

Volume 8

Winter 1982

Number 2

# The Journal of Christian Reconstruction



Symposium on  
the Atonement

A CHALCEDON PUBLICATION

# COPYRIGHT

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## The Journal of Christian Reconstruction

Volume 8 / Number 2

Winter 1982

*Symposium on the Atonement*

Douglas Kelly, Editor

ISSN 0360-1420.

A CHALCEDON MINISTRY

Electronic Version 1.0 / October 6, 2006.

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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.

*The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* is published twice a year, summer and winter. Each issue costs \$5.00, and a full year costs \$9.00. *Subscription office and editorial office:* P.O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251. Copyright by Chalcedon, 1982.

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# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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*Douglas Kelly*

Isaiah 53:11 speaks prophetically of the glorious results of the finished work of Christ on the cross: “He (i.e., the Suffering Servant—now the victoriously risen Christ) shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied....” James I. Packer, some twenty years ago in his introductory essay to John Owen’s *Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, said this about the irresistibly victorious results of the atonement of Christ:

[The Calvinist] insists that the Bible sees the Cross as revealing God’s power to save, not His impotence. Christ did not win a hypothetical salvation for hypothetical believers, a mere possibility of salvation for any who might possibly believe, but a real salvation for His own chosen people. His precious blood really does “save us all”; the intended effects of His self-offering do in fact follow just because the Cross was what it was. Its saving power is such that faith flows from it. The Cross secured the full salvation of all for whom Christ died. “God forbid,” therefore, “that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

This verse from Isaiah and paragraph from Packer’s introduction strike the theme of this issue of the *Journal* on the Atonement: the infinitely precious sacrifice of the Son of God is accomplishing all of the purposes for which it was offered. In the words of Isaac Watts’s hymn:

His pow’rful blood did one atone  
And now it pleads before the throne.

In other words, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was not in vain. It is, in conjunction with the resurrection, the most effectual thing that ever happened in space-time history. The shed blood of Christ cleanses all of the people of God; begets in them saving faith. This potent, substitutionary death is applied by the Holy Spirit, along with the benefits of Christ’s bodily resurrection and heavenly intercession, to enable

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1. *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, John Owen with an introductory essay by J. I. Packer (London: Banner of Truth Trust, [1959] 1963), 10.

God's redeemed people: "more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness" (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 35). All those deaths to self, whereby a formerly egocentric people "count others better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3) in order that the whole body of Christ may be built up and "evil overcome with good" (Rom. 12:21) flow from Him who "*bare the sin* of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). Every beam of {2} holiness, love, and moral beauty in the redeemed—and through them in the structures of our society—radiates from the hill of Calvary.

Ultimately, "the gates of hell" are not withstanding the assaults of the church (Matt. 16:18), because Christ on the cross "having spoiled principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). In the midst of our situation today, and more and more as THE Day approaches, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) is being satisfied with the fruit of "the travail of his soul."<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the loud and impressive rattling of Satan's weaponry today, history is inevitably marching toward the time when "every battle of the warrior with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood" (Isa. 9:3) will be ended and stilled, as one sound rises, swells, and triumphantly rings throughout an entire universe. Our voices shall join the strain raised by hosts of angels and elders of the church: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
Endless the victory Thou o'er death hast won.

Yet our hearts are sobered, indeed heavy at "the confused noise" of the many battles raging at present. Freedom is tragically repressed in Poland; the draft is reinstated in the United States. Inflation continues even as high interest rates choke off much of a once vibrant economy. The incredible debt loads of Third World countries as well as of Western and Communist governments increase in geometric proportions. For many it is already impossible to service the debts, much less pay

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2. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes*, bk. 4, chap. 1, sec. 2: "... Let us know that Christ's death is fruitful, and that God miraculously keeps his church as in hiding places."



them back. American agriculture, which has fed a vast proportion of humanity, seems on the verge of critical dislocation. Intolerant humanists, seeing their former political hegemony threatened, daily mount the podiums of the liberal media to continue launching their hysterical attacks against infuriatingly effective, conservative Christians such as Jerry Falwell. "The slaughter of the innocents" continues at an appalling rate as "civilized" doctors and nurses hack to pieces millions of unborn babies in the wake of the 1973 "Roe vs. Wade" decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. A Federal Court rules against the Arkansas Legislature's plan to have Creationism taught in the public schools alongside the untouchable dogma of modern humanism: evolution.

Still, at the same time (only a day or so after this negative court decision), the Mississippi Senate passes a similar plan in favor of teaching Creationism in government schools. And so the struggle of light and darkness continues: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto [us], and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:9). The struggle, though, is not an equal one, for {3} "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5); for this is indeed "the light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18), "the Day-spring from on high" (Luke 1:78), "the Light of the World" (John 8:12), whose beams are even now shining against and flushing out "principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

In the face of entrenched Satanic opposition, there are vastly more evangelical Christians in the Soviet Union today than ever existed under the Czars. Solzhenitsyn says that practically no one in any Communist country believes any longer in the dogmas of Marxism. There are now more Anglicans in Africa than in any other part of the world. If the growth rate of Christianity continues the same for the next fifteen or twenty years in Africa, that massive continent will be majority Christian, and thus by the end of this century the major portion of all Christians will be nonwhite.

The seamless garment of humanistic control over thought and culture in the United States is being quietly rent in pieces as fundamental Christians are sallying forth into the political arena, finally aware that disengagement from the issues of the day is to set their seal of approval on what the pagan elite has done to us for the last one hundred years.

Christ's soldiers are making plans to spread His light into the spheres of the media and entertainment, now that cablevision and the microelectronics revolution are effectively ending the dominance of the three liberal networks.

The educational establishment of the government schools (which are so essential to keep this nation plummeting to the depths of socialism) is secretly quaking before what R. J. Rushdoony has called the major revival that is going to determine the future of this country and of the world: the Christian school movement. Probably over one fourth of school age pupils in the U.S. are already in private (usually Christian) schools, and two new Christian schools are opening every day. If this trend should continue, by the end of the twentieth century most Americans will be in Christian schools. Awareness of this inevitability is undoubtedly the factor motivating state and federal bureaucracies to attempt to halt the movement by taking so many Christian schools (and now day-care centers) to court.

Humanistic government monopoly over welfare is being effectively challenged by saints of God such as Brother Lester Roloff, who says to parents who plead for help for their seemingly hopeless, wayward daughter (on whom other agencies have long given up): "Bring her to us. Jesus finished all the work that ever needed to be done for boys and girls" (*Lester Roloff Living by Faith*, M. B. Roloff, 127—see "Defenders of the Faith" in this issue).

In sum, those who experience the power of the death of Jesus are also brought into the liberty of the Spirit. As the old lines say: {4}

The Spirit answers to the blood,  
And tells me I am born of God.

It is very difficult for corrupt intellectuals and politicians to manipulate men and women who have been liberated from their sin and guilt through the atonement of Christ. These same people are rising up and building alternative structures of life and service that will honor God and set people free to serve Him.

In the words of an evangelical hymn we may sum up what is taking place here and now (which directly flows from what took place then and there at Calvary):

Leaving the mountain the streamlet grows,  
Flooding the vale as a river;  
So from the hill of the Cross there flows,  
Life more abundant forever.  
Life! Life! Eternal Life! Jesus alone is the giver.  
Life! Life! Abundant Life! Glory to Jesus Forever!

Life is flowing into the dead places of our society. Light is spreading into the dark places of this world with their “habitations of cruelty.” In spite of every temporary setback, the light and life will continue to increase even as darkness and death continue to recede. Indeed, darkness and death now in the twentieth century are still harnessed to serve the same ultimate function they had to serve in the first: their extreme expression was the cross, and that brought glory to God and salvation to the human race. All the forces of darkness and death are still unwitting and unwilling instruments that are inevitably used to spread the very life and light they wish to quench. This is because He who was bruised for our iniquities “shall see his seed, shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10).

In this issue of the *Journal*, **R. J. Rushdoony** analyzes the real meaning of the atonement in his usual crystal-clear way, and, with a keen eye open to the true causes of the neuroses and disasters of contemporary society, shows specifically how and why the substitutionary, atoning death of the Son of God is the only door through which we may enter into forgiveness, healing, and obedient victorious living. Nowhere else that we know of will you find such fascinating insight into the real state of contemporary culture in all its rawness and need, and nowhere else will you find more definite, specific applications of the benefits of the cross.

**William Still's** sermon on “Propitiation” (which we have reprinted by permission) is an unflinching exposition of the righteous anger of God against sin, and at the same time a powerful and sweet wooing of the soul to cast itself upon the mercy of God revealed in the cross of Christ. If you have never experienced the saving power of the cross in your own life, this sermon may be the very means God uses to show you the way. {5}

**Bill Kellogg** opens up in a very practical way “The Pastoral Usage of the Atonement.” One of the most useful aspects of his paper is the man-

ner in which he shows how the atonement is *not* to be used: to attempt to manipulate people by piling false guilt upon them, rather than letting the cross do what it was meant to do: liberate men and women into “that service which is perfect freedom.” In this regard he fairly and faithfully deals with the so-called radical Christianity of Ron Sider. The pastoral counselor will be helped by this article, as will the Christian school teacher, who will find the section on “atonement and false philosophies of education and apologetics” of particular interest.

In addition to the biblical, theological, and pastoral approaches to the atonement just mentioned, your editor makes a historical study of how in the providence of God one of the early Church Fathers (Irenaeus of Lyon) waged victorious battle against powerful, heretical forces (all too similar to the same ones we face at this juncture of the twentieth century), and in so doing laid the theological foundations and furnished many of the tools for the church to construct in council and creed its fundamental, evangelical understanding of the saving work of Christ.

In the section on “Christian Reconstruction,” **Magnus Verbrugge**, through an erudite, yet lucid and intriguing study on “Animism in Science,” demonstrates the utter subjectivism and backwardness of evolutionary dogma that tragically reigns supreme in the government schools.

Two writers contribute to “Contemporary Theological Trends”: **John A. Nelson** with much insight discusses the strange propensity of many modern evangelicals to oppose law and obedience on the supposed basis of love; while **Kenneth L. Gentry** with biblical thoroughness, theological depth, contemporary understanding, and logical precision builds a forceful, compelling “Christian Case Against Abortion.” This is a “Tract for the Times” that dispels many misconceptions about the subject and should move believers to action.

**Caroline Kelly** writes about Lester Roloff as a current “Defender of the Faith,” to which **R. J. Rushdoony** adds an appendix giving an explanation of the “legal” bureaucratic persecution that this Pastor/Evangelist/Rescue Mission Worker has undergone—and is still facing in the appeals courts. This is an important section, not least because where Brother Roloff is now, vast numbers of us who are more traditional,

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mainstream-type Christians will soon be, unless something is done to reverse the continuing governmental policy of stifling religious liberty.

A number of significant books are reviewed in the areas of medicine, Bible studies, theology, economics, politics, and education.

Of great interest to all will be the remarks of the beloved theologian, **Cornelius Van Til**, on "What I Believe Today."

