the Representatives of the good people of this Commonwealth ... claim to enter upon the journals of the Senate, their protest against it, as unconstitutional, oppressive, and unjust.<sup>9</sup>

Note here an interesting fact: this interposition was specifically for entry “upon the journals of the Senate.” Until the 17th Amendment radically changed the national/state federal structure, the States were *formally* represented in the U.S. Senate as independent political entities. That is, the senators did *not* represent the people, but the States. The direct election of senators since 1913 has worked to destroy this important principle of formal State representation in Congress, thereby seriously *weakening* the carefully devised federal structure of the Union of States. Before 1913 it was common for the various state legislatures to *petition* U.S. Representatives (who represent the *people* of the States) to cast {27} their vote in such and such a way, while they commonly *instructed* U.S. Senators (whom the state legislatures appointed to represent the States) how to vote. The direct election of senators has thus weakened the federal structure of our Constitution and has intensified

9. *Ibid.*, 231–34.



and speeded up the tendency of governmental power to be centralized in America.

The Legislature of Georgia, in its opposition to the “tariff of abominations,” focused on the fact that the national government is a *creature of the various sovereign States* and that it is a government of only *expressly delegated and limited powers*:

The committee to whom was referred the resolutions from the States of South Carolina and Ohio have had the same under consideration....

They [i.e., the Georgia committee] entertain no doubt but that the Constitution of the United States is a federal compact, formed and adopted by the States as sovereign and independent communities.

The Convention which formed and adopted the Constitution was composed of members elected and delegated by, and deriving immediate power and authority from, the Legislatures of their respective States. Its ratification depended upon the Legislatures of the States—each reserving the right of assent or dissent, without regard to population....

In the Constitution of 1787, the powers delegated are clearly defined and particularly enumerated. The amendment to the Constitution is more explicit. It declares that the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the People....

The States, in forming the Constitution, treated with each other as sovereign and independent Governments, expressly acknowledging their rights of sovereignty; and inasmuch as they divested themselves of those rights only which were expressly delegated, it follows, as a legitimate consequence, that they are still sovereign and independent as to all the powers not granted.

The States respectively, therefore, have, in the opinion of your committee, the unquestionable right, in case of any infraction of the general compact, or want of good faith in the performance of its obligations, to complain, remonstrate, and even to refuse obedience to any measure of the General Government manifestly against, and in violation of, the Constitution; and in short, to seek redress of their wrongs by all the means rightfully exercised by a sovereign and independent Government. Otherwise, the Constitution might be violated with impunity and without redress, as often as the majority might think proper to transcend their powers, and the party injured bound to yield a submissive obedience to the measure, however unconstitutional. This would tend to annihilate all the sovereignty and indepen-

dence of the States, and to consolidate *all power* in the General Government, which never was designed nor intended by the framers of the Constitution....{28}

For the same reason, Congress have not the right to appropriate the moneys of the United States for the improvement or benefit of a particular section of the country, in which all the States would not have a common interest and equal benefit.<sup>10</sup>

This lucid statement of the federal character of the Union and the sovereignty of the States as compacting parties, as well as what is proper when the creature (the U.S. Government) oversteps the bounds of its creation, should be carefully studied by Americans today.

### ***(6) South Carolina's Ordinance of Nullification (1832):***

The national Congress passed another tariff law on July 14, 1832, which slightly reduced the tariff and which removed some other objectionable features of the 1828 tariff, but it did *not* show any indication of abandoning the protective policy being followed by the general government. Accordingly, the South Carolina Legislature called a special convention, which passed its famous Act of Nullification on November 24, 1832:

Whereas the Congress of the United States, by various acts, purporting to be acts laying duties and imposts on foreign imports, but in reality intended for the protection of domestic manufactures, and the giving of bounties to classes and individuals engaged in particular employments, at the expense and to the injury and oppression of other classes and individuals, and by wholly exempting from taxation certain foreign commodities, such as are not produced or manufactured in the United States, to afford a pretext for imposing higher and excessive duties on articles similar to those intended to be protected, hath exceeded its just powers under the Constitution, which confers on it no authority to afford such protection, and hath violated the true meaning and intent of the Constitution....

We, therefore, the people of the State of South Carolina in Convention assembled, do declare and ordain, and it is hereby declared and ordained, that the several acts and parts of acts of the Congress of the United States, purporting to be laws for the imposing of duties and imposts ... are unauthorized by the Constitution of the United States,

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10. *Ibid.*, 234–36.

and violate the true meaning and intent thereof, and are null, void, and no law, nor binding upon this State, its officers or citizens....

And we, the people of South Carolina, to the end that it may be fully understood by the Government of the United States, and the people of the co-States, that we are determined to maintain this, our ordinance and declaration, at every hazard, do further declare that we will not submit to the application of force, on the part of the Federal Government, to reduce this State to obedience....<sup>11</sup>

This Act is instructive because (1) it shows the high degree of constitutional awareness that used to exist in America (an example which modern-day Americans might well emulate), and (2) the practice of {29} governmental interposition in this instance culminated in a direct action by a specifically established representative body, a convention of the people themselves. The duly elected legislature, instead of acting on behalf of the people as they might have done (except that the recently held State election hinged on the promise of calling a special convention), turned the problem back to the people for their *direct* participation and handling. In church polity this would be akin to the elected body of church elders turning an especially critical issue back to the congregation for a direct vote.

Now, President Andrew Jackson did *not* agree with the action taken by the people of South Carolina. So he issued a *counter*-proclamation on December 10, 1832. In it he admitted that there is an “indefeasible right of resisting acts which are plainly unconstitutional, and too oppressive to be endured ... ;” and that “it is true ... that to justify this abrogation of law, it must be palpably contrary to the Constitution.”<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Jackson *agreed with the principle* of governmental interposition, while he *disagreed with the specific manner* in which the courageous people of South Carolina *applied* it.

Both Jackson and the Governor of South Carolina had prepared for military action, which appeared imminent, but the national Congress reconsidered and narrowly passed a compromise tariff bill which promised to reduce the protective tariff over a period of years.

South Carolina’s clear intent was to secede from the Union if the national Congress insisted on pursuing its sectional protective tariff

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11. *Ibid.*, 268–71.

12. *Ibid.*, 274–75.

policy. Thus, South Carolina's 1832 Act of Nullification must be regarded as an example of successfully applying the principle of governmental interposition. The action of interposition, as serious as it is admitted to be, provides a "safety valve" for redressing wrongs and for preventing the still more drastic action of secession, which is the ultimate alternative open to an abused people who claim the right of self-determination. Failure to apply the principle of interposition successfully a generation later *did* convulse our nation of "free and independent States" in the most tragic war of American history.

### (7) *South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession (1860):*

When radical abolitionists in the North were successful in electing a minority president (Lincoln), the South Carolina Legislature called for a state convention of the people. The convention met and unanimously adopted the following ordinance:

We, the people of the State of South Carolina in convention assembled, do declare and ordain, and it is hereby declared and ordained, that the ordinance adopted by us in convention on the twenty-third day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty eight, {30} whereby the Constitution of the United States of America was ratified, and also all acts and parts of acts of the general assembly of this State ratifying amendments of the said Constitution, are hereby repealed; and that the union now subsisting between South Carolina and the other States, under the name of the "United States of America," is hereby dissolved.<sup>13</sup>

This Ordinance of Secession resulted from the *failure* of successfully applying the principle of governmental interposition. Clearly South Carolina expected that the other states would recognize and respect her right to withdraw from a Union of which she had been a voluntarily compacting party, but such was not to be the case. When President Lincoln embarked on a number of unconstitutional steps in an attempt to preserve the Union by force, he evoked a number of *additional* acts of governmental interposition which have all but been lost to history. Some of these acts were taken by *individual office holders*, some by *states*, and some even by *counties*.

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13. *Ibid.*, 442.

### **(8) Governmental Interposition by Individual Office Holders:**

Article 4, Section 4 of the U.S. Constitution guarantees that the general government will protect each State from domestic violence *upon application of the state legislature* or upon application of the governor when the legislature can not be convened. Without such formal application, no federal troops were ever allowed to be sent into a state, for to do so without a specific invitation would constitute an aggressive military action—the military invasion of an independent and sovereign state. Thus, when President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to invade South Carolina and the other states which had followed her lead, the reaction of some state governors whose states had not seceded was swift and firm. The following replies are examples of what John Calvin termed appropriate action by magistrates to protect the people from tyrannical acts:

Governor Magoffin of Kentucky replied:

Your dispatch is received. In answer, I say emphatically, Kentucky will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern States.

Governor Harris of Tennessee replied:

Tennessee will not furnish a single man for coercion, but fifty thousand, if necessary, for the defense of our rights, or those of our Southern brothers.

Governor Jackson of Missouri replied:

Requisition is illegal, unconstitutional, revolutionary, inhuman, diabolical, and can not be complied with. {31}

Governor Ellis of North Carolina replied:

Your dispatch is received, and, if genuine—which its extraordinary character leads me to doubt—I have to say, in reply, that I regard the levy of troops made by the Administration, for the purpose of subjugating the States of the South, as in violation of the Constitution, and a usurpation of power. I can be no party to this wicked violation of the laws of the country, and to this war upon the liberties of a free people. You can get no troops from North Carolina.<sup>14</sup>

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14. All quotes from Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, vol. 1 (pub. Thos. Yoseloff, reprint, 1958; orig. pub. 1881), 412–13.

Lincoln's unconstitutional action to raise an army and the sending of troops across a state line to reinforce Fort Sumter stopped short efforts by the state of Virginia to mediate between the general government and the seceded States. Virginia leaders were of the opinion that the seceded States would have voluntarily re-entered the Union after a time if left alone.

As both the North and the South prepared for impending military conflict—forcible invasion by the North, and an equally forcible attempt to repel invasion by the South—other incidents of governmental inter-position, not generally known today, occurred:

### *(9) Interposition by Counties:*

(a) The western counties of Virginia refused to follow the state in secession, thus establishing a new state, West Virginia.

(b) The County of Winston, Alabama, which was 98 percent white, Scot-Irish, refused to go with the South, but it did not join the North either. It remained independent. No legal steps were actually taken, and Alabama did not send troops to invade the County.

### *(10) Interposition by a State and a County:*

The border State of Missouri was divided in sympathy. She, like her sister border State of Kentucky, sought to remain neutral in the impending war. Both states offered guarantees of peace and order within their respective territories if left free to control their own affairs as sovereign political States. But since neither state agreed to supply troops for invading the South, they came under suspicion and were subsequently invaded by Union troops.

In the spring of 1861, Union troops suddenly appeared and surrounded a peaceful encampment of Missouri State Guard at Camp Jackson near St. Louis. Captain Nathaniel Lyon was in command of the Union troops in the absence of General W. S. Harney. Sadly, after the Missouri State Guard handed over their arms, the Union troops opened fire, killing some {32} of the State militia and also killing ten and wounding twenty women and children who were bystanders. Upon his return to the Union command, General Harney negotiated a treaty with General Sterling Price of the Missouri State Guard (who

was known up to that time as a pro-Union man). The treaty, signed on May 21, 1861, guaranteed the territorial integrity of Missouri as a neutral State. In part, the treaty read:

General Price, having by commission full authority over the militia of the State of Missouri, undertakes with the sanction of the Governor of the State, already declared, to direct the whole power of the State officers to maintaining order within the State among the people thereof. General Harney declares that, this object being assured, he can have no occasion, as he has no wish, to make military movements that might otherwise create excitement and jealousy, which he most earnestly desires to avoid.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, the military invasion of Missouri did not stop, so General Price led the poorly equipped Missouri State Guard in a series of desperate (and successful) efforts to eject the invaders from the state. But though the Guard, through superior leadership and dedication of the poorly equipped men, won every battle, the sheer number of 70,000 invading Union troops forced General Price to lead his men, who never numbered more than 3,500, out of the state southward, where they joined the Confederate troops.

This unsuccessful military interposition by State officers still leaves an interesting story to be told about Missouri at the *county* level.

Callaway County, a farming community in mid-Missouri just north of the Missouri River, was strongly Southern in sympathy. Its citizens took action at the county level when Callaway was invaded by Union troops. The first military skirmish took place on the morning of July 17, 1861, when some 200 Callaway County citizens fired upon and turned back several hundred Union troops who attempted to enter the County from the direction of Jefferson City, which by now was under Union control.

In October 1861, another body of Union troops approached the eastern border of Callaway County. Colonel Jefferson F. Jones quickly moved to oppose the Union troops, who were headed by General John B. Henderson. Here is what happened:

Colonel Jones then moved his troops east and within a few miles of the Montgomery line. General Henderson had meanwhile halted his command a few miles east of the line. Each army could plainly see the

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15. *Ibid.*, 417.

smoke from the campfires of the other. After a few days of negotiation between Colonel Jones and General Henderson, a treaty was made and signed, the terms of which were that General Henderson, purporting to speak for the United States of America, agreed not to invade Callaway County, and Colonel Jones, acting for Callaway County, {33} agreed not to invade the United States of America. After this treaty, General Henderson retired with his troops. Callaway County, having thus dealt as an absolute equal with a sovereign power, became known as the Kingdom of Callaway, a designation which it has proudly borne and doubtless will for all time to come. The treaty between the United States and Callaway County was signed on October 27, which naturally is a national holiday in the Kingdom of Callaway.<sup>16</sup>

The Callaway County incident may seem like a very unimportant event in the grander sweep of events in the tragedy called the Civil War, but the *principle* involved is extremely important: the principle of local self-determination and, therefore, the concomitant principle of governmental interposition. These two principles are extremely important to the liberty of a freedom-loving people.

John Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 4, admonishes us that wicked rulers are a judgment of God upon a people (par. 25), and that obedience to bad rulers is required in Scripture (par. 26), and that it isn't the role of *individual* citizens to vindicate right, but that it is God's role to do so (par. 29). But Calvin just as clearly points out (in pars. 30 and 31) that *constitutional* magistrates ought *indeed* check the tyranny of rulers:

Here are revealed his [God's] goodness, his power, and his providence. For sometimes he raises up open avengers from among his servants, and arms them with his command to punish the wicked government and deliver his people, oppressed in unjust ways, from miserable calamity (par. 30).

For if there are now any magistrates of the people, appointed to restrain the willfulness of kings (as in ancient times the ephors were set against the Spartan Kings, or the tribunes of the people against the Roman consuls, or the demarchs against the senate of the Athenians; and perhaps, as things now are, such power as the three estates exercise in every realm when they hold their chief assemblies), I am so far from forbidding them to withstand, in accordance with their duty, the

16. Hugh Williams, *The Kingdom of Callaway*, 33.



fierce licentiousness of kings, that, if they wink at kings who violently fall upon and assault the lowly common folk, I declare that their dissimulation involves nefarious perfidy, because they dishonestly betray the freedom of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by God's ordinance.<sup>17</sup>

There is no doubt that Calvin saw the principle of governmental interposition as solidly biblical. The principle is, if anything, even more applicable in modern America than in Calvin's age, for the system of American constitutional government is certainly feudal (i.e., contractual). Thus, any deviation of the ruling authorities from their governing contractual {34} agreement with the people (the state and U.S. Constitutions) amounts to a breach of contract, thus obligating the intermediate "magistrates of the people" to rise to the people's defense, lest they be guilty of "nefarious perfidy" and responsible for betraying the freedom of the citizens they are to protect.

This brings us to a final point concerning Calvin, his feeling about when men should obey or disobey civil government, and how it relates to our present situation in America.

While it is true that Calvin taught a high degree of submission to rulers, even tyrannical rulers, there is one situation in which he felt that even *individual* rebellion is justified. This is where the civil government attacks God. Calvin's attitude is that the *individual* citizen (but *not* the intermediate magistrate who is properly a protector of the citizens' freedom) can well sacrifice his own honor by submitting to tyrants. (Note, this is *his* attitude, not necessarily the *biblical* attitude.) But when civil governments attack *God*, everything changes. Thus, when King Darius issued a decree forbidding anyone from praying to any god for thirty days, except to him, and Daniel disobeyed by continuing his usual daily practice of prayer, Calvin writes in his *Commentary on Daniel*:

For earthly princes lay aside their power when they rise up against God, and are unworthy to be reckoned among the number of mankind. We ought, rather, utterly to defy them (*conspuere in ipsorum capita*—i.e., literally, "to spit on their heads") than to obey them.<sup>18</sup>

17. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1518–19.

18. Lecture 30, on Daniel 6:22.

How does Calvin's advice apply to Christian Americans today? In this way: Our once Christian-based civil government has become idolatrous by arrogating to itself the God-like power of permeating every aspect and sphere of citizens' lives. But *only God* has the right to rule over every sphere of the people's lives!

Our once carefully limited and restricted civil government now claims the unbiblical right of "playing God" by invading our homes, our schools, our churches, and our business, financial, and personal lives. *It has become a secular god to whom all must bow.* No sphere, not even one small niche, is sacred any more from the strong hand of civil government as the humanistic state attempts to care for people from the cradle to the grave. Truly the humanistic state has thus become a false god just as Nebuchadnezzar did when he built his golden image and ordered everyone to worship it.

Is it not time for God-loving Christians, perhaps even as individuals, to start defying this secular idol we call the State when it arrogates to itself God-like powers? How many Christians today have been guilty of encouraging, instead of resisting, the growth of an anti-biblical humanistic State? But the point of this essay is not to encourage Christians {35} to individual resistance, but to emphasize the clear-cut *biblical* principle of *governmental interposition* by intermediate magistrates and levels of government.

Today the biblical principle of governmental interposition, its firm constitutional basis, and its rich historical application in America to offset the growth of tyrannical power has been all but forgotten. Sadly, many years of tax-supported statist education have subverted our Christian foundations and have conditioned Americans to acquiesce meekly in accepting a decidedly unbiblical view of civil government and its rightful sphere of activity. This principle of interposition may well be the very answer Christians need to reconstruct the American Republic constitutionally and to help rebuild the spiritual foundation for a Christian America.

# THE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION OF AMERICAN POLITICS

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*A. A. Hodge*

From *The Princeton Review* 3, no. 1 (1887).

This is a Christian country, in the sense that Christianity is an original and essential element of the law of the land.

*First.*—This easily demonstrated position does not, even the most remotely, tend to invalidate our cherished American principle of the absolute separation of church and state. Christianity is a supernatural revelation of God, recorded in the Bible. It is not an ecclesiastic organization, nor essentially dependent upon one. Churches and church officers of every kind are never lords over the consciences of men, neither have they any authority within the sphere of the state, but they are simple agencies used by God at His discretion for the dissemination of the Gospel among men. The state and the church are both divine institutions, having different ends, spheres, laws, methods, and agents, and the officers and the laws of neither have any jurisdiction within the sphere of the other. They are, nevertheless, both equally divine institutions, and the members and officers of each are alike subject to God, and bound to obey every word He directs to either one of them in their appropriate sphere. It is Christianity or God's revelation to men in the Scriptures, and not any external society or agency, which is declared to be an essential element of the law of this land.

*Second.*—By this assertion is not meant that the state is directly or indirectly committed to any ecclesiastical creeds or confessions, or to any interpretation of the contents of Scripture as to matters of either faith or practice, presented by the church or her representative. The state must interpret the lessons of Scripture for herself, as far as these bear upon her peculiar duties, just as the church must interpret them for herself and within her own sphere. The Christianity affirmed to be an essential element of the law of this land is not the Christianity of any

one class of the Christian population, but the Christianity which is inherited and held in common by all classes of our Christian people.

This principle is expressed very plainly in a decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in the year 1824: {37}

Christianity, general Christianity, is, and always has been, a part of the common law of Pennsylvania; not Christianity founded on particular religious tenets; not Christianity with an established church, and tithes, and spiritual courts; but Christianity with liberty of conscience to all men.<sup>19</sup>

Chief Justice Kent, in a decision of the Supreme Court of New York, in 1811, says:

Christianity, in its enlarged sense, as a religion revealed and taught in the Bible, is not unknown to our law.

*Third.*—Nor, in the third place, does this affirmation that essential Christianity is an element of the law of our land mean that the civil government is bound either directly or indirectly to provide for the preaching of the Gospel, or for the doing anything else in that interest which falls within the sphere of the church. Whatsoever belongs to the church for that very reason does not belong to the state. But it simply means that Christianity, as a revelation, binds all Christian men to obedience in every relation and department of duty upon which that revelation reflects the will of God. The state should obey God in carrying out within its own sphere the will of God, however made known. God has revealed to all men much of His will, through the natural law written upon the heart. No respectable publicist pretends that this natural revelation of God's will shall be discarded by the state, or that the civil law must ignore moral distinctions because a class of our free citizens repudiate them. And God has also been pleased to make, through the Christian Scriptures, a special supernatural revelation of His will to all men, touching several matters which necessarily fall within the sphere of the civil law. These are such as the observance of a day of rest from the business of the world, the oath, the right of property, capital punishment for murder, marriage and divorce. Hence also, when the state, for her own defense, assumes the function of providing for the education of the rising generation of the whole people, the Christian charac-

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19. Sergeant and Rowles' Reports, 394.

ter of the state requires that, as far as she teaches those branches of knowledge of which Christian theism is an inseparable element, as, e.g., history, ethics, philosophy, science, she should include that element in her teaching also.

The evidence of this proposition thus limited and explained is three-fold:<sup>20</sup> (1) The *a priori* necessity of the case. (2) The historic genesis of our common law and political institutions. (3) The present facts of the case.

### 1. *The a priori necessity of the case*

Every state must possess, in the whole range of its activities as a state, precisely the intellectual, moral, and religious character of the governing majority of its citizens. The state is nothing else than the people, constitutionally organized, acting in their organic capacity through the {38} machinery of the law. If the people are morally righteous their action upon all questions possessing a moral character must be righteous. If the governing majority of the people believe in God as the Creator and moral Governor, and in the authority of the Bible as His Word, then organic action must express personal belief, and in all cases conform to the will of God, whether revealed in the light of nature or in the text of Scripture, as the majority understands them. If the citizen disbelieves in God and His Word, he does not believe in them at any time or in any relation, but if he does really believe in them, then he must act in conformity to them at all times and in all relations. It is simply absurd to say that a single believer must individually obey every indication of God's will, and that a multitude of believers collectively may, if they please, shut their eyes and ignore His voice. It is purely absurd to say that a believing man, on Sunday, must recognize and obey the voice of Christ speaking in His Word, and directing belief and action in the sphere of the church, and that the same believer, on Monday, sitting in a State or the national legislature, may disregard the same voice explicitly commanding his obedience in matters coming within his control as a legislator; as, e.g., marriage and divorce, the Sabbath, or education. The thing is simply impossible. If attempted and pretended it is a monstrous treason. Neutrality is absolutely impossible. If we are

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20. [Only the first two points are included here.]

not for the King we are against Him. If we do not acknowledge we deny Him, if we do not obey we rebel. If the state acts under the light of nature, and without the light of supernatural revelation, it is certainly *non-Christian*, but it will be either theistic or atheistic. But if it act under the clear light of the Bible in the hands of all the people, it must be either Christian or *anti-Christian*.

This has always been believed hitherto. All nations of all past ages have confessedly founded their states upon their religions. This is true of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, of China, Japan, and all else within the purview of history. The precedents of the few short-lived atheistic states of history are alike exceptional and appalling.

This principle is recognized by the greatest writers on law in our language. Blackstone, Introduction, section 2, says:

Upon these two foundations, the law of nature (dictated by God himself) and the law of revelation, depend all human laws; that is to say, no human law should be suffered to contradict these.

And Washington, in his Farewell Address, that legacy of political wisdom from the Father of his Country, says:

Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.

Every Christian, at least, must accept this political axiom. The Scripture, which he acknowledges to be the Word of God, fully commits him {39} to this conclusion. Jehovah weighs nations as well as individuals in His balances. He estimates them as righteous or unrighteous, as godly or ungodly. These are characteristic Scriptural predicates of nations. It is predicted that all "nations" shall serve Christ, and that "nation" is declared to be blessed whose God is the Lord.<sup>21</sup> The kings of the earth, as public magistrates, in whom the character of the state is embodied, are declared to be immediately accountable to God for their stewardship. Christ is "Prince of the kings of the earth."<sup>22</sup> "The powers that be are ordained of God." "Rulers are the ministers of God to us for good." "Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." "Wherefore, ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."<sup>23</sup> This is, moreover, the essential basis of all liberty

21. Jer. 27:7; Prov. 14:34; Ps. 33:12; 43:1.

22. Is. 24:21; 60:10; Rev. 1:5.

for the individual, in an organized state. The law must be obeyed, either from physical constraint or willingly. Where obedience is irksome, or apparently to my disadvantage, I obey either in deference to the will of God, or to the physical force inherent in the majority. Obedience cannot be ethical unless it be religious, and it cannot be free unless it be ethical.

## 2. *The historic genesis of our common law and political institutions*

The principle for which we contend is demonstrated by all the facts relating to the historical genesis of our institutions. All organisms, political as well as physical, are generated by lengthened processes out of germs, and the character of the germ always passes over into the resultant organism. The elements subsequently introduced are digested and assimilated by the preexisting constitution to its own nature, they never assimilate the preexistent constitution to their nature. This is not a poor metaphor, based upon a superficial analogy between political societies and physical organisms. It is the definitely ascertained law of growth of the one as well as of the other. It is at once a law of necessary sequence, and at the same time of most equal justice to all the parties concerned. It is only justice if recent immigrants, who voluntarily and for their own advantage enter into partnership with us in our paternal heritage, should conform to all its long-established conditions. It is infamously unjust if the recent immigrant, immediately upon his advent, should demand the revolution of our established political principles in conformity with his untested speculations, while he ignores our history, and the rights of the majority who differ from him.

Every colony going out from an historical community in order to found new states in unoccupied territories necessarily carries with it an inheritance of laws and customs which constitute the germs of the new commonwealth. These lie latent (a) in the characters of the persons emigrating; (b) in their inherited social relations; (c) in their inherited legal customs, {40} the *lex non scripta*, or common law; and (d) in the charters of their kings, or chief magistrates. The colonies, which by continuous political evolution generated the United States of America,

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23. Rom. 13:1-5.

were from the first constituted almost exclusively of earnest Christian believers. The Puritan settlers of New England emigrated at infinite pain and cost for the single purpose of founding a truly Christian government. The purpose of the Quaker followers of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania and West Jersey, was no less specifically religious. The Dutch of the valley of the Hudson and of East Jersey; the Huguenots, who mingled largely with the other colonists from Charleston to Massachusetts; the Cavaliers of Virginia; the Romanists of Maryland; the Scotch-Irish of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and North Carolina, all were earnest believers, and deliberately intended to found their nascent commonwealths on the basis of their religion.

Bancroft says that “the birth of constitutional liberty took place in the cabin of the *Mayflower*.” There the charter of the first colony was formed and signed. It begins thus:

In the name of God, Amen. We, etc. ... having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony on the northern part of Virginia, etc.

The Dutch East India Company, from its formation in 1621, provided for the religious as well as for the secular wants of the colonists in New Amsterdam.<sup>24</sup>

In 1606, James I of England gave a charter to the Colony of Virginia, in which the king appeals to “the Providence of Almighty God,” and declares that one object of the plantation is “the propagation of the Christian religion.” In another charter, given three years afterwards, the king says:

It shall be necessary for all such as inhabit within the precincts of Virginia to determine to live together in the fear and true worship of Almighty God, Christian peace, and civil quietness.

William Penn, the proprietor and lawgiver of Pennsylvania in 1682, declares that “the origination and descent of all human power is from God,” so that “government seems to me to be a part of religion itself.” The English element of this primary immigration ultimately absorbed

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24. See *Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States*, by Rev. B. F. Morris. Philadelphia, George W. Childs, 1864. To this wonderful collection of facts this article is much indebted.



and dominated all the rest, and consequently brought the English traditional common law into active force in all the territories covered by the charters of the original colonies. That common law is consequently the basis of civil and political life throughout our whole land, excepting those portions {41} bought from France or Spain, or conquered from Mexico. It is so recognized in all our courts, state and federal, except in so far as it has been modified by our changed circumstances, or by positive legislation. That this English common law is the creature of Christianity has never been questioned. This has grown and been confirmed by the habits and legislation of our really Christian people through the two hundred and fifty years in which our institutions have been growing on American soil, and in doing so they have spread through all our zones, over all our mountains and plains, a mass of precedents, half-unconscious traditions, self-executing habits, instincts, prejudices, of our millions of people, which it would be a Herculean task to undo by positive legislation in a thousand years. Our people would not if they could, and they could not if they would.

The first constitutions which these colonies formed for themselves were explicitly Christian. Connecticut gave the first example of a written Constitution self-imposed by any State. That first Constitution recognizes “the Providence of Almighty God.” It declares that the great end of the establishment of that political commonwealth was “to maintain and preserve the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.” It declares that “the Scriptures hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties they are to perform to God and man.” The first act of the Legislature of the Province of Pennsylvania, at Chester, December 1682, declares that “Government in itself is a venerable ordinance of God,” and that it was the principal object “of the freemen of Pennsylvania to make and establish such laws as shall best preserve true Christian and civil liberty, in opposition to unchristian, licentious, and unjust practices.” The Colonial Legislature of New York, in 1665, ordered that a church should be erected in each parish, and that ministers should preach every Sabbath. The Church of England was established in the Colony of Virginia, and remained so until after the Revolution. The first charter of South Carolina, granted in 1662, by Charles II, declared that pious zeal for “the propagation of the Gospel” had been the actuating motive of the colonists. The second charter,

granted in 1669, provided a “Fundamental Constitution,” which declared the Church of England “to be the national religion of all the king’s dominions, as also of Carolina.” It permits Jews and other dissenters from the purity of the Christian religion to form churches, on condition they should (1) acknowledge the existence of God, (2) and that He should be worshipped, and (3) that every man, at the command of the magistrate, should testify in some form indicating a recognition of divine justice and of human responsibility.

At the era of the Revolution all the colonies adopted Christian constitutions in assuming their new character as sovereign states. The State Constitution of Massachusetts, adopted 1780, declares “that the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, {42} essentially depends upon piety, religion, and morality.” It proceeds to provide that the Legislature shall require the “several towns to make suitable provision for the support of Protestant teachers of piety, religion, and morality.” And it ordains that every person “chosen governor, lieutenant-governor, senator, or representative, and accepting the trust, shall subscribe a solemn profession that he believes in the Christian religion, and has a firm persuasion of its truth.” South Carolina, in her Constitution, in 1778, declares “that all persons and religious societies who acknowledge that there is a God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, and that God is to be publicly worshipped, shall be tolerated. The Christian Protestant religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be, the established religion of the State.” The English church continued the established church of Virginia until after the Revolution. The “Act for the establishment of religious freedom,” passed through the influence of Jefferson, recognizes “Almighty God,” and Christ, “the Author of our religion, the Lord both of body and mind.” The constitutions of Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Delaware, and Maryland, all formed in 1776, all required a professional belief in the truths of the Christian religion as a condition of holding any office, or place of trust. Those of New Jersey and of Georgia, in 1777, restrict toleration to the various sects of the Protestant religion. The constitutions of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut, all in various terms declared the duty of worshipping God, the truth of the Christian religion, and the importance of its institutions. The Constitution of the State of New York, in 1777, recognizes

the special character of the Christian ministry by excluding clergymen from holding any civil or military office under the state. The Legislature of New York, in 1838, declares: “This is a Christian nation....Our Government depends for its being on the virtue of its people—on the virtue that has its foundation in the morality of the Christian religion, and that religion is the common and prevailing faith of the people.” The Great and General Court of Massachusetts issued a proclamation in 1776, declaring “that piety and virtue, which alone can secure the freedom of any people, may be encouraged, they command and enjoin upon the good people of this colony that they lead sober, religious, and peaceable lives, avoiding all blasphemies, contempt of Holy Scripture and of the Lord’s Day, and all other crimes and misdemeanors.” The seventh section of the Bill of Rights, forming part of the Constitution of Ohio (1802), which was in force during the period in which their common-school system was perfected, ends as follows:

Religion, morality, and knowledge, however, *being essential to good government*, it shall be the duty of the General Assembly to pass suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of worship, and to encourage schools and the means of instruction. {43}

The men who formed the Federal Constitution were, with no known exception, earnest believers in the moral government of God, and the great majority were earnest Christians. Franklin and Jefferson, who would naturally be thought of as exceptions, occupied very much the position of the more conservative and reverent class of our modern Unitarians. The former introduced the resolution into the Convention for drafting the Federal Constitution, for opening their sessions with prayer, saying: “The longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, *that God governs the affairs of men.*” The latter said, in his first Message as President:

Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure, when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?

But, far better than these, Washington, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Gouverneur Morris, Benjamin Rush, Alexander Hamilton, Charles Carroll, John Jay, Elias Boudinot, James Madison, James Mon-

roe, and afterwards John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Abraham Lincoln, were sincere and outspoken believers in the truth and universal obligation of the Christian religion.

The first act of the Continental Congress, Tuesday, September 6, 1774, was to resolve that “the Rev. Mr. Duché be desired to open Congress tomorrow morning with prayer.” On occasion they resolved to attend divine service as a body. They frequently recommended to the authorities of the several states the observance of days of humiliation, fasting, and prayer. In September 1777, Congress, voting by States, resolved that: “The Committee on Commerce be directed to import 20,000 Bibles.” In 1781, the Rev. Mr. Aitken asked Congress to aid him in printing an edition of the Bible. A committee was appointed to attend to the matter, which subsequently secured the examination and approval of the work done by Mr. Aitken, by Bishop White, and Doctor Duffield:

Whereupon, *Resolved*, That the United States, in Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken, ... and being satisfied of his care and accuracy in the execution of the work, they recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States.

Although the Federal Constitution does not explicitly recognize Christianity, it contains no single phrase that by remote implication reflects upon it, and in several incidentals it implicitly signifies its truth: as when it bears date “in the year of our Lord 1787”; and when in four places it demands the sanction of an oath, which is essentially a religious act; and as when it provides for the observance of the Christian Sabbath (Art. 1, sec. 7). {44}

From the first, under this Constitution, Congress has provided for itself a constant succession of chaplains, and the sessions of both Houses have been continuously opened with religious services. Chaplains have also always been provided by law, and paid from the public purse, for the army, navy, and prisons of the United States. The same has been done by all the several states for the service of their Legislatures, militia, prisons, penitentiaries, and reformatories of all kinds. And these chaplains are required by law to be regularly authorized ministers of one or other of the Christian denominations.

From the first, throughout our whole history, the Colonial and State Legislatures, the Continental and United States Congress, have frequently appointed thanksgiving days and days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. In Virginia, June 1774, at the first news of the Boston Port Bill, Mr. Jefferson, through Mr. Nicholas, proposed a day of “fasting, humiliation, and prayer,” “to implore Heaven to avert from us the horrors of civil war,” etc. On December 11, 1776, another fast day was appointed, and God acknowledged as the supreme “Disposer of events, and Arbiter of the fate of nations.” In November 1776, Congress sent an address to the several States and to Washington’s army, calling for a service of thanksgiving for the victory over Burgoyne, in which all men are exhorted “to confess their manifold sins,” and to make “supplication that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive,” etc.

These fast-day observances were the united acts of Congress and the several State Legislatures and their governors. They were the acts of the Nation, and of the states in their political character, and as such they have been repeated continuously to the present time. The local Thanksgiving Day of New England Puritanism, as Christian in its origin as Christmas itself, has become a fixed national institution. In every instance the Thanksgiving-Day proclamations of President or Governor constitute an explicit official recognition of God and of His providential and moral government, and implicitly of the Christian religion. In many conspicuous cases the full faith of Christianity has been definitely confessed. In 1780, Congress uttered a call to thanksgiving, which entreats God to “cause the knowledge of Christianity to spread over the earth.” Again, on Thursday, March 19, 1782, “The United States, in Congress assembled,” call men to pray “that the religion of our divine Redeemer, with all its divine influences, may cover the earth as the waters cover the seas.” Again, the United States, in Congress assembled, in 1783, “call men to give thanks that He [God] hath been pleased to continue unto us the light of the blessed Gospel.” Again, in 1787, “The United States of America, in a Committee of States assembled,” recommend to the “Supreme Executives of the several States,” to call the people to give thanks to God, that He “has been pleased to continue to us the light of Gospel truth.” The proclamation for a fast day, {45} March 23, 1778, recognizes the “Redeemer of man-

kind,” and another of March 8, 1799, recognizes the “great Mediator and Redeemer and the Holy Spirit.” The Senate of the United States, March 2, 1863, passed a resolution which explicitly declares the faith of the Government in the success of the war to rest upon “the assurances of His [God’s] Word,” and their purpose to seek God “through Jesus Christ.” And the proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, of same date, signed also by Wm. H. Seward, acknowledges the “Holy Scriptures” as the revelation of God. The acknowledgment of Christianity is frequently found in the proclamations of the governors of the several States, e.g., as of Seward, of New York, in 1839 and 1840, of Bouck, in 1844, of Silas Wright, in 1845, of John Young, in 1847, 1848, of Horatio Seymour, 1853, 1854, of Andrew, of Massachusetts, 1861, of Olden, of New Jersey, 1862, of Berry, of New Hampshire, 1862, of Lowe, of Iowa, and Brown, of Georgia, 1858.

These facts, and the vast multitude which they represent, have been fully recognized by some of the most profound of our lawyers. Daniel Webster, “the interpreter of the Constitution,” says:

There is nothing we look for with more certainty than this principle that Christianity is part of the law of the land. General, tolerant Christianity, independent of sects and parties.

In his *Institutes of International Law*, Judge Story, of Massachusetts, for many years a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, said:

One of the beautiful traits of our municipal jurisprudence is that Christianity is part of the common law, from which it seeks the sanction of its rights, and by which it endeavors to regulate its doctrine.

In 1824, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania declared, in a judgment on a case of blasphemy, that “Christianity, general Christianity, is part of the common law of Pennsylvania.” Judge Parsons, of Massachusetts, delivered an opinion to the same effect. Chief Justice Kent, of New York, in 1811, delivered a similar opinion. In the same year, Justice Allen, of the Supreme Court of New York, delivered the unanimous opinion of that court to the effect that “Christianity is part of the common law of this state, in the qualified sense that it is entitled to respect and protection as the acknowledged religion of the people....”

# THE CHRISTIAN IN POLITICS: THE CALL AND THE CAVEATS

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*Rus Walton*

Let me level with you, right from the start. When the editor of the *Journal* suggested that I do an article on Christians in politics, I was ambivalent—to say the least.

I do believe that the Christian should be active in the political processes of this republic, at every level of government. If we are to strive to fulfill our responsibilities to Christ, our Savior and our King, we must work to advance His kingship in *all* areas of life.

Why, then, the ambivalence? It stems from thirty years of personal involvement in politics and government as both a volunteer and a “professional.” My experiences over that period of time tend to make me reticent to push my fellow Christians into the arena. Even while I recognize that they should do battle for the Lord in this everlasting struggle, and that labors for Him are not in vain, I nevertheless cringe at the thought of the trials and temptations that await them. My predicament is somewhat similar to that of the squadron commander who knows the enemy’s oil fields must be bombed and strafed but is reluctant to assign flight crews to the mission because he anticipates the flak and the fighters they will encounter.

Politics is a rough game; yet, it is an essential feature of this life if free men are to maintain the “golden mean” between collectivism and anarchy.

Jesus never promised us that this life would be a bed of roses; He commands us to take up His cross (Matt. 8:34), to take a stand for Him, no matter what the cost (Matt. 5:11–12). And, to do this in all things. Thus when the question arises as to whether the Christian should be active in the affairs of state-politics and government—the answer must be a definite “yes.”

Therefore, my purpose here is to recite several fundamental reasons why we, as His, must do so, and to offer some *caveats* for the Christians

who answer the call to political duty (or, rather, their duty to Christ in politics).

### *Why Politics?*

In one of my books<sup>25</sup> I suggested what I consider to be three substantial {47} reasons for Christians to get involved in politics:

1. because we must work to restore morality to government and truth in public affairs;
2. because government is already involved in virtually every aspect of our daily lives (including the practice of our faith),
3. because divine guidance (God's hand) is the only power that can save this nation from disaster or destruction.

Those three reasons would seem still to be valid. But, as I have grown in the Lord, I have come to see more clearly that they are, in reality, secondary to a more compelling—"first order"—responsibility:

Christians should be active in the affairs of government (and the midwifery of politics) *because government is God's*. It is He that ordained it, not we ourselves. It is He that established it, not man. Government belongs to God. Man tries to preempt it, misuses it, but the government is His. The very first commandment God gave to man concerned government—*self-government*:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die. (Gen. 2:16–17)

In that commandment is not only the requirement that man be obedient to God but also the commandment that man recognize God's sovereignty and govern himself according to God's rules or pay the consequences. The Lord did not tell Adam he *could* not eat of the tree, He told him he *should* not. The point seems clear: God created man a free agent, a self-governor, accountable to God for his actions. (We might also note that here, at the beginning, God established three basic requirements for good government: obedience to God's laws, self-control [self-government], and individual accountability.)

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25. *In the Spirit of '76* (Third Century Publishers, 1975).



## *The Purpose of Civil Government*

Through the Noahic covenant, God established civil government. The Bible tells us that God did this for some very specific reasons:

1. to protect human life (made in the image of God): “Whoso sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:6);
2. to defend the law-abiding (the righteous) from the lawbreaker (the unrighteous): “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil....Do that which is good and you shall have the praise of the same; for he is the minister [the servant] of God to you for good. But, if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain; for he is the minister [the servant] of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil” (Rom. 13:3–4);
3. to provide for a peaceful, orderly society: “I exhort, therefore, {48} that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, For kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

Those who first settled this new land, those who brought and kept the Bible as their “great political textbook,” purposefully established a civil government in keeping with God’s principles and precepts. The citizens of Plymouth proclaimed their intent “to advance the kingdome of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to injoy the liberties of the Gospell in purities with peace.” The citizens of Connecticut, who drew up the first written constitution to create a civil government, wrote this in the beginning of their “Fundamental Orders”: “...well knowing that where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent government established according to God.”

And, in the Preamble to our Constitution, we hear echoed the words and sentiments of the Apostle Paul: to “establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty...”

Thus we know, as did our forefathers, what the Bible tells us about civil government: it is to be a minister (a servant) of God to us for good, and it is to be administered in such a manner that we may lead quiet, peaceful, and godly lives.

How is such godly government to be achieved and maintained unless God's people work to see that the governors are, indeed, His servants and that government is, indeed, in keeping with His purpose? Are we to sit back and expect the ungodly to cultivate and nourish the fruits of godliness? That would not be faith, that would be an unwarranted presumption.

Centuries ago, Balthasar Hubmaier, the Anabaptist leader, put it this way:

... if Paul asks the believer to pray for the government, then the question arises: "Would a believing or an unbelieving magistrate be wise and skilful to preserve his people in a peaceable, quiet, godly, honest life?" You must, must, must always confess that a Christian magistrate will strive much more earnestly to do it than one who is not a Christian.<sup>26</sup>

Can we not make the same observation today? And, who is to put the Christian magistrate, or mayor, or governor, or congressman, or President in office—if not the Christians? Hubmaier went on to remark that the unbeliever "has at heart neither Christ, God, nor godliness, but only thinks how he may remain in his power, pomp, and ceremony."

If civil government is to serve as God's instrument, does it not follow that believers should diligently pray and work to have government serve {49} Him? To those who advocated political abstinence, Hubmaier counseled: "Where is it written then that a Christian may not be such a servant of God as fulfills the command of God to the good of all men? Or, that he may not undertake a divine work (as Paul himself calls it) according to the ordinance of God?"

As Hubmaier said in his day, so we must say in ours: those who suggest that Christians abandon civil government to the machinations of the humanists, the autocrats, the collectivists, the anti-Christians, go against the Bible. The "higher powers" are to be the servants of God and to govern in accordance with His institutes. Nowhere in the Scriptures do we read that Christians are to sit back and permit the ungodly to govern; and nothing in the history of mankind tells me that such

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26. Balthasar Hubmaier, "On the Sword," as researched and quoted by Professor Dell Johnson, *Political Views of the Anabaptists* (1978).

would govern as servants and ministers of God, for the good of all men.

### *Chartered and Commissioned*

There is yet another reason Christians should be active in statecraft: we are bound by God's dominion charter and Christ's Great Commission; we, as His, are to have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:6); we are to teach all nations to observe all things Christ has commanded (Matt. 28:19–20). For us, as Christians, these are not electives, they are responsibilities.

Both the dominion charter and the Great Commission deal with our mission here on earth: we are to subdue the earth, to exercise authority over it, in His name and for His glory, and we are to bring it unto Him.

There are some who will suggest that the charter deals primarily (if not exclusively) with the *physical* realm, and that the commission deals primarily (if not exclusively) with the *spiritual*—that while the charter concerns our responsibilities as *stewards* (caretakers), the commission concerns our responsibilities as *disciples* (witnesses). Are we not constrained to ask: are not the two parts of the whole and is not the whole His?

Can the physical be divorced from the spiritual in the life of the Christian? Can discipleship be held apart from stewardship? Is not Christ to have preeminence in all things? Are we not to present ourselves—body, soul, and spirit—a living testimony unto Him? Is He not both Savior and King, and King of all? Is not His whole Word to govern the whole man?

Those who would justify a gap between the spiritual and the physical must be prepared to answer these questions: What is it that He has created, and ordained, and chartered, and commissioned, that is not to be subject to Him? What part of life, personal and public, is not to be consecrated to Him and lived, as best we can, according to His precepts and principles? Government—self, family, church, or civil? Economics—self, family, or social? Education? Is there any area of endeavor where His sovereignty {50} is not to prevail and where His people are not to seek to exercise authority in His name and for His honor?<sup>27</sup>

### *Some Caveats*

Having briefly touched on the purpose and propriety (and necessity) of the Christian's involvement in government and its handmaiden, politics, let me now raise some *caveats*, some warnings, about the political world.

Politics, as it is today and has been throughout much of man's history, is the meanest, roughest, toughest of all ministries (and, for the Christian, politics should indeed be a form of ministry—of witness and work, done heartily as unto the Lord).

Politics can be, and usually is, corrosive. It can eat at the heart; it can etch graven images on the mind; it can create false gods and golden calves.

Over the years, many saints of God have gone forth into the foreign mission fields and ended their work on earth by having their bones picked clean by cannibals. An untimely demise, to be sure, and yet victorious; for those cannibals destroyed only the body. By contrast, the cannibals of politics are more deadly: they can destroy the soul. We do not have to search many pages of history to read about men who have gained the whole political world and lost their souls.

Like Satan in Eden, the cannibals of politics can be attractive, even beautiful. They are almost always subtle, in the beginning, and usually beguiling. And, more often than not, they cater to the "self."

Years ago, in political seminars for Christians, I would warn that the prime evil of politics is "I"—the ego. ("Id can be fatal.")

There are three "I's" in politician, two in politics. Given even the smallest opening, those "I's" will take over; it is the nature of politics to be ego-centered. When that happens, the "o" in Son is replaced by the "I" in sin and Jesus ends up on the outside, knocking to get back in.

You may think this is a bit of an exaggeration. It is not. In some thirty years of experience in government and politics, I have met only a few persons who consistently, humbly, and prayerfully sought to keep God first and Christ preeminent in all things. (The next time you hear or

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27. For a remarkably lucid explanation of the Dominion Charter and the Great Commission and how the two should work together in the Christian life, see Francis Nigel Lee, *The Origin and Destiny of Man* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974).

read a politician's speech, observe how many times the perpendicular pronoun crops up.)

Thus, that twinge of cynicism whenever someone announces that "God has called me to run for public office." (Why is it that God calls so many to walk the halls of Congress, or sit in the seat of the legislator, but calls so few to endure the swamp and the jungle, or even the not-so-spectacular {51} life of the factory, the office, or the nursery?) This is not to suggest that God does not call men to political service; I believe He does. But, it is to suggest that one must be very, very sure—through much prayer and through earnestly seeking His will—that what he hears is really God's voice and not his own. *Caveat, Christian!*

### *Political Survival*

The first rule of politics is survival. The generally accepted way to stay alive, politically speaking, is to seek to please either the power brokers or the greatest number of constituents. So, once again: *caveat, Christian!*

Without wishing in any way to misapply the Scriptures, let me suggest that these verses from Mark should have a very special (double) warning for the individual who holds or seeks public office:

Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same will save it. For, what profit it a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? (Mark 8:35–36)

It is saddening to observe that there have been, and are now, those who have saved their political lives and lost their souls. Remember those cannibals of politics!

Without doubt, there are men and women who would be willing to lose or fail to gain political office if that were the cost of "keeping their soul." Those who would be willing to give up or forego political survival for His sake and for the gospel. These are the men and women to look for; these are the ones who meet the first (and most important) qualification as the Christian searches for candidates to select and support. For these are the individuals who can be counted on to be servants of God; the ones who, when faced with casting a vote on a bill, or taking a stand on public business, will ask themselves: "Do I now seek

the favor of men, or of God? Or, do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of God” (Gal. 1:10).