**1.**  
**SYMPOSIUM ON**  
**THE ATONEMENT**

# THE ATONEMENT ANALYZED AND APPLIED

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*Rousas John Rushdoony*

## *1. Expiation and Atonement*

The terms *expiation* and *atonement* are very similar. Atonement means the reconciliation of two parties who have become estranged. Expiation is the act of payment, restitution, and restoration whereby atonement is made. When we speak of making atonement, we thus speak of both expiation (the restitution) and atonement (reconciliation).

The most serious mistake we can make with reference to expiation and atonement is to assume that these are ecclesiastical concerns whose sole reference is to a particular institution, the church or Christian synagogue, and its doctrine of Christ. Because the triune God is maker of heaven and earth and all things therein, all men inescapably have to do with God at every point, act, word, and thought in their lives. As such, they are either in obedience to God, or in disobedience. Whether or not men believe in God, they are inescapably tied to Him in all their being. Man's sin and unbelief is a moral or ethical fact; man's being is metaphysically the creation of God. By his sin and unbelief, man makes himself morally estranged from God, and at war with God. Metaphysically, however, man still remains totally God's creation and creature, so that, in spite of himself, man cannot depart an iota from the conditions of his life and being as they are ordained by God.

As a result, when man sins, he seeks ethical or moral separation from God and indeed claims a metaphysical separation as his own god (Gen. 3:5). The fact remains, however, that man is still God's creation, and everything he does will manifest that fact in spite of himself. Thus, because man was created in God's image to serve Him as His subduer over the earth, the condition of man's life is the law-word of God. Whenever and wherever man transgresses God's law, his whole being will demand and seek expiation. Having been created responsible to God, man will seek to discharge that responsibility, even though the

form of it is now perverted and evil. Thus, *first*, man continues to seek dominion and to subdue the earth (Gen. 1:26–28), although now his quest is turned towards the Kingdom of Man rather than the Kingdom of God. However, all that the ungodly accumulate will only serve God’s Kingdom (Isa. 61:6), and the lot of the ungodly will be frustration and failure. *Second*, in his sin, man will inescapably seek to {7} make atonement, even though he may deny in the process that he is either guilty of sin or is seeking to justify himself. Thus, man becomes his own judgment, because his whole being, as the creation of God, will serve God: to be God’s creation means to serve God, whether willingly or unwillingly. Because we are totally God’s handiwork, in all our being we manifest His purpose and judgment, so that, in our sin, we judge ourselves by our waking and sleeping, our thoughts and our dreams, in our eating and drinking, in our work, rest, and play, in every way we manifest His judgment on our sin.

Asaph tells us, in Psalm 76:10, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” Alexander commented:

The very passions which excite men to rebel against God shall be used as instruments and means of coercion. See Ps. xxxii.9. And so complete shall be this process, that even the remnant of such passionate excitement, which might be expected to escape attention, will be nevertheless an instrument or weapon in the hand of God. This last idea is expressed by the figure of a girdle, here considered as a sword-belt. So too in other cases the verb *to gird* is absolutely used in the sense of girding on a sword. See ... Ps. xlv. 3, and compare Judges xviii. 11, 2 Kings iii. 2.<sup>3</sup>

The Prayer Book Version renders the first half of this verse, “The fierceness of man shall turn to thy praise.” Kirk commented, “All rebellion against God’s will must in the end redound to God’s glory: it serves to set His sovereignty in a clearer light (Ex. 4:16).”<sup>4</sup>

Expiation and atonement are thus inescapable facts. A distinction must be made, however, between that which meets God’s require-

3. Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Psalms, Translated and Explained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1864; reprint, n.d.), 323.

4. A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 455.



ments, and that which man, in spite of himself, renders as a means of escaping guilt, although without success. *First*, legitimate expiation and atonement meet and fulfill God's requirements. To make atonement legally means thus to do so in the manner prescribed by God in His word, and in no other way. Because it is God's law which all sin violates, it must be God's law alone which sets the terms of reconciliation. No thief, adulterer, or murderer has any legal or moral grounds to set the terms of his forgiveness and reconciliation. He does not make the law, and he has no legitimate bargaining power with respect to it. *Second*, illegitimate expiation and atonement are man's attempts to remove the penalties for sins on his own terms, in his own way, and in his own time and place. In all false expiation and atonement, there is no lack of suffering and punishment, far greater indeed than in legitimate atonement, but there is no release. {8}

Hell is the end result of all illegitimate expiation and atonement. The reprobate, insistent on their own way and their own will, give themselves over to eternal self-justification. They are thus totally past-oriented and past-bound, endlessly rehearsing their sins and endlessly justifying themselves (Luke 16:19–31). There is neither community nor work in hell, only endless memory and unending and determined self-justification.

Heaven is the habitation of those whose sins are legitimately expiated and for whom atonement is accomplished by Christ. The memory of their sins is blotted out even by God (Isa. 43:25), so that they are freed from the guilt of the past and are future-oriented in this world, and eternity-oriented in the world to come. They now work, with no curse to hinder or frustrate their activities (Rev. 22:3), because their reconciliation is real and total (Rev. 22:4).

Legitimate and illegitimate expiation and atonement are in two directions, God-ward, and man-ward. *First*, all sin is an offense against God, and all sin requires restitution to God. This is the theological aspect of making atonement. The terms are strictly specified by Scripture. *Second*, sin also is man-ward, in that people are robbed, killed, raped, injured, slandered, despoiled by fornication and adultery, defrauded, and so on. Restitution must be made also to man, and this is the anthropological side of making atonement. Civil forgiveness follows such restitution, even as theological forgiveness follows restitution

to God. Here again the terms of restitution and restoration are specified by God's law-word.

False religion offers illegitimate expiation and atonement, and false civil orders offer illegitimate expiation and atonement. Examples of the latter are the prison system, rehabilitation programs, psychiatric treatments, and so on, all very much with us.

When false religion and false civil government offer men false expiation and atonement, the social order begins to disintegrate. It may talk about love, brotherhood, and community, but it will be marked by hatred, enmity, and social warfare. Men will be at war with themselves and with other men, torn apart by self-hatred and a hatred of the world and life. Illegitimate expiation and false atonement in church and state mean that the social order begins to exhibit the marks of hell, and there is neither peace nor community.

Ancient Rome recognized the necessity of atonement for social stability and order, and hence it required that all citizens be present for the annual lustrations. The only exemptions allowed were military, and the soldiers gained atonement by proxy. Rome recognized the *necessity* for expiation and atonement, but it sought these things on false grounds and hence failed to gain them.

Today, the same things are sought by means of laws, political action, and psychiatry. If anything, the results are becoming more disastrous now than they were then. Thus, expiation and atonement are matters of great {9} concern, of heaven and hell, of life or death, and any person or society neglecting them will pay the price of self-destruction.

## *2. Our Atonement by Jesus Christ*

At the heart of Christian faith is the fact that sinful man, incapable of making atonement to God, is redeemed by the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This great act is set forth typically in the Old Testament sacrificial system, and it is to the Old Testament we must look first for its meaning. We are told of man's fall, and the subsequent course of mankind (Gen. 3–5). Man as a sinner cannot render unto God that holiness and righteousness which is God's due. Lawless man is in all his being anti-God and is no more capable of faith in God and obedience to God's law than is a dead man capable of dancing a jig. Paul in Romans

3:9–20 stresses the total inability of man justify himself by self-righteousness. The sinner's self-righteousness compounds his sin.

Salvation is entirely the work of the triune God through Jesus Christ. Because it is entirely God's work, it is academic to discuss whether or not man can exercise his supposed free will. If God is man's creator, man's will, and all his being, is the handiwork of God and a part of His plan. For Arminians to assume some area of independence for man is to assume that God is not wholly God, and that man constitutes an area of independence from God in the universe.

Moreover, the atonement, as we meet it in Leviticus, is a *covenant fact*. The sacrificial system did not render expiation and atonement for all men but for covenant man, Israelite and non-Israelite. Those whom God chose as His covenant people were at one and the same time those who were redeemed and for whom intercession was made. There is no hint of universalism in the Old Testament with respect to the efficacy of sacrifice. In Psalm 87, we have the procession of foreigners into Zion, and, of all of them it is said, "This and that man was born in her" (Ps. 87:5), and this fact of being born into citizenship in the Jerusalem of God is of God's choosing: "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there" (Ps. 87:6). "The people" can be translated "the nations." God is portrayed as choosing the peoples, individuals from all nations, and by His sovereign choice decreeing their rebirth and their reconciliation. To be *born there* means to be born into the covenant by God's sovereign grace. Particular persons are saved, but no man is saved in abstraction from either Christ or Adam. We are redeemed *out of* and *from* the humanity of Adam *into* the new humanity of Jesus Christ. Our salvation is thus both individual and particular and at the same time an aspect of the universal fact of Christ's new humanity and new creation: the old man or old humanity of Adam is sentenced to death and is abolished, and the old world is sentenced to death also. Those who are chosen and elected to {10} redemption are transferred from one world and humanity to another. Those who are ordained for reprobation are elected to self-expiation and self-justification, to a cycle of sadomasochistic activities. There are two humanities, and two kinds of expiation and atonement.

We cannot separate the facts of atonement and regeneration except for theological analysis: in life, they are inseparable. No man is regener-

ate without Christ's atonement, and only the regenerate are atoned for through Christ. To speak of Christ having died for all men as individuals (rather than all men, i.e., all peoples, races, tongues, and tribes) is in essence the same as saying that Christ has regenerated all men, an impossible statement.

Can we limit this by saying Christ opened up the *possibility* of atonement and regeneration for all men? Emphatically not, because the cross did not constitute a possibility but *the fact* of expiation and atonement. Moreover, there can be no *possibility* outside of God without a denial of God. *All the possibilities* of atonement in the cross were and are of God's sovereign choice and predestination. The idea of a universal atonement dethrones God and enthrones man.

The worldwide nature of God's Kingdom is set forth in Psalm 87. It develops the thought of Psalm 86:9–10:

All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord: and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.

Thus, the very psalm which restricts the Kingdom of God to those born by God's choice into the covenant speaks of God's sovereign grace to the Gentiles. Leupold titles the psalm "The Glorification of Zion by the Adoption of the Gentiles."<sup>5</sup> The universalism of the faith is eschatological: it is not a universal atonement but a worldwide dominion by God's sovereign and efficacious grace.

Psalm 87 declares that the foundation of the true Zion is of God. A catalogue of some of Israel's enemies follows, but these enemies are now by rebirth the people of God's covenant. *All God's people*, including singers and the players on instruments, cry out to God with joy, "All my springs are in thee" (Ps. 87:7). They do not rejoice because they chose the Lord, but because He chose them (Ps. 87:6). It is not their free will they celebrate but God's sovereign grace: "All my springs are in thee."

The atonement is universal in the sense that men of every race and nation are among the redeemed. In this sense, "all men" are included in God's election. It is not universal if *all men* as individuals are meant. Christ's expiation and atonement have reference to His covenant peo-

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5. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1959), 621.

ple. Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ suffered and died for His sheep (John 10:11, 15), {11} His Church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25, 27), His people (Matt. 1:21), and the elect (Rom. 8:32–35), and this was in terms of an eternal and efficacious purpose by the omnipotent God. “The world” is to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19) because it is to be re-created, whereas the reprobate are cast out as false heirs (Matt. 21:33–41). The remade and new world and the regenerated humanity in Christ shall live forever in the joy of their Lord, and in the glory of the resurrection. An atomistic view of man can lead to the Arminian view of the atonement, but any view that takes seriously the sovereignty of God, and the covenantal nature of man’s relationship to God, will reject that view. Significantly, Arminians do reject both God’s sovereignty and covenantalism.