The caveats raised here concerning the dangers of the ego and the costs of political survival apply not only to the office-seeker and the incumbent, they apply as well to the political worker—the professional and the volunteer. These caveats must apply in the choice and support of candidates and issues, and in personal political department. Whenever something else begins to take preeminence over Christ, back off. Get out. There can be no compromise.

### *Those Little Compromises*

That leads us to the next *caveat*.

Beware of those “little” compromises that are part and parcel of the typical political package. {52} Compromises in politics are akin to Carl Sandburg’s fog—they come creeping in on little cat’s feet; softly, silently, subtly; often unnoticed at the start, and mostly unannounced.

When the Christian becomes politically active, he will soon be introduced to “political justification”—the art of compromise. The tighter the race, the closer the vote, the greater the urge; after all, something is better than nothing—or is it?

Compromise is the second rule of politics—directly tied to that first rule of politics, survival. Scratch a political “pro” and he is likely to tell you that “politics is the art of compromise.” Yet, the Christian must not compromise. *Period*. Certainly he cannot compromise God’s institutes; surely he should not compromise his witness. And remember, it is those “little” compromises that are the most insidious; the big ones are more obvious and easier to resist.

*So, caveat, Christian!* The first time compromise is proposed, repel it; the first time compromise is applied, run for the nearest exit. Even at the cost of giving up the seat? Even at the cost of losing the election? *Even then*. Believe me, the politician who will do anything to get in office, or to get his candidate in office, will do anything to stay in office, or to keep his man in office.

Where is the victory if we achieve it by compromising our faith? What kind of witness is that? Where is the dominion? Better to be reviled for His name’s sake than to compromise on His commandments and His precepts.

### The Great Political Textbook

What about those commandments? What of the Biblical principles (the institutes) of government, and economics, and education? Here is the second essential qualification for those Christians who would seek or hold office—and, for those who would support them: Christians who would become involved in politics should first adopt the Bible as their “great political textbook” and gain a sound knowledge of the Scriptures.

Too many sincere Christians are inclined to rush into the political battle without first studying the Bible. Thus, they have not mastered the Biblical principles of government; they may know how to organize a meeting or a precinct, they may know how to communicate, they may know how to deliver the vote, but if they do not *know* the Bible they are not really prepared for the political ministry. They may have a “sense” of what is right and what is wrong, but what is needed is more than a “sense”—what is essential is *Scriptural* knowledge. It is only when we have such knowledge that we can apply it to issues and candidates and be spiritually discerning.

As the Rev. George Marston points out in *The Voice of Authority*, when an individual truly accepts Christ as Savior and King, when he is really {53} regenerated, Christ’s standards and Christ’s laws become the individual’s standards and laws by which he governs himself. He accepts the Bible as his infallible guide for truth, faith, and conduct; all statements and programs and policies of men he measures according to the Scriptures.

In recent years there has been a rash of political action courses and seminars for Christians. Most of those seminars dealt with only political techniques and tactics. This is unfortunate. Political action seminars for Christians should start with, and concentrate on, a study of Biblical principles of government and economics. When those principles are mastered, there will be time enough for the techniques of politics—and the use of those techniques will be all the more effective. To put it bluntly, almost anyone can tack up posters, hand out literature, work a precinct sheet, or drive voters to the polls. But only those who have studied to show themselves “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” can

really be effective in the work of restoring Biblical principles to government.

So, *caveat*, Christian! First things first! Take time to put on the whole armor of God before you go forth to restore the republic.

***Author's Note:***

[In addition to daily reading and study of the Bible, these works should be “must” reading for Christians interested in government and politics—John Locke’s *Of Civil Government* (book 2), Frederic Bastiat’s *The Law*, Verna Hall’s *Christian History of the Constitution of the United States* and *Christian History of the American Revolution*, R. J. Rushdoony’s *The Institutes of Biblical Law* and/or *Law and Liberty*.]



# CONFESSIONS OF A WASHINGTON REJECT

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*Gary North*

From about the middle of June 1976, through January 3, 1977, I was serving my country on a full-time basis, meaning that I was deep into the Federal trough, but not paying Social Security taxes. When it is all said and done, not paying Social Security taxes for seven months was probably the single most important benefit I received for my stay in government service.

This should serve as an introduction to the nature of government service. I was an employee of the sovereign state of Congress. You think I'm joking. Not a bit. It is indeed a sovereign state. First of all, it employs its very own police force, and the force is probably the fourteenth or fifteenth largest police force in the United States. Second, Congress has wisely determined that laws passed by Congress to protect this nation's citizens do not apply to Capitol Hill. That, one must admit, is a sign of sovereignty. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission bureaucrats have no authority on Capitol Hill, so the secretaries are better looking, lower paid, and work harder than in other businesses. (The good-looking ones, by the way, are not the overworked ones, if by work you mean typing.) Nobody has to hire minority group members, except for political reasons. There are no contracts. Congressmen hire and fire at will. Or at least they think they do. (We will cover that a little later.) There is a great pension plan, assuming anyone is so stupid as to believe that any pension is great in an era of inflation. But you do not have to belong to it. The boys at OSHA do not prowl around the halls of Congress, since they would be able to shut the place down if they were allowed to apply OSHA rules on safety. There are no Nader belts on the official cars of Congress, unless the Congressman wants them. You cannot subpoena a member of Congress for anything relating even remotely to his official duties. You must subpoena the House itself, at its discretion, and the House may or

may not compel the Congressman to testify. In short, the rules and regulations that are strangling the citizens of the United States do not apply on Capitol Hill. They know what they are doing at least to this extent. The pollution of legislation from Congress is matched by the pollution from Congressional furnaces and Congressional vehicles; the Environmental Protection Agency has no jurisdiction here. The Post Office on Capitol Hill is run by Congress, not the {55} U.S. Postal Service. Congress is the 51st state. Wait! Congress is the first state; Hawaii is the 51st.

Certain other features of Washington politics are not really understood by the average voter. Consider the vastness of the output of activity and the minimal productivity. In any given two-year term, Congress will see the introduction of about 25,000 separate pieces of legislation. This figure includes about 1,500 resolutions. Of these 25,000, about 450 will actually survive the legislative process and be signed into law by the President. Some of these bills are virtually automatic, such as the annual raising of the Federal debt ceiling. In short, 535 legislators on both sides of Capitol Hill are able to achieve about a 1.5 percent “success rate” of proposed legislation actually enacted. This represents less than one bill per office. For this we should be thankful. It might have been two bills per office each term.

To accomplish this “vast output” of actual legislation, hundreds of millions of dollars are expended on staff salaries, office supplies, plane trips, and computer hook-ups. A Congressman receives over \$260,000 for staff salaries each year. He can hire 18 people with this money. Senate staffs receive up to \$650,000, in the case of the most populous states.

Then there are printing costs. The Government Printing Office produces 200 pages of the *Congressional Record* each day at an estimated \$300 per printed page. It is sitting on each legislator’s desk the day following the proceedings, waiting to be read. (No one ever reads it.) Then there is the *Federal Register*, another daily production of 200-plus pages, filled with new regulations from the bureaucracy, all having the force of law. For a brief example of what kinds of material appear in the *Federal Register*, you can call a taped message and listen to a summary of the “highlights” of tomorrow’s edition: (202) 523–5022.

About 60,000 pages of these regulations are published each year, in three-column fine print, most of it incomprehensible. No one but lawyers read it. This is the law of the land. Congress proposes, but the Federal bureaucracy disposes. It is a good thing that the Congress can get only 450 laws passed every two years. If it were more, the *Federal Register* would have to start going to morning and evening editions.

Then there are the hearings. A few bills on each side of the Hill actually make it to the hearings stage. Experts are flown in to testify. The liberals are flown in courtesy of the majority members of the particular committee. The conservatives are allowed their witnesses—one day's worth. It does not make much difference. No one pays the least attention to the testimony. Then the testimony is printed in several thick volumes. No one reads it. Then the committee votes yes or no. If it goes to the House or {56} Senate, the bill will then die, or be amended, or pass. Then it goes to the other branch of Congress. At this point, the whole process begins again. The witnesses are flown in to testify, very often the same witnesses. No one pays any attention. Then the hearings are printed. In one classic case, the 1976 hearings for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, the hearings were faked. The hearings were to have covered the \$56 billion worth of appropriations for various Federal welfare agencies. Half of the scheduled twenty-four days of hearings were held "live." The other twelve days were simply reports inserted by witnesses. Yet all eight volumes of these reports were printed as if they were held "live," with greetings from the chairman, a few faked questions and answers, and a pleasant goodbye to each witness. There was no way of distinguishing "live" from "dead"(?) testimony. Nevertheless, we have 4,500 pages of fine-printed hearings for the record. And for the record, no one will ever read them. (An account of this classic deception appeared in the *Washington Star* for October 4, 1976.)

This was the world I entered when I joined the staff of Congressman Ron Paul of Houston, in the summer of 1976. He had been elected in an interim election when the seat was vacated by a long-term Texas Democrat who had resigned to accept a position on the Maritime Commission. Dr. Paul came to Washington in April. He was defeated by 268 votes (out of 193,000-plus) in November, and if his *Special Report* (June 1977) is to be believed, only about 3,100 of these votes,

mostly for his opponent, were flagrantly illegal, indicating that for Texas politics, this was a fairly clean race. In short, he was America's only Bicentennial Congressman: elected and defeated in 1976.

Dr. Paul was as amateurish a politician as I have ever seen. He believed in principle and voted that way. He did not have an administrative assistant, so he hired his own staff. He never went on junkets. He was consistently outvoted by 403 to 3, or 407 to 2. Instead of going to the endless rounds of lobbying "socials," where the booze flows, the food is superb (unless some cheapskate right-wing group is putting it on), and off-hours business is conducted, he would go home after work to his aunt's house out in the Virginia suburbs. He left his family in Texas, flew home on the weekends, and (you won't believe this) spent the time with his family instead of campaigning. He voted against NASA's boondoggles, despite the fact that NASA was in his district. He voted no on everyone's boondoggles. In short, a clear-cut amateur. He lost.

Yet, in his brief stay in Washington he made a lot of headlines, something which mid-term, unknown, freshman Congressmen do not do very often. He fought against abortion, gun control, inflation, and higher taxes, yet he confounded the conservative wing by fighting the B-1 bomber in favor of the cruise missile and the atomic submarine program. He opposed {57} Federal guarantees to the atomic power industry, another vote that astounded both liberals and conservatives. He baffled them all, simply because he voted small government, start to finish. No one in Washington—I repeat, no one—does that on a consistent basis.

The day I walked in, I was told to draft an opposition statement on the International Monetary Fund bill. I had not heard of the IMF bill. This was the disastrous piece of legislation that revised the Bretton Woods Agreements after thirty-two years—the first major revision. It made the IMF the world's new engine of mass inflation. ("The Transformation of the IMF," *Remnant Review*, August 4, 1976.) The Administration was pushing it with all its might. The Democratic liberals were pushing it. So I sat down, and by Saturday afternoon I had nineteen double-spaced typewritten pages cranked out. We had to have them at the printers by Monday at noon, since we had been told that we had until Tuesday at noon. Sure enough, Congressman Gonzalez's opposi-

tion statement, submitted “on time,” was too late. When shrunk by the typesetting process, my (Dr. Paul’s) statement was 11 pages long—the only opposition statement. In the *Congressional Record*, it was shrunk to 3.5 pages, yet it was word for word what I had submitted. (If you think there is a lot of stuff cranked out each day by government writers, you are correct. It boggles the mind.) The bill finally was passed at 5 A.M. on the last day of the 94th Congress in the Senate’s chambers. There was no opposition. (A trade had been made: the IMF for the legalization of gold clause contracts.) One of the co-sponsors of the IMF bill, who sat on the House Committee on Banking, Currency, and Housing, admitted to Dr. Paul that he really did not know anything about the IMF. If *he* did not know, you can be certain that at least 300 of the 435 House members do not know, and that may be too generous. It passed, ignorance or not.

So it went, bill after bill. The billions flowed. The opposition capitulated. The conservatives were outtalked, outmaneuvered, outspent, and out-voted almost every time. Occasionally, we won one, like the Hyde Amendment (no Federal money for abortions), but rarely. It was one long, difficult, grinding series of defeats. It will continue to be so.

Is it any wonder that people with principles get eaten up and spit out by this system? How to manage 200 pages of *Congressional Record* every day, plus the hearings in committee, plus the *Federal Register*, plus the speeches on the road, plus the party (political organization) pressures, plus the party (riotous escape) pressures? No one can do it. No group can do it. The dreams of messianic legislation and comprehensive political predestination have not come to heavenly fruition, but they have driven mad those who had such visions. The pursuit of total planning has eaten up the legislators who assigned to themselves the role of minor gods. The work is killing, especially in the last fifteen years. They are retiring in droves. {58} Something like 50 percent of the men in the House in 1977 weren’t there in the late 1960s. The whole system is collapsing, and both the conservatives and ideological liberals know it, but the conservatives can not do anything about it, and the liberals won’t do anything about it. They are caught on a sort of demonic treadmill to legislative oblivion.

The conservatives get ground down. They give up after three terms. I will not mention any names, since we can be thankful for whatever

“no” votes we get, but these men have let their constituents down. One man always promised to lie low for three terms, get the ropes learned, and then really get things changed. With every term, he has voted for more and more welfare boondoggles. He chases secretaries, is not bright enough to read very much, and his staff is mediocre, meaning it is one of the better staffs. Yet he is considered one of the hard-liners. The pressure on them by their peers is enormous; indeed, this is the crucial factor in the decline of the conservative opposition. *Congress views itself as a club*. The Senate is notorious in this respect. They have little use for the rabble in the House. They are gentlemen. Fortunately, like gentlemen, they do not get much accomplished each day. They are the brake on government planning, not by ideology, but by inertia. Inertia grinds down the conservative opposition, too. So the booze flows, the secretaries smile, and the wives get dumped. Yes, Virginia, by conservatives, too.

Let me tell you of the catalogue of horrors.

### *The Staffs*

Seldom in the history of man have so many incompetents, cronies, idiots, goof-offs, hangers-on, and nincompoops been assembled in one geographical area. The mediocrity of the Congressional staffs is, above all, the fact that struck me hardest. Grafters are to be expected in government, but these people are yo-yos. You would not believe how second-rate these people are. I am speaking about the conservative staffers. You are fortunate to find one good, solid, competent staffer per office.

It is not the lack of money. Congressmen can pay up to \$50,000 per year to some staffers. They could buy up the hottest of the hotshots from the universities in every field, and I do not mean just newly graduated Ph.D.'s. I mean their professors. You could rent one for his sabbatical year, year after year, getting big-name people in there who could call upon the services of students back home to do research. Nobody has thought of this, apparently. The only office that I saw that used outside people on a regular basis was Larry McDonald's. He got his money's worth out of the part-timers. Frankly, they were the sharp people on his staff.

What goes wrong? It is a complicated problem. Here is my evaluation. *First*, Congressmen do not want to hire people smarter than they are. This reduces the level of competence to levels undreamed of. *Second*, they do not {59} hire anyone anyway. Their administrative assistants do the hiring. This leads to the most insidious aspect of the Congressional bureaucracy problem: *the administrative assistant*. If there is a single source of the conservatives' failure, look here. Forget about the great conspiracy. Forget about pay-offs. Forget about their lack of time. Just look at the AA.

The AA is the top dog. He gets the \$50,000, if anyone does. He gets the prestige. He hires and sometimes fires. And like any person in a no-contract, high-risk, high-pay job, he wants one thing above all: *tenure*. He can get it only in one way: *be absolutely certain that no one coming in contact with the boss is more competent than he, the AA, is*. This reduces the general competence of the staffs an additional notch. The AA is enormously defensive about his position. He sees to it that the level of incompetence is kept high by adhering to another unwritten rule: *never hire anyone who hasn't had Hill experience*. This screens out the threats to your position. Your competition is limited to the walking wounded: Hill rejects.

Why Hill rejects? Why not hire good people from other congressional staffs? Simple: there is an unwritten rule, a sort of "gentlemen's agreement," that one Congressman will never hire anyone away from another Congressman's office. This keeps the bidding wars from ever getting started. Only with the blessings of the first Congressman can the staffer move to another office. Of course, there are violations of this rule. Usually, a violation will be limited to lower-level staffers. A secretary may take an offer to be a somewhat better-paid researcher in another office. It is a promotion. But senior staffers are supposed to be left alone. This keeps salaries down. In short, Congress is a kind of cartel. Its hiring policies are very much like those of some illegal monopoly or oligopoly. But Congress is legal. This has been determined by law. The primary beneficiaries of this system in restraint of trade are the least competent administrative assistants who are not good enough to be recruited anyway, but who now face less competition from other, more competent AAs (or potential AAs) who might otherwise be recruited away from another office.

There should be a universal rule for any serious, dedicated Congressman: no one making over \$15,000 per year should be hired by the AA. Let the AA hire the secretaries. Yet, if anything, the rule is inverted: the Congressman is very often exceedingly interested in hiring the secretary who makes \$12,000 or less. Are you getting the picture?

Who hires the AA? The Congressman. He draws from two possible pools of talent:

1. *His Campaign Manager*. This friendly fellow is noted for his ability to organize precincts, raise money from well-heeled donors, compose fundraising letters, schedule speeches for the candidate, possibly write speeches {60} for the candidate, but certainly screen out controversial ideas from the candidate's speeches. He can organize an office staff out in Dubuque. He can get those volunteers to lick those stamps. He has won, so now he has an air of total confidence. Then he comes to Washington, where he knows absolutely nothing. He covers his insecurity with arrogance and pseudo-confidence. Outsiders can tell these guys nothing. So nothing is what they get shown. Then they hire the staff, generally out of the bodies left over from the campaign. The ready-made staff gets imported.

2. *A Professional Hill Administrator*. These guys are the chameleons of life. If you mated these guys with a jellyfish, the only thing you could produce would be a college president. They are noted for their non-ideological professionalism, i.e., lack of commitment to any idea other than survival. They pick and choose from other unemployed Hill professionals, all of whom must be less competent than the AA. The gray sludge of professionalism begins to clog whatever machinery the Congressman had devised to "get things moving around Washington." If, by some element of good fortune, the new AA is in some way ideological, he is a "Hill ideologue," meaning one whose principled edges have been filed off by job insecurity, peer pressure, booze, junkets, and the lack of time to read anything more rigorous than the *Washington Star*. Gerald Ford would have been regarded as an ideological AA.

Let me give you an example of how tight a ship the typical AA runs, as far as screening is concerned. A newly elected Congressman from a conservative Midwest district started out. For openers, he did his initial hiring through the office of House Minority Leader Rhodes, no ideo-



logue. Applicants couldn't possibly get through this wall of resistance. (Candidates are flooded with applications, and in despair they turn the screening over to [probably] the campaign manager. So most of the staff is already hired when he arrives in Washington. He has no idea of what committee assignments he will get, or how much work needs to be done, or what kinds of skilled workers are needed. But he keeps on hiring.) The next stage was when he hit Washington—or, more accurately, brushed by Washington. He hired a “professional” AA, a mildly liberal (gray sludge) Jewish gentleman. The Congressman, predictably, is a Christian fundamentalist. This follows the usual rules of Congress: the liberals staff their offices with liberals and moderates, and the conservatives staff their offices with moderates and idiots. So an old friend of the Congressman, a nationally known and influential conservative, called him to tell him that I was available as a staffer. (A man mired in the bog sometimes will stay in the bog if the ground nearby looks a bit more firm.) Fine, he said, have him apply. His secretary called me to set up an appointment. Unfortunately, the Congressman spent only two days a week in Washington; the other five were spent back {61} in the district. You couldn't get an appointment. So I called his office, and of course was connected to the AA. “All candidates for employment are interviewed by me first,” he announced. Naturally. I explained that his boss had called me directly. I wanted my appointment. That threw him. I was told when the Congressman might be in his office. I drove in. He had left, of course. This was the week before the House convened. “We do not need any research people right now,” the AA explained. “Congress doesn't begin until next week.” I called a contact of mine and asked him how many bills were scheduled for introduction during the first week. “Oh, about 1,800,” he replied. But our new Congressman did not need any research staff the week before. So I gave a copy of my *Christian Economics* book, autographed, plus a copy of my vita. The AA took them. The Congressman never called back. About a month later, after I had joined the program at *Ruff Times* as a consultant, I happened to call my friend, the Congressman's friend. Why didn't he ever call me, I asked. “That's funny,” came the reply. “He asked me why you never came in for an interview. He asked his AA if you had come in, and the AA told him he had never heard of you.” (The Congressman

later read an early version of this report. Naturally, he did nothing. The gray sludge man still runs his office.)

This is normal on Capitol Hill. The Congressmen barely run their own offices, and the newer they are, the more dependent they are on the “professional” AA. The bureaucratization of the staffs is continual. The people back home who gave money to elect the guy, who slaved to work for him, and who now think their work is at last over, with their reward sure, now watch in horror and disbelief as his voting record sinks slowly into the sludge. They wonder how it happened. “That’s politics,” they say to themselves. Not quite; that’s bureaucracy that has met no political resistance from the folks back home. The folks back home need to stay organized to pressure “their” man, forever. They seldom do.

### *The Equipment*

Most offices are run poorly. They are inefficient to a fault. But they are getting better. This is dangerous.

One new device is the computer. A computer is now available that will do at least all of the following. 1) Record all positions taken in letters to the Congressman from his constituents. 2) Sort out all yes or no letter-writers by the vote taken in each letter. 3) Sort out yes or no positions by precinct, zip code, or groups of precincts. 4) Compose letters to people who write in, shifting paragraphs or sentences to make each letter look individualized. 5) Check the voting record of other Congressmen. 6) Find out the location of any bill in the system: sponsors, preliminary votes, committee, etc. 7) Locate millions of documents now in the Library of Congress tapes. This is only a small fraction of what these machines will {62} do. Putting machines like this in the hands of incumbents and their staffs is to cement the present system into permanence short of political upheaval. Rental fee: \$1,000/month.

The Library of Congress will locate and Xerox a copy of any document up to 100 pages (2 book pages usually fit on one sheet) free of charge—unlimited numbers. They now require a separate request for each document, an unheard-of burden on the staffs. Every few days a computerized printout of hundreds of newly available materials for 100 possible topics is made available to staffs. Just send in one of these tear-off cards, and the Library of Congress sends you a Xerox copy. They do

ask that you limit yourself to a dozen topics, please. Each topic may cover 35 articles each week.

Any Congressional staffer can sign his boss's name (on the automatic name-signing machine) to a letter requesting the Library of Congress research staff to trace down the history of practically anything. It may take two weeks to get a reply, or it may take three days. Let a challenger match this service.

Then there is the kingpin of all Congressional elections. His name is Frank Privilege. Any Congressman can mail out all his newsletters free of mail charge, with very few restrictions. You may have seen that little note at the bottom of Congressional junk mail: "Not Printed at Government Expense." True enough. It is *mailed* at government expense, and it gets first-class treatment. The envelopes are also free. Now, multiply 200,000 letters by 16¢, and you have some estimation of the incumbent's advantage every time he mails a mass flyer (four times a year, possibly).

Printing costs might run \$2,500 each time. Match that, challenger, in a contest in which *name identification* accounts for about seventy percent of the action. He spends, say, \$10,000 worth of printing expenses to get \$128,000 worth of postage and envelopes, sends down the computer-produced mailing list to the Republican or Democrat printers (who make \$70,000 a year; these are *private* operations), and they are shipped out. Not bad. Unless you are a challenger.

If you need 24-hour mail service for a letter, package, or anything else, it is available, free of charge: "Orange-bag service."

If you want to call anywhere in the continental U.S., free of charge, 24 hours a day, it is yours. Every office has two WATS lines. It is a nice, nontaxable fringe benefit for staffers. I was really cheated during my time as a public servant. We had only one WATS line, and then only after 5 P.M. It was tough in my day, let me tell you.

Need a haircut? It will cost you \$2 at any of the Congressional barbershops, one in each building.

Want a good, subsidized meal? In the House, you are out of luck. They serve the worst food imaginable. I hear the Senate has good food. I believe {63} it. The only amusing thing in the Longworth Building's cafeteria is the middle-aged black lady who treats all customers equally. If you do not give her your order instantly as you move down the line,

she says, “Walk and talk, honey, walk and talk.” She is efficient, and she expects everyone else to be efficient. Alone among citizens in these United States, she seems to get some efficiency out of at least a segment of Congress. If you want something to eat, my friend, you *talk* as you walk, whether you are Mo Udall, Barry Goldwater Jr., or some summer intern. Equality reigns here, and *only* here, on Capitol Hill.

### *Where Does the Legislation Come From?*

If the staffs are incompetent, and the Congressmen have no time, where do the 1,500-page tax reform bills come from? They come from the Congressional committee staffs, which are a cut above the office staffs (but not by much). They also come from special-interest groups. I suspect that if a person wanted to make a significant contribution to our understanding of our day, he would trace the authorship of a dozen major pieces of leftist legislation back to their sources. I will tell you one thing: the office staffs do not create the prominent laws that get the headlines and cost the billions. The executive has tremendous influence in this area, and I suspect that it is through the executive bureaucratic staffs that significant batches of the legislation get submitted to Congress. This is where the think-tanks like Brookings Institution get the ball rolling. Congress is an uncreative institution today.

This means that conservatives can effect very little positive change. At best they can elect men to Congress who, for a time, will vote “no.” But when the President has the option of firing about 143 of the 143,000 people in HEW, elections mean very little. National elections, that is. The new men in Congress who have the willingness to submit new pieces of legislation do not have the staffs to write it, the knowledge of the system to push it through, the prestige to get cosponsors, or the media experience to force the leadership’s hands. Congressman Paul did not get a single piece of legislation enacted, although he came close on a couple of issues. Most freshmen Congressmen do not even get close.

Paul was an amateur, as I have said. He had no AA. So he hired me, and Dr. John Robbins (who is more conservative and a lot meaner than I am), and Bruce Bartlett (who writes for *The Freeman* and who has an M.A. in history). We had the best staff I saw in my limited experience on the Hill, all newcomers. We cranked out more dissenting opinions

in a shorter period of time than any other conservative office. On some of the issues, such as monetary policy, Dr. Paul had the automatic support of several of the old-time conservative Congressmen, who couldn't keep up with banking developments. Our hastily assembled staff was better qualified {64} than any we knew of on the House side. Within the conservative ranks, only Sen. Jesse Helms had anything as good. He, too, is an ideologue, a newcomer, and vulnerable in the next election. He, too, refuses to vote any party's line. He, too, was successful before he came to Congress.

One thing should be mentioned, however. On Paul's entire staff, only one person could type faster than 40 wpm—a holdover from the resigning Congressman's staff. We had a lot of conservative girls working as secretaries, with college educations, but not one of them could type any better than I can, and I use one finger to cover the whole keyboard (and one for the shift lever). Ideologically, they were sound as a Swiss franc. They just weren't cut out to be secretaries. We were pure, but we weren't mechanically efficient.

### Capitol Games

#### CAPITOL GAMES

By James Stevenson



### Conclusion

There are steps that can be taken, though limited, that might reduce some of these defects in the offices of future Congressmen. But there will be few challengers to be elected by conservatives in the near future, and few changes in Congress. I am a believer in local politics. My experience in Washington did not change my belief. Those who believe in political salvation at the national level are certain to be disappointed. I

knew it was bad before I arrived. Now that I have left, I know what an optimist I had been before. Things are going to get a lot worse before they get worse.

### *Postscript*

“Incumbent Edge Put at \$488,505”

“WASHINGTON—A member of the U.S. House seeking reelection has an automatic, government-provided advantage over his opponent that is worth at least \$488,505 and is increasing, Americans for Democratic Action said Sunday.

“The liberal political organization, in a study made public Sunday, arrived {65} at this figure by adding up a House member’s yearly salary and the salaries of his staff, various allowances for offices and other official and unofficial benefits of holding office (the values of some of the benefits were estimated).

“Incumbent representatives would be certain to object to listing all of these items as campaign advantages. But the ADA contended that although the items usually represented requirements for maintaining a congressional office and meeting the needs of constituents they were also available to help you win reelection campaigns.

“The organization noted that in the last four elections more than 95 percent of incumbents seeking reelection had been successful.

“It is clear that incumbents start out their elections with tremendous advantages over prospective challengers, many of whom have to give up jobs in order to mount an effective campaign,’ ADA lobbyist John Isaacs said.”—*Los Angeles Times* (August 25, 1975)

# THE TROUBLE WITH CONSERVATIVES

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*John W. Robbins*

If during the next few years, that is, during the period with which practical politicians are alone concerned, a continued movement toward more government control in the greater part of the world is almost certain, this is due, more than anything else, to the lack of a real program, or perhaps I had better say, to a consistent philosophy of the groups which wish to oppose it. The position is even worse than mere lack of program would imply; the fact is that almost everywhere the groups which pretend to oppose socialism at the same time support policies which, if the principles on which they are based were generalized, would no less lead to socialism than the avowedly socialist policies.—Friedrich Hayek<sup>28</sup>

It is not the purpose of this essay to provoke an altercation with any conservative or with any Christian who believes that conservatives and conservatism ought to be defended. This essay is rather a recognition of an already existing state of hostilities between Christians and conservatives—a state initiated by the conservatives themselves. It may come as a surprise to some readers of this journal that there is a distinction between Christianity and conservatism—let alone a state of hostilities—and for that reason alone this essay is necessary.

## *Conservatism as Non-Christianity*

The trouble with conservatives is the same as the trouble with liberals: they are not Christians. If one were to scrutinize the index of George H. Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*,<sup>29</sup> he would be hard-pressed to find even one Christian listed there. It is

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28. Friedrich Hayek, " 'Free' Enterprise and Competitive Order," *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1948] 1969), 107.

29. George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976). There are too many index entries to list here.

safe to say that of the twenty-four contributors to an anthology of conservative thought edited by William F. Buckley Jr., not one, including Buckley himself, is a Christian.<sup>30</sup> At this point a reader might question my definition of “Christian.” {67} I am using “Christian” in either or both of two senses: first, in the biblical sense of a regenerate, justified man; second, to denote a person who is not regenerate but who does, inconsistently, accept the biblical view of the state and politics. In neither sense do the men listed by Nash and edited by Buckley qualify as Christians. This fact is not without significance.

There are many non-Christian philosophies represented within conservatism. First and foremost, there is Roman Catholicism. Nash writes:

One is even tempted to say that the new conservatism was, in part, an intellectual cutting edge of the postwar “coming of age” of America’s [Roman] Catholic minority.<sup>31</sup>

A disproportionate number of conservative intellectuals in the 1950s were [Roman] Catholics.<sup>32</sup>

The new conservatives’ brand of Christianity was often of a decidedly [Roman] Catholic, even medieval cast....<sup>33</sup>

One of the most remarkable features of this movement [conservatism] was that, in a country still substantially Protestant, its leadership was heavily Roman Catholic, Anglo-Catholic, or critical of Protestant Christianity.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the ubiquitous Roman Catholics, there are the atheists (Ayn Rand and Max Eastman, for example); the pagans (Leo Strauss and Ernest van den Haag); the religionists (Edmund Opitz and

30. William F. Buckley Jr., *Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970). The contributors include Buckley himself, Garry Wills, John Courtney Murray, S.J., L. Brent Bozell, Frank S. Meyer, Michael Oakeshott, Albert Jay Nock, Henry Hazlitt, Max Eastman, Milton Friedman, Harry V. Jaffa, Willmoore Kendall, James Burnham, Ernest van den Haag, Mortimer Smith, Jane Jacobs, Russell Kirk, Hugh Kenner, Leo Strauss, Christopher Dawson, Eric Voegelin, Jeffrey Hart, Whittaker Chambers, and Frederick Wilhelmsen.

31. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 80–81.

32. *Ibid.*, 127.

33. *Ibid.*, 60.

34. *Ibid.*, 80.



Leonard Read); the pragmatists (Milton Friedman and Garry Wills); the southerners (Richard Weaver); the natural lawyers (Murray Rothbard, Peter Stanlis, and John Hallowell); the anti-natural lawyers (Ludwig von Mises and Willmoore Kendall), and so on. But amidst all this variety there does not appear a single orthodox Christian.

### *Conservatism as Anti-Christianity*

Conservatism as a political movement displays as much variety of thought as liberalism. Yet both liberalism and conservatism are united in their anti-Christianity.<sup>35</sup> Pluralism is tolerable in both camps, so long as Christianity is not in view. It is a mistake to think that conservatives and conservatism, as opposed to liberals and liberalism, are neutral on the issue of Christianity. There is and can be no neutrality. The conservatives seem to recognize this, but unfortunately the Christians do not. Many Christians still believe that politics is an endeavor or a discipline that can be pursued shoulder-to-shoulder with conservatives. They believe {68} that there is a common ground upon which both Christians and conservatives can stand and build—or rebuild—a free society. To disabuse the Christians who believe this—if there are any reading this journal—let us listen to what some leading conservative intellectuals have written about Christianity. I will not cite any of the views of the libertarians in opposition to Christianity, for this opposition is, I believe, well known.<sup>36</sup> I will restrict the citations to the more “traditional” conservatives for the purpose of showing that anti-Christianity is not confined to the libertarians but pervades conservatism as a whole.

The first conservative leader I will mention is L. Brent Bozell, brother-in-law of William F. Buckley Jr., and editor of a now-defunct periodical called *Triumph*. Bozell was the ghost writer of Barry Goldwater’s *Conscience of a Conservative* and author of *The Warren Revolution*, a study of the Warren Supreme Court. In 1968 *Triumph* published an article entitled: “Hippie, Son of WASP?”<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, Bozell

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35. For the purposes of this essay the anti-Christianity of liberalism is assumed.

36. The works of Ayn Rand are as good as any to mention as being examples of anti-Christian libertarian polemics.

37. *Triumph*, February 1968.

was also enamored of the fascist Roman Catholic regime in Spain. Nash notes that he was not alone:

Spain exerted a powerful influence on several American conservatives, including [Willmoore] Kendall, Francis Wilson, Frederick Wilhelmsen, and L. Brent Bozell.<sup>38</sup>

Bozell's love affair with Spain led him to educate some of his children there. The oppression of Christians in Spain is, unfortunately, a story too few Christians are familiar with—and they will not be told by conservatives like Bozell. They must rely upon the reporting of men like Paul Blanshard, whose books, *Freedom and Catholic Power in Spain and Portugal* and *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, provide a credible answer to the question: How much does the Roman Catholic church believe in liberty when it has the power to destroy liberty?

The second conservative intellectual I will mention is Frederick D. Wilhelmsen, who Nash also indicates was influenced by the regime in Spain. Wilhelmsen has correctly maintained that to understand contemporary conservatism, we must understand medieval tradition. His statement, however, is not merely analytical, for he has also blamed Calvinism and Manchesterism for shattering the medieval tradition. He has lamented the loss of “our kings and our chivalry; our craftsmen ... and our peasantry.”<sup>39</sup> One can imagine Wilhelmsen lamenting the loss of the unity of the church and the end of the Inquisition as well.<sup>40</sup> {69} Third, one might mention Michael Oakeshott, a British conservative whose book, *Rationalism in Politics*,<sup>41</sup> received a wide reception in

38. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 196.

39. Frederick Wilhelmsen, “The Conservative Vision,” *Commonweal* (June 24, 1955): 295–99.

40. This is not far-fetched. John Courtney Murray, S.J., in a passage from his book, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*, that William F. Buckley Jr., thought important enough to include in his anthology of conservative writing, called the Inquisition “a Committee on Un-Christian Activities,” drawing a parallel between the Inquisition and the House (of Representatives) Committee on Un-American Activities. This grotesque analogy is identical to the analogy drawn by the liberals. Both Murray and the liberals apparently are either too obtuse or too stubborn to differentiate between the two, the liberals for the purpose of discrediting the House Committee, and Murray for the purpose of commending the Inquisition. William F. Buckley, *Dream Walking*, 44.

conservative circles this side of the Atlantic. In a notable perversion of history, Oakeshott has referred to “the ‘godly prince’ of the Reformation and his lineal descendant, the ‘enlightened despot’ of the eighteenth century...”<sup>42</sup>

Oakeshott, whose *bête noir* is rationalism, has also expressed his distaste for Calvinist America:

Long before the [American] Revolution, then, the disposition of mind of the American colonists, the prevailing intellectual character and habit of politics, were rationalistic. And this is clearly reflected in the constitutional documents and history of the individual colonies.<sup>43</sup>

Another anti-Christian conservative we might mention is Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, a longtime associate of William F. Buckley’s *National Review*. Kuehnelt-Leddihn has located the intellectual roots of Nazism in the Reformation,<sup>44</sup> a position similar to that held by Leonard Peikoff, a disciple of Ayn Rand.

Still another anti-Christian is Albert Jay Nock, to whom many contemporary conservatives owe a great debt. Nock once referred to Calvinist theology as a “social superstition” in the same category as magic and the divine right of kings.

Perhaps the best example of an anti-Christian conservative is Eric Voegelin. Voegelin is the author of several books and has had an enormous influence on other conservative thinkers. Voegelin calls himself a “pre-Reformation Christian.”<sup>45</sup> Voegelin, who believes that “uncertainty is the very essence of Christianity,”<sup>46</sup> is absolutely certain that the Reformation, Calvinism, and Puritanism are the *fons et origo* of the spiritual, {70} moral, and political decline of the West. He writes:

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41. Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1962).

42. Michael Oakeshott, “The Masses in Representative Democracy,” in Buckley, *Dream Walking*, 111.

43. Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, 27. We shall mention below the conservatives’ opposition to written laws and documents.

44. See Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Liberty or Equality: The Challenge of Our Time* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1952), 268.

45. See Russell Kirk, *Enemies of the Permanent Things* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 254.

46. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1952] 1969), 122.

### On the Reformation in general:

... a clear epoch in Western history is marked by the Reformation, understood as the successful invasion of Western institutions by the Gnostic movements.<sup>47</sup>

### On Puritanism in particular:

In order to start a movement moving, there must in the first place be somebody who has a “cause.” From the context in [Richard] Hooker [*Ecclesiastical Polity*] it appears that the term “cause” was of recent usage in politics and that probably the Puritans had invented this formidable weapon of the Gnostic revolutionaries.<sup>48</sup>

Hooker’s description of the Puritan so clearly applies also to later types of Gnostic revolutionaries [such as Nazis and Communists] that the point need not be labored....The portrait of the Puritan resulted from a clash between gnosticism, on the one side, and the classic and Christian tradition represented by Hooker, on the other side.<sup>49</sup>

Hooker discerned that the Puritan position was not based on Scripture but was a “cause” of a vastly different origin. It would use Scripture when passages torn out of context would support the cause, and for the rest it would blandly ignore Scripture as well as the traditions and rules of interpretation that had been developed by fifteen centuries of Christianity.<sup>50</sup>

### On the role of John Calvin:

In order to make the Scriptural camouflage effective, the selections from Scripture, as well as the interpretation put upon them, had to be standardized....The systematic formulation of the new doctrine in Scriptural terms, ... was provided by Calvin’s *Institutes*.<sup>51</sup>

47. *Ibid.*, 134.

48. *Ibid.*, 135.

49. *Ibid.*, 137. Voegelin is honest enough to recognize that there is a problem with his construction and categorization of Puritanism, and dishonest enough to try to resolve the problem *ad hoc*. He writes: “Of the major European political Societies, however, England [not Roman Catholic Spain, Portugal, France, or Italy] has proved herself most resistant against Gnostic totalitarianism; and the same must be said for the America that was founded by the very Puritans [‘Gnostic revolutionaries’] who aroused the fears of Hobbes [and Voegelin].” The explanation that he gives for this fact does not solve the problem the fact poses for his analysis.

50. *Ibid.*, 138.

51. *Ibid.*

For the designation of this genus of Gnostic literature [the genus to which the *Institutes* belonged] a technical term is needed; since the study of Gnostic phenomena is too recent to have developed one, the Arabic term *koran* will have to do for the present. The work of Calvin, thus, may be called the first deliberately created Gnostic koran. A man who can break with the intellectual tradition of mankind because he lives in the faith that a new truth and a new world begin with him, must be in a peculiar pneumopathological state.<sup>52</sup> {71}

#### On Calvin and other Gnostics:

The work of Calvin was the first but not the last of its kind....In the eighteenth century, Diderot and D'Alembert claimed koranic function for the *Encyclopédie française*....In the nineteenth century, August Comte created his own work as the koran for the positivistic future of mankind....In the Communist movement, finally, the works of Karl Marx have become the koran of the faithful, supplemented by the patristic literature of Leninism-Stalinism.<sup>53</sup>

This last sentence causes one to wonder whether Voegelin, in his hatred for the binding nature of the word, a hatred shared by other traditionalist conservatives, regards the Bible itself as a koran. He at least believes that it is filled with myths<sup>54</sup> and that Gnosticism appears in the writings of John and Paul.<sup>55</sup> Whatever the case, it is clear that Voegelin is ardently anti-Christian, regarding Christianity as belonging to the same category of systems as positivism and Marxism.

The reader, however, may yet be unconvinced. I have given citations indicating a hatred for Christianity among some conservative intellectuals, but what about the movement as a whole? Is conservatism—regarded as a philosophy rather than as a collective name for conservatives—anti-Christian? The answer to that question, which I believe is in the affirmative, is at least as important as the citations given above to corroborate the contention that leading intellectuals are anti-Christian.

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52. *Ibid.*, 139.

53. *Ibid.*, 139–140.

54. See *Israel and Revelation*, volume one of his incomplete *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, [1956] 1969).

55. Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, 126.

### *The Conservative Denial of Total Depravity*

Conservatives are fond of saying that they, unlike the liberals, believe that man is depraved; that he is not by nature either good or perfectible. It is not enough to say that man is depraved, however, when one is discussing the relationship of Christianity to conservatism. The question is whether conservatives accept the biblical doctrine of man's depravity—and the answer is that they do not. This can be most clearly seen in two areas: epistemology and ethics. Conservatives—and many professed Christians—do not accept the biblical view that revelation and revelation alone is the source of knowledge and truth.<sup>56</sup> They believe that there are at least two roads to truth—science and revelation, or reason and revelation, or logic and revelation, or sensation and revelation. This *epistemological eclecticism* is common to virtually all conservatives, and common to all conservatives without exception who allow any role in learning {72} to revelation. In short, conservatives do not believe in total depravity, for they believe that man's mind can, apart from divine aid, discover some truths. This eclecticism—this Thomism—is an essential characteristic of contemporary conservatism.

The second area in which the conservative disbelief in total depravity appears is in the field of ethics. Here again, while they may admit that men are mixtures of good and evil, and that divine commandments have some role to play in ethical guidance, they are concerned to make it clear: (1) that man is not totally evil; and (2) that some ethical principles can be discovered by man's reason. Drawing upon their epistemological eclecticism, the conservatives espouse the Great Tradition in philosophy, the natural law and natural rights theories enunciated by Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. Libertarians, like Murray Rothbard and Ayn Rand,<sup>57</sup> prefer the Lockean theory and have enlarged upon that variant of natural law theory. It is important to realize that just as virtually all conservatives adhere to an epistemological eclecticism and all

56. Matthew 16:17; 1 John 5:20; Proverbs 20:27; 9:10; 2:6; 1:7; 1 Kings 3:9, 12; Job 32:8; 38:36; 39:16, 17; Psalms 119:30, 98; Proverbs 3:5; Luke 24:45; 2 Timothy 2:7; Ecclesiastes 2:19, 26; John 14:6; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:6, 8–10, 14–16; 3:6–7, 9, etc.

57. See John W. Robbins, *Answer to Ayn Rand* (Washington, 1974), for a discussion of Rand's theory of natural rights.

reject the axiom of revelation, so do they virtually all adhere to some form of natural law theory and all reject the ideas that our only source of ethical guidance is Scripture and that men are totally depraved in action as well as in thought. Nash writes:

To many writers of the 1950s classical political philosophy meant, above all, natural law. In *The Moral Foundation of Democracy*, John Hallowell argued its tenets. Describing himself as a “classical realist,” Hallowell enunciated three principles: (1) “there exists a meaningful reality,” an “orderly universe,” independent of the knower; (2) man can, by the use of his reason, discern the nature of reality; and (3) knowledge of what man should do in order to fulfill his human nature is embodied in what has traditionally been called the “law of nature” or the “moral law.”<sup>58</sup>

Russell Kirk, to whom conservatism is greatly indebted, tirelessly “stressed the eternal verities which commanded conservative allegiance: ‘belief in a transcendent order, in an unalterable human nature, and in a natural order.’”<sup>59</sup> Stephen Tonsor wrote:

The leaders of the new conservatism are not now, nor will they be, identified with the American business community. They are clearly identified with natural law philosophy and revealed religion.<sup>60</sup>

He was supported by the Jewish sociologist Will Herberg, who wrote:

Conservatives, true to the classical tradition of our culture, whether Hebrew or Greek, of course affirm the doctrine of the higher law as {73} the very cornerstone of their moral, social and political philosophy.<sup>61</sup>

Natural law is, of course, antithetical to Christianity. This point has been discussed in a previous issue of this Journal.<sup>62</sup> It is a form of creature worship, for the creature—Nature—is studied in order to “discover” her laws, while the laws of God revealed in Scripture are ignored

58. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 62.

59. *Ibid.*, 195.

60. To the editor, *Reporter*, August 11, 1955.

61. Will Herberg, “Conservatives, Liberals, and the Natural Law,” parts 1 and 2, *National Review*, June 5 & 19, 1962.

62. See John W. Robbins, “Some Problems with Natural Law,” *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1975).

or scorned. At best, scriptural commands are accepted and acceptable only if they repeat or are compatible with what has already been invented by reason. Historically, natural law theory predates Christianity. Logically, natural law theory is antithetical to Christianity. Ethically, it is the worship of the creature rather than the Creator. It was invented by unregenerate men who sought to provide logically justifiable ethical guidance apart from revealed moral law. It is a prime example of the suppression of the truth in unrighteousness. As such, and as a fundamental *motif* of conservatism, it is one of the basic reasons why conservatism is not Christian, and why Christians, insofar as they are Christians, cannot be conservatives.

The willingness of natural lawyers to play loosely with history is indicated in the following passage:

Historically, this tradition [of natural law] has found, and still finds, its intellectual home within the [Roman] Catholic Church. [So far, so good.] It is indeed one of the ironies of history that the tradition should have so largely languished in the so-called [!] [Roman] Catholic nations of Europe at the same time that its enduring vigor was launching a new Republic across the broad ocean. There is also some paradox in the fact that a nation which has (rightly or wrongly) thought of its own genius in Protestant terms should have owed its origins and the stability of its political structure to a tradition whose genius is alien to current intellectualized versions of the Protestant religion, and even to certain individualistic exigencies of Protestant religiosity.... The point here is that [Roman] Catholic participation in the American consensus has been full and free, unreserved and unembarrassed, because the contents of this consensus—the ethical and political principles drawn from the tradition of natural law—approve themselves to the [Roman] Catholic intelligence and conscience.<sup>63</sup>

Murray, intent upon crediting the creation of the American Republic to the Roman Catholic church, not only pads his history account, but even implies that the countries in which the Roman church is dominant are not *really* Roman Catholic countries at all. If they were, the contrast between them and the American Republic would be too great for even a Jesuit to explain. One of the best analyses of the nature of the American {74} Republic may be found in a previous edition of this Journal.<sup>64</sup> Suffice it to say here that it was not the Roman Catholic tra-

63. John Courtney Murray, S.J., as quoted in Buckley, *Dream Walking*, 50.



dition of natural law that founded America, but the Calvinists—the Christians.

### *Conservatives and Free Will*

The second respect in which conservatives differ from Christians in the field of ethics is on the question of free will. A prominent, contemporary conservative has stated the ubiquitous conservative argument in this way:

Ultimately, the author of human liberty is almighty God, who endows each human being with free will. Every human being since Adam has been free to obey the laws of God, or to disobey them....God Himself does not constrain our wills: in His infinite majesty, He respects the choices made by men.<sup>65</sup>

Usually this idea is elaborated upon by men such as Frank Meyer—a longtime editor of the *National Review*—to prove that political freedom is essential to allow personal virtue to emerge and flourish. The enormous confusion in such an argument is not dispelled but only camouflaged by invoking the name of God and His infinite majesty. I take it as given for the purpose of this essay that free will and Christianity are antithetical. Precisely *because* God's majesty is infinite, He constrains our wills. It is absurd to believe otherwise. Moreover, it is non-Christian to believe otherwise. Anyone who doubts this should *study* the Bible—not consult it as a religious *Bartlett's*—and learn what Christianity is.<sup>66</sup>

### *Conservatives, Logic, and Tradition*

In our discussion above of the anti-Christian views of leading conservative intellectuals, we have made passing mention of the conservative dislike for writing things down. Given the choice, a conservative would prefer an unwritten constitution to a written one. Michael Oakeshott finds the constitutional documents of the American colonies

64. See *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 3, no. 1 (Summer 1976).

65. Senator Jesse Helms, *When Free Men Shall Stand* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976). There is much to be praised in the Senator's book, I hasten to point out.

66. An excellent help is Gordon H. Clark's *Biblical Predestination* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969).

indications of the rationalistic cast of mind in the colonies. Voegelin is so anti-writing that there is reason to believe that he thinks the Bible itself, as the written revelation of God, is “koranic” in function.

In his opposition to written documents, the conservative displays not only an affinity for the Roman Catholic perspective which places tradition on a par with Scripture, but a kinship to the confidence man who is reluctant to put things down in black and white. More fundamentally, however, it is not writing *per se* to which the conservative is opposed, but the {75} *systematizing required to make writing coherent*. Conservatism is, by its nature, an enemy of system. Voegelin finds the construction of philosophical systems “Gnostic.” Oakeshott finds it an indication of “rationalism.” Other conservatives disparage systematic political theory as “ideological”:

... no conservative cosmology whose every star and planet is given in a master book of coordinates is very likely to sweep American conservatives off their feet. They are enough conservative and anti-ideological to resist totally closed systems [such as a closed canon?], those systems that do not provide for deep and continuing mysteries.<sup>67</sup>

This anti-ideological strain can hardly be overemphasized, for it characterizes virtually all of conservatism (but not libertarianism). One of the primary spokesmen for this idea is the Nobel Laureate Friedrich Hayek. Hayek’s *Law, Legislation and Liberty*<sup>68</sup> is an as yet unrecognized seminal book on the conservatives’ preference for irrationalism in politics. Hayek has made a great issue of defending the free society on the basis of man’s incorrigible ignorance. Life, particularly the life of societies and social institutions, is deeper than logic. But Hayek’s argument from ignorance and his putative skepticism about the limitations of the human mind are not precisely what they seem at first glance. What he emphasizes—and what all traditional conservatives emphasize—is not so much the limitations of the human mind, but the *desirability* of avoiding logical, systematic thought, and even the use of logic itself. This attitude is correctly deplored by both the liberals and the libertar-

67. Buckley, *Dream Walking*, xxii.

68. Friedrich A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, vol. 1, *Rules and Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973). Hayek seems to be both an irrationalist and an advocate of a “program” in politics.

ians, for unsystematic, nonideological thought is what ought to be avoided, not boasted of. Surely any Christian who has ever heard of systematic theology ought to accept the idea that if systematic thought is desirable in theology, it is equally desirable in political theory.<sup>69</sup> There is no virtue in possessing disjointed, unsystematized, perhaps contradictory ideas, that is, in being confused. Yet that is precisely what the conservatives regard as commendable. They place their trust, not in logical thought, but in illogical, unsystematic, disconnected *ad hoc* thoughts. Intuition, custom, and tradition—not logic or revelation—are the primary tools of these conservatives. Yet intuition, custom, and tradition can offer no guidance as to the best state or even the proper way to punish a criminal.

Conservatism is a political philosophy which professes to be practical and grounded in reality—not ideological or utopian dream worlds—yet it cannot furnish a coherent answer to a very practical question: What is {76} the proper punishment for a thief? Let us not deal with the big questions of the ideal state (or the question whether there is such a thing as an ideal state), the justification of government itself, or the proper relationship between church and state. Let us consider a small question. If the conservatives cannot furnish a coherent answer to that, then it is unlikely that they can answer the larger questions.

In the 1970s, a conservative will advocate the imprisonment of the thief for a completely arbitrary—that is, logically unjustified—period of time. Is not this what all the shouting about tougher judges and stiffer sentences amounts to? Yet what are the conservatives' reasons for doing this? The first is custom: criminals have been thrown in jail for hundreds of years. Edward J. Carnell once remarked that "truth can never be discovered by counting noses." To the conservatives we would say, "Truth can never be discovered by counting the noses of ancestors." The fallacy is the naturalistic. It simply does not follow that

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69. On the importance of systematic theology, see B. B. Warfield, "The Right of Systematic Theology," and "The Indispensableness of Systematic Theology to the Preacher," in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 2, ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973).

because imprisonment has been a method of punishment, it ought to be a method of punishment.

The second reply to our question might be that the laws of the state demand imprisonment. Let the judges simply enforce the laws. Do not tie the hands of the police. This is not the naturalistic fallacy; it is the *petitio principii*. The laws of the state cannot justify imprisonment; it is the laws themselves that need justification. This consideration applies equally to the constitution of a state: it cannot justify; it requires justification.

This discussion of an immensely practical problem has led us to theoretical problems to which the conservative can give no answer. Sooner or later (mostly sooner) the conservative will start thinking in natural law terms; that is, in anti-Christian terms. Custom can furnish no answer to practical questions.<sup>70</sup> Neither can intuition or present practice. The conservative, in fact, will grasp at almost every straw before—if ever—he acknowledges that revelation alone can provide an answer to practical questions.<sup>71</sup> {77}

### *What Is to Be Done?*

I hope that the reader is now convinced that Christianity and conservatism are two different things, and that conservatism is as humanist as liberalism. It was James Burnham who pointed out that:

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70. The conservative emphasis on tradition became too much for even Richard Weaver to bear. Criticizing Russell Kirk's veneration of "the wisdom of our ancestors," Weaver remarked that the important question was: Which ancestors? "After all, Adam was our ancestor.... If we have an ancestral legacy of wisdom, we have also an ancestral legacy of folly ..." ("Which Ancestors?" *National Review*, July 25, 1956).

71. Even when a conservative grasps a revealed principle, he perverts it. A case in point is William F. Buckley's suggestion some years ago that victims of crimes be granted restitution (a biblical concept). According to the Bible, the restitution is to be made by the criminal, who is not imprisoned, but compelled to pay part of his wages or wealth to his victim. According to Buckley, it is not the criminal who should pay the restitution, but the state, while the criminal is imprisoned. In Buckley's plan, the criminal is supported at the taxpayers' (including the victim's) expense, and the victim is paid at the taxpayers' (including his own) expense. This perversion of the Christian solution to the problem of punishment compounds the injustice of the present method of punishing criminals by supporting them at taxpayer expense in prisons.

Liberalism is infected with communism in the quite precise sense that communism and liberalism share most of their basic axioms and principles, and many of their values and sentiments.<sup>72</sup>

It ought now to be recognized that conservatism is simply pessimistic liberalism, cautious liberalism, liberalism unsure of itself. Conservatism, liberalism, and communism find their common ground in opposition to Christianity. They are all forms of humanism, and each finds its strength in the degree to which it logically and systematically articulates its humanism. Communism does it best; liberalism next; and conservatism worst of all. The conservative distaste—even hatred—for ideology and systematic thinking may be the result of a semi-conscious recognition by conservatives that, at bottom, they are at one with the liberals and the communists and that conservatives can obscure their kinship only by refusing to articulate their ideas systematically.

If this is so, it follows that the present impotence of the conservatives is ineradicable. Conservatism is a dead end. Christians ought to dissociate themselves from conservatives by articulating a distinctly biblical position in politics.

Such a philosophy is the *sine qua non* of a Christian reconstruction of society. It is not going to be provided by the conservatives.

Both the “conservatives” and the “liberals” stress a fact with which everybody seems to agree: that the world is facing a deadly conflict and that we must fight to save civilization.

But what is the nature of that conflict? Both groups answer: it is a conflict between communism and ... and what? —blank out. It is a conflict between two ways of life, they answer, the communist way and... what?—blank out. It is a conflict between two ideologies, they answer. What is *our* ideology? Blank out.<sup>73</sup>

*Our* answer is Christianity, not the emasculated Christianity of the “Judeo-Christian tradition,” but the robust Christianity of John Calvin.<sup>74</sup> To {78} paraphrase Ayn Rand, who declared her own independence from conservatism some years ago, the moral treason of the conservative leaders lies in the fact that they do not have the courage to

72. James Burnham, *Suicide of the West* (New York: John Day, 1964), 289.

73. Ayn Rand, “Conservatism: An Obituary,” *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (New York: New American Library, 1966), 193.

admit that the philosophy that founded America was Calvinism. They will pretend that it was anything else but Calvinism. Yet if the freedom we still possess is to be kept and enlarged, it can be done only if the nation is recalled to its first principles. If we as Calvinists—and we ought to identify ourselves as Calvinists—are to engage in a program of Christian reconstruction, then we must begin building our own homes now. Not only must a Calvinist philosophy of politics be written—a *koran*, to use Voegelin’s phrase—but Calvinists must articulate Christian answers to practical problems. Moreover, they must do this in an organized way, forming their own organizations, publishing their own periodicals, establishing their own schools, churches, charities, and universities. If they cooperate with conservative organizations, they must make it clear that they are *not* conservatives, while accepting as much authority as those organizations are willing to give them and they are capable of exercising competently. In short, they must do *all* that they do in the name of the Lord. In so doing, they must tell the world, as Whittaker Chambers put it, that “political freedom, as the Western world has known it, is only a political reading of the Bible.”<sup>75</sup>

The choice before us is, as T. S. Eliot wrote, “between the formation of a new Christian culture, and the acceptance of a pagan one.”<sup>76</sup> It is not a choice that we can refuse to make: refusing to choose is itself a choice. Nor is it possible to turn the clock back to an earlier time when the inherent defects of conservatism (and liberalism) were hidden from view. “[T]he only alternative to a progressive and insidious adaptation to totalitarian worldliness for which the pace is already set, is to

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74. “Judaism is also brought into the same generous tent [accommodating Protestants and Roman Catholics], and reference is made to ‘our Judeo-Christian heritage....’ The term ‘Judeo-Christian’ is most commonly used by the adherents of the religion of humanity, who are insistent on reading their religion into both Judaism and Christianity. No doubt, if Buddhism were a factor on the American scene, we would hear references to our Buddho-Judeo-Christian heritage.” Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1965), 69–70.

75. Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., [1952] 1969), 16. Chambers refused to call himself a conservative; he was a “man of the Right.”

76. T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1940), 10.

aim at a Christian society...”<sup>77</sup> “[T]he Christian can be satisfied with nothing less than a Christian organization of society...”<sup>78</sup>

As Christians, we must cultivate the moral certainty that comes from the knowledge that we know the *truth* if we are to prevail in the battle against humanism. We are not advocating Christianity because it works, or because it is the only thing left which can keep us from chaos. We advocate Christianity because it is *true*. The wisdom of this world—whether it be conservative or liberal—is foolishness. That is what is wrong with conservatism, and conservatives.

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77. *Ibid.*, 16.

78. *Ibid.*, 27.

# NATURAL LAW AND GOD'S LAW: AN ANTITHESIS

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## ***1. Introduction: Malaise of 20th-Century Man***

We are no longer a nation at peace with itself, if, indeed we ever were. The questions, outcries, and conflicts of recent events are legion, and the Christian literature of critique is beginning to point up this national despair ever more clearly.<sup>79</sup> Needless to say, lawyers have played some part in these events, and Christian lawyers have the greatest role to play of all, for theirs is the mandate, authority, and power to seek justice for all men (Prov. 8:12–16; Mic. 6:8; 2 Chron. 19:6; Isa. 58:6; Deut. 4:4–10; Lam. 3:35–36; Ps. 89:14; 1 Kings 10:9; Jer. 22:15; Ezra 45:9–10). I will try to develop the theme that the biblical idea of justice, as mandated by Jehovah to His people in the preceding texts, is of singular contemporary relevance for the legal profession as a whole and for our nation. It must be remembered that the only means given of attaining God's will for justice in the twentieth century is by the power of our risen Lord through the Holy Spirit *working in us as we break with our anti-Christian past, as well as when we invite unbelievers to share in the salvation brought by Jesus Christ.*

Since our field of view encompasses the legal system of an era that some have labeled post-Christian, we should first see what the notion

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79. The InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515, has published several works clearly outlining modern man's despair in his loss of certainty and purpose in life. Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death* (1973); H. R. Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (1970); Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (1968).



of justice has meant in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century jurisprudence, so that Satan's deceiving work may be most clearly contrasted to Jehovah's just purpose, as it is discussed at a later point.

## 2. A Truce with Anti-Christ: Natural Law

The warp and woof of our contemporary legal scene is inextricably bound up with what has been called natural law theory as well as with certain reactions to that theory which have dominated the field of jurisprudence in more contemporary times, so it is not altogether arbitrary to begin to trace the development of modern events in their flow out of natural law theory, though its roots extend back in history to humanism's Greek {80} ancestry. To explain in detail the origins of natural law theory in Greek and Roman thought is beyond the scope of this article,<sup>80</sup> but a credible point of departure lies at the close of the wars of religion. At this juncture in history the fabric of European civilization had been torn asunder between the opposing forces of the Reformation and Roman Catholicism in their struggle over essentially doctrinal issues. A Dutch thinker, Hugo Grotius, then wrestled with the problem of ultimate authority for civil rule, in war or peace, and grasped upon the theory of natural law, as is pointed out by Arthur F. Holmes.

Grotius was confronted by the breakdown of Christian unity in the religious wars that followed the Reformation. He could not appeal to religious sanctions for law in either war or peace but had to find some other basis, admittedly established by God, which would be binding on men regardless of what, if any, was their religious persuasion. He could resort neither like the Catholics to a scholastic legal philosophy nor like the Calvinists to the decrees of a sovereign God. Grotius accordingly turned to the older pre-Christian tradition of natural law. The setting of his Prolegomena to *The Law of War and Peace* is the argument between Carneades' legal positivism and Cicero's doctrine.

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80. For a general introduction to the roots of natural law theory see A. d'Entrevès, *Natural Law*, 2nd ed. (Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 178 Great Portland St., London WI, 1970); Roscoe Pound, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (Yale University Press, 1922), chap. 1, 2; Carl Joachim Friedrich, *The Philosophy of Law in Historical Perspective*, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1963), chap. 3, 9; Carl Joachim Friedrich, *Transcendent Justice* (Duke University Press, 1964), chap. 1.

Grotius agrees with Cicero, and like Cicero he appeals to universally self-evident truths.<sup>81</sup>

Protestant thinkers such as John Locke and Thomas Richard Hooker, for the same reasons as Grotius, opted for a Thomist theory of law and government rather than seeking a biblically rooted legal philosophy, with telling effects in the New World.<sup>82</sup> {81}

It was the political theory of Locke which affected the nation at large most deeply. Nor did it only affect England. It penetrated into France and passed through Rousseau into the French Revolution; it penetrated into the North American Colonies and passed through Samuel Adams and Thomas Jefferson into the American Declaration of Independence. We are generally prone to think of Locke as the exponent of the Social Contract. It would be more just to think of him as the exponent of the sovereignty of Natural Law. He put into plain English, and he dressed in an English dress of sober grey cloth, doctrines which ultimately go back to the Porch and the Stoic teachers of antiquity. There is, he taught, a Natural Law rooted and grounded in the reasonable nature of man; there are Natural Rights, existing in virtue of such law, among which the right of property, in things with which men have mixed their labor, is cardinal; and finally there is a natural system of government, under which all political power is a trust for the benefit of the people

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81. "The Concept of Natural Law," *Christian Scholars Review* 2, no. 3 (1972): 198. Evan H. Runner exposes the same vein of thought in "Scriptural Religion & Political Task," *Christian Perspectives* (Guardian Publishing Company Ltd., Hamilton, Ontario, 1962), 199–200 (referring to seventeenth-century political theories): "... These ideas belong to the modern rationalist movement generally. Their revolutionary character, even already in the *De jure belli et pacis* of Hugo Grotius (1625), is to be seen in the hope he cherishes for an international amity based on a Law of Nature. 'War, violence, disorder, which the law of God does not repress but suffers rather, and even justifies, as being part of an inscrutable design, all the ills which man is heir to—perhaps the day will come when some human law will bring about their mitigation, their abolition. Thus'—I am quoting the famous French historian, Paul Hazard—'we are invited, with manifold excuses for such boldness, to pass from the Order of Providence to the Order of Humanity.' Instead of an Order of God an order of man. Instead of the Law of God the social contract. Instead of the sovereignty of God the sovereignty of the people (popular sovereignty, *volkssoevereiniteit*, majority vote, etc.)."

82. From Sir Ernest Barker, "Introduction," *Social Contract* (Oxford University Press (1970); and Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, reprinted at 4, respectively.

(to insure their living by natural law, and in the enjoyment of natural rights), and the people themselves are at once the creators and the beneficiaries of that trust.

Though Locke was a Christian, and attempted to derive his theories from Scripture,<sup>83</sup> he was even then blinded to God's immediate rule of creation by this idea of an intermediate body of natural laws, innate to the nature of reasonable men. The tragic oversight of the impact of the fall on man's analytic capacity; the failure to perceive God's immediate rule of creation by His Word, were fixed in the minds of seventeenth-century Christians such as Locke because Christians had been shedding blood over doctrinal matters. These leading thinkers were driven *from* revelation by the conflicting appeals *to* revelation made by the ecclesia of the day while pursuing heresies with sword and faggot! The Body of Christ had discredited itself in the management of public affairs. The present hostility of unbelievers as well as some Christians to "mixing" religion and politics can be traced to this period of history. But compounding error with error was not and cannot be the answer to the search for a common foundation for human action. It now lies to us to perceive the root of this error and set the record straight as to the proper, God-ordained roles of government and church. To be able to do this with cogency we must see how the roles of government and law meet in the biblical concept of justice, while the role of the church is to preach the gospel. But we must start by clearly understanding where the wrong fork of the road was taken, and where this wrong fork has taken us via the natural law option of Locke and Grotius as it has carried down to modern times.

Fundamentally, natural law theory rests on the assumption that man has an innate quality—reason—which enables him to perceive and live by natural {82} laws which are "self evident truths" manifested in our natural surroundings. The appealing quality of this line of thought lies in the fact that it is a half-truth, the most deceitful kind of all. And Christians were not the least reluctant to seize upon it, as is pointed out by F. F. Bruce.<sup>84</sup>

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83. *Ibid.*, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, 3.

84. F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 243.

Or take the other term, *word*. In Hebrew thought “the word of God” is a way of denoting the divine activity; to say that Christ is the Word of God is to say that in Him God is uniquely and self-revealing active, whether in creation and redemption. But the Greek word by which this concept was rendered, the word *logos*, had already been current in Greek circles in a somewhat different sense, to denote the divine principle of reason or order immanent in the universe. The Hebrew and Greek ideas, though distinct, had a sufficient superficial similarity to make the transition from one to the other easy. So, when a Christian like Justin Martyr, brought up in the Greek philosophical schools, read the opening words of St. John’s gospel, “In the beginning was the *logos*,” the sense in which he understood them was not exactly that which the evangelist intended. Justin thought at once of *logos* in the sense of “reason” and concluded that the *logos* which became incarnate in Christ was the *logos* which had governed the thought and action of men like Socrates and Heraclitus and the Stoics. These men, because they lived in conformity with reason (Greek *meta logou*, “with [the] *logos*”), were really, if unconsciously, guided by the pre-incarnate Christ; they might therefore be quite properly regarded as Christians before Christ came, in much the same way as the holy men of Israel in Old Testament times.

Thus, Christians such as Aquinas, and later the Reformers, could be successfully tempted to read Romans 1:19 to mean that the image of God in fallen man—which Paul refers to only to show the depth and inexcusableness of the corruption of the men who choose to worship the creature rather than the Creator—was equivalent to some self-authenticating body of truth implanted in the minds of mankind.

Now here we must “test the spirits, whether they be of God.” Granted that man has, what I will call for clarity, an analytic capacity. Granted that this capacity operates upon the given of creation (not those of Mother Nature, or Nature’s God, or Nature’s Laws). Granted, then, that there is a sense in which a Christian *could* once have employed the terms “nature” and “reason” to describe his experience of God’s gifts in creation. But what *did* happen? *By adopting the terms and ideas of rationalism Christians put a handle on creation that pagans in their desire to “worship the creature rather than the Creator” could seize on and live in*

*the world while denying, by various means, its Creator*; as is pointed out by A. Skevington Wood:

The new scientific movement, with its recognition of law in the visible {83} universe, which had fostered Deism, also affected the apologetics of the Church. It is noticeable that the weapons with which Berkeley and Butler and Warburton fought and defeated their Deist opponents were rational rather than revelational. Creeds and confessions were set aside as things indifferent and the case for Christianity was built up on the argument of natural religion, fortified by the testimony of the prophecies and miracles of Christ. "The main effort of orthodox apologetic was therefore directed towards demonstrating that Revelation was a necessary adjunct to natural religion, or, at the lowest, not inconsistent with it," comments Professor Basil Willey. The effect of this outlook upon the contemporary pulpit may be measured by a scrutiny of the sermons of Archbishop Tillotson, the most popular preacher of the day. Throughout his works he constantly appealed to the tribunal of reason. He strove to prove that Christianity was "the best and the holiest, the wisest and the most reasonable religion in the world," and that "all the precepts of it are reasonable and wise, requiring such duties of us as are suitable to the light of nature, and do approve themselves to the best reason of mankind." He invited men to test their faith by reason at all points.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, reason could be used as a source of truth collateral with revelation, or superior to it: i.e., test faith by *reason*.

At this point I can summarize the conclusions that can be drawn from the preceding material and which will be further supported in the following paragraphs.

1. Whatever might be argued about the existence of an image of God in man and its consequences for man's conscience, man is none the less *fallen*; Paul himself shows that this characteristic, while sufficient to hold man chargeable, is clearly fallen, cursed, for it cannot lead man to worship God rather than the creation, thus cannot be an ultimate source of truth.
2. That reason or analysis, without revelation, will turn to rank speculation and ultimate relativism in their efforts to penetrate the creation, leading men to focus their belief on reason, or some object of reason

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85. A. Skevington Wood, *The Inextinguishable Blaze* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), 23–24.

(science, wealth, education, pleasure), thus producing idolatry and God's subsequent curse upon it.

3. In the search for truth in the "eternal tables of right reason" man is again deceived into serving a hypothetical creature rather than the Creator.

4. Reason has thus become a "high and lofty barrier to the knowledge of God" by becoming a measure by which revelation has been held for naught.

Documentation of the course of secularization of man's knowing processes is beyond the scope of this article, but I submit it for stipulation as {84} being a patent event in the history of the last three centuries.<sup>86</sup>

The words of Archbishop Tillotson quoted above support the conclusion voiced by author Wood that the Christian apologetic of that day was "rational rather than revelational." The title of Francis Schaeffer's book is revealing: *Escape from Reason. Why not Escape from God? Revelation? God's Law?*

Arthur F. Holmes, professor of philosophy at Wheaton College, says of natural law,

... This law is both rooted in the nature of man and accessible to him as a rational being. It has been related to the biblical concept of the law of God written on human hearts. (Romans 1)....My own concern is to explore the resources of this tradition for contemporary Christian thought ... it judges laws and actions not so much by their effects (as did Hobbes and Mill) as by universal principles and unchanging moral ends. It therefore has an understandable appeal to the Christian

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86. Commager's following comment on Puritanism may easily be read upon the secularization of Christianity generally: "Although the theological implications of Puritanism wore off in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many of its moral and political implications persisted. Two centuries of reaction could not dissolve the Puritan inheritance of respect for the individual and for the dignity of man, of recognition of the ultimate authority of reason, of allegiance to principles rather than to persons, to the doctrine of government by compact and by consent, and to spiritual and moral democracy. These things, along with Puritanism's deep-seated moral purpose, its ceaseless search for salvation, its passion for righteousness and for justice, and its subordination of material to spiritual ends, entered into the current of secular thought and retained their vitality long after the theological and metaphysical arguments which sustained them had been forgotten."—Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind*, 168.

mind. In other words, I want to remain within the natural law tradition as I have defined it above.<sup>87</sup>

At page 201 Professor Holmes captions section II of his article, “The Rule of Reason.”

Rather than multiplying these illustrations I would ask, does reason *rule*? ... seated at the right hand of God, vested with all power and authority? Is “all power and authority on heaven and earth given to reason, go ye therefore ...”? Therefore I must in love most strongly dissociate myself from these brethren and profess that as I read the Scriptures—our only rule for faith and life—I cannot discover any source of power, authority, or knowledge other than the Word of God, incarnate, as it maintains the creation. And unless I first turn to the Scriptures, I cannot obediently see the other forms in which God has revealed Himself. Thus by taking Scripture at face value we should see that there is no abstract body of truth such as reason, but rather patterns of consistency ordained by a loving God for His creation (Ps. 147; Heb. 1:2).

The positive meaning of God's Word in creation will be the subject of later discussion, so I would focus at this point on the Achilles heel of {85} natural law theory. Primarily it is that there is no body of truth or law existing apart from God's Word in some abstract sense of innate in the human heart. Man is in God's creation and is a creature of God. He can know nothing, see nothing, hear nothing, but that which exists by the command of Jehovah or by the allowance of Jehovah while He permits the evil one some latitude in these last days. Thus natural law has no base upon which to exist save the imaginings of man. Of course, many Christian-biblical notions such as justice, equity, responsibility, trust, mercy, and love have been stripped from revelation and posited *as* natural law, but this does not mean that they are other than the law of God specifically revealed to His people. What is advanced as natural law theory cannot exist by its own right of existence, for it has none, as it must be drawn from some other quarter.

And this opens the line of thought to the next and perhaps most serious charge that can be laid against natural law theory. To approach this we must recognize that when Grotius, Locke, and others opted for this

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87. Runner, *Concept of Natural Law*, 195–97.

way of certainty, mankind was standing on the brink of the most intensive detailed observation of the creation yet undertaken by our race. I refer to the coming of the age of scientific exploration and discovery. The intoxicating quality of the things man discovered during these three centuries of exploding knowledge is significant here, for man's fallen nature restlessly seeks a way of explaining himself and his circumstances while avoiding the Creator of that self and those circumstances, and these discoveries proved to be a way of truth that seemed to avoid the confrontation. In seeking this way man directs his creaturely devotion to some ultimate point or other: a god; an image of his own devising. Thus to the Rationalist mind, severed from the claims of Christ by the notion that natural law was accessible to reason, nothing could be more appropriate for ultimate allegiance than the rational analytical process itself,<sup>88</sup> and of course this was soon seen in terms of scientific, empirical methods as the exploration of the physical world moved along.<sup>89</sup> Thus when Christians have used the terms *natural law*, *nature*, or *reason* to indicate the knowing-process of man, they have surrendered critically important areas of human thought and scientific inquiry to dominion and control of fallen men, men under the rule of anti-Christ. And the willfully pagan minds of Rousseau, Comte, and other Renaissance thinkers quickly seized the ground yielded by rationalist Christians as neutral territory and used it as a vantage point for the adversary from which to claim rational, scientific observation as the *only* reliable way for man to know anything. The argument has run thusly: since knowledge is embedded {86} in laws of nature, these laws are identified by the observation of phenomena in nature. If the phenomena are reproducible under certain controlled and understood procedures, the principle which underlies the phenomena can be identified. These controls and procedures are known as scientific method. (Insofar as matters such as physics and chemistry are concerned these procedures have undeniable worth. But notice the twist given to the next argument.) Since we have acquired such reliable knowledge from

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88. Wood, *The Inextinguishable Blaze*.

89. Hendrik Hart, *Communal Certainty and Authorized Truth*—an examination of John Dewey's philosophy of verification (Swets & Zeitlinger, Amsterdam, 1966), 91. Hart summarizes Dewey's deification of science.



the foregoing methods, *we have no other equally reliable method of getting at truth.*<sup>90</sup> Therefore other nonscientific methods of knowing are unreliable and cannot be given credence in the evaluation of the important public affairs of man. All religions, therefore, since they deal with supernatural matters, cannot submit their credentials to the court of science, cannot be verified as being true, and are therefore *subjective*, i.e., fit only for personal consumption—unfit for public use.

So runs the argument. In its face Christians have largely taken one of three courses:

1. *Neo-Orthodoxy, Liberalism*—To question revelation *by science*, thus denying miracles and the reliability of revelation, destroying the faith of many.
2. *Fundamentalism*—To declare that the world is evil, totally under Satan's dominion, so that Christians should not engage in worldly activities (science, law, politics), thus limiting Christianity to evangelism, piety, and doctrine.
3. *Evangelicalism, Reformed Scholasticism*—To enter worldly areas, business, law, science, but live there on rationalist terms by dividing their Christianity according to rationalist dictates, focusing their faith-life on prayer, worship, piety, and evangelism.

To explore these three positions biblically is beyond the scope of this present effort, but I would advance for consideration at this point that all of these positions tend to deny the relevance of the Christian faith *to the world, human race, and life which have been created and are held in existence by their Savior in heaven!* And into this vacuum has come the power of the adversary bringing the hell on earth that he has worked for since that day in Eden.

Of course we may still worship as we choose, and should be thankful for that precious privilege. But is the trend moving in our direction? Witness the *Kings Garden* case.<sup>91</sup> To carry our faith into any public quarter is now being seen as not serving secular interests, or the public concern.<sup>92</sup> {87}

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90. *Ibid.*

91. 34 FCC 2d. 937 (1972).

92. See Editorial, *Christian Lawyer* 4, no. 3:36, for a suggestion of the dilemma of Christians broadcasting as seen in the public-private, secular-religious fog of humanist ideology.

*Where the leaders have no vision, the people perish.* And natural law theory with its rationalism was the Trojan horse that brought the legions of Satan further and further into God's world. The leaders—Grotius, Locke, Rousseau, and in our nation our Presidents, Senators, churchmen—all have failed to see the command of their Creator for their lives and offices, and we as Christians, the salt of the earth, have failed to see and lead for the blessing of ourselves and our posterity. Yet we are commanded to have vision, wisdom, to prophesy.<sup>93</sup>

Thus our task, mandate, from our risen Lord is to be the salt of the earth by seeing the sword of judgment the Lord sends among our fallen fellows; God's judgment on man-erected idols; and by relating the gospel to these judgments which show the stark reality of what Scripture means when it says that men are sinners, and that God is not mocked when He is denied.<sup>94</sup> We long ago should have seen the heresy of rationalism and been able to warn humanity of its folly in this regard. But even now, with the sweep of culture having rebelled against the mystical qualities of rationalism,<sup>95</sup> it is not too late to begin our public work by pointing out the root weaknesses of rationalism and simultaneously the weaknesses of positivistic and sociological jurisprudence as they seek yet another idol while rejecting the Baal of "sweet rationality." In

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93. 1 Cor. 14.

94. *Time Magazine*, January 8, 1973, 37, quoted Judge Saul A. Epton as follows: "Something is wrong he now believes, with the entire U.S. judicial system. 'We give the longest sentences,' he says, 'and yet we have the most crime. I do not know the answers. I'm just very frustrated.'"

95. The mysticism or irrationalism of the heart of rationalism is exposed in the writing of Clarence B. Carson, *The Flight from Reason* (Foundation for Economic Education Inc., 1969), where he speaks in almost existentialist terms: "But the immediate task here is to delineate right reason. Right reason, we gather, is conformable to nature. This is a very helpful clue. Right reason is thought in accord with the nature of the mind. More, right reason is reason with a built-in content. The mind does not operate in a void; it has a conception of the way things are. Modern thought got hung up over the question of how the mind gets this conception. The Platonists have held that it is innate. John Locke broke radically with this view to hold that the conception of the way things are comes to us from the senses. Let us admit that we do not know how we know what we know, and rather affirm that we do indeed know what we know. However acquired, then, right reason has content which consists of the conception of the way things are."

this manner the gospel of Christ will become pointedly relevant to all lawyers and a witness for Christ be made legally. Men will be called to repentance from their sin *as lawyers* in denying Christ His place in jurisprudence. And if the idols of rationalism, positivism, and sociological jurisprudence are cast down, men's eyes then can be directed to the true source of justice: God's law.

# APOLOGISTS OF CLASSICAL TYRANNY: AN INTRODUCTORY CRITIQUE OF STRAUSSIANISM

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*Archie P. Jones*

Straussianism is both a doctrine and a method. It cannot be fully understood apart from an awareness that its methodology and its doctrine are complementary parts of the whole which is the legacy of the late Leo Strauss, as interpreted by the clear majority of his most devoted students and, in turn, their most devoted followers.<sup>96</sup> The *methodology* of Straussianism may be summarily defined as the search for philosophical and political truth via an exacting, exhaustive, and logical exegesis of the writings of great political philosophers and thinkers, with special emphasis on the discovery of esoteric teachings conveyed by these thinkers through deliberate omissions and contradictions in their writings. More Straussians will confess to being Straussians in methodology than will confess to being Straussians in doctrine. And yet on this point their assertion is only partly true—in the sense that Straussians depart from the master in some fundamental ways—for perhaps the most prevalent emphasis of Strauss was on the Greek doctrine of the philosophical life as the highest life for man, and it seems a natural tendency for one who fancies himself to be par-

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96. The best introduction is the fine Straussian history: Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972). Obviously, not all former students of Strauss, nor of his disciples, are “converts” to Straussianism. Many—more, we shall see, than one would expect—have remained moderns. And a few, like my teacher, Paul Eidelberg, have, contrary to the dogmas of both Straussian orthodoxy and modernism, attempted to synthesize the teachings of the ancients and the moderns. Eidelberg sees a “Politics of Magnanimity” as the theoretical framework for synthesizing the ancients’ emphasis on virtue and excellence with the moderns’ emphasis on individuality and freedom. For an introduction to this, see his *A Discourse on Statesmanship: The Design and Transformation of the American Polity* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

icipating in such a life to assert, in some degree, his independence of intellectual subservience to another who is near to him in time. Despite these disclaimers by some, Straussianism is also a *doctrine* which, in less than perfect conformity to all the teachings of the master, holds to the superiority of the ancients' (the Greeks') teachings, the inferiority of the moderns' teachings, and the irrelevance of the teachings of revealed religion.

There are many things on which both the biblical Christian and the {89} American conservative can agree with Strauss and Straussians. But there are also some fundamental issues upon which the doctrine of the Straussian should be anathema to both the biblical Christian and the American conservative. Nor is this to say that Strauss would have agreed with all the positions taken by his disciples. But to discern these things we must first turn to the teachings of the master.

Leo Strauss (1899–1973), was, of course, not genealogically a Greek. A German Jew of conservative upbringing, he emigrated, like so many distinguished scholars, to the United States in 1938, in order to escape the terrors of life under National Socialism. An incisive, careful, and ever-inquisitive reader, steeped in close exegetical study of the great writings of the West, he was a great and inspiring teacher, first of political science and philosophy at the New School for Social Research, then (1949–1968) of political philosophy at the University of Chicago, and finally in post-retirement positions at Claremont Men's College, in California, and St. John's College, in Maryland.<sup>97</sup> It was not only the exacting craftsmanship and intriguing complexity of his writing style, nor the depth of his penetration and the breadth of his learning, manifested in a number of seminal works, but also his greatness in the classroom which attracted students.<sup>98</sup> Professor Strauss was surely one of the most profound and most careful students of politics and political philosophy to appear in this century—and some would say in the modern

97. John East, "Leo Strauss and American Conservatism," *Modern Age* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1977):1.

98. East, 2–3. For an excellent, laudatory introduction to accompany that of East, see David L. Schaeffer Jr., "The Legacy of Leo Strauss: A Bibliographic Introduction," *Intercollegiate Review* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1974):139–48. For representative eulogies by some of his most distinguished students, see the December 1973 issue of the *National Review*.

era. The possessor of a subtle and penetrating mind, Strauss, like many (though not enough!) others in our era, turned from the fashionable views of the modern “*intelligentsia*” to become an adherent of many of the older views of the “Great Tradition.” In turning, he led others not only to follow the careful and exacting methodology of his exegesis, but also to a similar destination.

### 1. *Leo Strauss: The Teaching*

Our concern here is not so much with the master as with the disciples. Yet this concern cannot avoid some consideration of the nature of the destination desired by the master. For Strauss was plainly a political philosopher (though by no means a *plain* political philosopher!) of a very high order, although one who deliberately cloaked his teaching within his interpretations of the writings of great philosophers, particularly in his elucidation of the philosophical and political issues underlying the dispute between the ancients and the moderns. We may perhaps be forgiven {90} for amending a conclusion of East’s fine study, namely, that Strauss’s affection for classical Greek political philosophy is a pervasive characteristic of all his work,<sup>99</sup> since affection for classical Greek political philosophy is *the* pervasive and most prominent characteristic of all Strauss’s work. Clearly, it was the humanistic, not the religious, part of the “Great Tradition” which was emphasized by Strauss.

Schaeffer and others have truly said that Strauss’s accomplishment as scholar was, first, by attacking the assumptions of positivism and historicism dominant in the recent and present intellectual community, to rescue the study of political philosophy from the antiquarian status into which those presuppositions had relegated it, and, second, to teach men the lost art of how to study political philosophy,

... by making them aware of the depth and care which went into the writings of the great philosophic works, and the consequent need of a similar thoughtfulness and care on the part of the reader who wishes truly to understand these work.<sup>100</sup>

99. East, 3; emphasis added.

100. Schaeffer, 140; cf. also note 97.

*Positivism*, the notion that only through the methods of empirical observation of material data can one truly know politics scientifically, is, though named by August Comte (ca. 1830) and practiced by most social and political scientists today, at least as old as Machiavelli.<sup>101</sup> Strauss attacked the positivism of the new political science for its break with the commonsense understanding of things as “things possessing qualities,” a break which makes the new political science reduce “political things to nonpolitical data,” a reduction which cannot be justified empirically, since “it is not known through sense data that the only possible objects of perception are sense data”; hence it is impossible to establish empiricism empirically. This renders the new political science incapable of distinguishing between the relevant and the irrelevant, and, in common with the rest of distinctively modern political thought, incapable of speaking objectively of the good, and thus of virtue and the common good. He further attacked the new political science for its “dogmatic exclusion of religious awareness,” based on “a dogmatic atheism which presents itself as merely methodological or hypothetical,” scoring its “unreasoned unbelief.” Finally, he attacked the new political science for its unexamined worship of liberal democracy combined with its professed objectivity in regard to the ethical good. Such “objectivity” strengthens the most dangerous {91} proclivities of democracy, by teaching in effect the equality of all desires, thus destroying the possibility of both self-contempt and self-respect. It requires that “social and political scientists” maintain an attitude of neutrality toward the enemies of liberal democracy and leads them to “an almost willful blindness to the crisis of liberal democracy, which they have, in part, created.” His concluding words are telling:

No wonder then that the new political science has nothing to say against those who unhesitatingly prefer surrender, that is, the abandonment of liberal democracy, to war.

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101. See Strauss’s *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, [1958] 1969). Although he expects to win no plaudits from Straussians, your servant considers it a privilege to have studied under some of them and, within the limits outlined below, considers such a work as Strauss’s *Thoughts* proof of the superiority of Strauss’s methodology—a painstaking and inquisitive exegesis of a text—to that practiced by many students of political philosophy.

Only a great fool would call the new political science diabolic: it has no attributes peculiar to fallen angels. It is not even Machiavellian for Machiavelli's teaching was graceful, subtle, colorful. Nor is it Neroian. Nevertheless one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns.<sup>102</sup>

Because positivism limits itself to the empirically observable data of the material world, it can, at best, speak only of that which has been observed in the present or the past; hence, "positivism necessarily transforms itself into historicism."<sup>103</sup>

Strauss attacked historicism because it, too, denies the possibility of objective standards, and because it, in its own terms, must be false. *Historicism* (one of the presuppositions of the so-called biblical "higher criticism") maintains that men's ideas are the products and prisoners of the times in which they live. If this is so, there can be no objective standards (short of revealed ones, which historicism denies) in terms of which man can know how he should live; hence the values of all societies and individuals are mere conventions which will be superseded by new conventions with the changes wrought by time. But historicism, it is true, must be false, for historicism is itself a product of the nineteenth century and must, by its own standard, be superseded with the passage of time. In order to avoid this reality, historicism must exempt itself from its own conclusion. Historicism does this because it is grounded in a denial of the possibility of the philosophic enterprise, that is, "the attempt to replace opinions about the whole by knowledge of the whole."

This denial is rooted in the crisis {92} of modern natural right, which arose because of the modern politicization of philosophy, visible

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102. Strauss, "An Epilogue," in Herbert J. Storing, ed., *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 327. This essay is must reading for those interested in the Behaviorist-Straussian controversy, or in the criticisms of behaviorist political science. As Gordon H. Clark, Cornelius Van Til, and others have pointed out, the empiricist cannot really know anything on his own terms, because he must assume the existence of a rational, chanceless universe, which cannot be proven empirically; the empiricist cannot really know anything until he knows everything, for he cannot empirically prove that there does not exist something outside the scope of his observation which influences that which he observes.

103. Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 25; quoted in East, 16.



even in the great conservative Edmund Burke's abandonment of the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition of giving primacy to theory and metaphysics and his consequent abandonment of transcendent standards in favor of discovering the latent wisdom inherent in the (even providentially ordered) unfolding of the historical process. But even the prescription praised by Burke cannot dispense with natural right unless prescription itself is a sufficient guarantee of goodness, or unless man's reason can clearly discern the intent of the divine Author of providence. And though "the 'experience of history' and the less ambiguous experience of the complexity of human affairs may blur ... they cannot extinguish, the evidence of those simple experiences regarding right and wrong which are at the bottom of the philosophic contention that there is a natural right."<sup>104</sup>

In his critiques of positivism and historicism, Strauss's argument rests on the fact of fundamental "common sense" experiences of right and wrong, from which the philosopher (as distinguished from the intellectual) proceeds, via rational argument, to a knowledge of the universals of ethics. We shall return to the problem of this ancient and Straussian reliance upon "common sense," but for the moment let us note that Eric Voegelin has pointed out that the Western concept of "common sense" is rooted in Greek and Judeo-Christian worldview, and hence is rooted in views not shared by cultures with different religious and philosophical outlooks. Plato and Aristotle, as well as their contemporary Straussian disciples, were quite aware of the phenomenon of cultural disagreement over the nature of right and the good, and that men's opinions about the good change over time. For these ancients, as well as for Strauss and his disciples, the existence of such differences of opinion does not obviate the possibility of the knowledge by one who has cultivated his reason of the unchanging ethical forms.

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104. *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), chap. 1, 6, and 294–323. Strauss did not give enough attention to the fact that God's divine providence is the basis of Burke's thought; the providence of God implies the establishment of biblical standards as normative; perhaps it could be said that Burke's lack of clarity on this point is a shortcoming of his political teaching. For a condensed view of Strauss on empiricism, see East, 10–15; for further relevance, see Strauss's *Thoughts* and his *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

But the problem obscured by the ancients is precisely whether man can, on the strength of his unaided reason, proceed from prescientific, commonsense experiences of right and wrong to a tolerably and hence individually and politically helpful set of ethical standards. Before considering this problem more fully, it is best to resume our overview of Strauss's teaching.

Strauss's *critique of modernity* extends back to the roots of positivism, {93} historicism, and other contemporary ideologies to Machiavelli, the founder of modern political thought, and to Hobbes, his assistant in establishing the "first wave of modernity." Both men, though subtly, broke with the biblical and classical traditions. They saw man in terms of the lower, the subhuman, the animal, rather than the higher, the rational, the perfection, or the salvation of man. Both denied the existence of, and hence the possibility of a right order in, the soul; both implicitly denied the existence of the biblical God and of an objective moral order. Making man the measure of all things and denying reason's ability to know objective moral norms, they made the *desires of the individual* the foundation of politics. Their denial of moral norms made power, glory, and security the new desiderata, and their instrumentalisation of reason rendered man's reason the subject of his will. Their optimism about the capabilities of the great man and the malleability of the nature of the common man launched the notion that man can, through the use of "well-ordered" (one could say, scientifically ordered) institutions, "ordered" via power and deceit, overcome either of the supreme threats to man—for Hobbes, violent death and lack of comfort—or the "chance" circumstances which have previously stood in opposition to man's will.<sup>105</sup>

Rousseau, the eighteenth-century successor of Machiavelli and Hobbes, loosed the "second wave of modernity," that of romantic Jacobinism. He openly broke with the "Great Tradition," repudiated God and biblical teaching, and denied the existence of teleology and norms. Placing the *individual's passions* in the seat of authority, and with Hobbes, abandoning the classical dualism of form and matter, he affirmed the dualism of freedom and nature, defining freedom as the ability to do what one wills. He thus removed any objective purposes for free-

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105. East, 16; *Natural Right and History*, 272–76, 278–82, 294.

dom, equated freedom with virtue, and replaced “the primacy of perfection, virtue or duty” with “an ultimate sanctity of the individual as individual, unredeemed and unjustified.” By removing objective purposes for freedom, Rousseau abandoned any tenable distinction between freedom and license. When applied to the most excellent men, such notions meant that true freedom must be found beyond society. When applied to the ordinary man, the citizen, such notions led to the surrender of all individual rights to the society’s vague and unlimited “general will,” and to the replacement of the natural law with the “general will,” which is in reality determined by the arbitrary fiat of a “legislator.” Though man and reason are the products of “blind fate,” of nature, the creativity of man’s (read: the legislator’s) reason can master the forces of nature by establishing the “general will” and hence the “virtue” of the many, of the collective man that is society.<sup>106</sup> {94}

Nietzsche launched the “third wave of modernity,” that of the apotheosis of man and open war on both Jerusalem and Athens. Blasphemously declaring the death of God, Nietzsche deified man, proclaimed Christianity to be mere “slave morality,” and rejected the Platonic doctrine of the knowability of the Good via reason, substituting the “*will to power*” for the restraints of Christian love and the classical Good. The hard, cruel, egoistic Nietzschean man openly seeks to usurp the place of God and recognizes, by definition, no higher authority than himself. His eschewal of the authority of traditional theology, philosophy, and history leads him to the use of power to destroy man, even to the destruction of self, for his denial of these traditional authorities leads to the “adoration of the nothing.”<sup>107</sup>

The three waves of modernity embodied and led to positivism and historicism but also to the modern phenomenon of *utopianism*. Activist philosophy, or philosophy in the service of activism, denied the classical pessimism or realism which said that the best regime is achievable only in speech, and it also denied the biblical affirmation that it is God’s grace alone which can save man. Machiavelli urged the “virtuous” man to conquer “fortune” or chance via the use of human institutions and actions; Hobbes said that man could escape the limits

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106. East, 15.

107. *Ibid.*

of nature via the institution of government; Rousseau proclaimed man “infinitely perfectible”; Nietzsche made man “god,” and hence the conqueror of nature and determiner of all human things. *Secular redemption is the goal of modern man*, and is to be accomplished by his *mastery over nature*. This project receives its fullest expression in modern totalitarianism, and in particular in National Socialism and Communism. This project is not only futile, but also fully tyrannical, since, in opposition to the “Great Tradition” of the West, it is founded upon “... pride, egalitarianism, relativism, perversion, terror, power, despair, and the rebuilding of the human condition from new foundations of strictly human design.”<sup>108</sup>

## 2. Strauss and Straussians: *The Desiderata*

With what would Strauss replace the perversions of modernity? Not with the teachings of the modern offspring of Locke. For Lockean individualism is the descendant of Machiavellian individualism and Hobbesian individualism, minus the grandeur of Machiavelli but with comfort added to (or made more explicit than) the self-preservation of Hobbes. The political hedonism of Locke “laid the theoretical foundation for the acquisitive society,”<sup>109</sup> and for modern libertarianism. But the egoism and {95} hedonism of the Lockean-libertarian tradition neither generated the theoretical strength and depth to withstand the onslaughts of the antilibertarian mainstream of the modern tradition nor provided higher ends for the individual’s existence. East’s summary of Strauss on statist and anti-statist liberalism is apt:

... The Lockean tradition negated notions of duty and service, of excellence and virtue, and offered instead tantalizing visions of ever-expanding rights which fostered egoism. Nor, continued Strauss, did libertarianism in general possess the theoretical strength and depth to withstand the evils of the modern isms. Rooted also in hedonism and egoism, libertarianism soon produced cloying and aimlessness, and life degenerated into “the joyless quest for joy...” Similarly, there was not redemptive power in modern statist liberalism. Its ethical foundations were appallingly thin: it challenged no one to virtue and service;

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108. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

109. Quoted in *ibid.*, 18; see also *History of Political Philosophy*, 532–53 and 782–804 for Straussian views of Rousseau and Nietzsche.

rather, it openly, unrelentingly, and arrogantly pandered to hedonism by promising material surfeit through governmental planning and edict. Knowledge no longer had “the character of ascent” toward the transcendent and enduring; it existed exclusively to serve the ever escalating material demands of the unrestrained human ego.<sup>110</sup>

It is clearly Strauss’s esteem of the tradition of classical political philosophy originating in Socrates-Plato and continuing, in a general way, with Aristotle, which led him *to reject the modern liberal’s emphasis on freedom*. Strauss and his disciples continually disparage the teachings of the moderns and hold up the teachings of the ancients as the true standard of political philosophy. Or rather, Strauss and his disciples, even while they note that essentially modern presuppositions and political teachings are as old as the original Sophists (as can be seen in Plato’s dialogues), at the same time obscure both the fundamental presuppositional identities between ancient and modern thought and the fundamental epistemological difficulties of ancient (and indeed all would-be autonomous) thought. Such difficulties led to the fragmentation of Greek philosophical and political thought after Plato and Aristotle and the rise of Skepticism and Cynicism. For despite their other differences, ancients and moderns presuppose what would-be autonomous men have necessarily presupposed ever since that episode in Eden:

- (1) that man’s mind or reason is autonomous (self-sufficient)—that man’s mind or power of logical thought is the ultimate point of reference in predication
- (2) that the environment in which man finds himself is ultimately impersonal—that is, though a god may exist, he cannot be the God of Scripture, the Creator who is the Sovereign of the universe and who thus can alone speak authoritatively about the universe and man
- (3) that the environment in which man finds himself is also fundamentally a chance-dominated universe—and hence, as Van Til has pointed out, an irrational one—and {96}
- (4) that, even though a god or gods may exist, the events of history and the things which exist are ultimately “determined” by the impersonal, plus time, plus chance.<sup>111</sup>

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110. East, 18.