Lawless man makes himself his own god and law and denies God and His law. To be redeemed means to believe in and obey God, to be subject to His absolute government. Expiation and atonement reconcile us to God’s sovereign rule and government, so that, as Berkhof points out, atonement is closely tied to intercession:

The great and central part of the priestly work of Christ lies in the atonement, but this, of course, is not complete without the intercession. His sacrificial work on earth calls for His service in the heavenly sanctuary. The two are complementary parts of the priestly task of the Saviour.<sup>6</sup>

Both atonement and intercession, priestly tasks, are inseparably tied to Christ’s royal task, government: the government is upon His shoulder (Isa. 9:6). Only those who are subject to His government by His sovereign grace are at the same time those for whom He makes intercession with the Father. And those for whom He makes intercession are those whom He has made atonement for in His mercy: they are the covenant people. The reprobate are in covenant with death and hell (Isa. 28:15).

There are thus two covenants, two humanities, and two kinds of atonement. Those who are the reprobate find their atonement and self-justification in sadomasochistic activities. Those who are the elect of

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6. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1946), 367.

God in Christ are called out of this fruitless and self-defeating atonement to Christ's efficacious work. They move from self-government to God's government, from self-made laws to God's law, from talking to themselves to praying to God through Christ, and from the covenant with death and hell to the covenant of God in Christ.

### 3. Vicarious Sacrifice

An ancient Greek religious rite gives us an insight into the widespread existence of vicarious sacrifices and penalties:

... the *Thargelia*, a festival of Apollo at Athens, included a {12} peculiar rite in which one or two men (*pharmakoi*) were first fed at the public expense, then beaten with branches and leeks, and finally put to death. The connexion with Apollo was not very marked; it seems rather to be an ancient rite which had to do with the safety of the ripening crop. Nor does it presuppose the Divine anger, though doubtless more stress was laid on such a ceremony in time of famine or pestilence, when men felt that their gods were angry with them. It was primarily a means of removing any taint of evil which might bring danger to men or destruction to their ripening crops. Because rites of this character were out of line with the development of Greek religion from Homer onward, it is perhaps safe to regard them as survivals from a very early period. In themselves they shed little light on the present question, except as they indicate that men feared the possible anger of their gods, and possessed means to allay the anger itself. Still these rites of riddance must be taken into account as the source of later purificatory rites, and perhaps as the starting-point of propitiatory sacrifice.<sup>7</sup>

Fairbanks gives us an evolutionary perspective, and hence what he describes is a very primitive rite in his eyes which historical development made obsolete.

Such vicarious sacrifices are readily found all over the world, among Aztec and other Indians (human sacrifices), and evidence is not lacking of the prevalence and persistence thereof.

These earlier *forms* of vicarious sacrifice have indeed often given way as cultures have developed and grown sophisticated, but this by no

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7. James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, [1912] 1937), 651.

means gives us any ground for assuming that the fundamental motive in these rites has disappeared or abated.

In dealing with the fact of *motive*, it is necessary to begin by calling attention to the *tainted* motives of fallen man. Man, as sinner and covenant-breaker, approaches all things from the standpoint of his rebellion. This means that, even when he accepts his guilt, he in effect denies it. He can ascribe guilt to the environment, other people, or to God, and he can do so directly, or, by admitting guilt, he can still do so indirectly by insisting that the conditions of his life made sin likely or inevitable. Thus, Epicurus insisted that the world poses a moral dilemma: if God wishes to prevent evil and cannot, then God is impotent. If God could prevent evil and does not, then God is evil. Thus, as Epicurus framed the problem, God was in either case indicted and man absolved, and man had every “good” reason to reject God as evil or to rule Him out of the universe as impotent or dead.

When man is guilty, or feels guilty, he suffers. When he suffers, he resents the fact that he does, and he is determined that others should suffer also. For him the world is out of joint because he himself is, and someone must pay for this. Vicarious suffering and sacrifice is demanded by {13} covenant-breaking man, ancient and modern, as a means of satisfying his own outrage at being made to suffer. When Cain was angry at God, he killed his brother Abel, and Lamech (Gen. 4:23–24) made it clear that “whoever wrongs me in the least forfeits his life.”<sup>8</sup> The “wrong” could be a fancied one: Lamech made himself the judge, and others a vicarious sacrifice to his own assertion of autonomy. The motive in all nonbiblical vicarious suffering and sacrifice is thus a tainted and evil one. Basic to man’s life, politics, and religion is this effort to lay his own guilt upon others. Even in masochistic self-punishment, there is a strong sense of the evil and oppressive world of God and man which “requires” such suffering. The masochist is an injustice collector, to use the apt phrase of Dr. Edmund Bergler. The world and God are to him dispensers of injustice, and he is the perpetual and long-suffering victim.

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8. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, pt. 1 (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, [1961] 1972), 243.

It is clear thus that vicarious suffering and sacrifice is a part of the life of fallen man. The masochist suffers, he believes, because God and man are evil, and he is their appointed and innocent victim. The sadist, on the other hand, lays his guilt on others and requires them to accept the role of a vicarious sacrifice.

But a still deeper motive is also always present. All men who are covenant-breakers are not only tainted in their motives but guilty men as well. Although they may consciously deny or excuse their guilt, in their hearts they know that they are guilty. It is thus guilt, injustice or unrighteousness, which leads them to suppress the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18–21). They are guilty in relationship to God and His law; they seek to make themselves gods and their own source of the determination of good and evil, of morality and law (Gen. 3:5). Denying God is basic to their denial of guilt. If there be no God, then man cannot be an offender against a myth, a nonexistent thing. Basic to atheism is the flight from guilt and responsibility.

However, man is God's creation, and every atom of his being witnesses to God, as does all creation. There is thus for him no escape from the witness of God (Ps. 139). At every hand, he is confronted by God, God's claims on him, and his guilt before God. Man thus stands guilty in all his being, and inescapably so, as long as he is a covenant-breaker.

Sigmund Freud saw man as inescapably guilty, and he held that, until the problem of guilt were solved, religion and priestcraft could never be abolished. Guilty men would seek somehow to find relief through religion, and some sort of religious atonement. The abolition of religion could only be properly effected by reducing guilt to a scientific problem and explaining it away as a survival of man's primitive past and of ancient drives within his {14} unconscious being.<sup>9</sup> The practical effect of Freud's solution was to create a new priestcraft to deal with the problem of guilt, psychoanalysts, with psychologists and psychiatrists also engaged in a like task.

Man seeks, in his sin, a sin-bearer to bear the burden of his guilt. Hence, vicarious sacrifice is basic to his outlook. "Someone must pay,"

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9. See R. J. Rushdoony, *Freud* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., [1965] 1975).



he believes, and pay heavily for the suffering of others. The masochist seeks himself as the vicarious victim. He makes atonement for his own guilt by means of masochistic activities, but, even in so doing, he is eloquently protesting against God and life for requiring so great a price.

Bergler has spoken of the habit of masochists of pleading guilty to the lesser offense. His meaning is Freudian, but his insights are often telling. Even the guilty pleas of sinful man are an indictment of God and life. The sadomasochists deny the sin, resent the guilt, and charge the real offense to God, life, and man.

Thus, the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice is not evaded by denying biblical faith. It remains, in a warped and evil form, because it is inescapable. Whenever and wherever man denies God and His word, he replaces it with an imitation thereof. All the categories of life are God-created and God-ordained. Man cannot escape them; in his sin, he perverts them.

God's law has penalties for sin. These penalties are fixed and unchanging. The sin of man requires eternal death. Man is incapable in his sin of pleasing God, or of offering an acceptable sacrifice or atonement. Man cannot make a personal atonement to God, or place God in his debt by any works or acts. His creation was of grace, and his life is incapable apart from God's grace of ever pleasing God. Even in his faithfulness, he is still an unprofitable servant (Luke 17:10). Only through the vicarious sacrifice of God the Son, who takes upon Himself the death penalty for the sins of His elect, can there be a remission of sin and guilt. All atonement in Scripture is by vicarious sacrifice, first set forth typically in the appointed clean animals (Lev. 1:4; 16:20–22, etc.), and then by Jesus Christ (Isa. 53:6, 12; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24).

Vicarious sacrifice is inescapable. In covenant-breaking man, it means sadomasochistic activities; it means punishing various classes, races, or peoples as the guilt-bearers for the rest of society. It means a politics of guilt and hatred, and a constant social revolution, as one group after another seeks to absolve man and society of guilt by punishing a chosen "evil" class or group which is made responsible and guilty for man's sins and problems.<sup>10</sup> The failure of churches to under-

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10. See R. J. Rushdoony, *The Politics of Guilt and Pity* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1970).

stand the meaning of vicarious sacrifice and the *freedom* it creates has been disastrous to man and society. {15} The presence of covenant-breaking forms of atonement is always a menace to man and society.

#### 4. *Imputation*

Perversity has long been native to man's disposition, in ways great and small. Men seem to prefer unhappiness, because they go to such great lengths to ensure its persistence and presence.

Literature in particular manifests extremes of perversity. Catullus, in pre-Christian Rome, is a very obvious example. Modern man is also marked by a penchant for unhappiness and perversity, by a desire to create conditions whereby he can accuse God and man of treating him unfairly. His greatest pleasure is often in this triumphant charge of injustice. He collects injustices as though injustice were gold, and then he finds even greater pleasure in charging God and man with unfairly and unjustly visiting them upon him. In humorous fashion, the cartoonist Charles M. Schulz has Lucy declare,

When you feel down and out  
Lift up your head and shout,  
Someone's going to pay for this!

There are times when the hatred of happiness, prosperity, success, light, and peace are openly expressed. Usually, however, man claims to want all things good while willfully working to ensure the triumph of evil. In effect, man says, because I am evil and dark, let there be only darkness.

Is this an overstatement? Let us then glance at a student poem for confirmation, H. E. Sheleny's "Hate":<sup>11</sup>

The dismal rain comes down  
And taps against my window pane  
Like so many little demons  
Striving to steal in and possess  
My soul. I love the Rain.  
The Darkness cascades over me  
As if to engulf me in a torrent

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11. *Crest*, vol. 2, (Costa Mesa, CA: Orange Coast College, n.d.), 20.

Of fear. I love the Dark.  
 The Sun warms me. It brightens  
 The world. It SEEMS to offer hope.  
 I hate the Sun.

The point is ably and powerfully made. The Rain and the Dark are dismal, like little demons, and they seek to steal and possess the soul. They are compared to a torrent of fear. Yet “I love the Dark,” i.e., evil, fear, the demonic, and so on. The Sun gives light and warmth and offers hope; ergo, “I hate the Sun.”

Man not only chooses evil, but he also chooses suffering. He seeks to justify his continued rebellion against God and his preference for evil by {16} indicting God for injustice in making man suffer so greatly. The greater man’s suffering for sin, the greater his self-justification and his sense of self-righteousness before God and man.

Theologians have rightly distinguished between *original* sin and *actual* sins. Original sin is the evilness or sinfulness of fallen man in all his being. It is the common attribute of all who are in the humanity of Adam. This sin or depravity is total in that it is the governing fact in his nature which colors his mind, will, emotions, actions, and all his being. Just as a tiger is always a tiger, so a member of the humanity of Adam is inescapably a man whose being is not merely marked by but is in essence governed by original sin, the desire for autonomy from God as a self-ordained god. Actual sins are particular acts in violation of God’s law. A newborn babe is without actual sins; it is marked by original sin.

In the atonement by Jesus Christ, this fallen man dies in Christ and is made a new creation in Him. His actual sins are atoned for, and his old life and nature are sentenced to death and then made a new creation.<sup>12</sup> Regeneration and justification accompany the atonement. Without them, actual sins would be dealt with only, but the sinning man would remain unchanged.

Jesus Christ, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), is He in terms of whom God makes all things new (Rev. 21:5). Not only does He remove sins from creation, but He removes the fact of sinfulness or rebellion and regenerates all things in terms of Himself

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12. See Robert L. Dabney, *Christ our Penal Substitute* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, reprint, 1978).

into the renewed image of God. This means a life of the knowledge of and obedience to God, of righteousness or justice in all our ways, of holiness or separation and dedication to Him in all our being, and it means also a life of dominion, man under God bringing every area of life and thought into captivity to Jesus Christ.

This freedom of the believer is accomplished by Christ's atonement. The sins of the redeemed man, or of the man who is by grace singled out for redemption, are *imputed* to Jesus Christ; they are laid to His charge, entered into His account, so that He assumes the penalty of death for us. But this is not all: through Him and in Him we have the *remission* (*aphesis*) of sins. Our sins are forgiven; restitution is made for them by Jesus Christ, and there is a dismissal of sins and a release. The remission of sins means that we stand before God as pardoned men. The atonement effects a *legal* change in our status before God.

But a pardoned murderer or revolutionist is still a law-breaker at heart. Not so the redeemed man. At the same time, he is *regenerated*, made a new creation, by the Holy Spirit through Christ, so that the pardon is received {17} by the renewed man; it gives new life to one who is newly raised from the death of sin.

To remit the sins of the ungodly is to compound evil. Humanists, denying God's law, insist that love and forgiveness can win over a criminal and change his life. The result has been the proliferation of crime and a growing decay of society. The criminal remains a criminal still, and all that the humanistic remission of sins accomplishes for him is a greater freedom to commit crime, to sin.

All offenses against God's law require death. If we do not have the death of Christ as our vicarious substitute, we have the certainty of death at the hands of Christ as King and Judge. Those who commit capital offenses against God's law with respect to human society should face death at the hands of a godly government as well.

It is Christ's atonement which saves the sinner. The atonement does not simply make salvation possible: it makes it actual, because it secures and seals an unchanging and irrevocable salvation. What Christ does cannot be undone, and whatever work He begins in a man, He carries through to its eternal fulfillment and glory.

The perversity of man in warring against God is replaced by a delight in doing God's will, and rebellion and unbelief are replaced by

faith and obedience. Without imputation, there is no redemption. The denial of imputation implies a humanistic faith in the self-sufficiency of man and his ability to save himself. In Romans 5:12 Paul tells us,

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Here as elsewhere man's inability to grasp the full meaning of God's truth no more nullifies that truth than a man's blindness obliterates the sun from the heavens. Paul makes it clear that our solidarity with Adam is a very real fact. Adam's sin and fall means "that all have sinned." Adam is our federal head or representative man. As all tigers and hyenas are no less tigers and hyenas from Adam's day to ours, so we are no less begotten in Adam's image, and in his own likeness (Gen. 5:3).

Adam's sin is thus imputed to all men. This is the *legal* fact. All of Adam's race are a part of a war against God, and so death is "passed upon all men," i.e., the sentence of death, for all sinned in Adam. Just as a man's liability for damages becomes the liability of his family residing with him, and of his property and income, so the liability of Adam becomes the liability of his race and the earth they inhabit. This is the *legal* fact.

The physical and moral fact is that all of Adam's race are begotten in his image. We are not told how this moral rebellion is transmitted, but we are told that it is basic to our very conception (Ps. 51:5).

Imputation is basic to our condemnation, and to our pardon. Murray cited the parallels and the contrast ably:

We cannot grasp the truths of world-wide significance set forth in this passage unless we recognize that two antithetical complexes are contrasted. The first is the complex of sin-condemnation-death and the second is that of righteousness-justification-life. These are invariable combinations. Sin sets in operation the inevitable consequents of condemnation and death, righteousness the consequents of justification and life, and, as is obvious, these are antithetical at each point of the parallel.<sup>13</sup>

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13. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959), 179.

The godly man thus moves in terms of Christ and His law-word, Christ's righteousness or justice. His sentence of death was just, and His redemption an act of sovereign grace. Accordingly, the redeemed man becomes an instrument of Christ's redeeming power and of His righteousness or justice.

Christ as the true and new man puts into force man's calling (Heb. 10:5–19), which David of old set forth in Psalm 40:7–10:

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

Even as we once did the works of Adam, so now we do the works of Christ; we are governed by His word and His Spirit. This means that we who are now alive in Christ are also alive to His law-word and to His Spirit. Christ's work being perfect, and His power extending to every realm, He does what no human judge can do: His legal pronouncement of pardon and remission of sins is accompanied by His regenerating power and a new life that delights in obeying the Lord. Alexander's comment on Psalm 40:7 is very good:

The reference is here to the Law of Moses. *Written of me* is by some referred to prophecy, by others to the requisitions of the law. The literal meaning of the Hebrew words is *written upon me*, i.e., prescribed to me, the *upon* suggesting the idea of an incumbent obligation. "Enjoined upon me by a written precept." This is clearly the meaning of the same phrase in 2 Kings xxii.13. Thus understood, the clause before us may be paraphrased as follows:—"Since the ceremonies of the Law are worthless, when divorced from habitual obedience, instead of offering mere sacrifice I offer myself, to do whatever is prescribed to me in the written revelation of thy will." This is the spirit of every true believer, and is therefore perfectly appropriate to the whole class to {19} whom this psalm relates, and for whom it was intended. It is peculiarly significant, however, when applied to Christ: first, because he alone possessed this spirit in perfection; secondly, because he sustained a peculiar relation to the rites, and more especially the sacrifices of the Law.<sup>14</sup>

The redeemed man thus has the Lord as his federal head, a program for dominion through God's law, and a freedom from perversity into joyful and willing obedience through faith. He has undergone a legal change by imputation and remission. He has a new life by Christ's regenerating grace and power.

Because Jesus Christ is very God of very God as well as very man of very man, our salvation is the work of eternity, not of time, and of the Creator, not of the creation. It stands thus impervious to the workings of men and history, and it abides eternally. Without imputation, man is trapped in history and its sin and death. In Jesus Christ we have our glorious and eternal salvation, victory in time and eternity.

The unregenerate impute sins to man and to God. Sodomasochism means that a man's sins are imputed to other men, or to one's self in a charade of self-pity which accuses God, but, in either case, there is an implicit and explicit imputation to God and to other men. Injustice-collecting has basic to it imputation. The injustice collector collects injustices as a means of increasing his misery and his tally of indictments against God and man. If the masochist suffers, it is suffering as a means of indicting others and of affirming a basic innocence behind the confessions to lesser offenses.

Those who charge the doctrine of imputation as representing a lower morality must face this "paradox": humanistic, sodomasochistic imputation is a flight from moral responsibility and accountability, whereas the biblical doctrine goes hand in hand with a true confession of sin and guilt, and a new life of moral responsibility. Humanistic morality imputes sin to God, the environment, society, capitalism, communism, and so on, rather than facing man's responsibility honestly. It brings in imputation, not to redeem man from his sins, but to absolve him falsely. Biblical imputation goes hand in hand with the sinner's full awareness of his offense against God. In Scripture, those whose sins are imputed to Christ do *not* impute the guilt of sins to Him. They freely confess their sin and guilt. It is the offense and the death penalty which is imputed to Christ, and by means thereof the elect are redeemed and pardoned. Those whose sins are imputed to Christ confess their sin and guilt: they do not impute them to their par-

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14. Alexander, *The Psalms*, 180.

ents, the environment, capitalism, their teachers, or anything else. Rather, they are *delivered* from such false imputation. {20}

False imputation began with the fall. Adam imputed his sin to Eve and to God: “The woman *whom thou gavest* to be with me, *she gave me* of the tree, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:12). Eve imputed her sin to the tempter: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:13). Ever since then, imputation of this false and evil variety has been basic to the life of man. The Bible thus does not give us a strange or novel doctrine: it gives us the only valid and moral form of imputation, one basic to moral responsibility and to legal accountability in a just moral order.

### 5. *Sacrifice*

False imputation has almost the status of a science today. The source of evil is regularly traced to a group, class, or race. Capitalism, communism, the military-industrial complex, Puritanism, the blacks, whites, and so on are seen as the root causes of evil in the world. More sophisticated forms in psychoanalysis and psychiatry impute sin to our parents, our environment, our “primitive” ancestors, and so on. The psychiatrist, modern man’s new priest, does not ask for a confession of sins which acknowledges sin in the way that the confession of the Office of Compline does:

I confess to God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and before all the company of heaven, that I have sinned, in thought, word and deed, through my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault: wherefore I pray Almighty God to have mercy on me, to forgive me all my sins, and to make clean my heart within me.

The psychiatric confessor receives confession in order to impute guilt to some other person, thing, event, or cause than the confessing person. There is absolution by false imputation: the confessing person’s guilt is transferred and imputed to another person or cause. Basic to modern psychiatry and psychology, as well as to its politics and sociology, is an essential environmentalism. Environmentalism is simply a form of imputation, and the modern world is governed by this false doctrine of imputation. Since all of us are both the victims of this environment, and, at the same time, the environment for all other people, we thus impute our small quota of sin and guilt to others and also have imputed to us the sins of our entire age and world. In every



way, man is the loser! Moreover, he exchanges a true for a false sense of responsibility: he imputes personal sins to others while assuming sins that are not his own.

Eugenics and the emphasis on heredity do not solve the problem of imputation: they transfer the problem to the past, which cannot be changed, and offers hope only in distant generations yet to come.

But this is not all. False imputation requires a false sacrifice. Someone must pay the penalty for the sin and guilt, and the net result is that, in humanistic societies, social energies are directed, not towards godly reconstruction, but towards making the guilty class or group pay the penalty. {21} Since the accused group has a different idea of who should be sacrificed for the social good, the result is civil conflict and sometimes blood-letting. False imputation requires a continual sacrifice of the offenders, and the more grievous the conflict, the more bloody the sacrifice.

In biblical imputation, the sinner must fully recognize that the sins imputed to the sacrificed are *his own*. The evangelical formula is, “Christ died for *my* sins,” not for sin in general, nor for *our* sins, but *mine*. Sin does not belong to the environment, to capitalism, communism, nor our parents. It is personal, and it is *mine*. In the words of the Office of Compline, it is “my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault.” Biblical imputation is also the birth of responsibility. The truly redeemed, as against false professors, are *responsible* persons. Biblical imputation transfers us from the irresponsibility of the fallen Adam and from his false imputation (“*The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*” [Gen. 3:12]) to godly responsibility. Instead of imputing guilt to others, we assume the *responsibility*; we find in Christ our atonement by His vicarious sacrifice and our freedom from sin and guilt, from irresponsibility, and from false imputation.