*The oft-heard Straussian distinction between ancients and moderns is more apparent than real; similar presuppositions yield similar political conclusions ... and similar problems. This is more true of the disciples than of the master, for Strauss was more apt to introduce the consideration for revealed norms into the study of political philosophy than are his disciples, and even stated a preference for biblical principles.*

### *A. Plato and the Ancients as Summum Bonum*

Straussians are more wont to praise the ancients and condemn the moderns than they are to distinguish between the ancient “good guys and bad guys” and between the strengths and weaknesses of the greatest of the ancients, but it is clear that both Strauss and the majority of his disciples preferred the political philosophy of Plato over that of Aristotle.<sup>112</sup> Although Aristotle’s cosmology, like Plato’s, is teleological (ends-oriented), Strauss preferred Plato’s view, because while Aristotle treats each of the various levels of being, and hence especially every level of human life, on its own terms, Plato’s discussion of every subject is inseparable from the question of the *right way of life* and the *best political order*.<sup>113</sup> Like all non-Christian religious philosophies, *Straussianism is essentially Pelagian*: it is a *philosophy of works*, the works of the philosopher or “wise man” who saves himself through philosophically “perfecting” himself via the cultivated dominance of his reason over his passions, and who would be the “savior” of the political order, if he would and could rule.<sup>114</sup> This redemptive action consists, essentially, in the raising of oneself from the realm of matter (the physical world) to the realm of form (Plato’s ideas), via the supposedly “autonomous” reason’s ascent from the becoming (flux) and hence ignorance or opinion to the realm of being, permanence, and hence knowledge, through following the *logos*, or reason, {97} which makes evident the presupposed rational structure of being. Such an enterprise begins out

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111. See Cornelius Van Til, “Foreword,” in Jim S. Halsey, *For a Time Such as This* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976), vii.

112. Strauss’s *Natural Right and History* is the clearest statement of this; see also *History of Political Philosophy*, 7–63, and East, 3.

113. East, 3; the quotation is from *Natural Right and History*, 156.

of a sense of “piety,” which results from man’s contemplation of the “lowly estate” in which he finds himself in nature.<sup>115</sup>

Such a piety, however, is not piety in the sense of reverence to God, for Socrates-Plato teaches that all the gods of the city are human inventions, that one cannot know whether whatever lies after death is better than life, and that the gods of the Greeks (and by implication of all other societies) cannot or do not communicate with men. The whole supposedly divinely ordained mission of Socrates’s life, namely, the alleged attempt to discover the meaning of the Oracle of Delphi’s assertion that there is no wiser than Socrates, is a practical denial of the validity of divine revelation to man. Consider: If the oracle means that *everyone* is equally as wise as Socrates (which is unlikely, in light of Socrates’s claim to a monopoly on the knowledge in the *Apology* and in light of his implicit claim to perfection in his conversation with Callicles in the *Gorgias*), then Socrates must end in skepticism, since others differ with him, or he must pray for revelation, and in any case is still unaided by the supposed previous communication from the divine. If *some* men are as wise as Socrates, then his entire effort is wasteful, since in encountering another as wise as himself he would only be hearing that which he already knew. Finally, if the Oracle meant what it seems to say, that *Socrates* is the wisest man, then Socrates is being impious in questioning its word, just as he is in fact being impious in questioning the word of the Oracle if it means any of the previous alternatives. The attitude of Socrates toward the gods in general and the gods of the Greeks in particular, is one of impiety. Though he, with false humility, says that he has no knowledge of things other than human, thus asserting that he has no knowledge of the divine, Socrates

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114. The term *saviour* is no accidental designation: see Plato’s *Republic*, especially bk. 6 and 496c, 500d, 502d, 499b, 506b. In light of this fact, Eric Voegelin’s assertion that it is a characteristic of modern political philosophy to see themselves as secular “Christ-figures”—saviors—should be modified. The Platonic philosopher is, in a sense, a more realistic would-be-Christ-figure than Marx or Comte, but only in the sense that his claims are not so large, nor his view of the nature of most men so optimistic, as that of his modern would-be autonomous descendants. The Platonic best regime may be realizable only in speech, but its ideal of total control by an elite remains the guiding ideal of classical political philosophy.

115. Strauss, cited in East, 14.

in fact separates the construction of the best regime from all divine guidance, and repeatedly identifies the philosopher-founder with the divine.

Some may argue that Socrates claims divine inspiration, in the form of his famous “inner voice.” Yet his claim that this inner diemonic voice has perhaps been given to one other or to no other gives his claim the status of special revelation, and removes it from all rational and/or empirical investigation.<sup>116</sup> With such a claim, the whole Socratic enterprise of “reason” vanishes into the realm of myth.

The best god Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle can come up with is an unknown, finite, and uncommunicative god—a god who is a mere limiting concept. As Van Til has pointed out, such a god, even if he could and did communicate with us, would be at best our “senior partner” in exploring the presupposed chance-ruled “cosmos” of the ancients. He could not {98} truly limit anything, for his word would lack authority, since he, too, exists in a chance universe. But Socrates, the idol of Plato, the idol of subsequent Platonists, and the idol of Straussians, makes no attempt to rely on divine revelation. What else could an apostate man (who chooses to continue to be an apostate man) do? Rather, his philosophical “ascent,” the “ascent” so admired by Strauss and his disciples, is an “ascent” to an *a priori*, presupposed, metaphysical realm of forms or ideas, the chief of which is the “Idea of the Good,” in terms of which the self-proclaimed “divine” philosopher-founder says—legislates—what any god, and hence God, must be like. *For the ancients, God is a limited god, a limiting concept (though an unsuccessful one), himself limited by the word of man.* The ascent of the “wise man” up the presupposed “chain of being” from ignorance to knowledge, from matter to form, is thus both religiously and politically a claim to *self-deification*. The philosopher becomes, by his own definition, the “savior” of himself and the “savior” of the polis.<sup>117</sup> He must determine the constitution

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116. The claims of Christianity are, of course, based on empirically investigable historical events.

117. Some may object to this characterization of Socrates. Yet Bible-believing Christians must maintain, as did a former professor of mine, that even Socrates was one of the “graceless Greeks,” and as such is, by *biblical definition* (Gen. 3:5), apostate, in rebellion against God. On the apostate philosopher as “savior,” see the *Republic* and note 114.



and conduct of all things in the best regime, from religion to reproduction, because it is he who, if we accept his claim, determines the constitution of the universe, or at the very least is the man who alone can speak authoritatively about the constitution of the universe. And before such a being, especially since he informs us that the constitution of the universe is an ultimate unity or oneness, in terms of his philosophically presupposed and politically legislated “Idea of the Good,” to which the city must conform, no mere man can stand. The “ascent” of Plato, while politically preferable to the ancient and modern denial of the existence of objective moral norms, is but pride cloaked in humility.

Such rationalistic pride—the attempt to ascend, via the operation of reason upon the “common sense” observations which makes of the world and man, to a knowledge of universals in terms of which one can know how he should live—is both religious in essence and self-defeating. Although man may begin from a sense of wonder at the existence and attributes of the universe, the man without revelation, or the man who chooses to reject God’s revelation, must, in order to explore the universe in search of meaning, begin from *religious presuppositions*. Religious because man’s spatial and temporal finitude (and especially his fallenness!) denies him omniscience, and hence requires him to posit and, if he is to live, act upon certain *unproven* ideas about the fundamental nature of reality: ideas which necessarily involve the divine. Religious because these ideas arise {99} from the very heart of man’s being or nature. And religious because these presupposed ideas are taken on faith. Even to begin a rational investigation of the cosmos, man must presuppose both the existence of a rationally intelligible structure of being and the adequacy of his reason to the task. And he who either would or is forced by circumstances<sup>118</sup> to undertake the enterprise of discovering knowledge, meaning, and moral standards without the incomparable aid of God’s revelation must also presuppose the autonomy of his reason. Rationalistic man, be he ancient or modern, literally thinks and lives by faith: *faith in autonomous reason*.

The rationalistic religious “ascent” of Platonic man must, since all human reasoning is necessarily circular because it is necessarily presuppositional,<sup>119</sup> be circular, not linear. Since even Socrates must

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118. Among which, we should note, is the unpleasant fact of his own fallenness.

reason from presuppositions, even the conclusions of Socrates, the destination of his “ascent,” are (so long as Socrates is logical!) determined by his starting presupposed religious ideas. And what’s sauce for the Socratic goose is sauce for post-Socratic ganders. The question therefore is twofold: 1) can man’s “autonomous” reason, as the main tradition of classical thought saw it, really know anything on its own terms, much less “natural right”? and 2) is “common sense,” the basis for classical political philosophy, philosophically justifiable?

In answer to the *first* question, we have noted that even the reason of Socrates must begin from *unproven presuppositions*. But the very presuppositional nature of all human thought renders the Socratic and humanistic assertion of the authority of reason a declaration of religious faith disguised as human impartiality, and hence renders reason’s pretended authority a nullity. Thus the very starting point of ancient “autonomous” man presents him with an insoluble difficulty. A second insoluble difficulty is the ancients’ religious presupposition of the existence of a dualism of Form and Matter. It is common for natural law or natural right thinkers to point out that natural law presupposes ontology, that is, structure of being, including not only the physical but also the metaphysical. The Greek dualism of Form and Matter is one such presupposition; the medieval dualism of Grace and Nature is another; the modern dualism of Freedom and Nature is a third.

However, while the existence of a Form and Matter dualism is necessary for ancient ethics, this dualism is not established as real by the assertion of ontology’s authority, for *the truth of Greek ontology itself is a presupposition which remains to be proven*. Christians presuppose the existence of the sovereign triune Creator-God. Greeks presuppose the existence of a finite, anchoretic, limited “God” in a Form/Matter {100} but ultimately chance-governed universe. And never the twain shall meet. But the crucial point has been established in one way by Clark<sup>120</sup> and in another way by Van Til:<sup>121</sup> *in terms of his own structure of pretended autonomous thought, the Greek rationalist can know nothing.*

119. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., [1955] 1972), 100–101, and passim.

120. Gordon A. Clark, *Three Types of Religious Philosophy* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), 1–51.

The existence of abstract forms or ideas is *a priori*: it must be accepted on faith, but faith is, by the very criteria of would-be-autonomous rationalism, inadmissible before the bar of “philosophy.” And would-be-autonomous man’s assertion of the determinative role of “chance” in the universe renders the whole structure of his would-be ontology radically suspect, since a chance universe is an irrational universe, and so a universe about which reason cannot speak. If the would-be autonomous Greek cannot speak rationally about the very structure of the universe, if he must accept its structure of Form and Matter on faith, he must fail his own test of knowledge. And if he cannot speak to us about the very structure of the universe, he cannot speak to us about the duties of ethical conduct, of “natural right.”

Moreover, the assertion of a dualistic structure, be it one of Form and Matter, of Grace and Nature, or of Freedom and Nature, leads to the alternation between one or the other of the poles of the dualism, as individual thinkers choose to ground their thought on one basis or the other, or choose to discover the truth of the assertion that forms, for example, exist. Thus Greek culture produced both *Neoplatonic mystical flight from the material world* and its correlative *materialistic hostility toward law and ethics* as exemplified by the Cynics. The process was repeated in the medieval world, as:

The Nominalists simply denied the reality of the universals of the world of grace; the world again relapsed into atomism. If reason were sovereign in its realm, and reason knows nothing of this realm of grace with its law, then reason must conclude that this world of grace and law is not real.<sup>122</sup>

If the Form and Matter dualism leads to the emphasis on matter to the exclusion of form by reason of individual preference, it also leads to skepticism and cynicism by reason of the very failure of Socrates and Plato to convince post-Platonic philosophers of the validity of Plato’s *a priori* argumentation and of the existence of the famed Platonic forms. Already in Aristotle, we see the beginnings of an empirical approach to

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121. See Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1969), for a full statement of his argument.

122. Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1971), 26; see also 23–26.

knowledge. In the Skeptics, we have a serious philosophical investigation of the empirical {101} method of attempting to verify the existence of universals resulting in doubt whether man can indeed know anything. As Clark points out, we are now in our third such cycle of rationalism leading to empiricism leading to skepticism.<sup>123</sup> Such a cycle springs precisely from the project of would-be autonomous thought and from nowhere else. Strauss and his disciples at best neglect and at worst obscure these problems.

What about the *second* question, the common-sense basis of classical political philosophy? Together with the adherents of modern natural law and of classics natural right, Straussians take their stand against the medieval absorption of natural law by theology, on the premise that

moral principles have a greater evidence than the teachings even of natural theology and, therefore, than natural law or natural right should be kept independent of theology and its controversies.<sup>124</sup>

To the Christian, this is a strange argument, since it is impossible that right exists without God: without God man is left with mere subjective opinion about justice, for there can be no objective basis of agreement about justice apart from a God-ordained standard of justice. Basing the argument, as Straussians are wont to do, on “common sense,” provides little help, for the fact that men normally recognize the things which they encounter in this world as “things having values” does not provide them with *objective standards* of what those values truly are, especially when not only cultures but also the great philosophers (including the great Greeks) disagree about the nature of those values. Nor does the classical claim to utilize pure reason to discern the universals from a commonsense beginning somehow purify “common sense,” for to begin from “common sense” is to ignore the *epistemological problems associated with man’s everyday observation*. If reason in the abstract, the “logos,” be deemed the way to knowledge and salvation, then it is inconsistent, and thus a violation of reason, to exempt an area of life from rational investigation: “common sense” cannot legitimately become an evasion of reason. The ancient, modern, and Straussian

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123. Clark, *Three Types*, passim, and Clark, *Thales to Dewey: A History of Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), esp. 533–34.

124. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 164.

resort to “common sense” and “reason” is in the final analysis an attempt to evade biblical law:

... the ultimate consequence of the Thomistic view of natural law is that natural law is practically inseparable not only from natural theology—i.e., from a natural theology which is, in fact, based on biblical revelation—but even from revealed theology.<sup>125</sup>

It is to Strauss’s credit that he noted this fact; his disciples are less open. But to apply reason to “common sense” is precisely to encounter the insoluble problems of knowing faced on the one hand by the *a priori* rationalist {102} and on the other hand by the *a posteriori* empiricist, and thus to face the blind alley that is the epistemological lot of humanistic man.<sup>126</sup>

But the Christian must go further in his examination of Straussian presuppositions regarding natural right. The Straussian and his natural right or natural law colleagues assume that nature, not the Word of God, is normative. Holy Scripture, however, says that nature is fallen, that God, not nature, is the source of law, and that God’s fully inspired word is man’s authoritative source of knowledge about the moral law. *If nature is normative, the obvious and historical conclusion is that man has no need of God’s word.* Given the fact that the carnal mind is at enmity against God, that men suppress the truth in unrighteousness, refusing to glorify God and disliking to retain God in their knowledge, and given the fact that even Christians are still, while in this world, affected by original sin, it is not surprising that men from Plato to de Sade and Marx have turned to various doctrines of natural law in their pride.

While those who do not have the law may show the work of the law written in their hearts (Rom. 2:14–15), the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:13–16), because man’s intellect is fallen as well as his will, because the ways of God are higher than the ways of man, and because the Lord declares: “It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

125. *Ibid.*

126. See Clark, *Three Types of Religious Philosophy*, Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, and R. J. Rushdoony, *The Word of Flux: Modern Man and the Problem of Knowledge* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1975).

and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (1 Cor. 1:19). Men may have a rudimentary knowledge of God’s law, but they cannot, on their own, construct valid legal philosophies from this rudimentary knowledge—even if they could agree upon the meaning of the Nature from which they seek to discover such laws<sup>127</sup>—for in addition to the scripturally delineated difficulties, there remain the epistemological difficulties summarized above. For him who would reject the biblical arguments above, there remains a final insurmountable philosophical difficulty:

Hume’s Gap, that gulf between observational data and ethical commands, has never been bridged by a secular philosopher. This is simply because there are two distinct logical categories of statements involved: propositions and commands. One cannot move directly back and forth between the two types of statements, because, among other things, propositions have truth-value, and commands do not. Commands can be neither true nor false; only propositions may be. So the natural law theorists are beset not only by ethical difficulties, in that man is depraved and nature cursed but also by an insurmountable logical difficulty, Hume’s Gap.<sup>128</sup> {103}

Neither the ancient nor the modern variety of natural law theory will withstand either the test of Scripture or the test of philosophy.

These are not mere nitpicking philosophical quibbles: *the failure of Straussianism to account for man’s knowledge in general, and for man’s ethical knowledge in particular*, upon the basis of either reason or common sense, means that the ethical concern of Straussians cannot rise above the subjective. It is all very well to speak much about the necessity of virtue (provided that one also acts consistently with his speech), but lacking a valid theory of knowledge, the ancient and the Straussian can merely opine about such matters. Rushdoony’s conclusion that for Aristotle the *state* or political community is the highest of all, aiming at the good in a greater degree than any other entity or group and also aiming at the highest good, thereby becoming the voice of justice and natural law,<sup>129</sup> applies as well to the main thrust of Platonic politics and

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127. John W. Robbins, “Some Problems with Natural Law,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1975–76): 14–20; see also R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1974), passim.

128. *Ibid.*, 18.

to Straussian politics. To be sure, there is in Plato the matter of the philosopher's tenuous relationship to the polis, but still Socrates ultimately submits to the authority of Athens even while denying that authority. For all his criticism of the Athenian gods and city, Socrates teaches us that we must at best have our say and submit to the dictates of even the unjust city. Still, the theoretical ideal is the total state of the *Republic*, founded and minutely ordered by the philosopher-king(s). Even the practical ideal pointed to by the *Republic* and *Laws* presupposes the ordering of all things by a human lawgiver. And such, we shall see, whether in Plato or in Aristotle, is *the ideal of the Straussians: the total state, ruled by "wise men."* Neither the great ancients nor the Straussians ascend far above the political community as union of the divine and the human described by Coulanges.<sup>130</sup> The difference of Platonic and Straussian politics from that total absorption of all spheres of the individual's life described by *The Ancient City* is entailed in the question of who should rule, not in the scope of rule by the state. The similarity between Straussians and other would-be ancients, however, despite the Straussian affirmation of the validity of "virtue" and the "wise man,"<sup>131</sup> lies in the inability of either to transcend a merely subjective opinion of what virtue and justice are. The religious centrality is the same; only the divinity has changed. Give a Straussian an inch—nay a centimeter—and he will assume that *he* is that mystical entity, the "wise man." But give him a mile—nay, a light year—and he will remain unable to give {104} a satisfactory account of the criteria in terms of which he or any other "wise man" should rule.

Straussians are sober, serious, and circumspect men, men likely to practice Plato's dictum that serious men should not be inclined to laughter, men to be commended for their concern with virtue and their high purpose in this age of license, frivolity, and relativism. But one's

129. R. J. Rushdoony, *Chalcedon Report*, no. 143 (July 1977).

130. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, [1864] n.d.).

131. The writer utilizes these quotation marks only to underscore the inability of "ancient" and modern Straussians to speak objectively of such things, *not* to indicate that there is no such thing as virtue or wisdom: after all, we have it on the Highest Authority that the word of God "maketh wise the simple."

admiration for these qualities should not be permitted to cloud one's estimation of the value of their teaching. Since they set up the ancients as the highest standard for men, then let us briefly inspect the ethical standards of the ancients.

For the ancients, *ethics* is not only a matter of right personal conduct, but also intimately a matter of social and political concern, supervision, and coercion. This social concern for individual action and virtue follows from the classical assumption of the essential divinity of the *polis*—the city-state, as a “cosmion,” a little cosmos uniting man and the divine. *Greek politics is not, and cannot be, incarnational.* Lacking Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God and Savior (and implicitly, presuppositionally, denying the possibility of His existence), the Greeks turned to the state, or to the rulers of the state, as the highest human manifestation of the presupposed “chain of being,” for salvation from the trammels of individual and social existence.

*Being* was believed to be a great hierarchical chain of all existing things, in which the differences between individual beings are differences in the degree of being participated in by each individual being, not differences in the kind of being inhering in each individual. Greek politics makes no distinction between the creature and the Creator. This denial of the existence of a sovereign God who created all things out of nothing is manifest in the notion of being as a dualism of Form and Matter. The best god the Greeks can imagine is one who worked on an originally existing matter to make, rather than create, all lesser beings, and who is thus limited by that matter, as well as by the abstract forms in terms of which he molded that changeable matter. Lacking sovereignty, such a god cannot be the savior of man, both because the god cannot be in ultimate control of a chance universe with its recalcitrant, changeable matter, and because such a god cannot communicate propositionally with man. Thus, just as with the various subordinationist heresies, *man becomes the only possible savior for man*, and the means of salvation becomes, individually and socially, the attainment, dissemination, and implementation of knowledge by man. Socially, this requires that the process of salvation be initiated and sustained (insofar as such sustenance is possible in a world of changing matter) by the highest point, humanly speaking, in the chain of being.<sup>132</sup> And this requires an *ascent up the chain of being*, an act of {105} *self-deification*,



by a very special man or men, who must order society in accordance with that which *man's reason*, working either from *a priori*, abstract universals (Plato), or from empirical observation (Aristotle), discovers is "right by nature." Such a man, the self-perfected, even self-deified, "wise man," is the savior of himself and, for Plato, must be the "savior" of the city if the city is to be saved. Not the incarnate Lord, the risen Christ, the triune God, but the self-rising man, the "philosopher-king," becomes the would-be savior of the city, precisely because *the philosopher replaces the triune God in the Platonic system.*

Ancient ethics was by definition political and all-inclusive also because the ancients believed that there are *objective ethical standards* available to man via (for Plato and Aristotle, particularly) reason, and because the nature of these rationally derived standards requires *political control.* For the Christian, the notion of individual perfectibility via reason and the notion of rationally derived universals constitute both a heresy and an illusion. As Cochrane has said, in regard to the "Straussians" of Augustine's day:

The claim of the heretics was that they could dispense with faith, teaching nothing except what was clear and evident to reason, and giving an account in terms of reason of the most obscure things. In this claim, as Augustine perceived, was concealed the great illusion of Classicism, an illusion common to all the heresies which derived from the classical spirit. This was the supposition that while opinion (roughly equivalent to "faith") was subjective, reason contained within itself the power to transcend the limitations of mere subjectivity and to apprehend "objective" truth. Classical reason was thus committed to an ideal of scientific objectivity, as well as to the discovery of a dialectic or technique of transcendence whereby that ideal might be realized....<sup>133</sup>

Both the Christian and the man who chooses to consider the philosophical problems inherent in the autonomous man's rationalistic enterprise must declare the classical and Straussian attempt to discover

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132. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., [1968] 1972), chap. 1, 2, and passim; *The One and the Many*, 72–73.

133. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study in Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (London: Oxford University Press, [1940] 1974), 402.

a technique of transcendence a futile, though in a sense fascinating and educational, enterprise.

Nevertheless, Plato, the highest standard among the ancients, and therefore among the political philosophers, according to Straussian doctrine, maintains that reason leads one to a transcendent “Idea of the Good,” *the* great universal or “form” in terms of which all other universals, and hence all temporal things, can be understood, and in terms of which all things in the city should be ordered, if the city is to have justice. And what is good for the city is good for the individual. As all things are ultimately one, in terms of the Idea of the Good, so all things in the city, {106} and all things in the life and even the very soul of the individual must be made one, in terms of the Idea of the Good, by the “divine” philosopher-king. The best regime, ethically, is the regime of the *Republic*, the regime ruled directly and totally by the philosopher, the regime in which a philosopher or philosophers rule over all areas of life, from the cradle to the grave and beyond, making the individual “virtuous” by manipulating all aspects of his life, from economics to religious belief.

Constructed on the basis of the “chain of being” concept and the monistic “Idea of the Good,” the *Republic* supposes that individuals are fitted by nature for only one task, and that men by nature fall into only three basic categories or types. Since all things in the regime must be one, *each person may perform only one function, which is to be chosen for him by the wise man or men who rule*, according to the ruler’s judgment of the quality of the individual’s soul. This determination is made upon the basis of one’s intellectual and moral stature, as *determined from one’s performance as a youth*, not from one’s subsequent behavior. Economic liberty can provide no possibility or incentive for personal improvement, for the *Republic*, the embodiment of “justice,” is founded on economic self-sufficiency, and is hence hostile to commerce, and aims to make men “virtuous,” and hence, since the material is seen as bad, must be based on the limitation of production and consumption to only that which is necessary for the health of the body and which will not, by luxury, corrupt the soul. And no real possibility is granted of one whose soul is deemed to be less than golden turning to the philosophical life. The *individual* is reduced to a metaphysical type embodying a *fixed degree of being*. One is, as it were, *frozen into the sta-*

*tus assigned to him* by the “wise man”: there is no vertical mobility upon the basis of one’s subsequently improved performance. Nor, in the ancient framework, is there any possibility of spiritual conversion working radical changes in the life of the individual, and hence allowing him to improve his social and economic status. One’s status is determined, in theory, by the degree to which one *participates in being*, by the part of one’s soul which rules, that is, by the *kind of soul* which one possesses. Despite the Socratic emphasis on the “turning around” of the philosophical life elsewhere, the ideal regime is patterned on the basis of an *analogy of animal breeding*, not upon the basis of fully real men, as we experience them. “Common sense” may be Platonic starting point, but the “ideal” of Justice to which Plato’s autonomous reason leads him is an abstraction based on an oversimplified portrayal of reality, in violation of human experience, and a violation of common sense!

The total control and determination of the *Republic* extends beyond the selection of the status and function of the individual in the city to incorporate all areas of the individual’s life. And beyond control of the individual’s life actions to the control over the very parentage of the {107} individual via “scientific” breeding, and even to control over the very right of the individual to live. Strauss notes that the ancients and the moderns agree in rejecting biblical law and any sort of natural law based on biblical law in order to allow the “statesman” greater latitude in confronting unusual circumstances,<sup>134</sup> but Plato urges the abolition of the family and recommends abortion and infanticide not so much as means of overcoming unusual circumstances—as if that were justifiable!—as a means of establishing and preserving his abstract idea of “Justice,” which is the city of the *Republic*. Aristotle urges abortion and infanticide for a similar purpose: the maintenance of the size of the city. Nor are contemporary Straussian venerationers of the ancients exempt from such anti-biblical notions. In 1972 I heard Joseph Cropsey, one of the most prominent Straussians, deliver a speech at the University of Dallas, in which he very subtly advocated the restructuring of the American family by the central government, on the grounds that the family was (a) under attack, for perhaps (unspecified) “good

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134. *Natural Right and History*, 163–64.

reasons,” by New Leftists, and (b) “epiphenomenal to the regime.” My wife and I were practically the only ones in the audience who did not applaud his speech. While granting the brilliance of Professor Cropsey, we may note here, as elsewhere, the ideas of pagan modern-would-be ancients and “conservatives” coincide with those of pagan moderns, while we also note that both Professor Cropsey’s ethics and his understanding of the purposes and traditions of the American regime are questionable. We shall subsequently say more on the Straussian interpretation of the American regime, but we can now clearly say that *ancient and hence Straussian ethics is clearly hostile to the dignity and liberty of the individual*. An individual whose very life before and after birth, whose very familial relationships and attachments and love, not to mention his ownership and use of property, his self-initiated actions and plans for the betterment of his life and that of his loved ones, can and must be totally regulated by an elite of self-proclaimed “wise men” in control of the power of the state, is not and cannot be an individual possessing inherent importance.

Straussians rightly manifest an antipathy to the modern notion of freedom as the absence of external restraint (Hobbes) or the ability to do what one wills (Rousseau). But this hostility is, in the abstraction of theory, extended to cover nearly all freedom of the individual to govern his own destiny, since the Christian idea of liberty under and in conformity to the law of God is omitted from consideration. This omission follows from the classical and Straussian *faith in reason*, which excludes the possibility of revelation upon the basis of an alien presupposition. While Straussians rightly emphasize virtue as a necessary correlative of freedom, {108} they make the *state*, as ruled by the “wise man” or statesman, the sole source and guarantor of virtue in the people, thereby omitting the grace of God, the role of the Church as churches—a state-controlled church would be acceptable—and the role of the voluntary associations so praised by Tocqueville. For the ancients, it is the *state* which is to be free, not the individual.

Although some Straussians have voiced strong moral opposition to slavery on the part of Southerners,<sup>135</sup> it is indeed difficult to reconcile such opinions with the classical ideal of the total state and, as we shall see, with Straussian pronouncements on subsequent American politics, except on the grounds that what is objectionable to Straussians is *pri-*

vate ownership of slaves, not the public slavery of the classical total state. The private individual may not be the “wise man,” and thus may not rightly direct the life and soul of the individual. But while in Straussian theory the Platonic emphasis on the tension between the philosopher and the city leads to the duty of the philosopher to question the justice of the city’s laws, neither in theory nor in practice is the necessity or desirability of limited, constitutional government with its substantive protections of the individual against governmental coercion granted. Consistent with classical thought, the Straussian assumption is always in favor of the public, the governmental, over the private, the individual.

Although *the best regime is realizable only in speech*, it is the ideal in terms of which all other regimes are to be judged. The *ideal* is that thoroughly ancient and modern one of *total planning by a central elite*. As Trueblood has noted, this ideal of central planning involves both a logical contradiction and ethical difficulties. The *logical problem* is that in order to plan, the would-be planner of the shape of society and the lives of individuals must assume a *determinism*, in terms of which the state can manipulate the lives of individuals to achieve its desired results; but if this determinism be true, then *the planner is himself determined*, and so cannot really plan; whereas if the determinism is false, then the plans of the state must go awry, since they can then be evaded by non-determined individuals.

The *first* ethical difficulty is that the planner must assume that which has nowhere in human history—with one exception, which the Straussians prefer not to discuss: Christ—been empirically proven to exist, namely, the *omniscience of the planner*. On this point, Aristotle, who said that there may be more wisdom in the people, collectively, than there is in the few or the one man, was more sensible than Plato. But Aristotle still failed to place any limits on the rule of the city-state.

The *second* ethical difficulty is that *the individual person* must be viewed as—and be!—*a thing which {109} can and should be manipu-*

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135. See, for example, Herbert J. Storing, “Slavery and the Moral Foundations of the American Republic,” in Robert Horwitz, ed., *The Moral Foundations of the American Republic* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1977), and various works of Harry Jaffa, principally his *The Crisis of the House Divided*.

lated, as a mechanism which, in the manner of animals, will respond in a predictable way to a given stimulus, and is incapable of responding in an unpredictable manner. For planning to work, man must be dehumanized, while the planners must be superhuman. We encounter neither in the real world; people are altogether too human.

A *third* ethical difficulty is that *society or the city must be viewed as an organism*, with the citizen-subjects composing the working parts and the planners being—you guessed it!—the brains. This again entails the dehumanization and oversimplification of the human condition. Society is not an organism in any strict sense, nor can human beings legitimately be reduced to mere “cells” within a society, as Plato attempts to do.

A *fourth* ethical difficulty is that planning assumes the existence of *one good which overrides all the other goods*, which one must seek to realize through one’s actions. For ancient and modern planners this one good is not the glory of God or the obedience of God’s word. And in the real world we have not the voice of a univocal abstract “Idea of the Good,” but rather the conflict of goods which are not in anything approaching a clear hierarchy.<sup>136</sup> The classics and their disciples seek to escape this difficulty by asserting the absolute rule of the abstract “Idea of the Good” over all ethical choices, as determined by “prudence,” or practical wisdom. It is because constitutionalism and limited government would “unduly restrict” the “prudence” of the “wise” statesman that ancients and moderns maintain that constitutional governments—especially when based on biblical law!—are undesirable: constitutions and clear universal moral rules must not be allowed to interfere with the plans of the planners! But while *an abstract “Good”* leaves the ruler/planner freedom of action, *it cannot supply evident standards* in terms of which the *individual*, be he ruler or citizen, can always know how he should act. For in a world of conflicting goods, only the most obvious conflicts can be resolved satisfactorily by “prudence” (assuming, for the moment, that the proponent of classical prudence can produce even a valid beginning ethical standard via “common sense” and his “autono-

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136. D. Elton Trueblood, “Logical and Ethical Problems Inherent in Central Planning,” in Helmut Schoeck and James W. Wiggins, eds., *Central Planning and Neo-Mercantilism* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand & Co., 1964), 1–15, esp. 13–14.

mous” reason). The “grayer” the alternative choices, the weaker the argument for making a governmental elite the sole authoritative determiner of values and actions, for the “grayer” the alternatives, the more difficult it becomes to choose rationally among them. Montgomery has said, in reference to conflicts or seeming conflicts among the individual’s obligations under the Ten Commandments, that the individual is compelled to make his choice and go to the redemptive work of the Lord on the cross to find forgiveness for sinning and for being responsible, through his inheritance from our first parents, for a fallen world in which he is confronted {110} with such choices.<sup>137</sup> Leaving aside the issue of whether Montgomery fully understands the requirements of the Decalogue (i.e., in light of Old Testament law as case law, illustrative of the particular applications of the law),<sup>138</sup> we must note that for the humanist such an alternative is unthinkable. Unthinkable because it flies in the face of his deepest presuppositions. And unthinkable to the would-be planner because it renders the individual morally responsible to God, and so nullifies the very claim to “prudence” upon which his claim to plan the lives of others rests. Even if Montgomery is right, he at least has some objective standards in terms of which he can make choices. The humanists, even the classical humanists, do not.

These logical and ethical difficulties inherent in the ancient and modern ideal of planning—not to mention the epistemological difficulties!—do not deter the Straussian from favoring the planning state. Even the second-best Platonic regime, that of the *Laws*, to which the *Republic* points, “the best regime in practice,” must be founded—constructed—by the philosopher-turned-statesman; it, too, allows the individual no freedom from the would-be benevolent supervision of the laws given by the founder and enforced or interpreted by his subsequent, though lesser, governmental successors. In the name of “virtue” the individual is still free to do only that which is permitted by the statist planners.

Plato and the Straussians lack the wisdom of the American “Founding Fathers,” who, as M. E. Bradford has pointed out, did not “found”

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137. John Warwick Montgomery, *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1970).

138. See Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, passim.

the American Republic upon the basis of abstract reason and preconceived notions of an abstract good, but rather built upon human experience and their providentially given heritage in order to retain what *was*.<sup>139</sup> As a reading of the *Federalist* and a knowledge of its historical context makes clear, the Founding Fathers built upon a knowledge of history, viewed through a basically biblical Christian view of man and the universe,<sup>140</sup> a regime which was, in the words of *Federalist* no. 10, designed to protect the very faculties of the individual, by protecting his liberty and property {111} against the effects of “faction”: against either the premeditated injustice or the presumptuous assumption of perfection on the part of others. To borrow a phrase from Ludwig von Mises, the Founders planned for individual freedom, precisely by planning against the presumption which is the idea of planning. In so doing, they not only avoided the presumption of the planners but also the insuperable logical and ethical difficulties inherent in the planning ideal, and hence avoided the chaos and diminution of liberty which it has been the function of applied central planning to create everywhere that it is attempted.

As van den Haag has noted, the true purpose of planning is to substitute the plan of the planner(s) for the plan of the individuals who make up society.<sup>141</sup> It cannot be otherwise. Rushdoony’s evaluation of the classics applies also to the Straussians: it is not the compelling force of reason, nor even the monistic ultimacy of the “Idea of the Good,” which leads them to prefer the total planning of the state; rather, it is

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139. M. E. Bradford, “A Teaching for Republicans: Roman History and the Nation’s First Identity,” *Intercollegiate Review* 11, no. 2 (Winter-Spring 1976): 67–81. Professor Bradford calls the Roman Republic “the heathen paradigm.” See also “The Heresy of Equality: Bradford Replies to Jaffa,” *Modern Age* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1976): 61–77 (special attention should be paid to Bradford’s footnotes).

140. See R. J. Rushdoony’s two important works, *This Independent Republic* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1964), and *The Nature of the American System* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1965); see also my “The Christian Roots of the War for Independence,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 3, no. 1 (Summer 1976): 6–51, with special attention to the sources cited in the notes: in fact, a perusal of the entire volume would be rewarding in this regard.

141. Ernest van den Haag, “The Planners and the Planned,” in Schoeck and Wiggins, 35–36ff.



the religious centrality of the city in Greek and ancient thought.<sup>142</sup> For Plato and Aristotle, justice is immanent, not truly transcendent, and includes the “right” of the rulers to deceive even their own people, for the good of the state. As Rushdoony has said, *for Plato justice is the subjection of all things to the divine-human order which is the city-state as cosmos*; the “good of the state,” as seen and ordered by those incarnations of divine wisdom which are the rulers, is thus the highest law, and *individual liberty is therefore the negation of justice*.<sup>143</sup> For Plato, ethics is essentially political,<sup>144</sup> but the ethical ideal enjoins two distinct sets of duties: for the “wise” rulers, total control of self and total manipulation of others; for others, total obedience. It is not only upon the basis of the insuperable epistemological difficulties facing all humanistic thought, even that of the ancients, but also upon the ancient and Straussian theoretical and practical *glorification of the idea of planning by “wise” men*, that we must note a fundamental and abiding similarity between the Straussians and their positivistic opponents. As Carl Friedrich said nearly three decades ago, the effective glorification of the state is the very essence of the Greek heritage:

So deeply rooted in the state-polis was Greek culture that any glorification of this particular culture-pattern carries with it an exaltation of the state....I do not believe that we can escape from this conclusion by taking at face value the verbal rationalizations of the Greek {112} polis, such as justice or order. The totalitarians have such verbal escapes too. The very vagueness of such words makes them available for rationalizing highly diverse political conduct. The crucial issue remains: shall we attach the highest value to the community and its effective secular organization or not?

The great world religions, foremost among them Christianity, answer this question in the negative. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” This question, addressed to every human being, more particularly holds for those who manipulate power on behalf of the community. Constitutionalism can never

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142. *The One and the Many*, 79–80.

143. *Ibid.*, 72–73, 79–81.

144. *Ibid.*, 82, and E. L. Hebdgen Taylor, *The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1966), 115. We have said little of Aristotle, but his political thought is essentially the same as that of his teacher; see *ibid.*, 83–89, and Taylor, 109–17.

be reared, except upon this foundation.... Athenian imperialism triumphed over Ionian constitutionalism (such as it was), while the mob in Athens triumphed over both. Spartan militarism, in turn, obliterated Athenian democracy, after the latter had become mob rule disguised by constitutional remnants. In other words, Greek history itself provides the most eloquent testimony against the deification of the state. The adoration of power for its own sake is the inevitable consequence. It is the crucial and at the same time the most dangerous core of the Greek cultural heritage.<sup>145</sup>

### *B. Strauss and Straussians on Religion*

It is at least imprecise to say, as Strauss did, that ancient political philosophy enjoins moderation and avoids all fanaticism “because it knows that evil cannot be eradicated and therefore that one’s expectations from politics must be moderate,”<sup>146</sup> for with all its talk of piety and moderation, *ancient thought still holds up the omnicompetent state and statesman as the ideal solution to all political ills*. Even though Strauss and the Straussians oppose the most manifest varieties of modern totalitarian fanaticism and make occasional courtly bows in the direction of our traditional individual freedom, the substitution of the ancient ideal of the total state for the modern ideal of the total state is not exactly a giant step in the direction of moderation. Nor does the burden of Straussian teaching and rhetoric on American history and political practice constitute a true advancement of moderation and piety, for Straussian practical politics always turns on an augmentation of state power, and Straussian argumentation is always based on the assumption of man’s autonomy.

Unlike his disciples, Strauss did not remain within a fully humanistic framework, for he attacked Spinoza’s rejection of the biblical heritage, and saw the Judeo-Christian heritage as both vital to the “Great Tradition” and as superior to the classical heritage. In this decision, Strauss was much influenced by Maimonides, who, in Strauss’s view, had harmonized the Platonic and Judaic traditions. Essentially, the appeal of Maimonides’s argument was threefold. First, both Platonism and Juda-

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145. “Greek Political Heritage and Totalitarianism,” *Review of Politics* 2, no. 2 (April 1940): 224.

146. *What Is Political Philosophy?*, 28; quoted in East, 6–7.

ism, in contrast to {113} modern thought, sought the Ideal, and biblical law is the ideal law. Second, Maimonides defended the “right of reason” against Judaic orthodoxy, while showing that “human reason is inadequate for solving the central problem” which faces man. This problem is man’s insignificance in the universe, which leads him to the conclusion that his claim “to be the end for which the world exists is untenable,” and thus leads him to an awareness of the necessity of revealed religion.<sup>147</sup> Third, Maimonides taught that Scripture should be approached with a view to uncovering its “hidden meaning”:

The *deeper sense* of the holy Law are pearls, and the literal acceptance of a figure is of no value in itself; ... Their *hidden meaning*, however, is profound wisdom, conducive to the recognition of real truth; ... Your object should be to discover ... the general idea which the author wishes to express.<sup>148</sup>

As an introduction to Straussian methodology, East’s careful and friendly comments on Maimonides and Strauss bear repeating:

As to reading *The Guide*, Maimonides requested, “Do not read superficially, lest you do me an injury, and derive no benefit for yourself. You must study thoroughly and read continually; for you will then find the solution to those important problems of religion, which are a source of anxiety to all intelligent men.” Maimonides then concluded with an observation which Strauss could only relish:

“Lastly, when I have a difficult subject before me—when I find the road narrow, and can see no other way of teaching a well established truth except by pleasing one intelligent man and displeasing ten thousand fools—I prefer to address myself to the one man, and to take no notice whatever of the condemnation of the multitude; I prefer to extricate that intelligent man from his embarrassment and show him the cause of his perplexity, so that he may attain perfection and be at peace.”

The technique of study advocated by Strauss in his professional career is unmistakably vintage Maimonides. There is that emphasis upon careful textual analysis in which one eschews literalism and looks for the “deeper sense” and “the hidden meaning.”<sup>149</sup>

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147. East, 6.

148. Quoted in *ibid.*, 6–7.

149. *Ibid.*, 7.

East's point, that Strauss "cast himself in the role of a modern Maimonides," is undergirded by the argument of Strauss in his *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, as well as by the methodology of Strauss and his numerous followers, and this methodology is applied not only to Scripture but also to the works of political thinkers. It must be noted that such a methodology is good training or exercise for the mind, and that the Straussian emphasis on the presence of *secret teachings* which run counter to the literal thrust of the texts of many great humanistic political thinkers results in a more {114} intelligent reading of the texts—and a clearer understanding of the philosophical issues involved in them—than do the interpretations of other dominant schools of political theory. And that Straussians are not liable, so far as texts go, to the fallacy of simplicity. Such things are attractive to many intelligent students.

But it must also be said that the methodology of Maimonides-Strauss entails certain difficulties, whether it be applied to secular writings or to Scripture. *First*, there is the characteristically humanistic assumption that man may attain *perfection* (Maimonides's choice of the word is not accidental) via his own works, in this case intellectual works. For at least the reasons discussed above, this is truly the impossible dream.

*Second*, there is the related problem, especially when the Straussian takes the ancients to be the highest source of authority, that the surviving early texts of Plato and Aristotle are by no means so accurately preserved as have been those of Holy Scripture. The more distorted the copy of the text from the original, the more difficult it is to understand the original, especially if one is looking for the "deeper sense" of the "hidden meaning."

*Third*, there is the marked disposition of Straussians to see reality as being somehow rationally caught and taught within the confines of a text. Now, this is a good principle when applied to Scripture, but only Christians take the Bible at its word and on the authority of its Author, Christ, the Incarnate Word, and so hold that *all* of Scripture is the fully inspired word of God. Humanists and heretical Christians deny the plenary inspiration of Scripture. The project, therefore, of humanistic thought is to achieve a comprehensive, coherent, and relevant understanding of man and the cosmos via the human mind or reason, and to

set forth such an understanding in a form in which it is available to other interested men. The question is, whether one man, or even a few men, is/are capable of succeeding in such a project. Only if someone is in fact capable of accomplishing such a goal can a text be its own authority. Thus the humanist is left with the gloomy prospect of confronting the insoluble epistemological difficulties, which face would-be autonomous man, and the gloomier prospect of the failure of his project. Since most humanists choose not to confront this harsh reality, they are left with the teachings of many men in many philosophical texts, one of which, be it past, present, or future, must—hopefully—be true. But the question still remains as to whether man's reason is alone capable of giving a satisfactory account of the diversity and complexity of all of reality and all of human experience. Put in simpler terms, the problem is this: *Is it by the abstract deductions of reason, or by the concrete manifestations of experience, that man best or truly understands the world?*<sup>150</sup> This problem {115} the humanist cannot solve.

A *fourth* criticism of Straussian methodology is that Straussians tend, in practice, to omit the cultural and historical *context* of the given text that they are studying, and thus to distort, by oversimplifying, the reality of the text itself. As a pastor friend of mine is fond of saying, “Text without context is a pretext.”

This consideration leads us to the *fifth*, and decisive, methodological problem of Straussian textual analysis: the difficulty of distinguishing between *text* and *interpretation*. The Straussian search for hidden meanings and its bias against the literal sense of a text is a result of the classical desire to perfect oneself via the cultivation of one's reason. A text which can be understood by the common man can have little attraction to the man who supposes himself greater in being or reason than the ordinary person, especially if he also supposes himself capable of saving or perfecting himself through the efforts of his reason. But the minute that a scholar begins searching for hidden meanings that are not apparent in the literal text, he becomes endangered by the temptation to replace exegesis with *eisegesis* (reading into the text that

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150. See M. E. Bradford, “A Better Guide Than Reason: The Politics of John Dickinson,” *Modern Age* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1977): 39–49. This essay is also relevant to note 139.

which cannot legitimately be found within it), with imagination, with innovation for the sake of originality or of moralism. The very hiddenness of the meanings for which Straussian searches enables one to smuggle into the text one's own presuppositions and philosophical or political preferences, and renders the decision as to where the text stops and the interpreter begins more difficult. This is one of the temptations of Straussianism, whether or not Strauss and individual Straussians characteristically succumb to it. (Some Straussians do succumb to this temptation, as we shall see in relation to American politics.) But the crux of the matter is manifested when the principle of hidden meanings is applied to Scripture. The orthodox, Bible-believing Christian has always maintained that Scripture is divinely inspired in all its words, down to the smallest jot and tittle, and thus has maintained that the Scripture does not merely *contain* the word of God but is the word of God, and hence speaks truly about all the subjects which it discusses. Scripture, being God's propositional revelation to man, speaks accurately, infallibly, about *all* things, whether those things be religious or historical or scientific or political. To be sure, there are deeper meanings in Scripture, which can be comprehended by further study and reading, especially as one's study is guided by the Holy Spirit, but the Christian affirms that the literal events and meanings recorded in Scripture are (insofar as one is not interpreting that which *Scripture itself* clearly indicates as literal to be symbolic) true and valuable: there are "layers of meaning" in Scripture, but the deeper layers do not contradict the truth of the surface layers; rather, the deeper layers are founded on the surface layers, are one with the surface layers, for Scripture is a unity of meaning. The Straussian eschewal of literalism (whatever "literalism" may mean) may or may not {116} produce brilliant analyses of political theories, but when applied to Scripture it opens the gate to "higher criticism" and the existential methodology—the assumption that Scripture speaks only to "religious" things, not to history, science, or culture—of theological modernism. Applied to secular texts, Straussian methodology opens the way to speculation and platform political moralizing. Applied to *the* sacred text, the quest for secret meanings transports into the City of God the Pandora's box of humanistic relativism constructed by all denials of the inspiration and infallibility of Holy Scripture. Careful study is to be preferred to super-

ficial reading, but the man who would displease ten thousand literalistic “fools” in order to perfect one other man thereby fools himself by abandoning the literal truth of God’s word in favor of his own subjective intellectual construct.

Strauss’s own views were deeply religious, in the conventional sense. Although a Bible-believing Jew, he stressed—without obscuring the differences between them—the common ground between Judaism and Christianity. East’s summary is apt:

Strauss contended that reason is inadequate for a comprehensive explanation, for it “knows only of subjects and objects.” Similarly, naturalism is inadequate, for it “is completely blind to the riddles inherent in the ‘givenness’ of nature,” and finally “humanism is not enough.... Either man is an accidental product of a blind evolution or else the process leading to man, culminating in man, is directed toward man. Mere humanism avoids this ultimate issue.”<sup>151</sup>

Against scientism and humanism, Strauss maintained, “Judaism and Christianity are at one.” Given the inadequacy of philosophy,

The common ground on which Jews and Christians can make a friendly *collatio* to the secular state cannot be the belief in the God of the philosophers, but only the belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the God who revealed the Ten Commandments or at any rate such commandments as are valid under all circumstances regardless of the circumstances.<sup>152</sup>

It is not pagan thought, Strauss declared, but the Bible that “... sets forth the demands of morality and religion in their purest and most intransigent form ...,” and it is “only by surrendering to God’s experienced call which calls for one’s loving Him with all one’s heart, with all one’s soul and with all one’s might” that one can “come to see the other human being as one’s brother and love him as oneself,” for without biblical faith it is impossible to see “human beings ... with humility and charity...”<sup>153</sup>

Despite the religious faith of Strauss, and despite the questions which could be raised as to the fullness of his orthodoxy (the quote above raises {117} the possibility that the Ten Commandments are not all

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151. East, 8.

152. Quoted in *ibid.*, 9.

153. *Ibid.*, 8.

universally true, while the previous quotation sees man as the result of a *process*, and of a process which is directed toward *man*), the Straussian hermeneutic of hidden meanings opens the gate to the denial by his disciples of the validity of the very Bible-based religion and morality affirmed by Strauss. This is partly due to the dominance in Strauss's writings of the theme of ancients versus moderns, with its concomitant underplaying of the arguments for and from revealed religion, partly due to the Straussian emphasis on the rational discovery of secret writings and on the related classical theme of self-perfection by reason, and partly due to what the biblical Christian would call Strauss's excessively optimistic evaluation of the capabilities of man's reason.

It could be argued that the corpus of Strauss's writings points men toward the things of God, in the sense that his writings first direct one to the philosophical questions which underlie the dispute between the ancients and the moderns and then by outlining a general "common ground" among ancients, Jews, and Christians, outlining the differences between theists and humanists, and stating some of the shortcomings of humanism, point one to the necessity of revelation. But biblical Judaism and Christianity hold that it is more important that a man—*any man*—be saved than that he gain the whole world. Given this paramount consideration, the argument for "saving" the very few and neglecting the very many collapses. If (as is the case) religion has teachings and political implications different from the thought of the moderns and even of the ancients, and if (as is the case) religion has a superior philosophical case to be made for it, then it would seem that it is the moral obligation of one who is aware of these facts to introduce them into the debate, and to introduce them at every relevant point. The dominance of the "ancients versus moderns" theme in Strauss precludes his fulfillment of this obligation. It may be true that in order to gain a hearing in an intellectual world ruled by modern humanists, one must speak the language of the humanistic court, in order to lead some men from modernism to "ancientism" and finally to theism. But what if, in the process of guiding men along this way, many become so enamored by the siren song of ancient humanism that they are wrecked on the shoals of its presuppositions and hence become unable to continue the odyssey to their proper home? Or, deluded by the false joys of the life of autonomous contemplation among the ancient rationalistic



lotus eaters, they become unwilling to continue? Western civilization was founded primarily on Christianity and Judaism, not on Greek thought. One need not be a Machiavellian to recognize that the preservation of a regime requires the frequent (or at least periodic) return to its foundations. To borrow a phrase from Strauss's great essay on behavioralism, to the extent that one neglects the arguments for and from {118} revelation, in favor of showing the superiority of ancients to moderns, he fiddles while Rome burns.

These things are even truer of the disciples than of the master. It would be inaccurate to say that Straussians do not concern themselves with religion, although they assuredly do not speak much of it. The general approach of Straussians to religion in general and Christianity in particular is 1) to fail to overtly confront its claims, and 2) when admitting it into discussion, to do so only on the condition that it be a civil religion—a religion in the service of the state and its rulers, used to make men “virtuous” and obedient. As such, *the doctrines of religion must be considered, but those doctrines must not oppose the needs of the state, as seen by the statesman*. Because Judaism and Christianity give man higher duties than mere absolute obedience to the state, these religions represent dangers to the state and to the plans of the statesman. The neglect of the claims of revealed religion by Straussians is usually based on the assumption that it is philosophically impermissible to reason upon the basis of revelation, but this claim is, obviously, based on an unproven presupposition of the autonomy of man's reason, and is therefore presumptuous.

The Straussian obscuring of revealed religion in favor of ancient rationalism is grounded on the *presupposition of man's reason's autonomy* and, derivative from the dominant classical expression of this, upon the belief in *natural right or law*, but is also a product of hermetic of *secret writing* for the few. If even God's revelation can be understood by only the few, then it would seem that either (in biblical terms) only the few are to be saved, or if those of the many who believe in some sense are to be saved, they must be saved through the missionary and teaching activity of the rational few. The doctrine that only that which is below the surface is of value leads to the doctrine of salvation by works, and to the doctrine of the salvation of us the stupid by the mediatorial activity of them the few. We can call this the doctrine of the

Gnostic fallacy. The political implications of such a doctrine are obvious. The religious presuppositions of Straussianism and the hermeneutic of secret writing come together in the Straussian neglect of revealed religion. Straussianism is humanism,<sup>154</sup> and {119} *humanistic man will not admit the existence of a God whose ways are higher than man's ways, and hence ultimately inscrutable to man's feeble reason, for to hold otherwise would be to admit the necessity of man's submission to God's word and will.* Consequently, Straussianism is willing to admit revealed religion into the city only insofar as the pragmatic judgments of the "wise" statesman deem such a policy to be in the interests of the state. For the humanist, the obsessive concern of the statesman must be not God but the state: the statesman is literally the state's man.

### 3. *Ancients and Moderns: Straussians on American Politics*

The consequences of Straussian doctrine are manifest in the Straussian account of the American political tradition. Most noticeably, the Christian basis of and influence on our politics is slighted or distorted. This results in a procrusteanizing of the American political tradition and the establishment of an intellectual pseudo-platform from which the Straussian can harangue the learned elite about the vices of "modern" America and win converts to the "virtuous" cause of "ancient" reconstruction of the Republic. The Straussian volumes on American political thought completely *omit* Christianity and colonial thought. Thus the whole history of the American people prior to the Declara-

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154. We have not distinguished between theistic and atheistic humanism. We are purposely reticent about making this distinction because Straussians are purposely reticent about their own theistic or antitheistic opinions. Part of this obscuring of their own beliefs may be due, in those who follow Leo Strauss, to the desire to lead men from opinion to philosophy to religion. But part of this activity is due to their methodology of keeping all questions but the ones most intimately related to the subject under discussion "open," and part of it is also due to the Straussian methodology and teaching of "secret writing," as well as to a desire to persuade one to accept their opinions, which is often more easily accomplished by the use of deliberate omissions, and is more appealing to one who accepts the humanistic presupposition of the autonomy and neutrality of man's reason. This deliberate obscurity, however, is at least questionable, for all political questions are ultimately theological questions, to which reason cannot speak except on the basis of prior theological assumptions.

tion of Independence, meaning the whole—or at least the clearly dominant part—of the background of American politics and culture, is obscured and declared irrelevant at the outset; hence the implication is that the political thought of the American people is irrelevant to an understanding of the political thought of American statesmen, or that the political thought of American statesmen can be understood apart from a consideration of the influence of America’s (until recent times) dominant religion.

Numerous scholars have given the lie to the notion that Christianity was irrelevant to the founding of America.<sup>155</sup> Francis Schaeffer places the date of America’s clear dominance by humanists at around 1930. Here, however, we need only concern ourselves with the period of the “Founding.” Tocqueville said, of America, *circa* 1830:

*Christianity reigns without obstacles, by universal consent; consequently, as I have said elsewhere, everything in the moral field remains {120} certain and fixed, although the world of politics seems given over to argument and experiment. So the human spirit never sees an unlimited field before itself; however bold it is, from time to time it feels that it must halt before insurmountable barriers. Before innovating, it is forced to accept certain formalities which retard and check it.*<sup>156</sup>

Not only was biblical law directly influential in early and later America, being extensively evident in state and local government laws, but biblical law was indirectly influential through the dominant medieval and Reformation concept of natural law,<sup>157</sup> which extensively incorporated biblical law, and also through English common law, which was

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155. See the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 3, no. 1 (Summer 1976); see also Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974), and R. J. Rushdoony’s two works cited in note 140, and note 139, for correctives to this deliberate and glaring omission. The Straussian volumes referred to are both edited by Morton J. Frisch and Richard G. Stevens: *The Political Thought of American Statesmen: Selected Writings and Speeches* (Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1973), and *American Political Thought: The Philosophic Dimensions of American Statesmanship* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971). It is interesting to note that the latter volume is dedicated to the “noble employment of the powers” (emphasis added) once wielded by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Felix Frankfurter; we shall subsequently clarify the significance of this dedication.

156. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969), 292. See also 42–43.

formulated in terms of both biblical law and medieval natural-law doctrines. Kendall and Carey, in their important study, *Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition*,<sup>158</sup> see the *idea of the virtuous people*, as reflected in our fundamental political documents, as the central symbol of our political tradition, but this idea was a product of the covenant theology dominant in early American Calvinism, which saw liberty as under God's law. Moreover, the idea of the colonies as holy commonwealths was profoundly influential on the nation, being most concretely expressed in law and practice at the state and local levels, wherein there existed constitutionally established churches (usually pluralistic), religious requirements for oaths of office, anti-blasphemy laws, sabbatarian laws, and other obviously biblically grounded legislation.<sup>159</sup> Both state and local governments, especially the latter, concerned themselves explicitly with the *morality* of the citizens. And yet, as Tocqueville noted, the American system presupposed and maintained *a large sphere of individual freedom*, a private sphere *wherein the individual*, being the best and only proper judge of his own interest, and competent to fulfill his own interest, *owes an account of his action* in matters that concern himself *to God alone*.<sup>160</sup> The framers of the Constitution knew well this cultural, institutional, and political context within which the great document was framed: the Constitution presupposed it.

It is these aspects of the American regime which rankle Straussians: the Christian context, decentralization, government limited by constitutional {121} law, and the sphere of liberty wherein the individual owes an account of his actions to God alone. Despite the dominant localism and true federalism of American governmental theory and

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157. Alice M. Baldwin, *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1928).

158. Willmoore Kendall and George W. Carey, *Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964).

159. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, 90–120; Tocqueville, 42–43, 292, and *passim*. See also the second appendix to Paul Eidelberg's *The Philosophy of the American Constitution: A Reinterpretation of the Intentions of the Founding Fathers* (New York: Free Press, 1968), entitled "Provisions in the State Constitutions Respecting Religion, Morality, Education and the Qualities Required of Statesmen."

160. Tocqueville, vol. 1, part 1, chap. 5.

practice even *after* the Constitution,<sup>161</sup> and its likeness to the small size of the classical *polis*, Straussians prefer even the “extended republic” of Madison to local self-government, provided that the central government can be interpreted to be like the polis in principle: all-encompassing in scope, total in power, and unbound by legally recognized moral absolutes.<sup>162</sup> In order to gratify this desire, the Straussian *must* omit the cultural context of the American regime and tradition, from which these things sprang; but in so doing he must also sacrifice the credibility of his account. A full account and refutation of the Straussian thesis about the American “Founding” and political tradition would require a volume. Herein we can only sketch the main outline of the thesis.

The Straussian thesis begins with the Lincolnesque attempt to establish the Declaration of Independence, or rather the Declaration procrusteanly reinterpreted along egalitarian and hence democratic lines, and divorced from its dominant common-law content, and hence from the clear assertion of property rights as among those rights established by “the law of nature and of nature’s God,” as our fundamental political document.<sup>163</sup> Never mind that the Declaration could, if seen in its

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161. *Ibid.*, chap. 5 is the key, but see also chap. 8, 262–63, and vol. 2, part 4, chap. 2, 5, 8, 12–13, and M. Stanton Evans’s valuable essay, “The States and the Constitution,” *Intercollegiate Review* 2, no. 3 (November–December 1965):176–99. Also see note 162.

162. See, for example, the arguments of Straussians Herbert J. Storing, “The Problem of Big Government,” 65–86, and Harry Jaffa, “The Case for a Stronger National Government,” 106–125, in Robert A. Goldwin, ed., *A Nation of States: Essays on the American Federal System* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1963). These provide an interesting contrast with Evans, *ibid.*, and with Russell Kirk, “The Prospects for Territorial Democracy in America,” 42–64, and James J. Kilpatrick, “The Case for ‘States’ Rights,” 88–105, in Goldwin.

163. Frisch and Stevens, *American Political Thought*, “Introduction,” esp. 11–13; and the revealing debate between Straussian Harry Jaffa and conservative M. E. Bradford in *Modern Age*. See Bradford, “The Heresy of Equality...” and Jaffa’s reply, “Equality, Justice and the American Revolution,” vol. 21, no. 2 (Spring 1977):114–26. The weight of Jaffa’s egalitarian commitment is such that he even cites Aristotle as being a proponent of equality—as if the main thrust of Aristotle’s teaching were egalitarian! Perhaps this is the great utility of classical relativistic “practical wisdom”: it can be used in such a way as to criticize the “Founders” for being excessively “low-level,” in order to undermine respect for their institutions, and then to implicitly criticize the “Founders” for being excessively aristocratic, in order to promote today’s fashionable projects for social, economic, and political leveling.

proper context and if read as a whole rather than as a launching platform for egalitarian and socialist pseudo-reforms, be seen to be consistent with the principles of the Constitution. Never mind that the Declaration was never subjected to the lengthy, intensive, and candid private and public deliberation and debate to which {122} America's true "founding" document, the Constitution, was subjected. Nor that the Declaration was not amended as a result of prolonged public debate and *opposition* within the *divided house which was the Union* from the very beginnings of America. Nor that the Declaration was never subjected to a series of public referenda, as was the Constitution. Nor even that the Declaration, as Kendall pointed out, does not even pretend to "bring forth a new nation," but rather brings forth, if anything, "a baker's dozen" of new nations, and makes no pretense of establishing governmental forms for any of them. Under the force of the Straussian passion for the centralization and absolutisation of the power of the state, such considerations must be dismissed as mere trifles.

The classical worship of the "wise man" in his role as statesman drives Straussians to see American political history as *a series of crises in which the regime was "rescued" by the teachings and practice of great statesmen*. Specifically, there were three great crises: the "Founding," or the formation of the Constitution, the "crisis of the house divided," or the Civil War, and the crisis of *laissez-faire* economics, or the "Great Depression." Not surprisingly, the democratic Republic was "saved" from these crises by the mediatorial activity of political thinkers who were also practical politicians: Hamilton and Madison, Lincoln, and F.D.R. All of these great practical men accomplished great things in the practical situations in which they found themselves. The catch is that the great work of the "Founders," principally Madison and Hamilton, was supposedly defective, and also misunderstood by later, lesser men—meaning those devoted to constitutional, limited government, strict construction, property rights, the preservation of the constitutionally reserved powers of the states, decentralization, economic liberty, the legal recognition of traditional Western moral absolutes, and individual liberty in general. The reader will never guess who "saved" us from such terrors, thereby enabling the democratic Republic to achieve the "true fulfillment" of its principles. Nor will he guess the nature of that "salvation" worked by Lincoln and F.D.R.!<sup>164</sup>

The framing of the Constitution was, according to Straussian dogma, a “founding,” a break, in some sense, with the past in which Madison and Hamilton, who were secret Hobbesians (or at least Lock-eans), led the convention in establishing a *centralized, democratic, commercial republic dedicated to national greatness*, via the controlled liberation of the passions, especially in *the pursuit of material property*. This government was not intended to be a truly federal government, that is, one in which the states have their own legitimate, reserved, and inviolable (if not absolutely clearly definable) sphere of authority distinct from the rule of the central government, but was rather either intended to be centralized from the {123} outset or intended to be centralized at some later date, perhaps “progressively,” as pragmatic judgment of the circumstances dictated. Nor was the Constitution to act as a limiting force: it was not to mean what it says it means, nor even what a reading of the *Federalist* and the debates in the Constitutional Convention and in the state ratifying conventions say that it means, but rather it was meant to be a “flexible” document, interpreted pragmatically by future “statesmen,” in accordance with the demands of the times. The great and radical defect in the “Founders’” design was their “deliberate narrowing of the scope of politics” to exclude the classical purpose of making the people “virtuous,” in order to leave them free to acquire material property.<sup>165</sup>

On the positive side, the Straussian teaching at least concerns itself with virtue. On the negative side, the only thing wrong with the Straussian analysis is that it is all wrong: it is *eisegesis*, not *exegesis*, and it is *eisegesis* with an ulterior motive: *the replacement of the American regime with the modern total state*, modified to produce virtue as well as material equality. For all their talk of virtue, Straussians in practice utilize the same illicit techniques as contemporary “liberals” in their ideologically motivated attempt to read the contemporary centralized,

164. See *ibid.*, “Introduction,” 125–44, 216–36, and the essays of Storing and Jaffa in Goldwin (note 162).

165. See, in addition to Jaffa and Storing, Martin Diamond’s classic expression of Straussian dogma on the “Founding,” “Democracy and *The Federalist*: A Reconsideration of the Framers’ Intent,” *American Political Science Review* (March 1959):52–68, and his fundamentally similar later essay, “Ethics and Politics: The American Way,” in Horwitz (note 135), 39–72.



pragmatic, expansionist, would-be omniscient state back into the intentions of the framers. Evans's analysis is appropriate:

If all that planning was to occur on schedule, it was necessary to figure out some method of getting around the founders' complexities and limitations....The struggle to secure enlargement of Federal powers has gone through a number of phases, which for want of an accepted terminology will here be labeled the subliminal, the explicit, and the brazen. These phases are not mutually exclusive, of course, and are quite capable of operating simultaneously....

At the first or subliminal level, the liberal effort has been and continues to be an attempt to find the requisite powers *within* the Constitution—by seeking out phrases that can be interpreted as conferring plenary powers on the Federal government.... [the general welfare clause, the commerce clause, the necessary and proper clause Fourteenth Amendment; the Tenth Amendment rendered meaningless]....Since the Supreme Court has approved it all, this studied conversion of the limited government system into its opposite can be presented as a perfectly normal and justifiable series of actions. The circle is squared, and the negation of the Constitution's central precepts is rendered "constitutional."

Yet ... [T]he founders' stated intentions ... make it rather clear that the job of centralization, however cleverly one works the phrases, is {124} contrary to the real design. As Madison quite logically inquired (concerning the "general welfare"), what sense would it make to construct a limited and balanced system, with a painstaking distribution and enumeration of powers, if a single phrase or sentence conferred enormous plenary powers to do virtually anything? Obviously, not much.

The founders' intentions, in sum, were a standing rebuke....It was therefore needful to go another step ... and tackle the problem somewhat more openly. The founders' intentions, quite simply, had to be disposed of.

Here, as in other cases, the theory of value relativity stands the liberals in good stead. On liberalism's basic premises ... there are no universals that persist over time, no axioms of belief impervious to the flow of circumstance. As conditions change, so do our attitudes and values. It follows that the American Constitution would have to change as well ... defined from epoch to epoch, according to the flux of circumstance....The Constitution's "meaning" is a product of the economic and political forces of the age, and therefore changes as these forces change. One way or another, therefore, the conversion of our Consti-



tution into its own negation is entirely proper, and nothing to worry about....

Occasionally, however, a franker appraisal is offered ... the brazen. At this level, the liberal view is simply a bold assertion: We did it and we're glad. We found ourselves up against this old-fashioned Constitution, and we simply decided to dump it.<sup>166</sup>

Evans's observation on the pragmatic reinterpretation of the Constitution is apt:

If the Constitution is to be changed from age to age merely by interpretation, why does it contain within itself a rather elaborate process for formal amendment?<sup>167</sup>

Kilpatrick was right on target in his rejection of the liberal and Straussian notion of loose construction:

This self-evident desire to restrain *all* government pervades the entire document. Ours was to be a *limited* government. That was the whole reason the framers enumerated the powers vested in the Congress, with such tedious care....And what a mockery it is of their prudent labors to see men contend for the absurd notion that the power to lay taxes "to provide for the general welfare" vests the Congress with the power to do whatever the Congress pleases! *Such a construction reduces the Constitution to blank paper*; it arrogates to judges and to congressmen the bumptious authority claimed by Humpty-Dumpty, to whom words meant what he chose them to mean, and neither more nor less. *If all powers were delegated to the central government, then {125} none remained exclusively with the States; the bulk of the Constitution is mere surplusage, and the Tenth Amendment is a fraud; the authors of The Federalist were masters of deceit; and the written English language is become the babble of idiots.*<sup>168</sup>

In the name of principle, the Straussian interpretation of the Constitution divorces the document from its true principles.

This is not less true in regard to the matter of property and virtue. Straussians, like their materialistic counterparts among the intellectu-

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166. M. Stanton Evans, *Clear and Present Dangers: A Conservative View of American Government* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 44–47. For proof of the validity of Evans's evaluation in regard to Straussians, see the argument of Storing and Jaffa with Kirk and Kilpatrick.

167. *Ibid.*, 47.

168. Goldwin, 95–96. Compare with Evans's essay (note 161).

als, identify the property which Madison is so concerned to protect against the effects of faction—against the violation of individuals’ rights and the common good—with simply material property, and hence are anxious to condemn Madison’s supposed Lockeanism and the framers’ clear favoritism toward economic liberty. *The Neoplatonism of the Straussian renders him hostile to material things*, and hence hostile to the liberty of individuals to better their own and their families’ economic circumstances. The Straussians prefer socialist economic and social planning to the individual planning of the market economy. But in so doing, they misread Madison, misunderstand his teaching on property and liberty, and fail to see the connection between property rights and virtue in the American regime.

The Straussian omission of the American cultural context results in a neglect of the fact that American individualism was still basically Christian individualism, not atomistic modern individualism, and that it saw liberty as limited by, and to be exercised in accordance with, an objective moral order:<sup>169</sup> as Tocqueville noted, God’s moral order. As Landi has shown, the same should be said of Madison’s political thought:

The importance that Madison attaches to liberty, especially the liberty of conscience ... may better be interpreted as an expression of the Christian political mind, for it involves no irrevocable link with strictly modern politics.<sup>170</sup>

A close reading of *Federalist* no. 10 makes it evident that, for Madison, the chief end of government is “the protection of the faculties,” or mental capabilities, of the individual against instability, injustice, or confusion introduced into the public councils by minority and especially “factions,” or groups of men united and activated by some interest, opinion, or passion which is adverse to the rights of other individuals or to the common {126} good. Factions spring from the

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169. Alexander Landi, “Was the American Founding a Lockean Enterprise? The Case of James Madison,” *Intercollegiate Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1975): 95–105; see also Landi’s study, “Madison’s Political Theory,” *Political Science Reviewer* 6 (Fall 1976):73–102. Were Landi a biblical Protestant, or especially a Calvinist, he could see far more evidences of the truth of his conclusion, especially in regard to human nature and liberty of conscience.

170. *Ibid.*, 105.

very ineradicable nature of man, originating in his flawed reason, the connection of his reason with his self-love—there can be no Platonic “wise man”: governments, as no. 51 tells us, are to be by men over men, not by angels over men—and the diversity and inequality of men’s faculties. Through the use of his diverse and unequal faculties, a man acquires the various *degrees* and *kinds* of property, and forms factions on the basis of his attachment to the degrees and kinds of property which he possesses. The *Federalist*, in opposition to classical thought, does not reduce the individual to the embodiment of a type, but rather appreciates his individuality. Not all groups are factions, for some individuals and groups in fact promote and intend the common good. But the ineradicable nature of factions’ origin, the necessity of liberty to the realization of justice, and the dignity and importance of the individual, make the protection of the individual’s *faculties*—*not* his property—the chief end of government. In order for one’s faculties to be protected, however, the various *degrees and kinds* of property owned by the individual must be protected against the effects of faction, especially majority faction. Although the most frequent and durable cause of faction is the inequality of material property, Straussians and leftists are without excuse in interpreting Madison to be concerned only with the protection of material property, for he clearly indicates that property includes “different *opinions* concerning *religion*, concerning *government*, and *many other points*, as well of *speculation* as of *practice*,” and his teaching is reinforced by his later essay, “On Property”:

This term in its particular application means “that domination which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in exclusion of every other individual.”

In its *larger and juster meaning*, it embraces *every thing to which a man may attach a value and have a right; and which leaves to every one else the like advantage*.

In the former sense, a man’s land, or merchandise, or money is called his property.

In the latter sense, a man has property in his opinions and the free communication of them.

He has a property of peculiar value in his religious opinions, and in the profession and practice dictated by them.<sup>171</sup>

Not being a Neoplatonist, Madison has a higher view of property than do Straussians. The connection between property and virtue in the *Federalist* {127} is obvious: protection of the fruits of the legitimate use of the individual's faculties, especially against the leveling effects of majority faction, is necessary to the maintenance of liberty, especially intellectual liberty, justice, and excellence; and securing to the individual that which is his own necessitates securing to him *both* property in its material sense *and* property in its larger and juster meaning. The protection of property is inseparable from the true promotion of intellectual and moral virtue. The establishment of a regime powerful enough to attempt to enforce a uniformity of interests or opinion's would be the enthronement of factional tyranny and the very antithesis of liberty and virtue.

But there is more, far more.<sup>172</sup> As Eidelberg has extensively shown, the framers intended to establish not a democracy but a *mixed regime*. Such a regime would promote virtue by protecting excellence, principally against majority faction's egalitarian proclivities, but also by the effects of its numerous aristocratic attributes. The editors of the Straussian volume of essays on American political thought aver that they "do not believe"<sup>173</sup> that Hamilton (for example) wanted a government of mixed aristocratic and republican principles, but offer no analysis to support their belief. Eidelberg's important work, *The Philosophy of the American Constitution*,<sup>174</sup> does, however, contain abundant evidence from the *Federalist* and the debates of the Constitutional Convention to clearly prove his thesis, and his important sequel, *A Discourse on*

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171. In the *National Gazette*, March 29, 1792; reprinted in Saul K Padover, ed., *The Forging of American Federalism: Selected Writings of James Madison* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1953), 267. I am indebted to the teaching of Paul Eidelberg here; see his *A Discourse on Statesmanship*, 241–46.

172. See the works of Paul Eidelberg, note no. 173, and my unpublished study, "Virtue, Liberty and the American Regime."

173. Frisch and Stevens, *American Political Thought*, "Introduction," and 11; emphasis added to indicate the faith-nature of the declaration. Frisch and Stevens's comment is ludicrous, considering the aristocratic and realistic nature of Hamilton's political thought. Consider, for example, Hamilton's comment in *Federalist* no. 72 regarding the renewability of the tenure of the president.

174. See note 159.

*Statesmanship*,<sup>175</sup> contains a lengthy devastation of the Straussian Diamond's supposedly Aristotelian-based "democratic republic" thesis, showing that according to strictly applied Aristotelian criteria, the American regime was clearly a mixed regime. Straussian works on the "founding"<sup>176</sup> completely *omit* the evidence of Eidelberg's careful and insightful exegesis and the primary source evidence on which his thesis is based: the numbers of the *Federalist* dealing with the institutions of the central government—the House, the Senate, the Presidency, the Supreme Court—and the numbers of the *Federalist* which give clear indications of the aristocratic attitudes and favor the rule of law—nos. 49, 62, 63, 72, etc.—are simply omitted from consideration! Such "scholarship" is hardly worthy of so great a figure as Leo Strauss. {128}

The significance of Eidelberg's work is at least this: the framers not only sought to protect the faculties of the individual, and thus of the virtuous and talented individual, from the effects of faction, but also sought to attract virtuous and talented men to serve in the central government, to establish the greatest possible probability of the selection of such men to office, and to make the interest of the individual officeholder coincide with the performance of his public duty. To effect these purposes, they designed as many *aristocratic attributes* (indirect election, staggered election, long tenure, etc.) as possible into the regime—even in the House of Representatives. The mixed regime, insofar as it was successful in obtaining better men in office and rendering them somewhat independent of outside pressure, would promote stability, the rule of law, domestic tranquility (since both the few and the many would have a voice in and a check on the formulation of policy), justice (since wiser, more independent men working in a framework of checks and balances would produce wiser, juster laws), and liberty. And the existence of a juster government, headed by wiser men, would promote virtue in the people by the laws and examples of those in office; stability and the rule of law, as *Federalist* no. 62 clearly shows, would enhance this function of inducing virtue into the people. Professor Eidelberg's remarks on the idea of a national university are germane to

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175. See note 96; see especially 22–278.

176. See both Frisch and Stevens volumes.

the issue of the classical dualism of theory and practice, and to the issue of the framers' views of excellence:

They did not establish in practice what no statesmen have ever established, namely, the best regime in theory. Accordingly, they did not institutionalize religion as the most important element for the existence of the best political community. It remains everlastingly true, however, that the founders, generally speaking, regarded the cultivation of human excellence as a legitimate object of government—some, as the most important object of government—and that Washington and Madison *attempted* to promote this end by urging Congress, at various times, to establish a national university, a veritable school for statesmen.<sup>177</sup>

On the issues of Lincoln and F.D.R., we must limit ourselves to a very few words. Straussians generally see Lincoln as having rescued America from the inevitable spread of slavery:

Lincoln saw that a house divided against itself could not stand, that a nation half free and half slave would willy-nilly become all one or all the other and, lest it become all slave, he set himself to putting it back on the footing on which it had first stood—a free nation....With clarity of mind and charity of purpose, he set about to make the nation more perfectly what the Declaration [!] and the Constitution [!!] had {129} all along intended, namely, a nation of freedom and equality [!!!] for all men.<sup>178</sup>

Without becoming an advocate of slavery, we can safely say that the Straussian portrait of Lincoln is highly tendentious and disputable, in that it seeks to legitimize his gross violations of the Constitution, his perversely egalitarian misreading of the Declaration and the Constitution, his at least pragmatic and Machiavellian oratory, and his deliberate and perhaps successful attempt to re-found the American regime via deceit and force. Moreover, the Christian must object to Lincoln's religion of union in equality, to his use of a false dilemma regarding the "house divided"—the notion that the Union *must* be all slave or all free (for, as M. E. Bradford has pointed out, "houses are *always* divided, in

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177. *A Discourse on Statesmanship*, 240. See also *The Philosophy of the American Constitution*, the chapters on the Senate, the Presidency, and the Supreme Court.

178. Frisch and Stevens, *American Political Thought*, 12–13; see also Jaffa's essay in this volume, "Abraham Lincoln," 125–44, and his more celebrated *The Crisis of the House Divided*.

some fashion or another”)—to his rhetorical equation of the dominantly Christian South with evil incarnate, to his caesaropapalisation of religion (his seeking to lead men to worship the Lincoln-interpreted Constitution and laws), to his antinomian vision and rhetorical presentation of himself as an instrument of Providence and equation of his own opinions with a new revelation of divine will, and to the use by Lincoln of all of these unethical devices for the promotion of his own political ends. The Christian who is also a conservative must also object to Lincoln’s weakening of the Constitution, and specifically of its separation of powers and decentralization, to his willingness to abandon the Constitution and the rule of law, and to his turning away from constitutional freedom to modern majoritarianism.<sup>179</sup> The Straussian thesis implicitly sanctions these things. The Christian and the conservative cannot.

The reader will not by now be amazed to learn that Straussianism applied to the Roosevelt revolution produces practically the same veneration and obfuscation which one encounters in the ordinary, garden variety liberal establishment textbook. F.D.R., supposedly discerning “behind the words of the Constitution ... the working principles of democratic government,” saved liberal democracy from the Scylla of state corporatism and the Charybdis of the class struggle, by consciously subordinating the economy to the government’s regulated or controlled economy. Supposedly, this was done by F.D.R. on the basis of an answer to the theoretical question: What is the purpose of democratic government? The “motive force” of the New Deal—“the mind of Franklin D. Roosevelt”—sought through {130} regulation to integrate economic well-being, or welfare, into the purposes of government, thus providing “something of happiness itself.” As if even *laissez-faire* economics had neglected economic well-being or welfare, and had thus neglected a portion of happiness! As if F.D.R., who disliked reading, especially serious reading, and who formulated his opinions upon listening to his dominantly leftist intellectuals debate substantive matters,

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179. On these matters, see Gottfried Dietze, *America’s Political Dilemma: From Limited to Unlimited Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 17–62, and M. E. Bradford, “Lincoln’s New Frontier: A Rhetoric for Continuing Revolution,” *Triumph* 6, no. 5 (May 1971):11–13, 21, and 6, no. 6 (June 1971):15–17; and Bradford’s “The Heresy of Equality: Bradford Replies to Jaffa.”

was a political theorist! Apparently some Straussians have never heard of the so-called “Brain Trust.” Nor of F.D.R.’s cynical confidante and advisor, Harry Hopkins, who articulated a fundamental principle of the New Deal: “Tax, tax; spend, spend; elect, elect!” Straussian “exege-sis” on the Constitution is a morality play, with those who take the doc-ument to mean what it says and what its authors said it said as the villains, and the legal pragmatists, egalitarians, and centralizers as the heroes. Straussian “exege-sis” (read: eisegesis) of F.D.R. is the same morality play turned farce. Conservatives become vulgarized Jefferson-ians; contemporary liberals become the true conservatives, who are “not the enemy of spending.” (At least not of other people’s money!) Ah, but what is the liberal, of which F.D.R. was implicitly the great example and leader?

[He is] ... open-minded, open-hearted and open-handed. The open-handed man is fair, plain-spoken and above-board in all his dealings. He does not wish to gain by force or fraud or by narrow shrewdness in the market. He respects the opinions and interests of others.<sup>180</sup>

This is the stuff of which political propaganda is made, not the embodiment of theoretical analysis! One sees no balance in such an account. The fact is that F.D.R. was none of these things, at least not with any degree of consistency. Straussians do not mention the Machi-avellianism of their hero of heroes, as was implicitly noted in con-temporary liberal academic James Macgregor Burns’s laudatory book, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*. The unsuspecting student is given no inkling that F.D.R.’s domestic and foreign policy was achieved by the use of a considerable amount of lies and deliberate deception, nor that, long before Watergate, he was utilizing the power of the presidency, the F.B.I., the I.R.S., and other agencies to harass and electronically bug political opponents, in and out of his own party.<sup>181</sup> Let us see some Straussian find the justice and morality in Yalta, Teheran, and Potsdam, and their consequent giveaway of Eastern Europe to the communists; the infamous Operation Keelhaul; the treatment of the Japanese in Cal-

180. Frisch and Stevens, *American Political Thought*, 17.

181. See Finis Farr, *F.D.R.* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1976), and Victor Lasky, *It Did not Start with Watergate* (New York: Dial Press, 1977).



ifornia; U.S. foreign policy toward our ally, China; and Roosevelt's infamous remark at Teheran, when

Stalin offered a toast as a salute to the execution of fifty-thousand German officers and technicians. Churchill was appalled, and instantly {131} protested "the cold-blooded execution of soldiers who had fought for their country." Roosevelt, with his customary aplomb, suggested a compromise, that "we should settle on a smaller number. Shall we say forty-nine thousand five hundred?"<sup>182</sup>

Here is the Machiavellian, not the "open-handed man"!

And what of the theoretical analysis of the "welfare state"? There is at best a paucity from our theoretical wise men. Martin Diamond, a prominent Straussian, rejects biblical law as "limited, negative ... 'thou shalt nots,' as Puritanical or Victorian 'no-no's.'<sup>183</sup> We have seen what results when these are abandoned by our would-be "wise men" in foreign policy as well as domestic policy. Whatever else one thinks of the "welfare state," it certainly is not immoderate to admit that it is at least partly based on theft—or does theft become legitimate when practiced by groups, or by one's "statesmanly" heroes? Is it not by now obvious even to the nontheoretically oriented that the "welfare state" has in fact *liberated the desires* and replaced personal needs with government-subsidized wants? Of such is the essence of modernity. And does not a controlled economy require central planning, and does not planning presuppose omniscience on the part of the planners? Is not centralized social and economic planning an extreme departure from the American political tradition? And has not the "welfare state" led generally to where such great libertarian economists as Ludwig von Mises<sup>184</sup> and Friedrich Hayek<sup>185</sup> said decades ago it would lead—to what contemporary economist Charlotte Twight calls *America's Emerging Fascist Economy*?<sup>186</sup> Granted, for the sake of argument, the benevolent intentions of F.D.R. and his advisors, the objective, or even the quasi-objective,

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182. Henry Regnery, "Historical Revisionism and World War II (Part 2)," *Modern Age* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1976):404.

183. Martin Diamond, in Horwitz, 40.

184. *Planning for Freedom* (South Holland, IL: Libertarian Press, [1952] 1974).

185. *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944).

186. New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1975.

observer would have to conclude that those Straussians who join J. M. Burns in (pardon the pun) lionizing F.D.R. thereby give the blessings of the ancients to the essence of modernity.

#### 4. Conclusion

Sadly enough, Straussians are just like the rest of us: some are wiser than others, and none are “wise men.” Precious few live up to the methodological ideals of Strauss when they have political axes to grind, and perhaps fewer still are willing to espouse the religious ideals of Professor Strauss. *Straussianism is very good at criticizing the moderns in theory, but very good also at joining them in practice.* Straussian methodology is excellent training for the mind, but it can and does lend itself to abuses, {132} both in reading Scripture and in reading political documents, especially American political documents. Sadly, we must report that many Straussians depart from Strauss.

*Straussianism’s Achilles’ heel is its epistemology.* Straussians talk much of principle, but cannot, on their own terms, know that they know *any* principles. And this is just the way many of them act: they give theoretical and practical aggrandizement to the centralization and concentration of power in the state, with visions of the “wise man” dancing through their heads, sanctioning the most glaring manifestations of pragmatism and Machiavellian deceit and force. Thus, *what claims to be ancient emerges as barely distinguishable from that which is eminently modern.* Much can be learned, theoretically, from the best Straussians, but the student becomes understandably confused when the highly touted critic of modernity emerges as its practical supporter. Moderns need to hear of the claims of virtue, and to consider them carefully, but in practice the rise of the total state for the purpose of an “amoral” utopia of freedom and material abundance is not much worse than the rise of the total state for the purpose of “amoral” material abundance and a pragmatically manipulated and necessarily conventional “virtue.”

At bottom, Straussianism, as distinguished from the teachings of Strauss, is *the worship of man and his power.* This power, as manifested in the state, it wants to be benevolently used. But its theoretical denial of salvation by the grace of the triune God and its denial of the fact of original sin, combined with its acceptance of classical political philosophy, insure that it cannot remotely guarantee the benevolent use of

power. And its teaching and practice insure that the power in the state which Straussianism establishes for ostensibly good purposes will be pragmatically abused. The brilliance of Strauss and of many of his students, together with Straussianism's assertion of the existence of an objective moral order and its opposition to the more obvious and obnoxious modern ideologies, have made Straussianism quite fashionable among many intellectual American conservatives, but this is because *the intellectually dominant part of the American conservative movement today is essentially humanistic*. Christians and conservatives should heed the words of Carl Friedrich, who, speaking of the essence of Greek culture, the idea of the omniscient, omnipotent *polis*, nearly four decades ago, warned:

Greek history itself provides most eloquent testimony against the deification of the state. The adoration of power for its own sake is the inevitable consequence. It is the crucial and at the same time the most dangerous core of the Greek cultural heritage. It is blossoming forth in our day in the theory and practice of totalitarian dictatorships. These are themselves, however, only more extreme forms of a long-range secular trend, rising through the Renaissance and Enlightenment, which though at first merely anti-ecclesiastical turns antireligious {133} in the process. Inevitably it becomes associated with various forms of exalted "state" doctrines, Cromwellian, Bonapartist, Hegelian, Marxist, Fascist. If these conceptions become permanently dominant, there is every reason to expect that Europe will go the way of Greece and Renaissance Italy—culture will wither and perhaps die, as the ruthless pursuit of power in the name of the secular church-state leads to ever more exhausting struggles for power and supremacy. Therefore, *let us beware of the heritage of the Greek polis: it is a veritable Trojan horse, smuggled into our Christian civilization.*<sup>187</sup>

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187. Friedrich, 224–25.

# PHILANTHROPY, ROMANS 13, AND THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF THE STATE

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*Jim West*

The American economic system is hardly one of “let do” or “go as you please.” Ever since the Industrial Age began we have devised and enforced thousands of regulations in prevention of economic domination or abuse of our liberties through the growing instruments of business. *Furthermore, the sense of public responsibility for the general welfare has successively produced public education, public health, public works, public stimulation of scientific research, and in 1929 for the first time embraced the responsibility for public action in the battle against depression. This is hardly laissez faire* (Herbert Hoover’s words, with my emphasis. This is socialistic theorizing from a so-called “rugged individualist”).

We regard the state as an educational and ethical agency whose positive aid is an indispensable condition of human progress. While we recognize the necessity of individual initiative in industrial life, we hold that the doctrine of *laissez faire* is unsafe in politics and unsound in morals....We believe in a progressive development of economic conditions which must be met by corresponding changes of policy (Richard T. Ely, *Ground Under Our Feet* [New York: Macmillan Company, 1938], 136).

God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life (First Spiritual Law of Campus Crusade for Christ). (This is bad theology and even worse political philosophy.)

It is an uncontested truth that the bounds of civil law in our post-Bicentennial land have been widening at an unprecedented pace. Through the *Federal Register* of the United States Government, an average of 60,000 pages of new federal laws are published each year. The implications of such a tidal wave of administrative regulations will

surely affect the life of every American who prizes his past insulation from the enlarging swells and breakers of the federal bureaucracy.

My intention is not to document fully these multiple codifications. Suffice to say that most of our laws do not come directly from elected legislatures but from individuals and governmental bureaus *without* any legislative authority. The constitutional authority from the University of Chicago, Professor Philip B. Kurland, concludes:

Administrative agencies no longer go to Congress for authority to act; {135} they are now recipients of pleas from congressmen that the agencies make the laws. Thus liberty is no longer limited by laws alone, but far more frequently by executive orders, by administrative regulations, by bureaucratic guidelines, by simple exercise of discretion at the lowest level of the pyramid and even by judicial actions forging major policy determinations for society without constitutional or legislative authority.<sup>188</sup>

A person would be in error to identify our prizing of individual liberty as mirroring the spirit of a libertine. To be sure, the Christian may conceivably fall into the snare of speaking evil of dignitaries and displaying revolutionary contempt for the powers that be; but one must be ever-cautious about confounding a desire for a maximum of religious, economic, and political liberty with an unlawful anarchy.

It is not without surprise that the architects of the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights did not view themselves as legislative predestinators of the human race. Their philosophy of politics did not revolve around the Campus Crusadism: "I love you and have a wonderful plan for your life." The Bill of Rights alone originally contained a double-digital number of "nors" and "nots" against the federal governmental power. It cannot be repeated too often that the Founding Fathers were more absorbed with the task of *the eradication of political tyranny* than even the eradication of civil malediction. This emphasis even led some of them to insist that good government is founded upon distrust, and not on good faith! Thomas Jefferson's famous Kentucky Resolutions (1798) portray the mentality of those who endorsed the United States Constitution. This document asserts:

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188. Editorial, quoted by Julius Guis, *Ventura (CA) Star-Free Press*, August 9, 1976.

That it would be a dangerous delusion were a confidence in the men of our choice to silence our fears for the safety of our rights: that confidence is everywhere the parent of despotism—free government is founded in jealousy, and not in confidence; it is jealousy and not confidence which prescribes limited constitutions, to bind down those whom we are obliged to trust with power ....<sup>189</sup>

Whatever barbs one would wish to hurl at the theological impiety of men like Jefferson, one must honestly acknowledge that these men had some cognizance of man's native depravity. It was because they did not trust each other that they imposed a rigorous system of checks-and-balances upon themselves (the opposite of today's confident, "I love you and have a wonderful plan for your life" politicians). Trend is certainly not destiny, but if the trend continues, the United States is headed for a socialistic slave-state. {136}

### *Presuppositions and Presumptions*

In order to understand the reasons for this encroachment upon individual liberty, one must first understand the political rationale of the typical American President or United States congressman, which is to say, one must understand John Q. Citizen. This entails a comprehension not only of certain presuppositions and presumptions but an awareness of what makes the law the law. Essential for the operation of any civil authority is the arm of force. The word of the magistrate is not to be treated as the appeal of an auctioneer or the moral suasion which you may take or leave. When the legislators legislate, they do so with the presupposition that their efforts will be backed up by the civil government's police power. This is the basic presupposition of all civil government. As George Washington stated: "Government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is force"; and as Woodrow Wilson reiterated, "Government, in its last analysis, is organized force."

Speaking horizontally, the civil magistrate is the extension of an individual's right to self-defense; it is the organized force of self-defense. His purpose is to protect life and property, and that is the same as saying that *his purpose is to protect liberty*. The preservation of lib-

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189. Allan Grimes, ed., *American Political Thought* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960), 159.

erty is contingent upon the exercise of the arm of force. Rob law of force, and the law disintegrates. Rob force of law, and there is no law, unless one wishes to speak of the “law of the jungle.” When force atrophies, the law atrophies, becoming moral suasion.

If the civil magistrate is the extension of the individual’s right of self-defense, then the justification of the magistrate’s existence must rest in part on the assumption that *man is basically depraved*. The Bible assumes then that the law is not basically a therapeutic device, but an instrument of retaliation. The purpose of the law is the punishment of the evil-doer. If one wishes to say that the law must coercively protect the good, then he has simply said the same thing in a positive manner. But the presupposition of retaliation becomes muddled, if not negated, by the concept now in vogue that the law must also be *philanthropic*. When this concept is embraced, the initial presupposition has been jettisoned. We have presumption instead of presupposition, or at least, presumptive presupposition. This “*kai ... kai*” (both/and) doctrine of civil government meshes philanthropy with justice and exalts presumption. To be presumptuous is for a man either to assume prerogatives that belong exclusively to God, or to arrogate to himself responsibilities that belong to man but then to exercise those responsibilities in a sphere *other* than what is biblically required. For example, it is good for a man to love a woman and to express that love sexually. But whenever this sexual union is found outside its proper marital sphere, it becomes fornication or {137} adultery. The current gospel of the welfare state epitomizes this presumption. Its “I love you and have a wonderful plan for your life” legislation is founded on the premise that one of the main tasks of civil law is to reshape the human race after its image. The legislator is the potter; the people are the clay to be molded as the potter sees fit. The people are spoken of as “great” before the election, but afterwards they are assumed to be an aggregate of stupid ignoramuses unable to manage their own affairs.

### *Not Quantitatively More but Qualitatively Less*

It should be understood that the advent of philanthropic law is not merely correlative to the retaliatory function of law. We must reject the appeal that philanthropic law simply makes the law quantitatively more than its penal ideal. *Philanthropic law is a form of tyranny*, in that it—

through such programs as Social Security, Medicare, and the much-heralded National Health Insurance chimera—really makes the law qualitatively less, not quantitatively more. As Frederic Bastiat said over a century ago:

If you exceed this proper limit—if you attempt to make the law religious, fraternal, equalizing, philanthropic, industrial, literary or artistic—you will then be lost in an uncharted territory, in vagueness, and uncertainty, in a forced utopia or even worse, in a multitude of utopias, each striving to seize the law and impose it upon you. This is true because fraternity and philanthropy, unlike justice, do not have precise limits. Once started, where will you stop? And where will the law itself stop?<sup>190</sup>

Although subject to some modification, this statement is true as far as it goes. Civil law and charity are simply not the same. When one seeks to translate biblical charity into political charity, the result will inevitably lead to injustice. It is true that love is the fulfilling of God's law, the Ten Commandments. In this sense love does have "precise limits"; but the precise limits of which we speak concern the lawful sphere in which this love may be operative. The Bible stresses that biblical charity is not identical with political charity. Charity is:

- (1) A personal expression and motivation, and,
- (2) An act performed voluntarily by one person for another.