The sacrificial system of the Bible sets forth this principle of responsibility and imputation. All sacrificial animals had to be clean animals or birds, bullocks, goats, sheep, doves, or pigeons (Gen. 8:20; Lev. 1, 11, etc.) Thus, the *first* aspect of sacrifice is that the offering had to be clean, i.e., kosher as food and hence an animal of usefulness. *Second*, the animal had to be without blemish (Lev. 1:3; 3:1; 2:17–25; Deut. 15:21; 17:1; Mal. 1:6ff.). If a herd animal, it was to be a male for certain

offerings, as the burnt sacrifice. It could not be a sick or old animal but only one in every way unblemished and valuable. *Third*, it had to be a domestic animal. Some wild animals are clean, but the wild animals are not man's property (2 Sam. 24:24), and the sacrifice begins with the surrender by the sacrificer of what is his, and from the best of his possessions. The wild animals are already God's (Ps. 50:10–11). Unlawfully acquired property could not be offered to God (Deut. 23:18). The unbloody offerings, cereals, flour, oil, wine, fruits, etc., were all products of man's labor and hence again were man's property and exacted a price, a sacrifice from man. The sacrifice involved the best from man's possessions and the best to God.

*Fourth*, the thing sacrificed represented the sacrificer, and, on the Day of Atonement, represented also his sin and guilt. Aaron confessed all the transgressions of Israel and placed his hands on the sacrificial animal, the scapegoat (Lev. 16:21–22). The laying on of hands represents a transfer, as of the Spirit (Num. 27:18; 2 Tim. 1:6, etc.), and it was probably normal practice in all sacrifices.

Thus, the biblical sacrifices involved a transfer of sin and guilt to a vicarious sin-bearer or substitute. The sacrifice had to be a part of the life {22} and possessions of the sacrificer, of his best. There was thus an identification with the death, a confession of sin and guilt, and thus a strong and full sense of responsibility together with gratitude to God that an unblemished substitute was ordained by God.

The sacrificial victim thus belonged to the condemned and was a substitute. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is our passover lamb, sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7). Christ appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). He, as the Adam of the new creation, dies for His elect and effects their atonement, a change in their *legal* status from men sentenced to death to pardoned and free men; He changes their *moral* status by making them a new creation by regeneration; and He changes their *family* status by making them sons of God by the adoption of grace.

False imputation breeds not only irresponsibility, an inability to face up to sin and guilt, but false sacrifice. All who are members of the humanity of Adam are ever involved in looking for sacrificial victims. Whatever the problem or offense, a sin-bearer is sought out as the scapegoat. Whereas with the biblical scapegoat there was a personal

and total confession of sins, and all men as sinners were individually and nationally to see themselves as guilty *before God* for their transgressions, humanism sees things differently. The offense is in essence *against man*, because its definition of law and of sin is man-centered. Man then must make atonement to man, and be sacrificed to man. Sin is not seen as the human condition of the entire humanity of Adam but as an attribute of a class, group, or race. The sin-bearer and scapegoat is then a guilty segment of humanity which must be made the victim, i.e., the capitalists, communists, blacks, whites, male chauvinists, and so on. Then all men see the problem as the sin and guilt of *the other* group, and all men try to effect atonement and salvation by sacrificing all other men. History then becomes, as it has been, a bloody battleground. Politics becomes in the hands of humanists the art of providing scapegoats and sacrificial victims.

The word *sacrifice* comes from the Latin *sacrificium*, *sacer*, holy, and *facere*, to make, so that it means that something is forfeited or destroyed in order to reestablish a communion and to make holy the sacrificer.

This Christ does for us. As Chytraeus wrote,

The *efficient principal cause* of Christ's sacrifice is the will of God's Son, who voluntarily turned upon Himself the wrath of God against sin and underwent abuse and dreadful torments of soul and body, so as to make satisfaction for the sins of the human race and, with the placation of God's wrath, restore righteousness and eternal life to men. John 10:15: "I lay down My life for the sheep." Isa. 53:7: "He was sacrificed because He Himself willed it." Ps. 40:8: "I have delighted to do thy will, O my God."<sup>15</sup> {23}

Because biblical imputation and sacrifice go hand in hand with responsibility, and atonement is also accompanied by regeneration, Christ's sacrifice does make holy. Humanistic sacrifices intensify sin. To illustrate, racism is today a major sin in the eyes of humanists. Thus, where whites have been in the past guilty of racism, and of victimizing other races, they must now be victimized and sacrificed to make atonement for their ancestors' sins.

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15. John Warwick Montgomery, ed. and trans., *Chytraeus On Sacrifice* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1962), 80–81.

But the human condition outside of Christ involves *total depravity*, i.e., every aspect of the individual is governed by the fall and sin, and every people, tongue, tribe, and race is affected totally by sin. Thus, to stay with racism, no oppressed race has ever lacked its own form of racism as well as the full complement of sins. One group may be culturally richer in its inheritance, but both oppressor and oppressed have a common problem. Exchanging places does not solve that problem, nor does the idea of equality, which is, together with inequality, an abstraction and a meaningless myth when applied to the concrete and actual situations of men and races. As there are differences between members of one family, so there are also between members of one nation, or one race. Abstractions only complicate the concreteness of human problems.

If man's problem is sin, then political abstractions and political attempts to solve problems by finding victim groups are dangerously false, nor do they solve the root problem. Political scapegoats are found, and the problem is intensified, because it is falsely dealt with, in that irresponsibility is fostered. Laws can no more abolish racism than they can abolish sickness, death, or bad weather.

How then can we deal with racism? We recognize, *first*, that there is a basic division in humanity, between those who are of Adam, and those who are of Christ. *Second*, those who are of Christ are only those who manifest the works of Christ. "By their fruits shall ye know them" (Matt. 7:20). The regenerate do not live by man's law and mores but by God's word and law (Matt. 4:4). In terms of God's word and law, they seek the reconstruction of all things. If we pinpoint the evil as racism, communism, or capitalism, we may or may not deal with actual evils, but we do so then from a perspective which is false and in itself evil. We fail to see sin in its true nature. We become self-righteous, and, if we deal with actual victimization, our answer is to transfer victimization to another group. Humanistic peace treaties lay the foundations for the next war, and humanistic solutions become the fabric of the new problems, because in essence they involve false imputation and require false sacrifices. These sacrifices do not make holy: they pollute humanity. Christ's sacrifice redeems the humanity of the new Adam and makes it righteous or just. As Paul says,

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto {24} all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Rom. 3:21–26)

Man's obedience to the law, if that were possible, could not effect man's salvation. The justice or righteousness of God, to which the law and the prophets witness, requires the penalty of death upon sin. All men are sinners, and none are righteous in and of themselves. The atonement and justification of the people of Christ is thus not of themselves but of Christ. By means of His atoning sacrifice, He effects the remission of our sins and makes us legally righteous before God. Christ's is the one true sacrifice for sin.

Where a false sacrifice or victimization for sins is effected, a false order and a false peace are created. If one problem is alleviated, it is only to create another. In the humanistic worldview, we are all of us victims, and we are all of us victimizers, because we belong to a group, race, class, or profession someone can find responsible and hence guilty for their plight. Men endlessly document their humanistic doctrines of imputation in order to "solve" problems of poverty, racism, war, class conflict, crime, and all things else. Because of our extensive social interlocks, all these solutions have a semblance of truth. The roll-call of "facts" is an endless one. We are thus guilty of racism, and we are also the victims of capitalism, socialism, fascism, or communism. We are alternately victim and victimizer and always more and more the slaves of the civil government which seeks atonement by imputing sins falsely to these various factors. Politics becomes the art of imputation so that some group or class may be sacrificed in order to save society. False imputation destroys society, however, because it leads to false victimization, to making another group the scapegoat. In the Bible, the people had to identify themselves with the scapegoat. It was the sin of *all* the people which the scapegoat bore. In humanism, others are the scapegoats, and all sins and problems are imputed to them. The conse-

quence is self-righteousness and hypocrisy, and also social anarchy and civil conflict. In trying to victimize one group, all are sacrificed; by failure to confess total depravity, sin is magnified and given status as good politics and sound sociology. False imputation leads to false sacrifice, and the result is death, not life.

### 6. *The Unatoned*

The unatoned, those who have no redemption in Jesus Christ, cannot live without atonement. They seek that atonement in sadomasochistic activities. "A large percentage" of prostitution is concerned with meeting {25} the demands of sadomasochism.<sup>16</sup> Politics provides a fertile area of activity for many sadomasochists. We are told of Lloyd George "that he reduced those who worked with him to nervous wrecks, almost as a way of charging himself with energy."<sup>17</sup> The treatment of employees and associates in the world of business and labor unions is rich in sadomasochism. Our literature has become pathological, and its prominent figures are perverse in their natures and writings.<sup>18</sup>

Those outside of Christ seek, consciously or unconsciously, an atonement by means of their own sadomasochistic plan. But, without Christ's atonement, men are trapped in their own cycles of self-punishment, pleading guilty to the lesser offense, and to sadism, ascribing the greater and real offense to others. This sadomasochism will manifest itself in every area of our lives, and it will lead to a politics of self-abasement and self-destruction, combined with an ascription of ultimate sin and offense to a class, religion, race, or group. Sadomasochism separates men from reality to fantasy; it creates what Warner rightly calls the urge to mass destruction, often presented as the salvation of man and the world.<sup>19</sup>

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16. Perry Whittaker, *The American Way of Sex* (New York: G. Putnam's Son, 1974), 190.

17. Aurens Uris, *The Frustrated Titan: Emasculation of the Executive* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1972), 97.

18. See the examples given in Otto Friedrich, *Going Crazy: An Inquiry into Madness in Our Times* (New York: Avon Books, [1975] 1977).

It leads not only to a nonproductive and suicidal life, but also to fear. Out of a background of police and detective work, O'Grady saw clearly, "Fear is the tax that conscience pays to guilt."<sup>20</sup>

The unatoned seek atonement, *usually unconsciously*, in sado-masochistic activities, through fantasy, politics, marriage, religion, social work, and so on, polluting all that they touch.

*Consciously* also, they recognize that sin must be atoned for, somehow removed. Massive and costly political and social efforts are demanded and instituted in order to remove sin, and we have the politics, sociology, and psychotherapy of sadomasochism on all sides. Sin somehow must be erased.

Another common effort was early favored by Reik: everybody sins, so let us all forgive one another and thereby undermine the seriousness of sin. Of course, such a reading of sin is humanistic. If man could forgive and wash away the *guilt* of sin, then long ago all guilt would have been abolished, and men would be sinning without guilt or fear. But sin is a violation of God's law, and the sinner cannot abolish either God or His law, and his guilt therefore remains. {26}

The problem of guilt will not go away. John Ciardi, in commenting in 1962 on the Adolf Eichmann case, wrote, "For the question 'Who is guilty?' might better become 'Who is not guilty?'" He had been in an air crew responsible for massive destruction in Tokyo during World War II. He commented:

But what if Japan had won and it turned out to be Japanese judges who tried the case? What could I have offered in my own defense but, one by one, all of Eichmann's arguments: I was only a cog—the smallest kind of cog, in fact, one of the four gunners who rode at least fifty feet away from the controls and bomb switches. I only obeyed orders—when I had to. It was my duty—alas. But in the end what could I plead to that—happily—never-convened court but "guilty as we all are"?<sup>21</sup>

All are guilty, and there is no remission of sins. Humanism begins by trying to abolish sin and guilt and ends by making it inescapable and

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19. Samuel J. Warner, *The Urge to Mass Destruction* (New York: Greene & Stratton, 1957).