We must unmask the notion today that charity is synonymous with a government-guaranteed security which replaces love with force. The abuses of these two characteristics of biblical charity can be best seen in the shift of individual responsibility to grants of aid by the state. In short, the political love of socialism is little more than "sounding brass or {138} tinkling cymbal." Instead of "owing no man anything but to love" (Rom. 13:8), the Federal Government's short-term debt is approaching the one-trillion dollar mark; instead of loving biblically, the government has embraced the political love of legal plunder. The pyramiding budget of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare reveals the hydra-headed growth of political charity. Political philanthropy, you recall, has no precise limits. It is motivated by one

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190. Frederic Bastiat, *The Law* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1974), 69.



purpose: to appease. This is another way of saying that it is a continuous campaign of vote-getting. Just as it has been said (either rightly or wrongly) that the Supreme Court is a continuous Constitutional Assembly, so the *agape* politician is a continuous campaigner. This is a clear case of love *not not* seeking her own. Peter F. Drucker has accurately described the *agape* politician's Social Security campaign:

If we continue with fixed retirement at age 65, 40% of every employee's wage and salary would have to be used to support older people on retirement. Before the end of this century the figure would be 50%. This is far too high to be politically bearable.<sup>191</sup>

Only one thing seems to be on the horizon of the *agape* politician's thoughts: is it "politically bearable"? Bastiat said it all when he told of a socialist who said to him:

"Your doctrine is only half of my program. You have stopped at liberty; I go on to fraternity." I answered him: "The second half of your program will destroy the first."

In fact, it is impossible for me to separate the word *fraternity* from the word *voluntary*. I cannot possibly understand how fraternity can be *legally* enforced without liberty being legally destroyed, and thus justice being *legally* trampled underfoot.<sup>192</sup>

### *The Regulative Principle of the State Is the Regulative Principle of the Sword*

In the broadest sense of the regulative principle is the truth of the total authority of God over the *cosmos*. This entails God's eternal decrees in the works of creation and providence. Psalm 105:3 broadcasts this truth: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." The regulative principle of the *cosmos* may be defined as "whatsoever God has done," and it cannot be added unto or subtracted from. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it" (Eccles. 3:14). This is the regulative principle expressed in terms of God's will of decree. Yet the regulative principle also regulates the *demeanor* of God's

191. Editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, September 15, 1977, 20.

192. Bastiat, *The Law*, 25.

people in terms of {139} God's revealed *scriptural will*. Norman Shepherd writes:

It is here that passages like Deuteronomy 4:1–2 and 12:32 are relevant. These passages are sometimes cited as though they had their principle if not exclusive application to the matter of worship. However, they are as broad in their application as life itself. “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32). This principle applies then to the whole scope of our obedience to God. We may properly speak of it as the regulative principle of life.<sup>193</sup>

It is evident from Scripture that there are three authority spheres in society. They are the state, the family, and the church. Of course, all three have been ordained by God. Strictly speaking, the state and the family differ from the church in three ways:

- (1) The state and the family each has an earthly head.
- (2) The state and the family both are characterized by a symbol to enforce their respective authority (the sword for the former and the rod in the latter).
- (3) The state and the family may exercise *legislative authority*, but the church may “only declare the will of the head of the Church through the ministry of his (God’s) Word.”<sup>194</sup>

The reason for these differences is that the church is the *body of Christ*. As the body of Christ she is concerned with the tasks of preaching how a man may be justified before God and how he may maintain communion with Christ. But it is also important to remember that both the family and the state were created to function under the *jurisprudence of Christ*.<sup>195</sup> It is here that we again accentuate difference number three: the family and the state may act as *legislators* (lawmakers) so long as their laws do not contradict the Holy Writ. It is at this critical juncture that we speak of the regulative principle of the state. *When the state either makes laws that contradict the law of Christ or makes laws that surfeit the biblical definition of the state, then it has*

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193. Norman Shepherd, “The Biblical Basis for the Regulative Principle of Worship,” *The Biblical Doctrine of Worship* (n.p.: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1974), 43–44.

194. *Ibid.*, 45.

195. Messianic passages like Psalm 2:10–12 afford very clear evidence of this truth.

begun to jettison the regulative principle of the state. The incongruity lies not in the state's making laws, but in making laws that deny the true nature of the state. The same would be true of marriage if one defined marriage as the sexual union of one man and one woman in holy matrimony in order to propagate the human race. By defining marriage so, one has perverted the regulative principle of the family. The biblical emphasis is not on the "increase and multiply" motif as the *main* purpose of marriage, but rather on the mutual assistance and {140} personal enrichment between a man and woman as comprehended under the "helpmeet" label of Genesis 2:18.

So the Bible teaches us that there is a regulative principle of the cosmos, a regulative principle of life, a regulative principle of worship, a regulative principle of the family, and a *regulative principle of the state*.

### *What Civil Government Really Is*

So, what is a civil government? Have you ever seen a government? Let us cite the words of Woodrow Wilson:

No man ever saw the people of whom he forms a part. No man ever saw a government. I live in the midst of the Government of the United States. I never saw the government of the United States.<sup>196</sup>

In other words, you have been trying to make a case for what one has called an "unperceived abstraction." The most picturesque description of a government I have heard is that government is the *police*. Wilson may not have thought of it that way, but every time he looked at himself in the mirror from 1913 to 1921, he was looking at the government. Now if government is to be viewed through the looking glass of the police department, this should be enough to make us realize that government is nothing more than organized force. Having said this, let us discard political euphemisms. What is Social Security but a gigantic *policeman's* benevolence fund? What is deficit spending but colossal *police* expenditures? What is public education but *police-type education* that is characterized by four kinds of police coercion:

(1) *Police-dictated curricula*.

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196. Leonard Read quotes Woodrow Wilson in his *Love of Liberty* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Foundation for Economic Education, 1975), 93ff.

- (2) Police-enforced compulsory attendance.
- (3) Police-enforced public taxation.
- (4) Police-tenured secular priests.

Now when Paul represents the state by the *sword*, he pictures it as it ought to be portrayed. In short, the sword equals the police, and the police equals the state.<sup>197</sup> Ecclesiastes 8:4 stresses the force motif: “Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou?” That is civil government.

### *A Biblical Evaluation of Caesar's Philanthropy*

All of this is not to say in toto that the magistrate's sobriquet must be Marianne Loveless! In the using of the sword penally, the magistrate manifests that he is amorously judicial. Let us cite and exegete Romans 13:1–7: {141}

- (1) Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.
- (2) Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.
- (3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:
- (4) For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.
- (5) Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.
- (6) For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.
- (7) Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Romans 13 declares that resistance to the civil magistrate is a violation of God's law and will lead to judgment. In fact, the magistrate is

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197. For a superb analysis of the true character of civil government we refer to Leonard Read's *The Love of Liberty*, 93–99.

the tool by which God Himself expresses His own wrath. God then certifies the judgment of the magistrate.

Romans 13 is the *Locus Classicus* regarding the just prerogatives of Caesar. The passage declares that the state has the authority to inflict punishment. It is to be a terror to all evil-doers. The central purpose of Romans 13 is not to tell us what an evil-doer is or is not, or even by what standard the laws of the land are to be made, but more precisely the proper role of the state in the lives of its subjects. When the king is properly utilizing his charge, fear is to be instilled in the populace, and Christians are to be in subjection, because this is part of “the good and perfect will of God.” The fear elicited in the hearts of the subjects is the fear that results when wrong has been committed under the eye of the power. Because Caesar bears the sword, the evil workers are to be afraid. Paul says that “rulers are not a terror to the good work but to the evil.” So the punitive is stressed. To bring judgment against the destructive forces is the heart (of the heart) of the passage.

The magistrate is consigned the title, “minister of God.” This does not mean that he must be a Christian with a corresponding credible profession of faith. This does not even mean that he must acknowledge God in order to be God’s servant.<sup>198</sup> But he *must* exercise the punitive reigns of civil government. When he is found doing this, he will be “a minister of God {142} for that which is *good*.” The good wrought is *not* the “good” created through a philanthropic use of the law, but the *resultant good* remaining once the cancerous cells of criminality have been excised from the bloodstream of the nation. It is this *tranquility* that best subserves the interests of piety. Thus, Paul exhorts that we should pray for kings and all who are in authority “that we might lead a serene and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:2). Paul, an ex-wrecker of the Christian church, sees that tranquility (not anarchy) best subserves the interest of piety. He does not even intimate that the magistrate must forcefully reshape society according to the Christian gospel. The arm of force is not to be used to force sinners to

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198. This should not be construed to mean that it is a matter of indifference whether a politician shows deference to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the previously quoted Psalm 2:10–12 indicates. The magistrate is *sanctified* (set apart) for a *purpose*, but not always as a trophy of *redeeming* grace.

go to church and sing the praises of God. The church is protected when gross sinfulness such as anarchy, lawlessness, and plunder are forcibly stopped so that the church may proclaim God's Word and lead its people in congregational worship.

Philanthropic misconceptions of the purpose of civil government are decapitated by another term in Romans 13, the symbol by which the magistrate wields his power, namely, the symbolism of the *sword*. The reason why "fear" is elicited is due to this sword-wielding.

"The magistrate bears not the sword in vain." Explicit in the sign of the sword is not only the magistrate's right to wield it, but the sword is the actual sign of *his authority and purpose*. The purpose of the symbolism of the sword is not to teach us that government may lawfully promote fencing contests, or thresh corn stalks, or flaunt glittering swords in brazen ostentation as if at an art show, but to represent in the wielding of the sword the censures of God's justice. It is true that this "grand symbol" of the magistrate may not represent the death penalty exclusively. It may and has been brandished to execute punishment which falls short of the death penalty. But one must note that the magistrate's function is described *entirely* in terms of penal prerogatives: he is an "avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." His role is multitudinal only in regard to the various penal responsibilities of his office, whether it entails the curtailment of domestic or international thugery. He declares war not on poverty, but on crime. Thus, if one speaks of the magistrate as an administrator of God's love at all, it must be done with the cognisance that he punishes the wicked in order that the law-abiding (the objects of his love) may live in peace. Be this as it may, we are constrained to say that even here we may have gone beyond the import of the text. If there is any "loving" in Romans 13, it is not directly the loving of people but the *loving of justice*. Caesar's role as *God's hangman* is best described not by the attribute of God's love but by the attribute of His wrath. The upshot of this is that our tax monies are not to be expropriated for governmental programs that are philanthropic, since the purpose of civil law is punitive and retaliatory instead of messianic or creative. {143}

Up to this point we have described the state as the extension of an individual's right to self-defense. That this is exclusively horizontal thinking having more in common with Lockean philosophy than good

theology is undeniable. Biblically, the state is an extension of *God's right of self-defense*, since the killing of man constitutes an act of murderous piracy against the image of God in man (Gen. 9:6). Every lawless act against another man, then, is in reality a form of attempted deicide. This is not true because man is deity, but because he reflects the image of his Creator.

The question regarding a pre-Fall origin of the state is beyond the purview of this article. Suffice it to say that the post-Fall task of the state is to invoke judgment on malefactors. In short, the state is God's hangman. That is the alpha and omega of its function. The mandate for the state's existence rests not with the people but at least partially with the totalitarian demands of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."<sup>199</sup> The sixth commandment is a litotes: it is a negative statement with a *positive* consequence.

By protecting life and furthering the safety of the family and of religion, the state is clearly positive in its ministry. Protection is not a mere negation: it is a present and continual climate of peace and safety.<sup>200</sup>

The saying then is true that kings were ordained for men and not men for kings; the shepherd is ordained for the sheep, and not principally for the wolves. The magistrate is a minister for good when he acts as an executioner of the malefactor. When the magistrate brandishes the sword he simultaneously extends the olive branch. As Saint Peter says:

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him *for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.* (1 Pet. 2:13–14)

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199. I say "at least partially." Attention should be given to Rousas J. Rushdoony's book, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), 76, in which he demonstrates that capital punishment is to be associated with the altar and the second commandment and thereby enhancing the theological meaning of the state.

200. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, 241.

### *Civil Government's Purposeful Existence in Romans 13*

Of course, it may be argued that Paul in Romans 13 symbolizes the state with the glitter of the sword, not as a symbol of the *exclusion* of the *ixthus* (of the Christian gospel), or the *cadeuceus* (of the medical man), or the hammer and sickle (of the proletarian man), or the tassel and gown (of the Ivy League man), but only as a *vindictory* symbol that is wielded against those who break laws that hypothetically may be in conformity to the *ixthus* and *cadeuceus* and hammer and sickle and cap and gown. Our {144} rebuttal to this argumentation is that Pauline thought in Romans 13 is like a great river of sanctification with an abundance of overflowing tributaries. There is one primary theme (the sanctification of the believer) and a multitude of subsidiary themes. Although they do not all empty at the same mouth, they have as their common source the equally authoritative Word of God. One theme is primary, others are secondary, but no themes are nugatory. So it should not startle us when we observe that Paul is *not* primarily writing about civil government, since chapter 13 is really an unpacking of the biblical doctrine of sanctification begun in chapter 12:1–2. Obedience to the civil body politic is central and basic to our Christian sanctification.

However, as a matter of godly hermeneutics, just as it is a miscarriage of interpretation to de-emphasize an emphasis, it is also wrong to overemphasize an emphasis. Paul not only lionizes:

- (1) submission to civil government, and
- (2) the evil of revolutionary citizenship,

but also *the whole Christian doctrine of civil government, together with a system of rewards and punishment under God's law!* Paul is not affirming, "If you are disobedient, then such and such lethal consequences will ensue from the hand of Caesar." Nor is Paul saying, "Obey Caesar because if you do not, then you should expect to receive his judgment, since his judgment has been ordained of God." In order to animate these Roman Christians into the obedience of sanctified action, he first stipulates that *civil government is ordained of God* and then *defines what it has been ordained unto*. In other words, sanctified living is urged upon the Roman Christians, not on the basis of ensuing penal consequences for anarchist living, but rather on the *basis of the purposeful existing of civil government*. This explains why Paul says that



we must be subject “not only for wrath, but also for *conscience sake*.” There are only two reasons provided for this *purposeful existence*:

- (1) The punishment of the evil-doer.
- (2) The praise of the one who does well.<sup>201</sup>

The former of these is represented by the sword; the latter has no representation, since it is essentially complementary of the former. So, the stress of the text is upon *purposeful existence*. Paul is, then, speaking about ensuing consequences in terms of purposeful existence. The state, then, has no responsibility to socialize the good, much less to regenerate the bad. The regulative principle of the state demands that the sword be wielded *uncreatively*. For this reason we may speak of the regulative principle of the sword, since the state and the sword are synonymous. {145}

There are, then, at least five misuses of *Jus Gladii* (the right of the sword). They are:

- (1) Sheathing the sword because of partiality (e.g., the pardon of Richard Nixon where Republican camaraderie prevailed over biblical justice).
- (2) Surfeiting the sword in lawless cruelty (e.g., Gestapo-type governmental activities that are performed independent of the Constitution and thereby of Congress).
- (3) Retiring the sword because of humanistic sentimentality (e.g., the cry against the “barbarism” of capital punishment).
- (4) Denying the sword the right of existence (e.g., the modern libertarian anarchists who espouse a political philosophy of “no government”).
- (5) Wielding the sword erringly in spheres outside of the sword’s dominion (e.g., the “love” programs of the Washington dictocrats).

The object of our concern is heresy number five. Our conviction is that Cupid’s arrow is not a symbol of the state and therefore should be banished forever as a statist symbol.

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201. The encomiums showered upon David’s theocratic policemen are a case in point. Read 2 Samuel 23.

### *Socialistic Love Is Unlove*

Caesar's love as it is currently expressed in the doctrine of the modern socialist-welfare state is not only a transgression of biblical *agape*, but a *travesty of the biblical doctrine of civil government*. Although the Bible does not clearly spell out one form of civil government *above* another (it does not prefer monarchy over democracy or oligarchy over aristocracy), it *does* deprecate the socialistic bugbear. The political chemistry of the modern demagogical "love" of the socialist is a Jekyll and Hyde potion which will find the dominant personality of Mr. Hyde reigning at last. This is why it is important that the state be limited to functions of maintaining peace and justice. As Henry Hazlitt has observed, "Precisely because the State has the monopoly of coercion it can be allowed the monopoly *only of coercion*."<sup>202</sup>

Modern political love violates the first, fifth, eighth, and tenth commandments. Biblical love "envies not" and actually recognizes the possibility of giving *all of one's goods to feed the poor* while still devoid of love (1 Cor. 13:3). So it is immensely important to be adequately equipped to evaluate some of our modern candidates of "love" by this objective truth. Romans 13 must be the principle tutor if the Christian church and all of mankind are going to be delivered from political and economic illiteracy.

The practical implications of Paul's teaching are broad and wide. There {146} can be little doubt that taken strictly (which is to say, taken biblically), Romans 13 implies a *laissez-faire* ("to let alone") policy of civil government.<sup>203</sup> The civil government must leave the trowel in the hands of the farmer, the scalpel in the hands of the surgeon, the mind of the child in the hands of the family, and the *ixthus* in the pulpit of the church.

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202. Henry Hazlitt, *Man Versus the Welfare State* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 220.

203. It has been rightly said, "One of the unalienable rights of man is to be let alone." It is not our purposes to exegete Revelation 13, but we believe the paternalism of the beast is best illustrated by this interference in the free market so "that no man may buy or sell" save those that "have a mark in their right hand, or on their forehead" (Rev. 13:17).

The socialists are the fiercest enemies of the Christian faith today! Normatively, they will not declare war upon you. They will not publicly say to you, “You are now enemy of enemies. Christianity and its governmental implications are the opium of the people. Fight to the death!” No, instead they speak with saccharine language: “We love you and are concerned about your medical insurance and your future retirement. We want you to know that the proper cultivation of your children’s minds is one of our foremost concerns. Your health, education, and welfare come before any of our personal interests. We love you, and have a wonderful plan for your life.”

*The socialists wish to play God.* They look upon people as raw material to be reformed at their sovereign discretion. They refer to their programs as “experiments.” The people are the trees, but the socialist is the all-wise agricultural genius; he looks upon himself as a great inventor, whereas the people are the machines; he is the great chemist while the people are his potions and formulas. He speaks about his messianic programs with great alacrity. There is the *Square Deal*, the *New Freedom*, the *New Deal*, the *Fair Deal*, *Creative Federalism*, the *New Frontier*, and the *Great Society*, which involve as a presuppositional premise an intense coveting after other men’s powers and responsibilities. The socialist imagines that the same difference between a gardener and his trees exists between himself and the rest of mankind. He tries to ungod God by playing God himself! He always has a new idea to try out on the people. Consider the following (rather routine) episode recorded in the *San Jose News* on December 16, 1976:

Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller has suggested a two-year mandatory period of public service for every young man and woman in the nation. Such a federal program, he said, would have a major impact on youth employment. Rockefeller mentioned the idea at a breakfast with reporters in Washington. He said he had no idea how much it would cost.

Such a philosophy is not unlike the inhabitants of Nineveh who, according to the indictment of Zephaniah the prophet, said, “I am, and there is none beside me ... (Zeph. 2:15). {147}

*The socialists really despise mankind.* Generally speaking, they divide mankind into two parts. The first group includes the citizenry in general except for the socialist himself. The second group, of course, are

the socialists. They are the vanguard class. They are the elite. Bastiat described them as assuming that everybody has no means of discernment and that men basically have no motivation to act. Through socialist bifocals, people are observed as “inert matter,” “passive particles,” and “motionless atoms.” The key premise of the socialist is this: *Human beings are really indifferent to their own existence.* Only the socialist really cares! So, they think to themselves that whereas mankind always yearns for evil, they have a monopoly on the yearning for the good. Mankind meditates on vice, but the socialist really believes that he alone cogitates on virtue and beauty. A rare but candid snapshot of the animus-filled mentality of the socialist surfaced briefly in the Watergate Tapes when President Nixon and his cohorts—desperate to preserve their position of power—scoffed at the fools in Mississippi who actually believed in them!

To conclude, the civil magistrate, according to Romans 13, is thus described:

- (1) Symbolically, he is represented by the sword.
- (2) Administratively, he is an avenger of the evildoer.
- (3) Psychologically, he is the organ of God’s wrath because he is a lover of His justice.

And so we are left with the *sword* as the supreme symbol of civil government. In order for man to have dominion over all the earth he must maintain life. As one has said:

The dominion of man is secure only as long as man exercises the power of death to avenge crimes against his own dominion and security under the law of God.<sup>204</sup>

To refrain from brandishing the sword is an explicit veto of man’s duty to have dominion. Certainly, any candidate who abuses the sword is not only unworthy of our vote, but is a positive menace to society. As T. Robert Ingram put it:

Man, to maintain his dominion, must from time to time prove himself. It seems to me this principle is so basic that no person is qualified to discuss matters of government, order, discipline, subordination, or even human relations who doesn’t almost instinctively know it....Since

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204. T. Robert Ingram, *World Under God’s Law* (Houston: St. Thomas Press, 1963), 78.

death and the power of death came into the world under Adam, Adam in his exercise of dominion must also hold in his hands the last act of death.<sup>205</sup> {148}

We are convicted that there is only one medium by which the socialist can relinquish his socialism: he needs a Romans 13 perspective of civil government. We need to make him say, “I love you, *but* I have a wonderful plan for your life.” In other words, he needs to see that his declaration of love is contradicted by the conjunctive phrase of contrast.

### *“Christian” and Conservative Socialism*

It is sometimes alleged by ostensibly Reformed Christians that the civil government has the responsibility to redistribute incomes for the purpose of providing for public welfare. When such a proposition is challenged as “love destroying,” it is steadfastly said:

The important point is not that the purity of our giving be questioned, but that we meet our responsibilities toward the poor. There is no conflict in having the government carry out this task for us.<sup>206</sup>

The position stated above can only be approached with astonishment. Such a position is a patent denial of the regulative principle of the state. It assumes:

- (1) That the state exists “to have a strong central government in order to guarantee effectiveness in the task of redistributing incomes, guaranteeing competition, and providing for the public welfare.”<sup>207</sup>
- (2) That Christian socialism is lawful and that the end justifies the means by condoning the forceful seizure of citizen Peter’s property in order to enhance the estate of citizen Paul. But again the real gravity of the fallacy consists in its denial that the *regulative principle of the state is the regulative principle of the sword*.

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205. *Ibid.*, 77.

206. Everret Van Der Heide, “Can Christians Accept Capitalism?” *Pro Rege* (Sioux Center, IA: Quarterly Faculty Publication of Dordt College, March 1976), 16, as he favorably quotes from “For Your Sake He Became Poor,” published by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Grand Rapids, 1975.

207. *Ibid.*, 20.

In order to buttress his “Christian” socialism, Everret Van Der Heide quotes from Dr. Gary North’s book, *An Introduction to Christian Economics*:

Freedom is necessary for the full flowering of mankind’s capacities. Society, however, cannot exist if the market makes available the moral acids that would render social adhesion possible....The sovereignty of autonomous, acting man is as diabolical a goal as the sovereignty of the State. Neither man nor the State is divine.<sup>208</sup>

Dr. North, however, was not writing in order to promote a Christian socialism. He was writing against the market-worshippers who, in order to protect their Ephesian Dianas, would exalt the whims of the free market to the very throne of deity. He was not extolling the “virtues” of {149} governmental wealth-distributing, but censuring a fanatical libertarianism that would attempt to deify the free market and thus metamorphosize certain political institutions as the police department into profit-making butterflies. All Christian-citizen-socialists should be rebuked by the forcefulness of the following statement:

The fact is generally overlooked that government is never a source of goods. Everything produced is produced by the people, and everything that government gives the people it must first take from the people. In this day of government handouts, few people realize that they are not getting something for nothing, that the government can give them only what it has taken from them. The only ones who are ultimately benefited by government grants and aids advocated by misguided humanitarians are those on relief who live off the earnings of others, bureaucrats, thieves, corrupt politicians, and vote-buyers.<sup>209</sup>

Our response to this is that it is not inconceivable that the desire to redistribute incomes may be initiated by misguided righteous men and that there are poor who are deserving of welfare (from the private sector) so that they are not self-conscious parasites or thieves. But the central issue pertaining to the welfare state is that it is wrong because it countermands the regulative *principle of the state*. If the principle be right, the ramifications must be right. We must approach the whole question of health, education, and welfare from a thoroughly *exegetical*

208. Gary North, *An Introduction to Christian Economics* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), 231.

209. John R. Richardson, *Christian Economics* (Houston: St. Thomas Press, 1966), 37.

standpoint instead of reposing in the *eisegesis* of false philanthropists. It has been argued, for instance, that education is a market good and that to leave education in the hands of the family would inevitably produce a scarcity of that good. The conclusion is that therefore education must be provided in *sufficient* amounts by the state. The only thing this proves is that there *might* very well be a shortage of *state-directed* education, or education as we know it today. Again we must appeal to Holy Writ; we are more than convinced of the truthfulness of these words:

The superiority of private capitalism over collectivism is essentially the superiority of God's revelation over man's human reason and faulty logic.<sup>210</sup>

Under biblical government, one's resources are expropriated in order to protect *one's resources*; under socialism, one's resources are taken in order to enhance *another's* resources. Romans 13 with every conceivable explication teaches the former. *What is inclusively symbolized by the sword is symbolized to the exclusion of the hammer and sickle, the caduceus, or the ixthus. The regulative principle of the state is the regulative principle of the sword.*

Where does this place us, then, on the political spectrum? There may {150} be some that will be zealous to place us on either the left or right wing. Let us affirm that we stand opposed to socialists of all parties. Conservatives, traditionalists, moderates, populists, mavericks, etc., are but crypto-socialists who hide their socialism (often unknowingly) under a facade of invective and myopic hip-shooting. They fulminate against "big government" and the "Washington Establishment." They complain about "the effete corps of impudent snobs" and "the economic royalists." They major in the vilification of bureaucratic red-tape, prodigious spending programs to find out why children fall off tricycles or the military advantages of the frisbee, while they themselves carry about the *philosophical germ* that causes such abuses. They are the "I-Buts" who say, "I believe in free enterprise but ...." They dreamingly look back to the Au + H<sub>2</sub>O formula of 1964, unaware that Goldwater's conservatism was but a form of "sweet water socialism." In 1964 (or thereabouts) Khrushchev, by saying, "We will bury you," was promising consistent Marxist Socialism; in 1964, Republicans, by say-

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210. *Ibid.*, 23.

ing, “We will Barry you,” were advocating a *reactionary socialism*. Professor Friedrich A. Hayek, while sardonically but honestly dedicating his *Road to Serfdom* to socialists of all parties, made a telling point about conservatism that should not be forgotten:

Conservatism, though a necessary element in any stable government, is not a social program; in its paternalistic, nationalistic, and power-adoring tendencies it is often closer to socialism than true liberalism; and with its traditionalistic, anti-intellectual, and often mystical propensities it will never, except in short periods of disillusionment, appeal to the young and all those others who believe that some changes are desirable if this world is to become a better place.<sup>211</sup>

### *The Law and Romans 13*

What has been intimated up to this point is far, far from saying that the state may only be privately and unofficially Christian. The state must know its *bounds*; that is the warp and woof of our discussion. Of course, when the state attempts to define its responsibility of wielding the sword in explicit terms of non-inscripturated law, it is destined for destruction. The embarkation of such a course leads us to this warning:

For the State at best can only hold to Unitarian principles of religion acceptable to all members of its constituency which is no better than a false religion it might otherwise impose.<sup>212</sup>

This compels us to inquire: just what kind of civil government is Paul describing in Romans 13? Is it Christian or pagan? Is it ideal or de facto? Of course, we have already answered this question earlier when we affirmed {151} the *purposeful existence* of the state as being the ground of sanctified submission to the state. But it will be adamantly (and correctly) maintained that Paul is speaking of a de facto civil government which is nothing less than Nero’s Rome as “the powers that be.” Are we to conclude that Rome under Nero was a Christian government?! Or (as it is implied by the *First Confession of Basel* in 1534), is Romans 13 the best ideal for “pagan governments ...”? Let us consider the question in the following manner.

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211. Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1944] 1957), xi-xii.

212. Ray Zorn, *Church and Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962), 190.



(1) Because Nero was not a professing Christian does not necessitate our affirming that there were no creditable features of his rule. Though the Ten Commandments were not the official standard during the *Pax Romana*, this does not warrant our total castigation of Roman law as if common grace were not operative or—better—as if the “work of the law” were not written on the hearts of all men (Rom. 2:14). Natural law can never be the standard of civil government *because nature is fallen*. But the reign of a fallen ruler does not always spawn the reign of a *consistently* fallen law. This means that much of Roman law was generated by “the work of the law” on the heart and that there was much in the de facto Roman government of Paul’s day that the Christian *must* find creditable! Why else would Paul say that the ruler in his day was “a minister of God to thee for *good*”? (He does not say “evil” because that was not the most distinguishing trait of the Roman civil body politic.)

The above does not forbid our claiming that because Rome falls under the canopy of Romans 13, that there is no breathing room for a distinctly Christian government *legally* founded upon the bedrock of the Ten Commandments. Indeed, the *purposeful existence* of the state shines with greater luster when radiated by the sunbeams of God’s *inscripturated law*. As Rousas J. Rushdoony summarized it:

The state thus has a duty to be Christian. It must be Christian even as man, the family, the church, the school, and all things else must be Christian. To hold otherwise is to assert the death of God in the sphere of the state. Because of its failure to require that the state be Christian, because of its implicit death-of-God theology, the church has surrendered the state to apostate reason and the devil. The church has done this because it has denied the law of God. It has, in fact, implied that God is dead outside the walls of the church....<sup>213</sup>

In other words, if Rome under Nero is portrayed as God’s minister for good to them that do well and God’s minister of wrath to them that do evil, then the Roman politicians must have been to a certain extent not only acting within their *bounds*, but acting (not epistemologically self-consciously) on the basis of who they were—that is, fallen men bearing the imprint of “the work of the law” on the heart. If the “powers that be” are {152} doing their job praising the “good” (an ethical term) and retaliating against the “evil” (an ethical term) then the unofficial

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213. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 240.

standard must (to a certain degree) be congruous to the highest ideal of God's inscripturated law. So, every civil government is operating on "borrowed capital" (to use Van Til's phrase) because it must operate to some extent on the premise of the law of God.

The statement sticks that a magistrate does not have to have a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ in order to be God's minister. This does not mean that if there is a choice between Abraham Kuyper and Genghis Khan on the ballot that one might well cast his vote for "the scourge of God" since the "work of the law" is written on his heart too! The "work of the law" may be written on his heart, but this is not equivalent to regeneration, nor does it of itself guarantee that his rule will consistently mirror that "work." On the other hand, one may pit a professed Trinitarian like Lyndon B. Johnson against a (small "u") Unitarian like Thomas Jefferson and discover to his amazement that the latter had, in actual practice, more political savvy (Unitarian inconsistency prevails over Trinitarian hypocrisy!).

Now, to return to our initial inquiry: Is Romans 13 describing a pagan government or a biblical government? Is the government here ideal or de facto? We answer: this is a picture of a biblical government (*par excellence*), because that government was not only ordained of God but was to some extent wielding the sword under the compulsion of the law of God. Is the pedagogical purpose of Romans 13 to instruct us concerning under what *standard* all civil laws are to be codified? We answer: yes, in two mutually complementary ways:

- (1) Because unofficially and informally the "work of the law" is implemented by the basest of men, there would therefore be no incompatibility in officially and formally implementing the inscripturated law by the most pious of men;
- (2) Because officially and formally God has declared Himself to be the Highest Power, the state as the higher power must officially and formally be under His direct jurisdiction.

So we can condense the preceding argumentation into two choices: either the state will be governed on the basis of inscripturated law, or it will be governed on the basis of the denatured law of the heart which is apostate and fallen, but still retains some vestiges of the divine image. The former meets the high ideal of Romans 13; the latter must (because man is who he is) produce a similitude of that ideal, but at the same

time it will also breed political acids like socialism, emperor worship, oppression, etc. It is because the prevailing political establishment did in fact produce a similitude of that ideal, that the civil magistrate of Paul's day was not naively denominated, "minister of God." In fact, Paul averts every temptation to {153} vent his spleen on the existing order by choosing a word of sacrosanct import to describe the civil magistrate—a word fitting his office to a tee so that we can think of him and his office as nothing less than holy. That word is *leitourgos* (translated "minister") and the holiness of it redounds whenever it is employed in Holy Writ. *Leitourgos* refers to the service of God and is often used in conjunction with the highest forms of ministry in the worship of God, and is even predicated of Jesus Christ Himself! (Heb. 8:1–2). So, why, O Christian of Paul's day and our day, is the civil magistrate your *leitourgos*? There are two reasons given:

- (1) The origination of His authority is from God; he is under divine jurisdiction. "The powers that be are ordained of God." Christians should, then, have no difficulty meshing this truth with the phrase, "one nation under God." This latter phrase, however, must be interpreted as a twofold call for *national accountability* to God and *sanctified submission* to the existing powers, and not always an assurance of divine blessing. The accountability to God in Romans 13 is also of a dual nature: the subject must be subservient to the ruler, and the ruler must be subservient to *the Ruler!*
- (2) To the extent that the magistrate rules according to the law of God, so that he is a terror to malefactors and a vehicle of praise to the good, he is God's *leitourgos*.<sup>214</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The civil ruler, then, is a minister of God in the Romans 13 sense when he rules in terms of God's law. Perhaps the following quotation will facilitate the applicability of this to the American scene:

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214. Calvin does not indulge in pardonable exaggeration when he boldly says of civil rulers: "Wherefore no man can doubt that civil authority is, in the sight of God, not only sacred and lawful, but the most sacred, and by far the most honorable of all stations in mortal life." John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), bk. 4, chap. 20, 654.

Ours is a Christian civilization. Ours is a Christian nation. Why? Because everyone in it is Christian? Or even because its leading citizens are Christians? No indeed. We are a Christian people because the laws under which all must live—whether Jew, Moslem, Buddhist, Confucian, or Christian—are the laws which come from God and are enforced upon His authority through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Our laws, like all law, apply to every person alike, whether he be a Christian priest or an atheist revolutionary, a devout Jew or a Christ-hating Moslem. The laws are the conditions under which all men must live if they propose to remain within a society. They must be applied impersonally and with absolute justice. Their end is to protect society as a whole and to preserve its basic structure—a Christian republic.<sup>215</sup>

This is the magistrate's purposeful existence—to rule in terms of God's law. When this is accomplished, the judicial wielding of the sword (and {154} not the philanthropic predestination of the cosmos) will be his distinguishing feature. Romans 13, then, is no fleeting snapshot of a debauched civil government; it is a picture in Cinemascope of civil government as it was to a great extent in Paul's day and what it *ought* always to be. So we derive the "ought" from the "is." Both *de facto* existence and purposeful existence are clearly intimated. The practice of any other political love than the *judicial love* of Romans 13 is but a form of seductive allurements to tyranny and brigandage. The love of the political Aphrodisiac is, in the last analysis, a symbol of "tinkling cymbal." The state is exclusively symbolized by the sword, but socialist love leads to the "cymbalization" of love.

When the state seeks to redistribute the wealth, it becomes an exploiter rather than a provider. This taking from the richer to give to the poorer has been variously labeled. One has accurately described it as a case of Robin Hood wearing a sheriff's badge. Indeed, it would not be far from the truth to describe the situation with the following riddle:

When does a policeman become a pig?  
When he enforces the pig-trough philosophy.

Thus, when the state is used as a medium for exploiting the richer, the pig-trough philosophy comes into its own. This is the case of the pig-trough philosophy supported by the big power.

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215. Ingram, *The World Under God's Law*, 4.

Christians should, then, be wary of the politicians' play on the word "love." Consider, for example, these recent political sentiments:

The poor, the weak, the aged, the afflicted must be treated with respect, and compassion and with love.

I have spoken many times about love, but love must be aggressively translated into simple justice.<sup>216</sup>

Is the point registering? Do you see the light? "*Love* [political love] *must be aggressively translated* [there is your force!] *into simple* [it is so clear to this god of the polis!] *justice* [synonymous with wielding the sword against the good in order to further equalitarian ideals]."

We need to reexamine some of our fundamental presuppositions about the God-ordained purpose of civil government. We need to evaluate the political lullabies of our politicians to see if they harmonize with the music of Holy Writ. If the politician does not see his task as one primarily wielding the sword to curb destructive forces, in terms of the moral requirements of Romans 13, he is not a qualified candidate. The choice is ours; either coercive government under a "loving" tyrant, or protective government under God's minister. To vote for a socialist is to essentially plead: "I covet your love, and I covet your wonderful plan for my life!"

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216. Acceptance Speech by Jimmy Carter, Democratic National Convention, New York, July 16, 1976.

# THE WORD OF GOD VERSUS THE TOTALITARIAN STATE

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During the first world war the American people were made to believe that the purpose of that conflict was “to make the world safe for democracy.” However, in the wake of victory came numerous dictatorships and totalitarian governments. In the second world war totalitarian Italy, Germany, and Japan went down to crushing defeat, but totalitarian Russia rose to incomparably greater heights of power and influence than it had previously enjoyed. Octopus-like, it has thrown its tentacles about much of Asia and Europe, and it threatens to draw within its grasp the greater part of the world. In addition to that grand triumph, state totalitarianism has scored several minor victories. In almost every country on the face of the globe there now exists a communist group that is both vocal and influential. Hardly had one form of socialism been defeated in Germany when another took control in Britain. And even in these United States of America, which were founded less than two hundred years ago on the principle that human government must be severely restricted, the power of the federal government has in recent decades grown by leaps and bounds. What the future holds is admittedly difficult to say, but of one thing we can be altogether certain—it is of the essence of totalitarian communism to force itself upon the whole of humanity, and it cannot and will not rest so long as it has not accomplished precisely that.

There is an easy explanation of the present ascendancy of state totalitarianism. It is said to be due to a rather natural human reaction to economic depression. In the closing years of the Roman republic there was

such a depression. The people clamored for *panem et circenses*: literally translated, bread and circuses; in modern paraphrase, a full dinner-pail and the movies. For these things they were more than willing to exchange their liberties. Inevitably the totalitarian Roman empire ensued. Today history is simply repeating itself. In 1929 came a financial crash which ushered in a prolonged depression. Once more men were willing to sell their birthright of liberty for a literal mess of pottage. If only a man gets {156} a big paycheck at the end of each week, why should he worry about the growing power of his government? If ever increasing power of government is conducive to his economic security, more power to it!

It cannot be denied that this explanation contains much more than a modicum of truth. Materialism and a concomitant neglect of spiritual values have induced numerous citizens to surrender at least some of their liberties to the state. And yet these sins are more accurately denominated the occasion than the cause of the ascendancy of state totalitarianism. Underlying them is a more basic evil. At bottom the problem is one of irreligion and false theology.

At a certain juncture in its history the Israelitish people expressed the desire for a king like the kings of the neighboring nations. When the prophet Samuel warned them that a king such as they asked for would certainly play the despot, the people were not dissuaded. And when Samuel complained to Jehovah of the ingratitude of the nation which he had so long and so faithfully served as judge, God made the significant declaration: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."<sup>217</sup> On the occasion of the anointing of Saul as Israel's first king, Samuel echoed those words when he said: "Ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us."<sup>218</sup> The truth thus expressed has a universal application. In this sinful world no nation can get along without human government. But that nation which fears God most, walks in His ways most faithfully, and so honors Him most consistently as its king, has the least need of government by men. Contrariwise, in the

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217. 1 Sam. 8:7.

218. 1 Sam. 10:19.

measure in which a nation denies the sovereignty of God, in that very measure it is certain to ascribe sovereignty to the men that rule over it. The people that will not have the God of sovereign love reign over it is bound to accept the rule of despotic men. In a word, the basic cause of state totalitarianism is irreligion.

It was no accident that the totalitarian governments of ancient history were without exception pagan. It was nothing strange that the Napoleonic despotism followed hard upon the French Revolution with its slogan, *ni Dieu, ni maître*. It is logical that the German people, which had harbored the haughtiest critics of the Word of God and had in considerable numbers embraced false philosophies as, for instance, the nihilism of Nietzsche, should shout in unison, *Heil Hitler!* That heathen Japan should have presented an almost perfect example of the totalitarian state is precisely as might be expected. It is just as natural that the Russian people, whose Christianity has long been characterized by such abysmal ignorance and {157} hollow formalism as to merit the name semi-paganism, should fall victim to communist totalitarianism. Marxist communism demands a totalitarian state for the very reason that it is blatantly atheistic.

No more urgent issue confronts the world today than that of the totalitarian state. Because this issue is theological, it is more than time that it be regarded in the light of Holy Scripture. It is to the discredit of the Christian church, particularly in America, that it has but feebly attempted to do this. Here is a striking instance of neglect by the church of the social implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ. At this point, as indeed at many others, the church has failed almost completely to do justice to the *Diesseitigkeit* of its God-given message. Modernism has paid some attention to the totalitarian state, but hardly from the viewpoint of the inspired Word of God. For that reason it has on the whole dealt far too gently with this evil, particularly with communism. Fundamentalism has condemned communism and has berated the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America for its leanings toward collectivism, but it has been handicapped by its strong aversion toward any sort of social gospel. Roman Catholicism has done fully as well as American Protestantism, but its attacks on the totalitarian state have been vitiated to a considerable extent by its passion for a totalitarian church and by the inconsistency of dealing much



less severely with fascism than with communism. Karl Barth has lifted up his voice in protest against the totalitarian state but can hardly be said to have attempted a comprehensive study of the subject. Dutch Calvinism has perhaps done best of all. Over a period of several decades it has produced a number of valuable books on the Christian conception of the state, and its periodical *Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde* has presented much worthwhile material on that theme; but not even those studies have dealt as specifically or thoroughly with the problem of the totalitarian state as present conditions in the world demand. The same may be said of the first volume of H. Henry Meeter's *Calvinism: An Interpretation of Its Basic Ideas*, a 1939 American publication on the Calvinistic conception of politics. In fairness to all concerned it should, of course, be borne in mind that state totalitarianism has but recently come to occupy the limelight.

Because of this status of the problem the present attempt to view the totalitarian state in the light of the Word of God will, no doubt, prove far from exhaustive. Perhaps little more will be accomplished in this study than to present an introduction to our theme. But that will be better than to sit idly by.

### 1. The Function of Government

An exact delimitation of the proper task of the state is difficult to give. Whether it can be given on the basis of Holy Scripture is problematical and even doubtful. It seems certain that general revelation in nature and {158} history, as well as special revelation in the Bible, must be consulted by one who attempts a precise circumscription of the function of human government. It is not at all certain that God intended that the Bible should say the last word on the subject. Holy Writ is not a textbook of statecraft or jurisprudence. However, there are certain scriptural data that bear significantly on this matter.

In orthodox circles the view has long been prevalent that the state owes its founding to the presence of sin in the world. That sin was indeed a potent factor in the origination of human government cannot be denied. Possibly the first scriptural reference to the state is contained in the divine ordinance: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."<sup>219</sup> It seems more likely that God intended that ordinance to be upheld by some constituted authority than that He

meant it to be executed by individuals in random fashion. If that reference to human government be veiled at best and dubious at worst, elsewhere Scripture teaches unmistakably that the fact of sin has rendered the state necessary. In his classical exhortation to loyalty to the state the Apostle Paul says that the civil ruler “beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”<sup>220</sup> Whether it follows that some sort of state would not have been instituted if sin had not entered the world, is a question that must be deemed both speculative and debatable. But the conclusion is certainly warranted that God founded the historic state, the actual state in human history, primarily for the purpose of holding sin in check. It does not necessarily follow as has sometimes been asseverated, that the function of the state is purely negative. Romans 13 contains more than an inkling that its task has a positive aspect. Speaking of the civil magistrate, Paul exhorts believers: “Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good.”<sup>221</sup> This can only mean that it is the business of the state, not only to prevent crime and to punish criminals, but also to encourage citizens in the doing of good. The fact that the need of such encouragement stems from sin does not alter its positive character.

The teaching of Scripture on the function of the state can best be summarized in the statement that the state is to operate in the sphere of justice. That links up with its task with sin, for in a sinless world justice would naturally reign supreme, so that provision for its maintenance would be superfluous. That ascribes to the state a task which is both highly important and truly colossal, for in this sin-cursed world injustice abounds and the propensity of men to injustice is at once universal and well-nigh irrepressible. That provides for both a positive and a negative aspect of {159} the task of human government, for justice demands not only the punishment of those who do evil but also the reward of those who do good. That makes room for international as well as intranational activities of the state, for it must uphold justice not only among its own citizens, but also among nations. And finally, that

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219. Gen. 9:6.

220. Rom. 13:4.

221. Rom. 13:3–4.

highly exalts the state, for it makes the state the earthly representative of the God of perfect justice. All in all, the position that it is the business of the state to maintain justice in the dealings of men with one another seems to cover admirably the various aspects of the teaching of Scripture on the function of human government.

Here then is a broad and yet specific scriptural principle to which human government should give heed and by which it should consider itself bound. The state should be scrupulously careful to restrict itself to the enforcement of justice and to abstain from all activities not bearing directly on the upholding of justice. On the other hand, to the maintenance of justice it should devote itself so diligently that it has neither time nor energy left for anything else. The acceptance of this principle by the state and the consequent devotion of itself both assiduously and exclusively to the cause of justice would, to say the very least, go a long way toward preventing its becoming totalitarian.

Against this conclusion it may be argued that because of the pervasiveness of injustice in the world the task of maintaining justice would necessitate the state's interfering with all human relations and that therefore the principle just enunciated must itself tend toward state totalitarianism. The answer to that objection is that, while the maintenance of justice is indeed a task of exceedingly wide scope, it by no means embraces the whole of human life. Men have a great many other interests than that of being dealt with justly. The pursuit of happiness, for instance, whether temporal or eternal, which is natural for man as constituted by the Creator and therefore a universal human interest, comprehends much more than the mere getting of a square deal. It is also an inalienable right of man of which no government may seek to deprive him and with the exercise of which the government may interfere only when one man tramples on the rights of others. It follows that a stronger conclusion than the one objected to is warranted. Strict observance by the state of the principle that it is to operate only in the field of justice would make the avoidance of totalitarianism not merely a likelihood, but a certainty.

Fortunately, a detailed application of this principle and a listing in *minutiae* of all that is and all that is not the function of the state is not necessary for our present purpose. If the Bible did contain such a catalogue, our problem would indeed vanish forthwith. But its absence

from the Bible does not preclude the possibility of dealing with the problem of state totalitarianism on a scriptural basis. Even though Scripture does not tell to the smallest detail what the state must do and what it may not do, {160} the distinct possibility remains that it clearly forbids the state to do certain specific things. Nor is it at all difficult to envisage the possibility that Scripture may, in the very interest of justice, place restrictions on the state's activities. That these possibilities in the abstract are in fact realities will be shown presently.

## *2. The Nature of Man*

The Word of God humiliates man exceedingly. It describes fallen man as totally depraved. "God saw," we are told, "that *every* imagination of the thoughts of his heart was *only* evil *continually*."<sup>222</sup> Jeremiah describes the heart of man as "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."<sup>223</sup> Paul says that Jew and gentile alike are under sin, and to both he applies the Old Testament quotation: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways."<sup>224</sup> According to Scripture nothing in man has escaped the ravages of sin, and his dominant disposition is to hate God and his fellows.<sup>225</sup> The credit for whatever relative good natural, unregenerate, man may do, goes not to any innate goodness of his, which is nonexistent, but to the common grace of God.

Strange though it may seem, the Bible exalts man exceedingly. Of all God's creatures on earth, man alone was made in the image of the Creator.<sup>226</sup> And that image, far from being a mere ornament added to man, constituted his very essence. It was the image of God that made him man. It follows that, when he fell into sin and became totally depraved,

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222. Gen. 6:5.

223. Jer. 17:9.

224. Rom. 3:12–16.

225. Rom. 1:30; Tit. 3:3.

226. Gen. 1:26–27.

he did not lose the image of God in its entirety. So long as he continues a human being he will retain certain remnants of the image of God, such as rationality, morality or conscience, and immortality. Small wonder that the Psalmist should sing this ode to man: “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.”<sup>227</sup> Nor is that all. By virtue of the image of God every human being has the *semen religionis* in his soul. Deep down in every human heart dwells an ineradicable consciousness of the reality of God; men everywhere “feel after God”;<sup>228</sup> and, in the words of the great Augustine, man cannot rest until he rests in God.

From both these aspects of the scriptural view of man it follows that the {161} totalitarian state cannot be pleasing to God.

No doubt, the institution of the state was intended by God as both a blessing and a curse. What the world would be like without human government is difficult to imagine. Were it not for this restraining force, sin would go on such a rampage as to transform this earth into a veritable hell. The state is an indispensable blessing of the common grace of God. On the other hand, because of the depravity of those who exercise human government it cannot but be evil. To be sure, regenerate man is no longer totally depraved, but neither is he anything like perfect. The most advanced saint still offends in many things and has a long way to go before he shall have apprehended the prize of the high calling of God.<sup>229</sup> Therefore, even at its best human government is certain to be bad. When man sinned against God and by that very act rejected the divine rule, God as it were said to him: “Very well; since you will not have Me rule over you, you will have to accept the rule of sinful, selfish, corrupt, and cruel men. See how you like it.” The institution of the state by God was God’s method of punishing man for his rebellion against Him. In every instance human government is a penalty of sin. And totalitarian rule by a ruthlessly cruel dictator is that penalty in its severest form.