20. John O'Grady and Nolan Davis, *O'Grady: The Life and Times of Hollywood's No. 1 Private Eye* (Los Angeles: J. Tarcher, 1974), 206.

21. John Ciardi, "Manner of Speaking," *Saturday Review*, July 7, 1962.

ineradicable. By denying the fixed and eternal law of God, it substitutes for it man's law, which becomes quickly totalitarian and provides no hope of escape.

Thus, Dr. Lorand sees "the demonic, dark side" of man as the primitive, primordial, and *personal*. It is Freud's id and ego. Our hope for Dr. Lorand is in the superego, our socialized part. "We are constantly witnessing a struggle in our psyche, recognizing hostile and antagonistic powers in perpetual battle with the socialized part of our personality, our censor."<sup>22</sup> This means when developed to its logical conclusion, salvation by total socialization by means of the totalitarian state.

The unatoned may be in the church, and they may be in the world at large. In either case, their lives have no valid direction. As Jude observed, all such men are rebels against God's authority; they are the living dead, "twice dead"; they are like "wandering stars" having no orbit. They are "trees whose fruit withereth," and they are "clouds without water" (Jude 10–13).

The unatoned, being aimless, are also the bored. They seek "something new" as a substitute for becoming a new creation. Thus, a letter by a Miss B. L., aged twenty, wrote of an affair of over eighteen months with a married man of thirty. Every sexual experiment was tried by this "happy" couple, and then boredom apparently set in. "Nothing else to try. Can you help us? We seem to be looking for something new all the time."<sup>23</sup> Luke comments on the decadent Greek thinkers of Paul's day, noting, "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, {27} or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21).

The unatoned may deny both sin and guilt, but they remain guilt-ridden sinners whose lives manifest their lack of peace and their troubled conscience. Having no peace, they are at war with God's peace, and they are troublers of the peace of this world. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22).

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22. Dr. Sandor Lorand, M.D., in the "Preface" to Arthur Zaidenberg, *The Emotional Self* (New York: Bell Publishing Co., [1934] 1967), 14–15.

23. Dr. Harold Greenwald and Ruth Greenwald, "Nothing Left," in *The Sex-Life Letters* (New York: Bantam Books, [1972] 1973), 446.



## 7. The Atoned

One of the great proclamations of Scripture sounds forth in Romans 5:1–2 which, while specifically referring to justification, sets forth the power and the privilege of the atoned:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Because our atonement, our reconciliation to God, and our justification are totally the work of God through Jesus Christ, our security is firmly grounded in the Lord, and we have peace. We are released from guilt into faith, grace, joy, and hope.

*Peace with God* is an impossibility on man's terms, or by man's works. The sinner cannot find peace nor a clear conscience. Because he is a guilty man, he is deeply and thoroughly involved in sadomasochism and is in flight from reality. He seeks escape in the fantasy world of fiction, entertainment, and self-pitying indulgence, because there is no escape in reality. He is a self-doomed and willfully blind man.

The atoned, however, have *peace with God*. They are delivered from the enervating power of guilt into the freedom of godly action. True faith thus is alien to charnel-house theology; instead of bewailing mortality and concentrating mournfully on the dead bones of its fallen estate, it works joyfully in Christ to do His will. The Great Commission does not ask us to spend our days mourning over past sins and what we once were but to go forth in Christ's power, commanding all nations of the world by "*teaching* them to observe all things" which our Lord commands, and to baptize them into the new creation (Matt. 28:18–20).

Calvin, in speaking of the life of the atoned, declared, in commenting on Romans 4:20,

All things around us are in opposition to the promises of God: He promises immortality; we are surrounded with mortality and corruption: He declares that he counts us just; we are covered with sins: He testifies that he is propitious and kind to us: outward judgements threaten his wrath. What then is to be done? We must with closed eyes pass by ourselves and all things connected with us, that nothing may {28} hinder or prevent us from believing that God is true.<sup>24</sup>

The atoned do not evaluate themselves in terms of either their pride or their guilt: God is true, and God declares them to be reconciled in Jesus Christ, to be atoned and justified by His sovereign grace.

*Atonement thus means freedom.* It is freedom from sin and guilt, and from the fallen humanity of the first Adam. We are freed from an endless dwelling on the past, the mark of hell, and are given a life of hope, power, and glory. The atonement is God's great Emancipation Proclamation. It releases us from the slavery of sin and death into the freedom of righteousness and life.

This means the ability to *rest*. There is neither rest nor peace for the wicked (Isa. 48:22). It is the mark of hell to be endlessly concerned with the past, trying to rearrange, edit, and alter past events (Luke 16:20–31). The redeemed work to alter the present and the future by means of God's law-word. Moreover, being heirs of *life*, they can *rest*, one day in seven, one year in seven, two years at the end of forty-eight years. Those who are the living dead cannot rest: life is always running out on them, and, with unceasing and sleepless activity and fretful self-indulgence, they try to seize life, but without joy, peace, or rest.

True rest and true work go together. Godly rest is productive of faith, energy, and action, and godly work is marked by joy, peace, and rest. Thus, the atonement also means the ability to *work* productively and effectively, because we know that our labor is never vain or futile in Christ (1 Cor. 15:58).

The life of the atoned is also deliverance from the delusions and fantasies of a man-centered mind. A woman in Moravia's *The Empty Canvas* epitomizes this reduction of reality to the limits of a person's thinking, so that the real is what man conceives it to be, and nothing more. Asked, "What do you believe in?" Cecilia answers:

In nothing. But I don't mean I didn't believe in it because I thought about it, and realized that I didn't believe in it. I didn't believe in it because I never thought about it. And even now I never think about it. I think about any sort of thing, but not about religion. If a person never thinks about a thing, it means that for him that thing doesn't exist. With me, it isn't that I like or dislike religion, it just doesn't exist.<sup>25</sup>

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24. John Calvin, *Romans*, 180.

This is the logic of modern philosophy come to fruition. The protagonist in the novel echoes a common opinion, a good illustration of sadomasochism, as he recalls an opinion that

Humanity is divided into two main categories; those who, when faced {29} with an insurmountable difficulty, feel an impulse to kill, and those who, on the contrary, feel an impulse to kill themselves.<sup>26</sup>

The unatoned are caught in some form of this internal dialogue. Because they are guilty, they know the power of guilt over themselves, and they use guilt to control others. Husbands and wives try to make each other feel guilty as the means of governing one another. A guilty person is unfree and is essentially incapable of consistent independent action. Preachers commonly preach to heighten a sense of guilt in their congregations. Supposedly this is done to further holiness, but holiness comes with faith and growth in obedience, not growth in the paralysis of guilt. Politicians use guilt heavily to control people: citizens are made to feel guilty for all the ills of the world and their country so that they might surrender more power to the state. The politics of guilt and pity is the politics of totalitarian humanistic statism.

Where control by guilt prevails, legalism does also. Man-made rules are imposed rigorously, and law proliferates in church and state. Even “free sex” groups impose rigid rules and find violations unforgivable. Because man is ultimate for all such people, man’s rules are basic. Fear of offending other persons, *fear of man*, is then basic, so that a double guilt governs such men. *First*, there is the guilt before God, who made them, and whose laws are implanted in every atom of their being. *Second*, because man is made his own god, there is guilt and fear before man, lest others be offended or despise the law-breakers, or rule-breakers, as outcasts, as socially unfit.

The atoned are free from the burden of sin and guilt because they are legally and personally redeemed by the atonement effected by Jesus Christ. Their salvation is grounded in an effectual, objective, and legal act by God the Son. Pietistic religion undermines that objective legal fact. As Aulen noted, “the watchword of Pietism was New Birth ...

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25. Alberto Moravia, *The Empty Canvas* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), 272.

26. *Ibid.*, 302.

rather than Justification—that is to say, the word chosen was one that described a subjective process.”<sup>27</sup> The new birth is very important, but its importance rests on the background of an objective and unchanging legal act by Jesus Christ. To stress the *results* of that act rather than the act itself is to place the emphasis on man. The result, too, has been a weakening of the objective legal fact. Because priority is given to man in pietism, man then assumes a place of sovereignty: God’s legal act, the atonement, is then available to all who of their own free will *choose* Christ. The result is an ineffectual legal act made effective only by man’s personal choice. As G. B. Long observes tellingly:

This author sees no purpose, benefit, or comfort in a redemption that does not redeem, a propitiation that does not propitiate, a {30} reconciliation that does not reconcile; neither does he have any faith in a hypothetical salvation for hypothetical believers. Rather, he has faith in a redemption which infallibly secures the salvation of each and every one for whom it was designed, namely “the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52), which is such a multitude of sinners declared righteous that no man can number them. God forbid, therefore, “that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).<sup>28</sup>

It is a real and objective law, which is broken by sin. That law is not a mere code which represents a human demand: it is the word which sets forth the righteousness of the living God. Our redemption from the *penalty* of the law for sin is Christ’s work. We are not, as Murray pointed out, redeemed from the law itself, because the law is summed up as our obligation to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, and being, and our neighbor as ourselves. “It would contradict the very nature of God to think that any person can ever be relieved of the necessity to love God with the whole heart and to obey his commandments.”<sup>29</sup>

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27. Gustaf Aulen, *Christian Victor* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1931] 1937), 150.

28. Gary D. Long, *Definite Atonement* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1966), 65.

29. John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1955), 49–50.

The atoned are redeemed from the *penalty* of the law into the *power* of the law. The law expresses the righteousness of God, and it is the means to dominion (Deut. 28).

Our religious experiences are thus at best hardly secondary to the supreme importance of God's great act, the atonement. The atonement is the charter of man's freedom.

# PROPIATION

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*William Still*

Reading: Romans 1:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

I told you what the text was. It leads on to lots of things, but we'll just take the first part of it, and you will see why, later on. It is the first few words in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 1, verse 18. Paul has been saying that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile; for in the Gospel, the righteousness of God, the saving righteousness of God, is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written in Habakkuk 2: "The just shall live by faith." And then he goes on to say, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

Some modern scholars, who work on the Scriptures and teach others how they should read them and what they should preach and teach about them, are very unhappy with this word, "wrath," because they don't believe it applies to God at all. They think that that word, along with the word practically synonymous with it, "anger," ought not to be applied to the God of the Bible and of the Gospel, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who is love; because they think to speak about the wrath or anger of God at all suggests ideas that rank pagans have about an angry God, with the suggestion—it is perhaps more in their minds than in other people's minds—that God is liable to get into a temper, a bad temper, and be capricious in His anger; vindictive indeed, and arbitrary and unethical. But even the Bible tells us there is such a thing as righteous wrath, righteous anger. Why shouldn't God's wrath, which Paul speaks about here and the Bible speaks about in so many places—more places than you might imagine—be righteous wrath? Surely we can assume that when the Bible says God is angry, that God is wrathful with wicked men, it doesn't mean He is in a bad temper, but that His anger and wrath are righteous.