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227. Ps. 8:5–6.

228. Acts 17:27.

229. James 3:2; Phil. 3:12–14.

It may not be inferred by any manner of means that totalitarian rule by some monster of iniquity is ever pleasing to God. On the contrary, this can never be anything but an abomination in His sight. Regardless of its relationship to God's decretive will, it constitutes a flagrant violation of His perceptive will. The same is true, although in lesser degree, of totalitarian rule by a relatively good man, for even good men so-called are bad. The opinion of both Plato and Aristotle that the best form of human government is rule by one, provided the one be good, is lacking in realism. "There is none good but one, that is God."<sup>230</sup> The simple fact is that no man is good enough to wield unrestricted authority over his fellows and that the best human ruler imaginable is still so evil that he must needs be restrained by some system or other of checks and balances. Only God, who is perfect, is qualified for totalitarian rule. For sinful man to undertake it is the most presumptuous kind of pride. Harsh though it may sound, the only epithet that describes it adequately is *satanic*.

In view of the depravity of human rulers that totalitarian state stands condemned. It stands condemned also in view of the fact that those who are ruled bear the image of God.

By virtue of the image of God which he bears, every human being is a prophet, a priest, and a king in his own right. To be sure, only regenerate man is in a position to exercise the functions of these offices in their rich Christian denotation and connotation. But even unregenerate man holds {162} these offices after a true fashion. A few of their prerogatives may be specifically named. As prophet, man speaks. It is significant that of all God's earthly creatures only man has the gift of speech. Every human being has freedom of speech. As priest, man worships. It is meaningful that of all God's earthly creatures only man has the capacity to worship. Every human being has freedom of worship. As king, man rules. Immediately after creating man God commanded him to "subdue" the earth, and He gave him "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."<sup>231</sup> Every human being has the right to hold private property. The prohibition, "Thou shalt not steal,"<sup>232</sup> the story of

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230. Mark 10:18.

231. Gen. 1:28.

the seizure of Naboth's vineyard by King Ahab and the violent divine indignation aroused by that wanton deed,<sup>233</sup> and Peter's words addressed to Ananias with reference to the land which the latter had sold: "While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?"<sup>234</sup> are a few of the Scripture passages that support the right of private property; but the most compelling scriptural proof of that right is the teaching that man is God's image-bearer. What is a king without a domain?

That these rights have their proper limits should go without saying. In relation to God they are severely restricted. Man may speak only that which is pleasing to God. Man may worship only according to the prescriptions of the Word of God. Man may hold private property only as a steward of God. In relation to men, too, these rights have bounds. In exercising them each man must have due regard for the rights of others. To insist that this be done is one of the obvious functions of the state, for it is essential to the maintenance of justice.

However, what needs to be emphasized at this juncture is that it was God who endowed man with these rights at the very moment of his creation. The rather prevalent notion that the individual citizen possesses these rights because the state has graciously bestowed them is utterly erroneous. He has them, not by the grace of his government, but by the grace of God. Specifically, an American citizen has freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and the right to hold private property, not because the constitution of the nation grants him these, but conversely, the constitution recognizes these prerogatives of the citizen because God has bestowed them upon him. For that reason these prerogatives are "inalienable." No man, no ruler, no government can deprive him of them. In case the state forbids their exercise, he is still in full possession of them. So long as man bears the image of God, so long as he is a human being, he continues in their possession. {163}

Not even that is the entire picture. At this point the state becomes servant to the citizen. It is the God-assigned duty of the government to

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232. Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19.

233. 1 Kings 21.

234. Acts 5:4.

protect the individual in the exercise of these God-given privileges. This is an obvious demand of justice.

All of that is either expressed or implied in our American Bill of Rights, which was added to our constitution almost at once after its adoption because many of the founders of this republic felt that the constitution was not sufficiently specific in defining the rights of the citizen. Thus regarded, the Bill of Rights is indeed an eminently scriptural document.

The principle that men may govern only with the consent of those whom they govern is patently scriptural. It is supported by certain events in Bible history. After Saul, Israel's first king, had been anointed by Samuel, he was chosen king—by lot, to be sure—at a gathering of the people.<sup>235</sup> Although David had been anointed several years before, he did not actually reign until he was invited to the kingship, first by the tribe of Judah, and subsequently by the remaining tribes of Israel.<sup>236</sup> However, the strongest and most conclusive support for this principle is found in the scriptural teaching of man's creation in the image of God. The image of God lends to man such dignity and glory that no one save God stands far above him. That man who arrogates to himself rule over his fellowmen without their consent flouts that dignity and that glory and puts himself in the place of God.

The case against the totalitarian state is far stronger even than that. Not only does no government have the right to exercise rule over a people without its consent. It is also true that no people has the right to consent to totalitarian rule. In several instances in the course of history whole nations have welcomed a totalitarian government. That the great mass of the Japanese people long did that very thing is beyond dispute. That the vast majority of the German people recently did likewise can hardly be questioned. But thus men despise and sell their birthright of the image of God. That most certainly may never be done. The conclusion is inescapable that totalitarian rule, even with the consent of the governed, is an abomination.

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235. 1 Sam. 10:17–21.

236. 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:1–3.



### 3. The Autonomy of Spheres

The life of mankind may be said to consist of several spheres which, although interdependent and inseparable, are distinct from each other. How many of these spheres exist, whether three or seven or more, is indeed an important question, but for the present purpose is not of supreme importance. What is of supreme importance is that the autonomy of at least certain of these spheres be upheld. {164}

There are in the world three institutions concerning which Scripture teaches unmistakably that they are of divine origin. They are the family, the church, and the state. The Lord God created woman and brought her to the man that she might be his wife.<sup>237</sup> Blessing them He said: “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.”<sup>238</sup> Thus God instituted the human family. God also instituted the church. He brought it into being in embryonic form when He said to the serpent in the garden of Eden: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”<sup>239</sup> He established it in more formal fashion when He spoke to Abram: “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.”<sup>240</sup> And referring specifically to the New Testament aspect of the church, the Son of God declared: “Upon this rock I will build my church.”<sup>241</sup> Likewise it was God who instituted the state. When Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea, said to Jesus, “Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee?” the Lord did not deny that power but replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.”<sup>242</sup> And speaking of the “higher powers,” Paul said, “There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.”<sup>243</sup>

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237. Gen. 2:21–24.

238. Gen. 1:28.

239. Gen. 3:15.

240. Gen. 17:7.

241. Matt. 16:18.

242. John 19:10–11.

243. Rom. 13:1–2.

If it was God who instituted the family and the church, it was not the state. It is an interesting and highly significant detail that both the family and the church are older than the state. The state cannot possibly have instituted them. Genesis 1 relates the founding of the family, in the garden of Eden before the Fall of man into sin. Genesis 3 tells of the founding of the church, also in Eden, but immediately after the Fall. As was already indicated, the first possible scriptural reference to the state is contained in Genesis 9, which narrates events that occurred after the flood. It follows that the family and the church do not exist by the grace of the state but by the grace of God, and that He bestowed upon the family and the church certain prerogatives of which the state may never presume to deprive them. The state, to be sure, is autonomous in its sphere, but so is the family autonomous in its sphere, and likewise the church in its. *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, a phrase popularized by the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper, expresses a teaching of Scripture which is meaningful indeed.

Because the life of the individual and the life of the race are organic, the various spheres which they comprise cannot be isolated from one another {165} but are certain to touch each other. That fact often renders the practical application of the principle of the autonomy of spheres extremely difficult. Who dares to assert, for instance, that he is prepared to say the last word on the implications of the separation of church and state? However, difficulties of application in no way detract from the validity of the principle under discussion. It is also true that numerous applications may be made without hesitation.

That children belong to their parents and not primarily to the state may be set down as a teaching of the Word of God without any fear of successful contradiction. Therefore Scripture charges parents, not the state, with the education of their children. The Bible literally teems with commands addressed to parents to be diligent in the performance of that task, and, as might be expected, it insists that the education which they provide be permeated with religion, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of both knowledge and wisdom.<sup>244</sup> Two particularly noteworthy passages may be singled out—one from the Old Testament, the other from the New. Moses expressed himself emphatically on the

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244. Prov. 1:7; 9:10.

subject when he said to Israel: “These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates.”<sup>245</sup> And Paul issued the forthright command: “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”<sup>246</sup>

Does it follow that the state has nothing to say about the education of children? Certainly not. Because of the inroads of sin on this domain of life, it is often compelled to act. If the state did not enact any compulsory education laws, many children would receive no education. Nor may it permit children who attend school to be exposed to the dangers of unsanitary conditions or of buildings that are veritable firetraps. In a word, the state must see to it that justice is done to children in the realm of education.

Regarding the precise task of the state in the matter of education there are, no doubt, problems that remain to be solved. However, one truth at the very least stands out unassailable. It is the right of parents, not the state, to decide what religious education children are to receive. The provision of the constitution of Soviet Russia forbidding the giving of religious education flies in the face of the Word of God. When, on the other hand, three decades ago, the Supreme Court of the United States of America {166} declared unconstitutional a law enacted by the State of Oregon compelling all the children in that commonwealth to attend the so-called religiously neutral public schools, it occupied scriptural ground, whether or not it was aware of that fact. And when, in 1921, a similar law was proposed in the State of Michigan and, having been submitted to the voters by way of a referendum, was overwhelmingly defeated, the people of that commonwealth, whatever their motives may have been, arrived at a scriptural conclusion. Again, for the recent decision of our highest court in the McCollum-Champaign

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245. Deut. 6:6–9.

246. Eph. 6:4.

case there is at least this to be said, that it is both good Americanism and good Christianity to insist that the civil government has no right to bring pressure to bear on parents to expose their children to any specific kind of religious education, or for that matter to any religious education at all. What seems strange, however, is that so few of the Christian people in our land seem to be aware of an obvious and far-reaching implication of that decision. If religious instruction given on a voluntary basis, not by the public schools but by the churches of a community, yet in the public school buildings and within what are usually regarded as school hours, violates the rights of atheists, then *a fortiori* the teaching of naturalism and materialism, with their inescapable atheistic implications, by the public schools themselves in classes which the children of believers are required to attend does the greatest violence to the rights of Christians.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, in the matter of the religious education of children the family is sovereign, not the state. And since it is the plain teaching of Holy Scripture that religion must suffuse the whole of education, Christian parents must ever insist on their God-given right to provide for their children an education that is Christian throughout. Never may the state deny, or even abridge, that right. In fact, the state is in duty bound in the interest of justice to uphold that right. In that respect the state exists for the family.

That Scripture teaches the separation of church and state is beyond dispute.

Under the theocracy, state and church were so closely joined together that it is hardly amiss to describe Israel as a church-state. Yet it would be an exaggeration to assert that the two were identical. Significantly, God did not place Moses alone at the head of His people, but alongside of him Aaron the high priest. In the days of the kings there were frequent clashes between them on the one hand and the priests or the prophets on the other. In a real sense these were clashes between state and church. For instance, the prophet Nathan did not hesitate to rebuke King David in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah;<sup>247</sup> the prophet Elijah on more than one occasion {167} violently assailed King Ahab;<sup>248</sup> and when Queen Athaliah sought to destroy all the seed royal,

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247. 2 Sam. 12.

the priest Jehoiada with the aid of his wife rescued the child Joash, kept him in hiding, and in due time anointed him to be king over Judah.<sup>249</sup> Two kings were severely punished directly by God Himself for violating the principle of the separation of church and state. When King Saul, ready to join battle with the Philistines, himself offered up a burnt offering instead of waiting for Samuel to arrive for the performance of that rite, God rejected him as king.<sup>250</sup> And when King Uzziah, otherwise God-fearing, presumptuously entered the temple to burn incense upon the altar of incense, the Lord smote him forthwith with leprosy, from which he never recovered, and his son Jotham reigned in his stead.<sup>251</sup>

The separation of church and state is taught progressively in Holy Scripture. Therefore, it is more patently taught in the New Testament than in the Old. The Lord Jesus stated it unequivocally when, in answer to the question whether it was lawful to give tribute to a pagan ruler, He said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."<sup>252</sup> Here Jesus, to quote from Calvin's commentaries *in loco*, "lays down a clear distinction between spiritual and civil governments." The completion of the separation of church and state was implied in Christ's command to the church to preach the gospel in the whole world and to make disciples of all nations,<sup>253</sup> and it actually came to pass with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church on the day of Pentecost. Cloven tongues as of fire sat on the heads of the disciples. They began to speak in many tongues. Men were present from all over the Mediterranean world. Each of them heard the gospel preached in the language in which he was born. Three thousand were converted and received by baptism into the Christian church.<sup>254</sup> That stupendous event marks the greatest turning-point in the history of the church. It had, by and large, been bound up—albeit never identi-

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248. 1 Kings 18, 21.

249. 2 Kings 11.

250. 1 Sam. 13:8–14.

251. 2 Chron. 26:16–23.

252. Matt. 22:21.

253. Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8.

254. Acts 2.

fied—with Israel as a nation; now it blossomed forth into universalism. Henceforth a national church was not merely an anachronism but a contradiction in terms. The church of Jesus Christ is neither national nor yet international. It is supranational. It far transcends all nationalism. And that fact spells the consummation of the separation of church and state.

It must be admitted that the church has been slow to grasp this teaching of the Word of God. Augustine, in many respects the greatest of the church fathers, did not see it, nor did the early reformers of the sixteenth century. It did begin to dawn on John Calvin, but even that keen student of the Word of God was not sufficiently far ahead of his times to discern {168} it clearly. Not even the Westminster divines a century later had anything like a profound insight into this truth. In the providence of God it remained for the churches of America in particular to be illuminated on this score by the Spirit of truth. From the time of its founding, and even prior to its founding, this nation has had a multiplicity of Christian denominations. It was but natural that no denomination was willing to have another denomination favored above it by the state. Therefore, unlike many European nations which had their state churches, these United States have from the beginning abounded with free churches. A logical consequence was the separation of church and state. Roger Williams, extremist though he was in some respects, must be credited with having been among the first to insist upon this separation. Gradually, nay rapidly, the teaching of Scripture on this matter gained general acceptance. In 1788 the General Synod of the Presbyterian Church amended section 3 of chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession of Faith to read as follows: “Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and Sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the Church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or

hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of *any* denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or of in-fidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.”

Admittedly the term *separation of church and state* is a loose one. Absolute separation of the two is obviously out of the question. It must also be granted that in practice the proper application of the principle denominated by that term is often difficult to determine. Many thorny questions remain here. Yet three truths stated in the above quotation from the Presbyterian Confession of Faith may without hesitation be called unassailable. The first is that the state has nothing to say about the spiritual affairs of the church of Jesus Christ. It may not assume to itself “the administration of the Word and Sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith.” The second is, that no state has the right to enact for the church laws which {169} conflict with the laws laid down by Christ for His church, and that it is the prerogative of the church to judge what are Christ’s laws for it. The third is that it is the solemn duty of the state to protect the church, as well as every citizen, in the “full, free, and unquestioned liberty” of exercising religion. In this important respect the state is servant to the church and exists for the church’s benefit. Each of these three truths rules out the totalitarian state.

#### ***4. The Kingship of Christ***

The Word of God teaches the mediatorial kingship of Christ, and it strongly emphasizes the totalitarian scope of His rule.

That the second Psalm is messianic permits of no doubt. Handel was right when he interpreted it thus in his famous oratorio, *The Messiah*, for the early Christians at Jerusalem so interpreted it in the prayer which they offered to God in the day of persecution. Quoting from this psalm they addressed God: “Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered

together against the Lord and against his anointed.” Identifying Christ with the Lord’s anointed, they went on to say: “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together.”<sup>255</sup> Now to this anointed Son of God the psalm ascribes totalitarian rule when it says: “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”<sup>256</sup> Of the suffering servant of Jehovah Isaiah says: “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”<sup>257</sup> When the risen Christ gave the great commission to His eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, He declared majestically: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”<sup>258</sup> Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus that God raised Christ from the dead “and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and {170} power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.”<sup>259</sup> The same apostle told the Philippian Christians: “God also hath highly exalted him and gave him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory

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255. Acts 4:25–27.

256. Ps. 2:6–8.

257. Isa. 53:10–12.

258. Matt. 28:18.

259. Eph. 1:20–22.



of God the Father.”<sup>260</sup> To the seven churches in Asia Minor, John described the glorified Christ as “the prince of the kings of the earth.”<sup>261</sup>

According to Scripture the God-man, the Saviour, the Mediator, having passed through the state of humiliation, is now exalted to the right hand of God and from there exercises totalitarian rule over the universe. He has boundless authority over the church and the world; over mankind as a whole and each individual; over every sphere of human life: the family, the church, the state, and whatever other spheres may exist; over politics, both national and international; over labor and industry; over science and art; over all.

Sad to say, much of Christendom is blind, or nearly so, to the scriptural emphasis on the present kingship of Christ. Historic Lutheranism, from the Protestant Reformation to the present day, has stressed Christ’s saviour-hood rather than His kingship. It is characteristic of Fundamentalism to do likewise. The usual Fundamentalist is diligent in urging sinners to accept Christ as their personal Saviour, but he seldom tells them that they cannot possibly receive Christ as Saviour without at once acknowledging Him as King. The modern Dispensationalist goes so far as to say that Satan is in control of this present world. He overlooks the obvious fact that the only three passages of Scripture which denominate Satan “the prince of this world” assert that Christ by His death defeated Satan as prince of the world. With a view to His impending death Jesus said: “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out”,<sup>262</sup> “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”,<sup>263</sup> “the prince of this world is judged.”<sup>264</sup> Karl Barth has insisted that it is folly to say that the kingdom is now present. According to him, Scripture teaches only that the kingdom has come nigh. Its actual arrival awaits a future crisis. And Modernism, which is in reality a denial of historic Christianity, while putting considerable emphasis on Christ’s kingship, divorces it from the substitutionary atonement,

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260. Phil. 2:9–11.

261. Rev. 1:5.

262. John 12:31.

263. John 14:30.

264. John 16:11.

which according to Scripture constitutes its foundation. God declares in Isaiah: “*Therefore* will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; *because* he hath poured out his soul unto death, {171} and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many”;<sup>265</sup> and, after saying that Christ “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” Paul proceeds: “*Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name.”<sup>266</sup> By severing Christ’s kingship from its scriptural foundation Modernism has transformed it into an air-castle. It cannot be denied that the present kingship of Christ is slighted, and even denied, by a great many who profess Christianity. However, this phenomenon is not universal. The Reformed faith has not only always acknowledged the present kingship of Christ, but has ever stressed it strongly, and it does that today.

The neglect of the present totalitarian rule of Christ is regrettable for more reasons than one. One extremely weighty reason is that this teaching of Holy Writ constitutes a potent argument against state totalitarianism. Those who slight this scriptural doctrine are discarding a compelling argument against the totalitarian state.

The rule of Christ is totalitarian. That truth leaves no room for totalitarian rule by men. When men seek to exercise totalitarian rule, they arrogate to themselves that which belongs to Christ alone. A totalitarian state cannot but collide head-on with the kingdom of Christ. In a word, state totalitarianism is a manifestation of antichrist. There are many antichrists in the world, but none bolder than this.

There can be little doubt that the thirteenth chapter of Revelation describes the kingdom of antichrist as it shall flourish toward the end of time, shortly before Christ returns to cast it down into utter ruin. The human race will be consolidated under the rule of the beast that rises up out of the sea, and his rule will be totalitarian. He will be the acknowledged political head of humanity. It is said that he has “seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns.” The dragon gives him “his power and his seat and great authority.” His followers say: “Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”<sup>267</sup> He

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265. Isa. 53:12.

266. Phil. 2:8–9.

will be the acknowledged religious head of humanity. “All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” A second beast, which comes up out of the earth, “causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast.” He tells men “that they should make an image to the beast....And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”<sup>268</sup> He will also be the acknowledged industrial head of humanity. “All, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond” will be caused “to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads,” and no man will be permitted to “buy {172} or sell” save he that has “the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”<sup>269</sup> Politically, religiously, and industrially the beast, who is none other than the antichrist himself, will dominate the human race. His rule will indeed be totalitarian. The conclusion is amply warranted that state totalitarianism is in its very essence antichristian. Every totalitarian state, whether of the past, the present, or the future, is antichrist.

The totalitarian kingship of Christ is an impregnable bulwark against totalitarian rule by men. There cannot be the slightest doubt as to which of the two will prevail in the end. How extremely sad, in the meantime, that of those who should man that bulwark so few are doing it. The Christian people of Germany could not possibly have bowed as they did before Hitler and his associates if they had been fully conscious of the scriptural teaching of the kingship of Christ. Evidently the Russian people fell an easy prey to communist totalitarianism because they had little or no conception of the kingship of Christ. On the other hand, it is safe to say that one reason why the Calvinists of little Holland, by and large, refused so persistently and at so great sacrifice to bend the knee before German despotism was that the kingship of Christ was uppermost in their minds. This too is certain—nothing can so effectively roll back the tide of totalitarian communism as the recog-

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267. Rev. 13:1–2, 4.

268. Rev. 13:8, 11–14.

269. Rev. 13:16–17.

dition by the peoples of the earth of the totalitarian kingship of the Christ of God as a present reality.

### 5. *The Sovereignty of God*

No doctrine looms larger on the pages of Holy Writ than that of the sovereignty of God. The very central teaching of the Bible is that God is God and that He is God alone. It is forcefully expressed in the following passages, together with a host of others. “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”<sup>270</sup> “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?”<sup>271</sup> “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?”<sup>272</sup> “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him and through him and {173} to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.”<sup>273</sup>

A corollary of the sovereignty of God is the thoroughly unpopular and much maligned but indubitably scriptural doctrine of predestination and election. That the Modernist, who rejects the Bible as the Word of God, should reject this doctrine also, is not difficult to understand; but when a self-styled Bible-believing and Bible-loving Christian denies it, one can hardly help wondering whether he really does believe and love the Word of God. It is taught so clearly and emphatically in Holy Scripture. Paul taught it unequivocally. To the believers at Ephesus he wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

270. Isa. 46:10.

271. Dan. 4:35.

272. Rom. 9:18–21.

273. Rom. 11:33–36.

who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.”<sup>274</sup> Peter taught it just as unmistakably. He addressed the believers to whom he wrote as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God”;<sup>275</sup> he described them as “a chosen generation”;<sup>276</sup> he exhorted them: “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure”;<sup>277</sup> and he informed them that those who stumble at the Word were “appointed” thereunto.<sup>278</sup> The Lord Jesus taught it no less emphatically when He said: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”<sup>279</sup>

It was their unshakable belief in the sovereignty of God and divine election that caused the Calvinists of the Reformation and post-Reformation periods to insist on the equality of men before God and boldly to cast off the yoke of oppressive rulers. Rightly so. If God is the sovereign ruler of men, no man is sovereign over his fellows. Only then does one man have any authority at all over another when it pleases God to lend him authority, and even in that case he is restricted in the exercise of that authority by the ordinances of God’s holy Word. When a human ruler violates these ordinances, it is not merely the privilege of his subjects to oppose him, but such is their solemn duty. Again, the prince and the pauper alike can be saved by grace only. The poorest peasant may be one of God’s elect as well as the most pompous potentate. In fact, it is possible that the potentate may be numbered among the reprobate, whereas it is certain that the believing peasant belongs to the elect. Then why should a cobbler fawn before his king or a ditch-digger before his emperor?

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274. Eph. 1:3–6.

275. 1 Pet. 1:2.

276. 1Pet. 2:9.

277. 2 Pet. 1:10.

278. 1 Pet. 2:8.

279. Matt. 11:25.

Says John Richard Green in his *History of the English People*: “What {174} gave its grandeur to the doctrine of Knox was his resolute assertion of a Christian order before which the social and political forces of the world about him shrank into insignificance. The meanest peasant, once called of God, felt within him a strength that was stronger than the might of nobles, and a wisdom wiser than the statecraft of kings. In that mighty elevation of the masses, which was embodied in the Calvinist doctrines of election and grace, lay the germs of the modern principles of human equality.” He proceeds: “The fruits of such a teaching soon showed themselves in a new attitude of the people. ‘Here,’ said Melville, over the grave of John Knox, ‘here lies one who never feared the face of man’; and if Scotland still reverences the memory of the reformer, it is because at that grave her peasant and her trader learned to look in the face of nobles and kings and ‘not be ashamed.’”<sup>280</sup> After asserting: “It is not too much to say that in the seventeenth century the entire political future of mankind was staked upon the questions that were at issue in England,” John Fiske opines: “Had it not been for the Puritans, political liberty would probably have disappeared from the world. If ever there were men who laid down their lives in the cause of all mankind, it was those grim old Ironsides, whose watchwords were texts of Holy Writ, whose battle-cries were hymns of praise.”<sup>281</sup> Of Calvinistic Holland George Bancroft wrote: “Of all the branches of the Germanic family that nation has endured the most and wrought the most in favor of liberty of conscience, liberty of commerce, and liberty in the State. For three generations the best interests of mankind were abandoned to its keeping; and to uphold the highest objects of spiritual life, its merchants, land holders, and traders so teemed with heroes and martyrs that they tired out brute force, tyranny, and death itself, and from war educed life and hope for coming ages.”<sup>282</sup> De Toqueville called Calvinism “a democratic and republican religion”;<sup>283</sup> and Froude said: “Calvinism has inspired and maintained the bravest efforts ever made to break the yoke of unjust authority.”<sup>284</sup> Lord Macaulay is cred-

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280. Bk. 7, chap. 2.

281. *The Beginnings of New England*, 37, 51.

282. *The History of the United States*, vol. 10, 58.

283. *Democracy*, vol. 1, 384.

ited with saying of the Puritan: "He bowed himself in the dust before his Maker, but he set his foot on the neck of his king." The truth is that he set his foot on the neck of his king for the very reason that he bowed himself in the dust before his Maker. Because he upheld the sovereignty of God he could not but rebel against the human ruler who arrogated to himself in any degree the sovereignty which is God's alone.

The word *sovereign*—more correctly spelled *soveren*, the modern spelling being due to a supposed connection with the word *reign*—is derived {175} from the Latin superlative *supremus*, which means *highest*. Obviously there can be but one who is highest. To be sure, historically the term has come to be used in a looser sense. We speak, for example, of the sovereignty of the individual and the sovereignty of the family, of the church, and of the state, each in its own sphere. Although it can hardly be disputed that such terminology is fully justified by usage, the fact may not be overlooked that it reduces sovereignty to something relative. Absolute sovereignty belongs to one alone, and that one is God. The individual, the family, the church, and the state are all of them subject to His boundless sovereignty. It follows that the state which in the exercise of power goes beyond the bounds set by God in His Word impinges on the divine sovereignty. The conclusion is also inescapable that the state which assumes unlimited authority over the individual citizen, the family, and the church sets itself up as God. The totalitarian state is in its very essence a denial of the divine sovereignty. And that is but another way of saying that state totalitarianism is blasphemy.

It is no accident that many of the notorious dictators of history laid claim to divinity. It was rather the logical consequence of their totalitarianism. The image of gold which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, set up in the plain of Dura and for which he demanded the worship of the peoples and nations under his rule may possibly have represented Nebuchadnezzar himself.<sup>285</sup> It is certain that Darius the Mede laid claim to divine honor. He decreed that every man who would ask a petition of any God or man during a period of thirty days save the king would be cast into the den of lions.<sup>286</sup> The early Roman emperors

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284. *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, 13.

285. Dan. 3.

required the worship of their subjects and persecuted the Christians for refusing to worship them. By decree of the Senate, Gaius Octavius, the first of them, was named Augustus, which means *sacred*. He had the title Pontifex Maximus, or high-priest, bestowed upon himself. After his death the people erected temples and altars to his memory, and numbered him among the gods. The emperor of Japan long claimed direct descent from Amaterasu, the sun-goddess; and State Shintoism was in reality worship of the state. Patriotism, or loyalty to the state, was until recently the official religion of Japan. Marxian communism is commonly thought to be thoroughly antireligious. The truth is that it is itself a religion. In their volume, *The Growth of Religion*, Henry Nelson Wieman and Walter M. Horton correctly classify it as a religion. It considers itself the only true religion. Its God is the communist state. For some years a large section of the German people rendered what approached divine honor to Adolf Hitler and regarded his *Mein Kampf* virtually as their Bible. Even the American {176} people need to be reminded that, while regard, in the interest of justice, for the physical welfare of its citizens surely lies within the province of the state, to guarantee freedom from want and freedom from fear is far beyond the power of human government. Only God, whose providence controls all the events of history comprehensively, can guarantee those freedoms.

The question how the onslaughts of state totalitarianism may be met and thwarted can now be answered.

War cannot do it. This is not to say that war of the democracies on such a totalitarian state as Soviet Russia may not become a necessity or even a duty. But after the defeat of several totalitarian states in the recent war the threat to the world of state totalitarianism is greater than ever. The democracies themselves are more nearly totalitarian today than they were before the war. War cannot destroy an ideology. The power of the Roman Catholic Church cannot do it. Rome is indeed powerful and it is violent in its opposition to communism. But it is zealous for church totalitarianism, which finds no more support in Scripture than does state totalitarianism. Besides, the church which it would make totalitarian is itself a state. Neither can the principles of the French Revolution do it, for history shows abundantly that a prole-

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286. Dan. 6:1-9.



tariat which considers itself sovereign can be every whit as tyrannical as the most autocratic despot.

There is but one answer to this burning question. Only a return to the Word of God by those peoples that were historically Christian and the acceptance of that Word by the other peoples of earth can stem the on-rushing tide of state totalitarianism. Nor will a half-hearted, or for that matter an enthusiastic, recognition of some of the teachings of Holy Writ suffice. The nations must tremble at the whole Word of God, even at the truth which is probably the most despised and hated, but certainly the most basic, of all scriptural teachings—the sovereignty of God.

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2.  
CHRISTIAN  
RECONSTRUCTION

# THE NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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*J. Gresham Machen*

A speech delivered before the 1933 convention of the National Union of Christian Schools. Published in 1934 by the NUCS.

## *Two Reasons for the Christian School*

The Christian school is to be favored for two reasons. In the first place, it is important for American liberty; in the second place, it is important for the propagation of the Christian religion. These two reasons are not equally important; indeed, the latter includes the former as it includes every other legitimate human interest. But I want to speak of these two reasons in turn.

In the first place, then, the Christian school is important for the maintenance of American liberty.

We are witnessing in our day a worldwide attack upon the fundamental principles of civil and religious freedom. In some countries, such as Italy, the attack has been blatant and unashamed; Mussolini despises democracy and does not mind saying so. A similar despotism now prevails in Germany; and in Russia freedom is being crushed out by what is perhaps the most complete and systematic tyranny that the world has ever seen.

But exactly the same tendency that is manifested in extreme form in those countries, is also being manifested, more slowly but none the less surely, in America. It has been given an enormous impetus first by the war and now by the economic depression; but aside from these external stimuli it had its roots in a fundamental deterioration of the American people. Gradually the people has come to value principle less and creature comfort more; increasingly it has come to prefer prosperity to freedom; and even in the field of prosperity it cannot be said that the effect is satisfactory.

The result of this decadence in the American people is seen in the rapid growth of a centralized bureaucracy which is the thing against which the Constitution of the United States was most clearly intended to guard.

### *The Attack Upon Liberty*

In the presence of this apparent collapse of free democracy, any descendant of the liberty-loving races of mankind may well stand dismayed; and to those liberty-loving races no doubt most of my hearers tonight belong. I am of the Anglo-Saxon race; many of you belong to a race {178} whose part in the history of human freedom is if anything still more glorious; and as we all contemplate the struggle of our fathers in the winning of that freedom which their descendants seem now to be so willing to give up, we are impressed anew with the fact that it is far easier to destroy than to create. It took many centuries of struggle—much blood and many tears—to establish the fundamental principles of our civil and religious liberty; but one mad generation is sufficient to throw them all away.

It is true, the attack upon liberty is nothing new. Always there have been tyrants in the world; almost always tyranny has begun by being superficially beneficent, and always it has ended by being both superficially and radically cruel.

But while tyranny itself is nothing new, the technique of tyranny has been enormously improved in our day; the tyranny of the scientific expert is the most crushing tyranny of all. That tyranny is being exercised most effectively in the field of education. A monopolistic system of education controlled by the State is far more efficient in crushing our liberty than the cruder weapons of fire and sword. Against this monopoly of education by the State the Christian school brings a salutary protest; it contends for the right of parents to bring up their children in accordance with the dictates of their conscience and not in the manner prescribed by the State.

That right has been attacked in America in recent years in the most blatant possible ways. In Oregon, a law was actually passed some years ago requiring all children to attend the public schools—thus taking the children from the control of their parents and placing them under the despotic control of whatever superintendent of education might hap-

pen to be in office in the district in which they resided. In Nebraska, a law was passed forbidding the study of languages other than English, even in private schools, until the child was too old to learn them well. That was really a law making literary education a crime. In New York, one of the abominable Lusk Laws placed even private tutors under state supervision and control.

### *Temporary Relief*

It is true that no one of these measures is in force at the present time. The Lusk Laws were repealed, largely through the efforts of Governor Alfred E. Smith. The Oregon School Law and the Nebraska Language Law were declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court, and Justice McReynolds in the decision in the latter case gave expression to the great principle that in America the child is not the mere creature of the State.

Even such salutary decisions as that are not to be contemplated with unmixed feelings by the lover of American institutions. They are based, {179} I suppose, upon the great "Bill-of-Rights" provisions of the Constitution of the United States. But the original intent of those provisions was that they should be a check upon Congress, not that they should be a check upon the states. The fundamental rights of man were to be guaranteed, it was assumed, by the constitutions of the individual states, so far as the powers reserved to the states are concerned. It is a sign of appalling deterioration when the Federal Supreme Court steps in to do what the state courts ought to do. Nevertheless, we cannot help rejoicing at the result. For the present, at least, such an excess of tyranny as was put into effect in Oregon and has been seriously advocated in Michigan and other states is postponed.

Yet the forces inimical to liberty have not been discouraged by these temporary checks. They are at work with great persistency just at the present time, busying themselves particularly in the advocacy of two vicious measures, both of which concern childhood and youth.

### *The "Child Labor Amendment"*

One of these is the misnamed "child-labor amendment" to the Constitution of the United States. That amendment masquerades

under the cloak of humanitarianism; it is supposed to be intended to prevent sweatshop conditions or the like. As a matter of fact, it is just about as heartless a piece of proposed legislation as could possibly be conceived. Many persons who glibly favor this amendment seem never to have read it for themselves. They have a vague notion that it merely gives power to regulate the gainful employment of children. Not at all. The word “labor” was expressly insisted on in the wording of the amendment as over against the word “employment.” The amendment gives power to Congress to enter right into your home and regulate or control or prevent altogether the helpful work of your children without which there can be no normal development of human character and no ordinary possibility of true happiness for mankind.

But, someone will say, Congress will never in the world be so foolish as that; the amendment does give Congress that power, but the power will never be exercised. Now, my friends, I will just say this: when I listen to an argument like that, I sometimes wonder whether the person who advances it can possibly be convinced by it himself. If these stupendous powers are never to be exercised, why should they be granted? The zeal for the granting of them, the refusal of the framers of the amendment to word the amendment in any reasonably guarded way, show plainly that the powers are intended to be exercised; and certainly they will be exercised, whatever the intention of the framers of the amendment may be. I will tell you exactly what will happen if this amendment is adopted by the states. Congress will pass legislation which, in accordance with the {180} plain meaning of the language, will be quite unenforceable. The exact degree of enforcement will be left to Washington bureaus, and the individual family will be left to the arbitrary decision of officials. It would be difficult to imagine anything more hostile to the decency of family life and to all the traditions of our people. If there ever was a measure that looked as though it were made in Russia, it is this falsely so-called “child-labor amendment” to the Constitution of the United States. In reality, it can hardly be called an amendment to the Constitution. Rather is it the complete destruction of the Constitution; for if human life in its formative period—up to eighteen years in the life of every youth—is to be given to Federal bureaucrats, we do not see what else of very great value can remain.

The old principles of individual liberty and local self-government will simply have been wiped out.

### *The Present Danger*

This so-called child-labor amendment was originally submitted to the states a number of years ago. It was in process of being rushed right through without any more examination than other amendments received. But then fortunately some patriotic citizens in Massachusetts, especially in the organization called “the Sentinels of the Republic,” informed the people of the state what was really involved in this vicious measure. Massachusetts had a strict child labor law; it might have been expected, therefore, in accordance with the customary specious argument, to need protection against states where the child labor laws are less strict. Yet in a referendum the amendment was rejected by an overwhelming vote. Other states followed suit, and it looked as though this attack upon American institutions and the decencies of the American home had been repelled.

But we are living now in another period of hysteria, a period even worse than that which was found at the time of the war. So the so-called child-labor amendment has been revived. State after state has adopted it, to a total number, I believe, of fourteen. It looks as though the enemies of American institutions might soon have their will, and as though the childhood and youth of our country might be turned over after all to the tender mercies of Washington bureaus. That disastrous result can only be prevented if there is an earnest effort of those who still think the preservation of the American home to be worthwhile.

### *Federal Intrusion*

Another line of attack upon liberty has appeared in the advocacy of a Federal department of education. Repeatedly this vicious proposal has been introduced in Congress. It has been consistently favored by that powerful organization, the National Education Association. Now without {181} being familiar with the internal workings of that Association I venture to doubt whether its unfortunate political activities really represent in any adequate way the rank and file of its members or the rank and file of the public-school teachers of this country. When I appeared

at a joint hearing before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor and the House Committee on Education in 1926, Mr. Lowrey of the House Committee asked me how it was that the resolution favoring the Federal department of education was passed unanimously by the National Education Association although he had discovered that many members of that Association were saying that they were opposed to it. Neither Mr. Lowrey nor I seemed to be able to give any very good explanation of this fact. At any rate, I desire to pay the warmest possible tribute to many thousands of conscientious men and women who are teachers in the public schools of this country. I do not believe that in the entire governmental aspect of education these teachers have any really effective representation.

The commission on the subject which President Hoover appointed, for example, was composed hardly at all of teachers, but almost exclusively of “educators.” It had within its membership professors of “education,” superintendents of schools and the like; but in the entire roll of its membership there was found, if I remember aright, hardly a single man eminent in any branch of literary studies or of natural science. The composition of that commission was typical of one of the fundamental vices in education in America at the present time—namely, the absurd overemphasis upon methodology in the sphere of education at the expense of content. When a man fits himself in America to teach history or chemistry, it scarcely seems to occur to him, or rather it scarcely seems to occur to those who prescribe his studies for him, that he ought to study history or chemistry. Instead, he studies merely “education.” The study of education seems to be regarded as absolving a teacher from obtaining any knowledge of the subjects that he is undertaking to teach. And the pupils are being told, in effect, that the simple storing up in the mind of facts concerning the universe and human life is a drudgery from which they have now been emancipated; they are being told, in other words, that the great discovery has been made in modern times that it is possible to learn how to “think” with a completely empty mind. It cannot be said that the result is impressive. In fact the untrammelled operation of the effects of this great American pedagogic discovery is placing American schools far behind the schools of the rest of the civilized world.



### *The Evil of Uniformity*

But that is perhaps something like a digression. Let us return to the “educators” and their general demand either for a Federal department of education or for Federal aid to the states. Such demands are in the {182} interests of uniformity in the sphere of education. There should be, it is said, a powerful coordinating agency in education, to set up standards and encourage the production of something like a system. But what shall we say of such an aim? I have no hesitation, for my part, in saying that I am dead opposed to it. Uniformity in education, it seems to me, is one of the worst calamities into which any people can fall.

There are, it is true, some spheres in which uniformity is a good thing. It is a good thing, for example, in the making of Ford cars. In the making of a Ford car, uniformity is the great end of the activity. That end is, indeed, not always fully attained. Sometimes a Ford car possesses entirely too much individuality. My observation was, in the heroic days before the invention of self-starters, when a Ford was still a Ford, that sometimes a Ford car would start and sometimes it would not start; and if it would not start there was no use whatever in giving it any encouraging advice. But although uniformity was not always perfectly attained, the aim, at least, was to attain it; the purpose of the whole activity was that one Ford car should be just as much like every other Ford car as it could possibly be made.

But what is good for a Ford car is not always good for a human being, for the simple reason that a Ford car is a machine while a human being is a person. Our modern pedagogic experts seem to deny the distinction, and that is one place where our quarrel with them comes in. When you are dealing with human beings, standardization is the last thing you ought to seek. Uniformity of education under one central governmental department would be a very great calamity indeed.

### *The Fallacy of “Equal Opportunity”*

We are constantly told, it is true, that there ought to be an equal opportunity for all the children in the United States; therefore, it is said, Federal aid ought to be given to backward states. But what shall we say about this business of “equal opportunity”? I will tell you what I say

about it; I am entirely opposed to it. One thing is perfectly clear—if all the children in the United States have equal opportunities, no child will have an opportunity that is worth very much. If parents cannot have the great incentive of providing high and special educational advantages for their own children, then we shall have in this country a drab and soul-killing uniformity, and there will be scarcely any opportunity for anyone to get out of the miserable rut.

The thing is really quite clear. Every lover of human freedom ought to oppose with all his might the giving of Federal aid to the schools of this country; for Federal aid in the long run inevitably means Federal control, and Federal control means control by a centralized and irresponsible bureaucracy, {183} and control by such a bureaucracy means the death of everything that might make this country great.

Against this soul-killing collectivism in education, the Christian school, like the private school, stands as an emphatic protest. In doing so, it is no real enemy of the public schools. On the contrary, the only way in which a state-controlled school can be kept even relatively healthy is through the absolutely free possibility of competition by private schools and church schools; if it becomes monopolistic, it is the most effective engine of tyranny and intellectual stagnation that has yet been devised.

### *The Propagation of the Faith*

That is one reason why I favor the Christian school. I favor it in the interests of American liberty. But the other reason is vastly more important. I favor it, in the second place, because it is necessary to the propagation of the Christian Faith.

Thoughtful people, even many who are not Christians, have become impressed with the shortcomings of our secularized schools. We have provided technical education, which may make the youth of our country better able to make use of the advances of natural science; but natural science, with its command over the physical world, is not all that there is in human life. There are also the moral interests of mankind; and without cultivation of these moral interests a technically trained man is only given more power to do harm. By this purely secular, non-moral and nonreligious, training we produce not a real human being

but a horrible Frankenstein, and we are beginning to shrink back from the product of our own hands.

The educational experts, in their conduct of their state-controlled schools, are trying to repair this defect and in doing so are seeking the cooperation of Christian people. I want to show you—and I do not think I shall have much difficulty in showing this particular audience—why such cooperation cannot be given.

### *“Character-Education”*

In the first place, we find proposed to us today what is called “character-education” or “character-building.” Character, we are told, is one thing about which men of all faiths are agreed. Let us, therefore, build character in common, as good citizens, and then welcome from the various religious faiths whatever additional aid they can severally bring. Let us first appeal to the children on a “civilization basis”—to use what I believe is the most recent terminology—and then let the various faiths appeal to whatever additional motives they may be able to adduce.

What surprises me about this program is not that its advocates propose it; for it is only too well in accord with the spirit of the age. But what {184} really surprises me about it is that the advocates of it seem to think that a Christian can support it without ceasing at that point to be Christian.

In the first place, when this program of character-education is examined, it will be found, I think, to base character upon human experience; it will be found to represent maxims of conduct as being based upon the collective experience of the race. But how can they be based upon the collective experience of the race and at the same time, as the Christian must hold, be based upon the law of God? By this experiential morality the reverence for the law of God is being broken down. It cannot be said that the results—even judged by “civilization” standards (if I may borrow the terminology of my opponents for a moment)—are impressive. The raging tides of passion cannot successfully be kept back by the flimsy mud-embankments of an appeal to human experience. It is a feeble morality that can say nothing better for itself than that it works well.

### *Non-Christian Morality*

For that reason, character-building, as practiced in our public schools, may well prove to be character-destruction. But suppose it were free from the defect that I have just mentioned. I do not see how it can possibly be free from it, if it remains, as it must necessarily remain, secular; but just suppose it were free from it. Just suppose we could have moral instruction in our public schools that should be based not upon human experience but upon something that might be conceived of as a law of God. Could a Christian consistently support even such a program as that?

We answer the question in the negative, but we do not want to answer it in the negative in any hasty way. It is perfectly true that the law of God is over all. There is not one law of God for the Christian and another law of God for the non-Christian. May not, therefore, the law be proclaimed to men of all faiths; and may it not, if it is so proclaimed, serve as a restraint against the most blatant forms of evil through the common grace of God; may it not even become a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ?

The answer is that if the law of God is proclaimed in public schools, to people of different faiths, it is bound, in the very nature of the case, to be proclaimed with optimism; and if it is proclaimed with optimism it is proclaimed in a way radically opposed to the Christian doctrine of sin. By hypothesis it is regarded as all that good citizens imperatively need to know; they may perhaps profitably know other things, but the fundamental notion is that if they know this they know all that is absolutely essential. But is not a law that is proclaimed to unredeemed persons with such optimism at best only an imperfect, garbled law? Is it not very different from the true and majestic law of God with its awful pronouncements of eternal death upon sinful man? {185} The answer to these questions is only too plain. A proclamation of morality which regards itself as all that is necessary—which regards itself as being capable at the most of nonessential supplementation by additional motives to be provided by Christianity and other faiths—is very different from that true proclamation of the law of God which may be a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. It is not merely insufficient, but it is false; and I do not see how a consistent Christian can possibly regard

it as providing any part of that nurture and admonition of the Lord which it is the duty of every Christian parent to give to his children.

### ***Bible-Reading in Public Schools***

What other solution, then, has the public school to offer for the problem which we are considering just now? Well, many people tell us that the reading of the Bible can be put into the public schools. Every educated man, we are told, ought to know something about the Bible; and no intelligent, broad-minded person, whether a Christian or not, ought to object to the bare reading of this great religious classic. So in many places we find the Bible being read in public schools. What shall we say about that?

For my part, I have no hesitation in saying that I am strongly opposed to it. I think I am just about as strongly opposed to the reading of the Bible in state-controlled schools as any atheist could be.

For one thing, the reading of the Bible is very difficult to separate from propaganda about the Bible. I remember, for example, a book of selections from the Bible for school reading, which was placed in my hands some time ago. Whether it is used now I do not know, but it is typical of what will inevitably occur if the Bible is read in public schools. Under the guise of being a book of selections for Bible-reading, it really presupposed the current naturalistic view of the Old Testament Scriptures.

But even where such errors are avoided, even where the Bible itself is read, and not in one of the current mistranslations but in the Authorized Version, the Bible still may be so read as to obscure and even contradict its true message. When, for example, the great and glorious promises of the Bible to the redeemed children of God are read as though they belonged of right to man as man, have we not an attack upon the very heart and core of the Bible's teaching? What could be more terrible, for example, from the Christian point of view, than the reading of the Lord's Prayer to non-Christian children, as though they could use it without becoming Christians, as though persons who have never been purchased by the blood of Christ could possibly say to God, "Our Father, which art in Heaven"? The truth is that a garbled Bible may be a falsified Bible; and when any hope is held out to lost humanity from the so-called ethical portions of the Bible apart from its great

redemptive core, then the Bible is represented as saying the direct opposite of what it really says. {186}

### *The Study of “Religion”*

So I am opposed to the reading of the Bible in public schools. As for any presentation of general principles of what is called “religion,” supposed to be exemplified in various positive religions, including Christianity, it is quite unnecessary for me to say in this company that such presentation is opposed to the Christian religion at its very heart. The relation between the Christian way of salvation and other ways is not a relation between the adequate and the inadequate or between the perfect and the imperfect, but it is a relation between the true and the false. The minute a professing Christian admits that he can find neutral ground with non-Christians in the study of “religion” in general, he has given up the battle, and has really, if he knows what he is doing, made common cause with that syncretism which is today, as it was in the first century of our era, the deadliest enemy of the Christian Faith.

What, then, should the Christian do in communities where there are no Christian schools? What policy should be advocated for the public schools?

I think there is no harm in advocating the release of public-school children at convenient hours during the week for any religious instruction which their parents may provide. Even at this point, indeed, danger lurks at the door. If the State undertakes to exercise any control whatever over the use by the children of this time which is left vacant, even by way of barely requiring them to attend upon some kind of instruction in these hours, and still more clearly if it undertakes to give public-school credits for such religious instruction, then it violates fundamental principles and will inevitably in the long run seek to control the content of the instruction in the interests of the current syncretism. But if—as is, it must be admitted, very difficult—it can be kept free from these evils, then the arrangement of the public-school schedule in such manner that convenient hours shall be left free for such religious instruction as the parents, entirely at their individual discretion, shall provide, is, I think, unobjectionable, and it may under certain circumstances be productive of some relative good.