That is why in the second portion of Romans which we read, while the Revised Standard Version reads the word, “expiate,” in 3:25, we stand by the Authorized Version, which reads, “propitiate,” which means to appease one who is angry.

Turn to 1 John 2:2, where practically the same Greek word for “propitiation” in the Authorized Version is also translated, “expiation.” You find the same again in the fourth chapter of the same letter, verse 10; “expiation,” again, for our sins. They have changed the translation in these places, because, they say, {32} this must refer to the removal of sin without reference to an angry God. We can’t have an angry God. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ can’t be angry. We can’t have it; it savours too much of superstition, heathenism, paganism. Well, that, it seems to me, is like saying we must put out a fire without reference to the cause of the fire—such as fire-raisers or incendiary bombs. Nothing started it!

That is to say, the expiation of sin, not the propitiation of an angry God, the expiation of sin is something done in a vacuum. It impersonalizes the whole action. It is said that it is just a fact that we are sinners and have sinned, and by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ on the cross, sin is put away. It is “expiated,” without reference to God; not that God is excluded altogether, they could hardly do that, although some even would go as far as that, but they exclude any reference to a God who is angry with sinners. I hope you see that this is nonsense. Some have gone to great lengths, they have ransacked the Old Testament and the New Testament, and ransacked pagan literature, Greek and so on, to try to prove that this is so, because they don’t like the idea of an angry God.

Now it must be clear, and it is to anyone who has sense—it is amazing how little sense some people have—it must be clear that the wrath of God spoken of in Romans 1:18 is holy wrath. It is the wrath of a holy God. And I want you to note in that connection that in 3:25 it is God who puts forward Jesus Christ as our propitiation. We don’t offer to God our propitiation. Another of their objections to the idea of an angry God being appeased is that the pagans offer gifts to appease their gods when calamities come upon them. They appease their angry gods by offerings and gifts. But we don’t offer gifts to God to appease His anger; it is God Himself who provides the Gift we give Him back again,

Jesus Christ. It is He who puts forward His own Son, Christ crucified, to be our propitiation.

Now, note that it doesn't say that Christ is put forward to be our Propitiator, although He is. That is to say, He is not offered us merely as a Saviour who does something for us, but He is offered us as Someone who, having done something for us, is Himself the propitiation. It is Christ who is our propitiation, not merely what He has done, although, of course, it is Christ having wrought efficaciously, that is offered to us; but it is not the mere fruit, as if Christ handed you something and said, "Here is your redemption; here is your forgiveness," and then ran away; as a messenger hands a gift in at the door, and the door shuts and away goes the messenger; he has done his job! Not a bit of it! It is Christ Himself, the Worker, who comes to us Himself. It is Christ, personally, who is our salvation, because we become new creatures in Him; and it is with all the efficacy, the fruit, of what He has done, and is the propitiation for our sin.

"Yes," you say, "you keep using that long word, and some of us don't know what it means." Well, one way of translating the word, {33} "propitiation," which should possibly be found in the Revised Standard Version of Romans 3:25 and elsewhere, is simply to call it by the term, "mercy-seat." If you looked at Hebrews 9:5 you would find the word "mercy-seat" there, and it is exactly the same word in the Greek here. I'm not saying it should be translated the same, but it is exactly the same word in the Greek, and it is there translated, "mercy-seat."

You want to know what propitiation means? Let me take you back to the Jewish Tabernacle in the wilderness. God gave Israel the dimensions and prescribed the furnishings of the place in which they were to worship God; with its outer court and brazen altar, on which they sacrificed the animals, and the laver for washing themselves before they entered the first division of the Tabernacle. Within that, the Holy Place, were three pieces of furniture; the table of the shewbread, the seven-branched candlestick, the altar of incense; all of gold. Then there was the curtain, and behind it the ark of the covenant, the wooden chest completely overlaid with gold, so that no wood was to be seen. Inside the chest were the two tables of the Ten Commandments, the Decalogue as we call it (see Ex. 20 and Deut. 5).



As the ark stands hidden in that unspeakably dark inner chamber called the Holy of Holies, there is a seat on top of the ark, overlaid with purest gold. Who sits there? God sits there! That is His Judgment Seat, and He is judging men according to the Ten Commandments inscribed in the tables within the chest. That is the judgment seat. But then, one day in the year only, in the month of October, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest of Israel will dare to part the curtain and go in to that place where no one is to enter on any day of the year—except this one man only. If any other man entered he would be smitten to death.

But the High Priest does not enter empty-handed; he enters with a vessel bearing the blood of the animal which has been sacrificed outside, and very fearfully he takes of the blood in the basin and sprinkles it on the golden seat above the Ten Commandments. It is the blood of the Lamb. God is there: invisibly, we may think of Him, but that is His seat.

But it is then no longer a judgment seat, but a mercy seat. The sins of the people not only have been expiated, blotted out by the sacrifice of the Lamb, who, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ, but the anger of God, who is seated on the judgment seat, and who is wrathful with men because they have broken His commandments, every one of them, the anger of God is appeased, assuaged, exhausted, and it is then mercy, not judgment, which He dispenses from that seat to those who will come to Him by the blood of the Lamb.

That is what propitiation means, and you can see it when it is applied to the Lord Jesus Christ in His death on the cross for us. For, you see, our text, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” tells us that God is angry with sinners in their sins. I said to you a moment ago that you find the {34} wrath of God expressed in many places in the Old Testament and in the New; a number of times in the New, perhaps oftener in the New than in the Old. For it is our Lord Himself at this point who says, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests on him” (John 3:36).

You find the wrath of God mentioned quite a number of times in the book of Revelation, more often there than anywhere else; and we even read in 6:16–17 of “the wrath of the Lamb.” Not only is God who sits on that judgment seat angry with sinners, but the Lamb Himself who spilt

His blood for the forgiveness of sins and the deliverance of sinners, is angry with men because of their rejection of His sacrifice and the atonement He has made.

But back again to our text. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” If you were to scan the first chapter of Romans from verse 18 onwards, you would see that God is angry with men because they turn their backs on Him so that they may not feel the guilt of their wicked deeds; that is why He is angry. He is angry with them because of their sins, but He is much more angry with them because they won’t face their sins and admit them and turn to God and receive forgiveness for them. They turn their backs upon Him, because they can’t stand the feelings of guilt and shame which come over them when they know they commit wicked deeds in God’s sight. They ignore what they see of God in nature, blind their eyes to what they see of the glories of nature. The sunset tonight, the glimpse that I had in a moment of freedom to see just the last remnants of the sunset, it was marvellous! Just a little strip of light and etched against it, silhouetted against it, a few chimney pots. It was so beautiful against the dark of the night as I looked, that it spoke of the glories of God’s creation and of His grace and goodness.

But men turn their backs upon God as they see Him in nature, men turn their backs upon God as they know Him in their own consciences (that is the beginning of Romans 2). Men turn their backs upon God as they see Him in the Commandments and in the whole Old Testament law. Men even turn their backs upon God—sometimes, most of all, when they see Him in the holy Gospel, where both the grace of God and the wrath of God are revealed, because the anger of God is revealed in that cross. Rich blood was spilt because of men’s sins, and so there is wrath there as well as mercy. There would be no need of mercy if men had not sinned, and God was not wrathful with them.

And so men turn their backs upon all the light God shines upon their paths, the glories of nature as God has created it, fallen as it now is, the light that God has streamed into men’s consciences to know what is right and what is wrong, the light God has given to men by His holy law in the Old Testament and the far greater, blazing light in the Gospel. Men have turned their backs, and today are still turning their backs on all that. Why? {35} Because they want to go on living their

own lives and doing what they want and living in their sins; and since this is so, they dismiss the Christian church and they dismiss the Christian gospel and they dismiss the Bible and they dismiss anything that has to do with good at all, simply because they want to live their own kind of lives.

We understand, of course, why this is. They are blinded, have shut their eyes and have turned away; but it is all because they have been wrought upon by a certain character, a loathsome enemy of God, the devil. And that is why Paul, speaking about those who are blind, having turned their backs upon God, and who, therefore, cannot see the glory of His grace, says of them, "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers" (2 Cor. 4:4). The devil has blinded men's minds. Indeed, when they turn against God they don't even know that they are being wrought upon. When men turn their backs on the Gospel, they think they are doing it all by their own intelligent wit and will. They don't like it. They don't believe it. "Away with your Bible and your Gospel," they say. But they don't know that they are being wrought upon by the devil, that it is he who makes them do it. But that is what the Gospel says, "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers."

Nonetheless, they are responsible for yielding to the enemy, and for following him, even though they do not know him as such nor call him by his name. They still have consciences, and that is why Paul, writing to the Ephesians and speaking about men who have turned their backs upon God and His holy gospel, calls them "children of wrath." Of these he says, "We [Jews] all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind [Gentiles]" (Eph. 2:3).

So men who turn their backs upon God are children of wrath, although they are unaware that God is angry with them. How can they know that God is angry with them? How can they see His flaming wrath when the devil has come to them and wrought upon them, and they have gladly welcomed his attentions until they themselves turn away in hate? They are absolutely unaware of it. If they really knew that God in heaven was flaming angry with them in their sins, they wouldn't sin as they do. And they will not know until the Spirit of God

breaks into their consciences and tells them, “God is angry with you for what you do and what you are!”

That is exactly what happened to David when he took another man’s wife and, to get her, murdered her husband. He committed adultery, and then murder. Now, here was a man who had quite a lot of light, because God had regarded him as a very favoured man and had revealed very wonderful things to him; and yet, in a moment, because he was greatly tempted in his own passions, he turned his back upon God and lusted after that woman, and to get her, had her husband slain in the battle. Then he took her. But, {36} because God doesn’t wink at our sins but knows every sin we commit, God sent His prophet, Nathan, to him, to say, “David, I’ve a story to tell you.” And he told him the story of the man who, having guests come to his home, instead of taking of his own large flock to make a feast for them, helped himself to the one ewe lamb of a poor man. When David heard the story, he was furious with the man for taking the poor man’s one ewe lamb to make a meal for his guests, but Nathan said to him, “Wait a moment, David; not so angry, unless *you* are being angry with yourself, because you are the man. That is what you have done. You have plenty of wives, far too many, and this godly man, Uriah, who was not even of your nation, and one lovely wife, Bathsheba; and because you have not enough wives and concubines of your own, you have taken his one, lovely, pure wife and have killed her husband to get her. You do right to be angry at this story, David, if you are angry with yourself!”

And it was thus that David knew what he had done. He didn’t know beforehand, or, rather, wouldn’t let himself know that God was angry with him for his sin. David never prospered after that. He might have laid down his head and died there and then, because there was no good in his life.