### *The True Solution*

But what miserable makeshifts all such measures, even at the best, are! Underlying them is the notion that religion embraces only one particular part of human life. Let the public schools take care of the rest of life—such seems to be the notion—and one or two hours during the week will be sufficient to fill the gap which they leave. But as a matter of fact the religion of the Christian man embraces the whole of his life. Without Christ he was dead in trespasses and sins, but he has now been made alive by the Spirit of God; he was formerly alien from the household of God, but has now been made a member of God's covenant people. Can this new {187} relationship to God be regarded as concerning only one part, and apparently a small part, of his life? No, it concerns all his life; and everything that he does he should do now as a child of God.

It is this profound Christian permeation of every human activity, no matter how secular the world may regard it as being, which is brought about by the Christian school and the Christian school alone. I do not want to be guilty of exaggerations at this point. A Christian boy or girl can learn mathematics, for example, from a teacher who is not a Christian; and truth is truth however learned. But while truth is truth however learned, the bearings of truth, the meaning of truth, the purpose of truth, even in the sphere of mathematics, seem entirely different to the Christian from that which they seem to the non-Christian; and that is why a truly Christian education is possible only when Christian conviction underlies not a part, but all, of the curriculum of the school. True learning and true piety go hand in hand, and Christianity embraces the whole of life—those are great central convictions that underlie the Christian school.

I believe that the Christian school deserves to have a good report from those who are without; I believe that even those of our fellow citizens who are not Christians may, if they really love human freedom and the noble traditions of our people, be induced to defend the Christian school against the assaults of its adversaries and to cherish it as a true bulwark of the State. But for Christian people its appeal is far deeper. I can see little consistency in a type of Christian activity which preaches the gospel on the street corners and at the ends of the earth, but neglects the children of the covenant by abandoning them to a cold

and unbelieving secularism. If, indeed, the Christian school were in any sort of competition with the Christian family, if it were trying to do what the home ought to do, then I could never favor it. But one of its marked characteristics, in sharp distinction from the secular education of today, is that it exalts the family as a blessed divine institution and treats the scholars in its classes as children of the covenant to be brought up above all things in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

### *Christian Heroism*

I cannot bring this little address to a close without trying to pay some sort of tribute to you who have so wonderfully maintained the Christian schools. Some of you, no doubt, are serving as teachers on salaries necessarily small. What words can I possibly find to celebrate the heroism and unselfishness of such service? Others of you are maintaining the schools by your gifts, in the midst of many burdens and despite the present poverty and distress. When I think of such true Christian heroism as yours, I count everything that I ever tried to do in my life to be pitifully unworthy. I can only say that I stand reverently in your presence as in the presence {188} of brethren to whom God has given richly of His grace.

You deserve the gratitude of your country. In a time of spiritual and intellectual and political decadence, you have given us in America something that is truly healthy; you are to our country something like a precious salt that may check the ravages of decay. May that salt never lose its savor! May the distinctiveness of your Christian schools never be lost; may it never give place, by a false "Americanization," to a drab uniformity which is the most un-American thing that could possibly be conceived!

But if you deserve the gratitude of every American patriot, how much more do you deserve the gratitude of Christian men and women! You have set an example for the whole Christian world; you have done a thing which has elsewhere been neglected, and the neglect of which is everywhere bringing disaster. You are like a city set on a hill; and may that city never be hid! May the example of your Christian schools be heeded everywhere in the Church! Above all, may our God richly bless you, and of His grace give you a reward with which all the rewards of earth are not for one moment worthy to be compared!



# 3. BOOK REVIEWS

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### *The Professional: A Biography of J. B. Saunders, by Otto Scott.*

New York: Atheneum, 1976. 497 pp., \$15.

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#### Reviewed by Judy Ishkanian

Rightly, the biography of J. B. Saunders should be a business history of a remarkable businessman and citizen with a limited, but admiring, audience. Its final resting place might find it retired somewhere in the archives of the oil and gas industry. In less skilled hands than Otto Scott, this surely would have been the fate of a biography of J. B. Saunders, who, after all, was a quiet man, unalterably disinterested in politics and politicians, unversed in the arena of war and its games, and who utterly lacked notoriety. He was a businessman. He was a “professional,” and as such he does deserve more than a second glance, for he represents what might be a dying breed of man, soon to be remembered in legend and song, in the manner of the “cowboy.” It is fortunate for us, then, that the task of writing the biography of J. B. Saunders fell to Otto Scott, that we might be treated to not only the life of J. B. Saunders, but to a sweeping history of the twentieth century to the present. It is a tribute to Scott’s restraint that in *The Professional* he allows the relentless parade of world events largely to speak for itself. What the events have to say leaves one to ponder, not the dismal aspects which are so well known, but the amazing productivity of the American businessman in the face of sixty years of ever-tightening controls by “big government” and the increasing hostility of the American public.

It is in the oil and gas industry that J. B. Saunders has earned a signal place, and he stands tall among the achievers of his time. Born and raised in the cow country of Texas and Oklahoma, where the significance of “black gold” was just being realized in earnest, he began with the usual boyish odd jobs with no apparent plan in mind. Each work experience became an essential component of part of a very specialized bundle of competence which he demonstrated when he became the shipping clerk at Imperial Refining Company. By combining his knowledge of railroading with that of the oil business, J. B. laid the

groundwork for his future. In the waning years of the productive twenties, J. B. rose from shipping clerk to general manager of the firm. He saved W. B. Hassett's Imperial Refineries from extinction in the early shocks of the depression by adjusting it to the new demands of the marketplace, and in the process came to a crossroad in his own life:

... he had worked his way from a shipping clerk in a branch office to general manager of the firm, and had been instrumental not only in saving it from collapse, but also in its rebuilding. In the process he had learned thousands of details, hundreds of people, and many tangible factors about the petroleum marketplace and industry. Through all these years he had taken for granted that his own future would expand with the firm—and so it had. But he had also learned, in the last few years at Imperial, that there is a deep and wide divide between the owners of an enterprise and a hired manager. That realization had begun when he watched Mr. Hassett calmly reach into the earnings of the subsidiaries to take a generous bonus for himself; it appeared even more clearly when young Bill Hassett constructed a \$75,000 home.... Toward the end of 1936 he came to the bitter realization that the world is a {190} harsher place than he had realized. If a man is to attain independence, he must first become an independent man. (197)

Many times during the dark days he said to himself in a variety of ways, "What I did for Hassett & Sons I can do for myself." With his finely tuned skills, talents, and experience he began his own marketing company, Triangle Refineries, in the middle of the depression with borrowed capital, and two financial backers. Triangle was a product of his intimate knowledge of the intricacies of railroads, oil and gas production and refining, and available markets. With no tangible assets to begin with (despite the word *refineries* in the company name), he was the middleman who connected the producers with the consumers, first through the railroads, then through barges as well, and finally through pipelines. He provided ever-expanding markets for the struggling, independent refineries. His knowledge of prices, shipping schedules, and markets was the fountain from which flowed a swelling stream of ideas and opportunities. Triangle was the world's largest marketing firm for petroleum products when it merged with Kerr-McGee in 1957. After 20 years of business for himself he owned chains of outlets and service stations of his own, parts of oil fields in ventures with others he had staked to success, an oil barge firm, a pipeline company, scores of subsidiaries, and a myriad of other connected business enter-

prises. He numbered among his personal friends and acquaintances the giants of the industry, such as Jack Rathbone of Standard Oil of New Jersey, H. L. Hunt, Herbert and George Brown, Senator Kerr of Oklahoma, and passing acquaintances with U.S. Presidents Truman and Johnson. Not only was he president of his own huge Triangle Refineries, but he served on the executive boards of Texas Eastern and Kerr-McGee, and others. In later years he turned his energies to many civic and philanthropic endeavors. The life of J. B. Saunders is a success story in the “American fashion,” complete with wealth and public honor to cap the achievements of a lifetime.

Why does this success story seem oddly out of place in the 1970s? Why would his own son, J. B. Saunders III, himself a marketeer, state that “Triangle could not exist under today’s rules” (481)? Imagine, a multimillion dollar business where contracts were sealed with a handshake or a verbal agreement! The government’s regulatory agencies, which were in their infancy with Triangle’s inception, have matured into a pack of watchdogs far too vigilant to allow Triangle’s far-flung and loose operation to escape their notice. Ah, yes, the “people” have spoken, and in stupendous numbers they have expressed in the ballot box their approval of the concept of a regulatory, statist government to provide for their “needs” and to protect them from the dangers lurking in the marketplace. An entrepreneur, whose total operation rests in the free market with private capital, is a source of suspicion today.

J. B. Saunders was a producer, and his increasing supply of capital was used to produce more capital (not a \$75,000 home or a fat bonus). Growth was a way of life for J. B. New business conquests were the inevitable outcome of a growth-oriented marketing outlook. It is because J. B. was a “producer” that his story seems almost odd in our consumption-centered society. A government-controlled society is a consumption-centered society, where the primary purpose of money is thought of as something to spend for commodities rather than as capital, and where the concern is to divide what “IS” rather than to produce more of what “IS.” When whole segments of a society reflect this attitude toward capital, it can be interpreted as the temper of the times.

Otto Scott subtly traces the trend toward the consumption-centered society, beginning with the advent of World War I and its demoralizing effect on the {191} American people. He points out the permanent shift

in the relationship of the government to its citizens that took place at that time. It is apparent that this shift did not affect all the people all at once, for J. B. exemplified those who took little or no thought of the affairs of state. He was, by his own admission, a man of action, a “doer,” whose ceaseless energy was directed at immediate, work-oriented goals and problem-solving. His efforts brought him into confrontation with the government occasionally. He was not impressed. His participation in the Madison Trials, conducted by the Department of Justice in 1937 against 16 oil-related companies, awakened him to how the U.S. government had changed its relationship to its people:

It was difficult to see any firm principle in a government that sought to jail some citizens for doing what others were allowed to do with the force of the law...

As the Madison case proceeded J. B. noticed the government attorneys were very young men from Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, and very sincere. He came to realize with a sense of shock, that they actually regarded businessmen as engaged in nefarious activities. (215)

The cornerstone of Triangle’s existence was prices in the free-market economy. In a day of increasing price controls, price supports, and price freezes, a free-market price system might, indeed, appear to be nefarious. The change in the price system, alone, is enough to substantiate J. B. III’s statement that “Triangle could not exist under today’s rules.” For in the free market, prices are the measure of supply and demand, and are the weathervane, in a secondary way, of the money supply. In a controlled economy, prices lose their true function when political fiat and decree supersede prices as the measure of availability of goods, and interfere with the free-market system of balancing supply and demand. J. B. had learned to read the subtle fluctuation of prices with great skill. On his quick and accurate judgment alone rested his margin of profit or loss, as well as the assurance of a steady supply of products to his customers. As a successful entrepreneur, he trusted that the free-market system would allow him to accurately predict the future and act upon his perception of it. On his correct estimation of trends and indicators rested his ability to receive financial backing and establish himself in a position of respect.

J. B. avoided association with the majors and was confident that he could always “grab a crumb and run” (216). During the World War II

years (when the Petroleum Administration for War [PAW] controlled the industry), he did not join the majors in supplying the war machine, but rather kept the wheels of working America turning in the middle states. Recycled gas for independent gas stations, gas and oil for heating, and a full spectrum of petroleum products flowed to the anxiously waiting households, small industries, and townships through J. B. Saunders. Small refineries were kept in business during the difficult years by the volume of his orders. For him, the margin of profit was less than 1.7 percent, or 1.5 cents on the dollar (213). An error in judgment in the potential market price of any commodity could cost him dearly. He bought all products from the refineries in cash and often had scores of tank cars riding the rails before he found his market for them!

Over a period of years, J. B. did become wealthy through knowledge of his industry and his investment judgment exercised therein. Most of his years, however, were spent in intense concentration in conquering the vast challenges of sophisticating his marketing system. Profit was not a nasty word associated with lavish living and opulent show, but was seen as a vehicle for growth; and growth {192} meant, by the way, an ever-expanding source of supply for consumers. A society that has forgotten the meaning of “capital” in a “capitalist” economy will not long enjoy its fruits. The consumption-centered society thus destroys the very engine that caters to its own satisfaction. J. B. was a future-oriented individual who, though he did not enjoy the difficulties thrust upon him during the Depression, saw in the economic changes a positive element: opportunity. Triangle was born because of an optimistic attitude toward the future. As an executive at Kerr-McGee, he demonstrated that he could find opportunity to produce even under the restraint of corporate controls, rules and regulations, and repressive policies that were so vexing to his “free spirit.” He adapted the marketing system of Triangle to the new requirements and built an entire fertilizer production and supply network for Kerr-McGee. To a man of action, armed with self-discipline and skills, change can mean opportunity. In these times, the example of J. B. Saunders is a lesson that thoughtful persons might well heed.

There are no discernible theological overtones to *The Professional*, and yet there is a wealth of implications to be gleaned in this “Biography of J. B. Saunders.” Generally speaking, Scott’s chronological history

documents the decline and fall of humanism as the prevailing philosophical force in Western culture. The decline of an earlier optimism slid into an abysmal cynicism as, one by one, the implications of humanistic ideas have had the opportunity to act themselves out on the stage of history: promises of freedom for democracy, in death and war; promises for freedom from the boom and bust cycles of the economy, in depression and unemployment; freedom from moral restraint, in social decay and degeneracy. Yet, for all its failures as a guiding philosophical force, society seemed firmly in its grip. The dawn of the twentieth century illuminated the kind of confused moralism which was exemplified by J. B.'s early experience of daily Bible reading coupled unselfconsciously with his lifelong associations with De Molay and Free Masonry (pp. 84–85, 102). He was not out of step with the times to find no contradiction in belonging to the Masons and the Presbyterian Church at the same time. There is virtually no reference anywhere in this book to the foundational orthodox Christianity on which the political and economic freedom we enjoy is founded. The silence is deafening. The vague moralism which was left to fill the void in these epistemologically unconscious times gave way to cynicism and despair during World War I. The nation's morale has been in a non-stop decline ever since. Otto Scott's year by year diary reminds the reader of the landmarks along the way. In summing up J. B.'s career, it seems that he was:

busy for many years, much of the world's activities had taken place while he was abstracted or absorbed. Now he had reached the top of the hill—and could gaze at longer vistas. (477)

He did not like what he saw: “The situation of the United States, from a businessman's point of view, was not good ... the wage and price freeze was, of course, nonsense ... our government is using fiat money ... the government is not in responsible hands.” (476)

While I do not argue with the soundness of these statements, I am left with the realization that the power to effectively change the direction of a culture does not reside with a “professional,” a man of action, or even many men of action. Such persons will always respond to the demands of their day and the opportunities they find in it. The world must be made safe for those whose talent is expressed through an absorption in the business community, so that the entire community

might benefit from their efforts. A return to the orthodox Christian value system, which was the underpinning of our culture in our beginnings, is essential for growth and prosperity. I am convinced that only God-centered visionaries operating in {193} terms of clearly defined goals can redirect the course of our culture, so that business professionals can plan and work in freedom. Humanistic visionaries have led us to our present position in history, and if we do not appreciate where we find ourselves, then we must look to Christian visionaries to lead our culture in another direction. It is simply not enough to grasp nostalgically at the rosy glow of the past after a lifetime of personal pursuit, no matter how sentimental the memories or how honorable the pursuit. The world is ultimately ruled by a transcendent faith, and the “professional” person must live and work under a banner of a clearly defined faith, or his sense of purpose and real accomplishment will be lost on the wind.

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*Christians and Marxists:  
The Mutual Challenge to Revolution,*  
by José Míguez Bonino.

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976. 158 pp., \$6.95.

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**Reviewed by David H. Chilton**

This work was originally delivered as the 1974 London Lecture in Contemporary Christianity under the chairmanship of John Stott, with whom the author had several “frank and enlightening conversations” during the course of these lectures, and who is described in warm terms as a friend (9). This fact in itself would merit my attention, as one who has benefited from several of Stott’s books. Furthermore, Míguez (dean of graduate studies at the Higher Institute of Theological Studies in Buenos Aires and a vice president of the World Council of Churches) claims in his preface to be “a person who confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour” (7). Unfortunately, this encouraging beginning is immediately qualified by his next statement: “This presupposition belongs ... to the realm of *faith*,” and “a second presupposition belongs to the realm of *history*,” that presupposition being the



“imperative” of “revolutionary action” (7–8; emphasis mine). In other words: Jesus is Lord—in the Church; Marx is Lord in history.

Míguez, apparently anticipating criticism, decided not to play fair, issuing several disclaimers throughout the book. For instance: the nature of his work “is that of an invitation to conversation and study rather than that of a developed and finished thesis” (9), thereby transforming any critique into simple misunderstanding. Elsewhere he confesses: “Neither the competence of the author nor the nature of this book correspond[s] to the area of exegesis” (31), although he does make a few stabs at it. Well, his modesty is understandable. In fact, as we shall see, it should be downright shame.

The basis for the book is the “pilgrimage to Marxism” of certain South American Christians, Míguez’s thesis being that as they attempted “to make their Christian faith historically relevant” they were led by “the dynamics of the historical process...to discover the unsubstitutable relevance of Marxism” (19). Several points could be made here, but surely the most significant is that Míguez’s epistemological slip is showing. For Míguez, experience is the test of truth. Truth must “become true,” it must be “confirmed by the facts” (18). Attitudinal changes between Marxists and Christians are not the result of a change in *theory*, but because of “the *fact* of the existence of revolutionary Christians” (24). Thus, Christian Marxism is *Truth*, simply because there are those who claim to be such. Later Míguez asserts: “True knowledge can only be acquired starting from the concrete actions of men ... theory has meaning only as it leads to a course of action {194} which proves significant” (93). Truth then has nothing to do with content—it is found simply in “encounter” with reality (105). “What has to be done is clear,” Dr. Míguez tells us, “and one sets about doing it without waiting for justification from the Christian gospel or Marxist philosophy. One is Christian and Marxist because that’s how things are” (121).

Accordingly, we would not expect that the Scriptures would be regarded by this “theologian” as authoritative. And Dr. Míguez does not disappoint us. “Christianity,” he pontificates, “does not offer a philosophy, just as it does not offer a particular political or social system” (94). (Has he not read Deuteronomy?) He continues that the Bible’s authority and competence do not extend to socioeconomic analysis,

because “this is not a theological but a scientific issue and must be solved as such” (97). Indeed, “we cannot pose the existence of abstract values or moral laws”; the good must be measured only by current “economic, technological, psychological conditions obtaining at that point in history” (98). We may not rely upon biblical standards in any ethical matter, “because we live in a different world” from biblical characters (113). We may not even “invite our Marxist partners ... to become Christians—this belongs, indeed, to another context” (101). Dr. Míguez concludes that “there is no possible relationship” between Christianity and Marxism, “unless each recognizes the autonomy of the other” (104). Yet Dr. Míguez is not really being honest with us. He is actually defending the autonomy of Marxism at the expense of Christianity. For example, he points out that “as Christians we are not judged by Marx or Marxism; one alone is our judge: the Lord. But Marx is a witness” (58). Well, now, that’s comforting, isn’t it? But may Christianity “witness” against Marxism? Míguez answers: because “the basic ethos of capitalism is definitely anti-Christian,” capitalism must be criticized “radically, in its fundamental intention,” while Christians may only criticize socialism “functionally, in its failure to fulfill its purpose” (115). “In itself, Christianity is not enough,” Míguez informs us; it must be supplemented by Marxist analysis and strategy in order to become practical. What is more, this analysis and strategy may be criticized only on Marxist, and not on Christian, terms (120–21)! In fact, the Christian is “morally obligated” to use Marxist insight “to the extent that it proves scientifically accurate and valuable” (122). And, we are promised: “Insofar as the reactionary associations of the churches are overcome, Marxism loses much of its antireligious virulence” (124). But this is not telling us anything new. Obviously, if religion submits to Marxist demands, if it consents to criticize socialism only “functionally,” if Christ is no longer *Lord*, then Marxists will have little reason to be antireligious. An “upper-story,” irrelevant pietism will never be a genuine threat to even the most militant forms of statism, as witness the already existing government-sponsored churches within totalitarian countries.

Coming back to the main thesis then, is it possible to be “Christian” and “Marxist”? Aren’t Marxists atheists? And isn’t atheism at odds with Christianity? Not really, says Míguez. After all, “the Bible is not prima-

rily interested in rejecting atheism but idolatry” (70). That bit of logic, surely, should be sufficient to dispel any illusions we may have indulged about the professor’s exegetical acumen. But our author favors us with further theological treats: the doctrine of the Trinity is not necessarily *true*, but is simply a “focus,” a convenient way to understand God’s actions (105); Christ may be “historical or mythological” (109); the nature of Christ’s mediation is such that He is man’s *representative*, not his *substitute* (*ibid.*); Paul’s theology is that of “faith against the Law” (66). The last point is dwelt on at some length, Míguez informing us that because God restores man’s right relationships “outside the Law” (67), “God has to break again and again {195} into the life of His own people and destroy, transgress, contradict, relativise” His commands (68). (This is, to say the least, an interesting interpretation of passages such as Romans 3:24–31.) And still Míguez goes on: one cannot affirm God “without affirming man,” because He “has declared Himself on the side of man forever” (102); indeed, everything God does is for the whole of humanity (107). God had a “humanizing purpose” (110), in terms of which He “fights for man’s lordship” (108); presumably, God’s chief end is to glorify man.

Let us make no mistake: all this is not merely an “alternative understanding” of certain disputed passages. It is blasphemy, the all-too-coherent ravings of a sacrilegious fool. Míguez is a heretic. His god is, at best, a weak-willed slave of a gang of cultural misfits; at worst, it is Míguez himself. This man does not deserve to be treated mildly. Life is not simply a merry-go-round of polite panel discussions—it is total war between Christ and Satan, with no middle ground. What Dr. Míguez deserves is excommunication. Sadly, in this milquetoast, mealy-mouthed age, that is exactly what he won’t get. Rather, he is hailed and toasted by evangelical organizations, enters into genteel, toothless “dialogues” with John Stott and others, and has his books printed by theologically drifting publishers all under the guise of “Contemporary Christians” boldly discussing “the burning issues of the day.” As Solomon said, “They that forsake the Law praise the wicked” (Prov. 28:4).

Now, all the above-mentioned friends of this contemporary anti-christ are able to get away with such infidelity because Dr. Míguez is considered to be an evangelical, as he himself claims throughout the

book. In fact, he goes so far as to attack “liberals” (cf. 31, 106), thus leaving us with only two choices: we must either side with (1) the liberal, bourgeois concept of autonomous individuals, or (2) the evangelical, Marxist, liberating message of freedom for humanity (96). God demands justice, Dr. Míguez would remind us, and this can come about only “by the redressing of the condition of the weak” (112). Do not the Scriptures militate against “unjust authorities (kings, priests, rich)” (124)? Míguez does have a valid point—certainly, we must not favor the rich man on the grounds that he is rich. But the Bible goes further: neither may we favor the poor man on the grounds that he is poor; our sole standard must be righteousness (Lev. 19:15). (That’s the trouble with quoting Scripture—it is God’s word, not man’s, and so it cuts more ways than one. Dr. Míguez would do better to stay on the same epistemological base with his father the devil, rather than make the mistake of trying to bring God into the discussion. At least Marx, for all his faults, was consistent.) Míguez is undaunted, however, and cites as confirmation of his thesis the story of Ananias and Sapphira, whom, he says, God condemns “because they want to reserve for themselves in isolation something which belongs to the total availability of faith,” thereby breaking “the solidary community of love” (111–12). Given Dr. Míguez’s unique expository talents, we might have expected this. The biblical record, however, is clear: they were not condemned for keeping their property, because it was theirs (Acts 5:4). They were charged only with *lying* (Acts 5:3–4), an accusation which Dr. Míguez himself should consider before he writes another book.

I have mentioned Míguez’s rejection of any “abstract values,” but it turns out that he does have one: “utter self-giving solidarity (love) ... the absolute law” (108). And this he sees as the key to ultimate union between Christians and Marxists. You see, the Christian knows the “source and power” of love, but it is only the Marxist who knows how to apply it (115)! After all, the life of Marx “is full of a deep compassion, a sensitivity to friendship and joy, a love of beauty ...” (140). {196} And we must not forget Ché Guevara’s motto: “A revolutionary is a person possessed by deep feelings of love” (100). Sweet. One wonders what Guevara’s victims (excuse me—*lovers*) would say. But of course this may be difficult to determine, so many of them being dead. Míguez’s definition of love is frightening. True, he does speak nobly of going

“beyond what is demanded,” of Christians paying “out of their comfort, their status, their work, their own life” in order to bring about the needed transformation of society (138). But he doesn’t stop there. He mentions also that this change may mean “inflicting suffering” and “a certain sober ‘calculation’ and acceptance of human ‘cost’” (129). He then writes of the tremendous (mental) “suffering which results from taking in love responsibility for others” (139)—“those who cannot understand” the lofty principles behind it all, and who must therefore be sacrificed (138). Put in simple terms, this means that Señor Míguez and his coterie will gallantly accept the high calling of eliminating those who refuse to go along with the program (reminding me of G. B. Shaw’s dictum that those who would not fit in with the socialist utopia would be executed in a kindly manner). May God deliver us from such love.

Dr. Míguez closes with a chapter entitled, “Red Heroes and Christian Martyrs.” Here he contends that anyone (“whether Christian or not”) who gives his life for “humanity, justice and peace” attains “solidarity with Christ” (139). Míguez’s faith, clearly, is recognizable in that remark. I have no quarrel with his claim to be an “evangelical.” But it is *another evangel* which he preaches (Gal. 1:8–9), and his interpretation of Christianity has not one whit more validity than the serpent’s evaluation of the tree. He demonstrates no desire whatsoever to submit to God’s authoritative revelation in His word. Instead, he attempts to manipulate Scripture for his own ends, infusing biblical terms and phrases with his own anti-Christian content. Failing this, he rejects biblical standards, pointing out that Scripture is just a musty old theology book anyhow, having no relevance except in the realm of “faith.” But all is not lost: some day even José Míguez Bonino will be forced to acknowledge the lordship of Christ (Phil. 2:9–11). And there is much to hope for when one considers God’s justice, for He may just grant Míguez his fondest wish: that of spending eternity with Kant, Hegel, and Karl Marx. Everlasting flames can (albeit belatedly) do wonders for a man’s epistemology.

*The Capitalist Reader,*  
ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich.

New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1977. 272 pp., \$9.95.

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**Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers**

The objective of this volume is to introduce the student to the theory and general practice of capitalism as expressed by some of its more renowned advocates. As editor Lawrence S. Stepelevich notes in the introduction, “the term ‘capitalism’ has acquired a morally dubious connotation among many of the citizens who actually live in a capitalist society, and for those who live without, capitalism simply designates an economics of greed and exploitation” (9).

Defenders of the system which Marx asserts “lives off the life-blood of the workers” are almost automatically placed in pejorative defendant position by attempting to justify self-interest and competition rather than collective and cooperative economic activity. The capitalist, Stepelevich asserts, offends both therapist and theoretician by an existential view of man as a morally independent individual {197} and by rejecting the vision of economic utopia which would replace “productive anarchy” with “planned productivity.”

The proponents of capitalism are faced with defending an apparently anarchistic “system” which operates without conscious direction of an external lawgiver and governs itself through a myriad of personal choices, resisting simple description as well as rationalist direction. With reliance upon individual self-interest as its primary mover, capitalism, to its critics, is characterized by confusion and selfishness rather than by freedom and individualism.

The contrast between capitalism and totalitarian economic and social systems is more than a question of which system of intercourse is the most efficient or productive economically. For the spiritual capitalist, the economics of capitalism should be upheld even if it did hold less promise of well-being than socialism of whatever form or variety. However, one finds ample explanation among the spokesmen in this volume in articulation of a fact on which there is unanimous agree-

ment among them, namely, that it is capitalism which *is* the most productive system.

There are important noneconomic questions which go to the heart of the measure of merit of an economic system. This reader presents excerpts from major spokesmen for capitalism in illustration of how free-market economists have confronted issues relating to the moral as well as the economic efficiency and feasibility of capitalism.

Part 1, "The Theory," contains Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand" argument of the combined maximum economic productivity and social good from capitalism, and their diminution by the lawgiver's intervention; Frederic Bastiat's appeal for rejection of all systems "save the liberty which is an acknowledgment of faith in God and His work"; Eugen von Boehm-Bawerk on private production; Wilhelm Roepke on the economic functions of private ownership and its moral significance for free society; Ludwig von Mises on the necessary connection between the market economy and free political and social institutions; plus two articulations on capitalism's presupposition of voluntary interaction in an open society by Ayn Rand ("What Is Capitalism?") and John Chamberlain ("American Capitalism").

America's abundance, Rand points out, "was not created by public sacrifices to 'the common good,' but by the productive genius of free men who pursued their own personal interests and the making of their private fortunes" (92). The maximum common good was made possible precisely by the fact that it was not forced on anyone as a moral goal or duty; it was merely an effect; the cause was a man's right to pursue his own good. It is this, she states, and not the consequences of this right, beneficent though they are, that represents the moral justification of capitalism.

Part 2, "Capitalism and Justice," contains selections from the writings of Friedrich Hayek ("Economic Myths of Early Capitalism"), Bertrand de Jouvenel ("Capitalism and Intellectuals"), Roepke ("Monopoly"), Mises ("The Alleged Injustice"), Milton Friedman ("Discrimination"), Rand ("The Roots of War"), and Louis Kelso and Mortimer Adler ("Property and Justice").

In these selections Hayek challenges the widespread legend among economic historians of an alleged deterioration in the position of the working classes in consequence of the rise of capitalism, countering

that the “very claims and ambitions of the working classes were and are the result of the enormous improvement of their position which capitalism brought about” (132). Jouvanel feels the intrinsic distaste for capitalism in the inner courtyard of intellectualism is due to the fact, in economic jargon, that the market value of the intellectual’s output is far below factory input. This item is a most interesting essay in the sociology of knowledge, {198} or, in this instance, what we might style as the sociology of favor and “deficit preference” (“... his sympathy goes to institutions which run at a loss, nationalized industries supported by the treasury, colleges dependent on grants and subsidies, newspapers which never get out of the red”) of the intellectual (133).

Mises’s piece in this section articulates the position that all pseudo-economic doctrines which depreciate the role of saving and capital accumulation are absurd. According to Mises, “All those rejecting capitalism on moral grounds as an unfair system are deluded by their failure to comprehend what capital is, how it comes into existence, and how it is maintained, and what the benefits are which are derived from its employment in the production processes” (154). Friedman explains the dynamics of the major reduction in the extent to which particular religious, racial, or social groups have operated with respect to their economic activities with the development of capitalism.

Part 3, “Capitalism and Freedom,” contains six selections on this theme authored by Bastiat (“Enforced Fraternity”), Hayek (“Economic Control and Totalitarianism”), Roepke (“The Age of Tyranny”), Friedman (“Economic and Political Freedom”), Gustav Stolper (“Progressive Capitalism”), and Lawrence Fertig (“Prosperity Through Freedom”).

Milton Friedman has noted that it is widely believed that politics and economics are separate and largely unconnected; that individual freedom is a political problem and material welfare an economic problem; and that any kind of political arrangements can be combined with any kind of economic arrangements (237). Such is a delusion, for not only is freedom in economic arrangements itself a component of freedom broadly understood, so that economic freedom is an end in itself, but economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom. The alternatives, as Gustav Stolper explains, are “production for profit” on the one hand versus production by compulsion and terror on the other. And, as Fertig states, capitalism is of



great value to the American citizen (who thus should defend it against Communism) because it is promotive of and is indispensable to human freedom, it is the most efficient economic system by permitting the laws of supply and demand to operate through free pricing, and it offers the greatest opportunity for self-expression for the individual.

Rand, in her “What Is Capitalism?” answers the question, “Why is capitalism destroyed in spite of its incomparably beneficent record?” with the point that “the lifeline feeding of any social system is a culture’s dominant philosophy and that capitalism never had a philosophical base” (101). Noting that some twenty to thirty million people died through planned malnutrition or in concentration camps in the Soviet collectivization, this being what the *Encyclopedia Britannica* refers to as “investment in people,” Rand adds a thought which requires assessment:

In a culture where such a statement is made with intellectual impunity and with an aura of moral righteousness, the guiltiest men are not the collectivists; the guiltiest men are those who ... attempt to defend the only rational and moral system in mankind’s history—capitalism—on any grounds other than rational and moral. (105)

*The Capitalist Reader* is an excellent baseline volume which highlights the rational and moral arguments for capitalism and its necessity if political freedom and its social accouterments are to be known and enjoyed. It does not, however, contain assessments from a strictly biblical or theological perspective; it does contain information with which those doing the spadework of contemporary reconstruction need to be familiar. {199}

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*The Ethics of Freedom*, by Jacques Ellul  
(trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley).

Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976. 517 pp., \$13.50.

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**Reviewed by Roger Wagner**

Jacques Ellul, professor of history and sociology of institutions at the University of Bordeaux, is having an ever-increasing impact in the English-speaking world, especially the United States, through the

translation of his works. His dozen books already available in English range from sociological investigation (*The Technological Society*, 1964; *The Political Illusion*, 1967) to more theological and ethical studies (*To Will and To Do*, 1969; *The Meaning of the City*, 1970; *The Judgment of Jonah*, 1971; *The Politics of God and the Politics of Man*, 1972). Now with the appearance of *The Ethics of Freedom*, published by a mainline “evangelical” publisher like Eerdmans, we can get an indication of the impact Ellul’s thought is having and will have in more conservative theological and ethical circles. Ellul’s work therefore deserves our attention. For those who are interested in a biblically based ethic with a view toward Christian reconstruction in every area of life, what has Dr. Ellul to offer us?

*The Ethics of Freedom* is the first of three projected volumes forming a unified ethics for the modern Christian. An introductory groundwork for the present studies was laid in *To Will and To Do: An Ethical Research for Christians*, which appeared several years ago. The plan is to organize the three volumes around the three Pauline virtues: faith, hope, and love. He will produce an “ethics of holiness” corresponding to faith, an “ethics of freedom” corresponding to hope, and an “ethics of relationship” corresponding to love. He has published the “ethics of freedom” first, “because [he became] increasingly convinced that freedom is the location and condition and arena of all Christian ethics and that holiness and relationship are possible only on the basis and in terms of the functioning of freedom” (7).

Before looking at some features of the work more closely, a general word or two about *The Ethics of Freedom* is in order to guide the prospective reader. In the first place, this book is a treatment of ethics from a speculative, rather than a textual-exegetical, perspective. Ellul generates his arguments in terms of what he sees to be broad biblical (specifically New Testament) principles with only infrequent reference to the text of Scripture. This is in part dictated by the nature of the material to which he is addressing himself. Much of his discussion is in the area of “meta-ethics,” i.e., those foundational and presuppositional questions that underlie the dealing with specific, concrete ethical problems. The bulk of the study (368 of the 517 pages) is theoretical in this sense, before he comes in the latter section of the book to some “Concrete

Implications.” For this reason, the reader in search of answers to specific ethical questions will not be satisfied on that score with this study.

A second general remark relates to Ellul’s method of argumentation. In any given section, Ellul will approach his subject first from one angle, and then another, and then another, seeking to examine thoroughly. Brevity and clarity are sacrificed in the name of this thoroughness. Consequently his discussions are protracted, and the reader may well feel that what has been said could as well be said in one-half or one-third of the space without loss of substance. Ellul’s method of pedagogy has some virtues. The reader who sticks with it will sense that he has really thought through the issue with Ellul. Many more, I fear, will fall by the wayside. This reviewer came away from many sections with the impression that the thought of Ellul never did crystallize in a clearly recognizable formulation, despite (or perhaps because of) the lengthy argumentation. Thus the reader in search of a {200} terse, clear exposition of ethics will be well warned that there is some ploughing to do here.

Central to Ellul’s subject is the reality of the “freedom” which Jesus Christ has secured for man through His life, death, and resurrection. This “freedom is the ethical aspect of hope” (12), hope that is man’s response to God’s redemptive work in Christ. Thus, as we have noted, freedom for Ellul is the central dimension of Christian life and action. What specifically is this freedom? In looking at Ellul’s definition of “freedom” in Christ, we come to the center of Ellul’s thesis, and I believe to the central weakness of the book.

Jesus Christ was the only free man, and Ellul sees in the wilderness temptation of Jesus the paradigm of true freedom (52ff.—this is one of Ellul’s few extended treatments of a passage of Scripture, and one can see here an example of his non-exegetical use of the text). Through the act of redemption, Jesus has delivered men from their bondage to sin, their slavery, their alienation (66ff.). Now the world has been reconciled to God and liberated.

In analyzing man’s condition before liberation, Ellul points out that the Scriptures speak of man as a “slave to sin.” He seeks then to develop a contemporary category that corresponds to the biblical conception of “slavery.” For modern man, the reality that most closely approximates slavery is “alienation,” and the reality of living in a world of “necessity.”

Borrowing from Marx's concept of alienation, supplemented by the findings of secular science (both natural and social sciences), Ellul concludes that man lives in a world where he is subject to forces, internal and external, over which he has no control. He is alienated from his work, from others, from the world, and from himself. The great irony of the modern world, says Ellul, is that in the face of the evidence of growing determinism, modern philosophy cries out the louder for freedom and human dignity (36–37). This is modern man's slavery, corresponding to the slavery to sin of which Paul spoke. But we are forced to ask, is this so?

Ellul's exposition of modern man's view of his own alienation is very ably done, but has he really found an accurate counterpart for the biblical doctrine of sin? For Marx and modern science, human alienation, however undesirable and painful, is nonetheless part of the nature of things, universal and cosmic. Alienation is metaphysical because the determinism of the cosmos is given, axiomatic. For Marx it is only through the creativity of revolution that this natural condition of alienation can be changed. Is this what Paul has in mind, or is the similarity merely formal?

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), and now all things in the creation and in human history come to pass in accordance with his sovereign decree and providence (Eph. 1:11). There is thus a determinism in the world, but it is not from within the world, nor does God's predestination do violence to the will of man or "second causes." Thus the world as created by God is very different from the cosmic machinery of Marx and modern science.

Further, man was created in the image of God, to rule over the earth in the name of God and in terms of His law-word. In this original condition man had fellowship with God (Gen. 2) and blessedness. Man's disobedience and the Fall brought sin and condemnation upon the whole race. Man became a slave to sin. But this slavery is clearly spiritual and ethical, not metaphysical. Also, the concept of "alienation" is not foreign to the Bible, but it is not cosmic, metaphysical alienation, it is ethical and personal: alienation from God and from life (cf. Eph. 2:11 ff.). Thus, although the Scriptures speak of the "natural man" being at enmity with God, it is not man as created (metaphysically), but man as fallen in Adam {201} (spiritually and ethically) that is in view. In this

light, I think we can see that there is a great gulf between the views of alienation taken by Marx and modern science (and Ellul) and the doctrine of slavery and alienation taught by Paul. The similarity at best is only formal.

This confusion becomes acute when Ellul seeks to make clear the sense in which man has been liberated by Christ. In his discussion of the “Universality of Freedom” (76ff.) he seeks to outline the freedom that all men have in Christ, and the unique sense in which the Christian is “free.” He definitely rejects the notion that this “freedom” is restorative: “it is surely obvious that nature is not just restored or improved. The condition is not in conformity with nature; it is against it” (93). Is this liberation a metaphysical change then? He rejects that idea also: “the real problem of freedom is not metaphysical. The problem of freedom is ethical” (85). One is left in doubt.

Ellul makes it clear that in Christ all men have, in some sense, become free. They have become liberated from “fate”—whether Christian or not. Nevertheless men reject and rebel against their freedom, and history moves on unchanged (82). Although man is saved, he is not by virtue of that free (83). One senses that Ellul is giving with one hand and taking with the other. He tries to resolve the conflict in terms of the “servant-lordship” of Christ. The lordship of Jesus Christ, he says, is not authoritarian, but the lordship of a servant. Thus the whole effectiveness of liberation in Christ hinges on “reciprocity” (84). Man must mediate the lordship of Christ, and only the truly “free” man can do this. All this still does not clarify for us the nature of the uniqueness of Christian freedom. That it exists is more asserted than explained.

In section 2 of the book, Ellul goes on further to develop his view of freedom. It is very much tied up with choice and possibility. The free man is that man who can act in terms of his freedom in the face of the “necessity” of the world around him. He then proceeds to look at freedom in relation to the self, the “powers,” and revelation. In this latter section, Ellul comes as close as he does anywhere to giving us his view of Scripture and how it is to be used. Although it is not a systematic presentation, one senses that Ellul is greatly influenced by the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, but with perhaps a “higher” view of Scripture than others in that camp.

Ellul's book is to be an “*ethics of freedom*.” How is an ethical viewpoint to be developed from this view of the freedom of man in Christ? The exercise of freedom ethically, says Ellul, must always be directed to the glory of God and the good of our neighbor. The choices of the free man must be directed toward this goal. Freedom, to be possessed, must be acted out, used in concrete ethical living. Ellul has thus set forth a worthy *goal* for ethics: to glorify God in all things. But what of the *motive* and *standard* of our ethics? In this study, presumably hope would be the motive for ethics (as would faith and love in the other two studies in the trilogy). But what of the standard? What is to give shape and content to our “ethics of freedom”? Ellul's answer to this question is very disappointing from the perspective of an ethic rooted in the law-word of God. Ellul is loath to tie the ethics of freedom to the liberating and life-giving law of God. On the contrary, for him fixed commandments are the antithesis of freedom. The “life of liberty ... involves more than a direction, even though this comes from Christ Himself, and more than a commandment,” and later, “The problem of the ethics of freedom, which begins with the liberation granted by Christ, is to discover what can be the choices and orientation of this man who has been freed, and yet to do so without enforcing a fixed model, a body of doctrine, or {202} stereotyped conduct, and thus making ethics a negation of freedom” (73–74).

Freedom, cut off from the moorings of the law-word of God in Scripture, becomes directionless (or at best given only a very vague, general direction) and contentless when facing concrete ethical problems. Yet this dichotomy between liberty and law is a recurrent theme throughout Ellul's book. Christ's lordship, we are told, is in no sense authoritarian (83). He is the servant. Now it is true that the Son of Man came in humiliation to serve as a minister, but the servant-ministry of Christ cannot be absolutized, as Ellul has done, without doing violence to the plain teaching of Scripture (e.g., Matt. 28:18ff., “All *authority* has been given unto me ... go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe *all things that I have commanded you...*”). Christ has truly made us free from the bondage of sin and death, not so that we might live in autonomous freedom loosely guided by the principles of glorifying God and loving our neighbor, but that we might become “enslaved to God” (Rom. 6:22), servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:18),

obedient from the heart to the “form of teaching” which we have received (Rom. 6:17), i.e., everything that God has commanded. Indeed one is tempted to think that Ellul’s conception of “freedom” owes as much to the existential freedom of Jean Paul Sartre as it does to the scriptural conception.

This weakness of content to the “ethics of freedom” becomes evident further when Ellul turns in his last section of the book to a consideration of some concrete ethical situations. We shall note only two, briefly. First, in his discussion of “Christian Freedom in Politics” (369ff.), he comes to advocate a sort of “Christian anarchism” with respect to the political institutions of the modern world. He clearly rejects consistent anarchism as a deadend. He further points out that the whole of modern life is politicized, and the modern states (both leftist and rightist) are so deeply entrenched and totalitarian in character that it is unrealistic to speak of any sort of freedom for the individual in this context. One can easily feel the force of Ellul’s analysis. But he goes on to reject the notion that there can be a Christian theology of the state. There is no specific word of law from God that binds the state as an institution, and if there were, it is foolish to think the modern state will listen to it. Left without a clear word for the state, Ellul is reduced to his anarchistic methods that have as their goal a loosening of the system to give freedom some breathing space. There can be no transformation or reconstruction of institutions in a Christian fashion, according to Ellul. Only the attempts of the free individuals acting to crack the vise of the political system. Ellul has much more to say on the subject, much of it perceptive and helpful, but we must move on.

Secondly, when Ellul comes to discuss “Freedom in the Family, Work, Sex, and Money” (447ff.), the same dilemma of what to say to the modern secular world faces him. Again, he rejects the notion of institutional reformation. One might note in passing that the study of history and sociology of institutions has left Dr. Ellul very skeptical about the possibilities of institutions in a Christian environment. The stress of his whole book is on the individual and his acts of freedom (although he denies he is advocating “individualism”). So once more the Christian is left without a word of law from God to speak to the spheres of vocation, family, and economics. The pressures of “necessity” that face the family, he says, are less strong now than they were in

the last century (because the institution of the family is disintegrating), and thus in this already “loosened” situation the possibilities for freedom are greatest. When adultery and abortion are culturally acceptable, the Christian can “freely” choose to be faithful to his wife and have children. In the field of vocation, however, the “necessities” of production and {203} economics are virtually total. Thus freedom is impossible, except in the use of “sabotage” which is designed to loosen the structure to allow for freedom.

One can see from this that Dr. Ellul has given us little help in the pursuit of biblical Christian reconstruction. Having emptied Christian ethics of its specific content in the law-word of God in Scripture, and minimized the authority of the King of kings, Jesus Christ, he has left us with little beside an attempt to “brighten the corner where we are.” Paul on the other hand stresses that Christ must reign, and is reigning now, until He has put all His enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25). We are called to be prophets addressing the Word of the Lord clearly to our generation, calling for and giving direction to their repentance in every area of life. We are to be priests interceding with the Lord of glory to pity the nations and constrain the earth to come to the King. We are called to be kings, bringing every thought, word, deed, individual, and institution we touch into submission to Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have tried to focus on some central features in Ellul’s *The Ethics of Freedom*, and have found real weaknesses there. Yet it is a very rich book, and there is much of real insight and helpfulness given us along the way. Ellul’s realistic perception of much in the modern world is useful for the application of a Christian ethic. We only hope that he will soon discern in the law-word of God the content and power for Christ transforming culture.



# THE MINISTRY OF CHALCEDON

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[Pr. 29:18]

Chalcedon [kalSEEdon] is a Christian educational organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and cogent communication of a distinctly Christian scholarship to the world at large. It makes available a variety of services and programs, all geared to the needs of interested laymen who understand the propositions that Jesus Christ speaks to the mind as well as the heart, and that His claims extend beyond the narrow confines of the various institutional churches. We exist in order to support the efforts of all orthodox denominations and churches.

Chalcedon derives its name from the great ecclesiastical Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), which produced the crucial christological definition: “Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man....” This formula challenges directly every false claim of divinity by any human institution: state, church, cult, school, or human assembly. Christ alone is both God and man, the unique link between heaven and earth. All human power is therefore derivative; Christ alone can announce that “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). Historically, the Chalcedonian creed is therefore the foundation of Western liberty, for it sets limits on all authoritarian human institutions by acknowledging the validity of the claims of the one who is the source of true human freedom (Galatians 5:1).

Christians have generally given up two crucial features of theology that in the past led to the creation of what we know as Western civilization. They no longer have any real optimism concerning the possibility of an earthly victory of Christian principles and Christian institutions, and they have also abandoned the means of such a victory in external human affairs: a distinctly biblical concept of law. The testimony of the Bible and Western history should be clear: when God’s people have been confident about the ultimate earthly success of their religion and committed socially to God’s revealed system of external law, they have been victorious. When either aspect of their faith has declined, they have lost ground. Without optimism, they lose their zeal to exercise dominion over God’s creation

(Genesis 1:28); without revealed law, they are left without guidance and drift along with the standards of their day.

Once Christians invented the university; now they retreat into little Bible colleges or sports factories. Once they built hospitals throughout Europe and America; now the civil governments have taken them over. Once Christians were inspired by “Onward, Christian Soldiers”; now they see themselves as “poor wayfaring strangers” with “joy, joy, joy, joy down in their hearts” only on Sundays and perhaps Wednesday evenings. They are, in a word, pathetic. Unquestionably, they have become culturally impotent.

Chalcedon is committed to the idea of Christian reconstruction. It is premised on the belief that ideas have consequences. It takes seriously the words of Professor F. A. Hayek: “It may well be true that we as scholars tend to overestimate the influence which we can exercise on contemporary affairs. But I doubt whether it is possible to over estimate the influence which ideas have in the long run.” If Christians are to reconquer lost ground in preparation for ultimate victory (Isaiah 2, 65, 66), they must rediscover their intellectual heritage. They must come to grips with the Bible’s warning and its promise: “Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29:18). Chalcedon’s resources are being used to remind Christians of this basic truth: what men believe makes a difference. Therefore, men should not believe lies, for it is the truth that sets them free (John 8:32).

*Finis*