But you see the point? God had broken into the darkness of his wicked heart and mind through the prophet, and had streamed light into his soul to show him how angry God was with his sin; and then, this is the interesting thing, David later wrote a poem about it, he was so repentant. And in that poem he neither speaks of the wrong he did Uriah, the man he had murdered, nor the wrong he did his wife, committing adultery with her, nor the wrong he did himself being God’s servant and the king of Israel, nor the wrong he did Israel by leading

them into trouble that lasted for generations and generations. He does not speak of the wrong he had done to the man, or the woman, or himself, or anybody, but God. He was so filled with the knowledge of what he had done in God's sight, the wicked, horrid, and filthy thing he had done in God's sight, that this is what he says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight, so that thou art justified in thy sentence and blameless in thy judgment" (Ps. 51:4). O God, it is against You, it is against You only!

That doesn't mean to say that he hadn't sinned against the man and the woman and against himself, but it meant that the sin he had committed against God was so heinous that the sin he had sinned against the others seemed slight, almost, in his sight, compared with the fact that he had wronged his God who had blessed him so.

You see what that tells us? When the knowledge, the news, the light streams into our souls, that God is angry with us in our sins—the things we treat so lightly and joke about—the revelation fills all our horizon. The whole sky becomes black and we see nothing but the anger of God filling the whole universe and smothering our souls; so much so, that when it descends {37} upon us as an unspeakable blackness, our sin seems so heinous in the light of God's wrath that it seems impossible for it ever to be forgiven. We believe, then, that there is no possibility of forgiveness, nothing in the world can ever atone for such an enormity of sin.

And yet, you see, we are so made, that we say, "But I must try. O God, I must try to make amends. I must try to atone for my sin, God. You cannot forgive me. It would be indecent for You to forgive my sin. It would be dishonourable; it would be unjust; it would be a monstrous wrong for You to forgive my sin. God, You can't do it. I must atone. I must make amends. How will I make amends? Punish me, God. Visit me with Your wrath. Visit me with Your judgment. I must pay for my sin. If not, I will have to punish myself and suffer every day of my life until I have paid for my sin."

That is what conviction of sin says, when we see the wrath of God for our sin. But someone comes along with the Bible in his hand and says, "Yes, you are a wicked fellow, you are a wicked fellow. God says so, and I agree with you, and say that what you have done is very, very wicked. But, look, the Gospel says that God forgives. He forgives sinners." "Oh,

no,” you say, “He can’t, it’s too cheap. He can’t forgive my sin. Nothing that He could do, could forgive my sin. Only I myself can forgive my sin by atoning for it. I must pay for it by suffering. It’s too cheap that He should forgive me.”

And then the preacher, or the witness with the Bible in his hand, begins to speak about the death of Jesus, and says, “Do you know what this Book says?” One day, God sent His Son for sinners and put Him on that cross and thrashed Him to death for sinners: the sinless One, who never sinned one sin from birth to death, not one sin of thought or word or deed! And God thrashed all the sins of all men on Him unto death. God vented all His wrath for the sins of men, including your sins, upon Him, so that you could go free and really be forgiven.

That is not cheap; and the proof of it is that Christ in Heaven who is now the Advocate, is praying night and day—and there is no night there—praying night and day for repentant and believing sinners, and saying, “O God, You must keep forgiving them, because, remember, I died for them. You must forgive them, Father. I know they are bad and wayward and perverse, but you must forgive them, because I died for them.” “And so,” says the preacher, “He died for you in particular. He was thrashed for your sins; the thrashing, the punishment, the judgment for what you did, if it was a sin like David’s, or any one else’s, has been paid for. He was thrashed to death for it. There is nothing you can do and nothing you need to do. It is done, it is done, it is done.”

Listen to this hymn: you know it well: {38}

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
 [that is, Christ’s death]  
 Let me hide myself in Thee;  
 Let the water and the blood,  
 From Thy riven side which flowed,  
 Be of sin the double cure,  
 Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labours of my hands  
 Can fulfil Thy law’s demands;  
 Could my zeal no respite know,  
 Could my tears for ever flow,

All for sin could not atone:  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy Cross I cling;  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;  
Foul, I to the fountain fly;  
Wash me, Savior, or I die.

Or, this hymn:

Jesus, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high;  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide;  
O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none;  
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;  
Leave, ah! leave me not alone;  
Still support and comfort me.  
All my trust on Thee is stayed;  
All my help from Thee I bring;  
Cover my defenseless head  
With the shadow of Thy wing.

Indeed, this is the sin of sins, that when you have been convicted of your sin, when you know the wrath of God is upon you because you have sinned and some one comes to you with the Gospel, you say, "Oh, no, I can't take that; it's too cheap." The death of Jesus, too cheap! "I must make atonement for my own sin." That is the sin of sins, which will not let God forgive you, because you are so proud. You will not even forgive yourself, you are so proud; you will never forgive yourself for sinning when you learn that God is angry with you—which you did not know before.

This is the second shaft of light that has to stream into our souls. The first is a horrid shaft of light which reveals how angry God is with us. The second {39} is far more difficult for us to accept. Did you know that? It is to know that God forgives you freely by the death of Jesus Christ and all you have to do is to lift your hands (and He even helps you do that) to receive His salvation, His redemption.

It is so humbling to accept His mercy. “No, no,” we say. “Justice! I will not accept justice vested in Another. I will only accept justice that has been done by myself. My pride will not allow me to accept this great sacrifice which Christ has made for me. I cannot accept. I will try and save myself.”

And so, to come to Jesus Christ involves two deaths. The death of learning what wicked sinners we are in His sight and how angry God is with us; and, second, the death to our pride; coming with empty hands like beggars and saying, “Oh, God, I’m undone; I’ve made an awful mess of it and I can do nothing to undo it, but You have done something for me. I accept it. I accept Him, and propitiation concerning my sins. Come and forgive me. Come and forgive my sins and take me into Your heart, a saved sinner.” Will you?

Let us sing this hymn:

Depth of mercy! can there be,  
Mercy still reserved for me?  
Can my God His wrath forbear?—  
Me the chief of sinners, spare?



# THE PASTORAL USAGE OF THE ATONEMENT

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*Bill Kellogg*

## *Introduction*

In this age of guilt, and its exploiters, it is essential that those who teach and counsel in the church apply the full counsel of God to the lives of God's people more faithfully than has been the case for years. This writer has attended only two churches where the Scriptures were applied in a clear and powerful way to the lives of twentieth-century believers. In the vast majority of churches that I have attended the preaching read twentieth-century psychology lessons from the Bible (an especially common instance of this is David going through "male menopause" or "the midlife syndrome" in 2 Sam. 11). In some of the Reformed churches that I have attended, though the preaching has been doctrinal, yet it was not effectively applied to the lives of the people. Either the teaching was so academic in character that it never touched ground, or it was couched in the language of the seventeenth century. Thus it was insulated from twentieth-century people. Likewise, our counseling is often richer in twentieth-century relational psychology than it is in the pure milk and meat of the Word. A few thick volumes could be spent cataloging the various categories of inadequate preaching and counseling, but that would be of little profit. It will be of far greater value to begin a discussion of what profitable use Scripture is for both teaching and counseling.

Let us begin by outlining some general principles to guide us in the task at hand.

First, our usage of the atonement or any other biblical doctrine must always be in accord with the context of Scripture. This may seem like a foregone conclusion, but in reality it is not. Many times in the crush of daily responsibilities, whether in the vocational Christian ministry or in some other calling, those involved in teaching doctrine neglect to study the context of a doctrine adequately. This is a special danger

when one is teaching a topically organized lesson rather than an expository lesson from the text of Scripture itself. As one example of this pitfall, not long ago the writer heard a sermon from the text of the Authorized Version on Proverbs 3:5–6. In this sermon the pastor’s third major point was that if we trust in the Lord completely, He will guide our path in life. He cited Romans 8:28 by way of illustrating this point. The only problem with the sermon was that Proverbs 3:6 {41} does not teach that God will guide us through life, but rather that if we trust in the Lord wholly, He will make our path “straight,” or lawful, as opposed to the crooked path of unbelievers. The preacher’s point was an excellent point, but he should have used another text, if that is the point he wanted to make. Another famous example is the use of Revelation 3:20 as a text for evangelism. Such usage of this text is illegitimate. The passage is a call for the church to repent of her compromise, not a call for sinners to repent and believe the gospel. This is not to say that we may not draw inferences from the text that are not brought out in it explicitly, but it does mean that we should not use a passage to teach something that is inconsistent with the explicit teaching of the text.

Not only should our usage of a doctrine be consistent with the texts of Scripture that teach it, but our usage should be consistent with the nature of the doctrine itself. For instance, to use the atonement as a means to make people feel guilty for something they are doing or not doing would be inconsistent with the very nature of the atonement itself. Christ died on the cross to remove our guilt, and to make us the very righteousness of God judicially now, and practically in the eternal kingdom. The writer has heard a number of sermons that have grossly violated this principle in making the people in attendance feel that they were totally unworthy before God, and must “save souls” if they would be in God’s good graces. If we would use the atonement to motivate believers to action, then we must use it as the incomprehensible example of self-sacrifice for the kingdom of God that it is.

Consistency to the text of Scripture, and consistency to the nature of the doctrine itself are still not enough. Our usage of any given doctrine must be consistent with the whole counsel of God. Orthodox Christians confess that the Bible is a self-consistent unity, and so it is. Often, however, a given doctrine is applied in such a way as to do violence to

other doctrine. Not long ago a minister performed a funeral for a high-school boy from his own congregation. The young man had been killed in an accident. The pastor assured the family and congregation that the deceased was in glory because he was a covenant child by baptism. The problem was that the young man had a reputation as a rebel against the church and his family. In this case the minister not only violated the Reformed teaching on baptism, but he also did violence to the Scripture teaching on human responsibility; sanctification (cf. Heb. 12:14); the honor of God, etc. At this point he failed to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). With these three guidelines in mind let us consider the application of the atonement from select passages in the New Testament.

### *The Atonement and False Guilt*

Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. {42}

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind. (Col. 2:16–18, NASV)

False guilt is not a new thing. It is an ancient game used by the principalities and powers, and evil men, to enslave God’s people. Briefly, false guilt is any guilt that does not arise from violation of some godly obligation, which comes explicitly or by proper inference from Scripture. In Paul’s day the Judaizers went around enslaving both Jewish and Gentile converts to falsely understood elements of the Old Covenant. Further, they laid the burden of a Gnostic doctrine of angels and asceticism on the new converts as well. The story has not changed through the ages, only the sources for false guilt have varied. The cure is still the same. In the verses preceding those quoted above, Paul reminds the Colossians of their position in Christ, and focuses particularly on their vicarious death to the flesh in Him. From this position he concludes above that they are to allow no one to act as judge to them in things that are not Gospel obligations. (Paul’s use of the atonement in Colossians 2 will be of further interest as it applies to apologetics and educa-

tion in the last section of this article.) As New Covenant believers we can only stand in the finished work of our Head if we are to be strong against the snares of the evil one. And it is only as we thus stand that we can be free for profitable kingdom endeavors in all of life.

There are three examples of false guilt that we will examine in the light of Christ's atoning work. We use them by way of their frequency. First, everyone involved in teaching or counseling in the church today has dealt with the false guilt of adolescents. Young people are not only oppressed by the class consciousness that is one of the intended evil effects of graded progressive education, but they also suffer under the guilt that comes from their failure to measure up to some imagined ideal of perfection. The writer had opportunity to counsel with a young woman who suffered from excessive shyness. She felt that she was ugly. It was not that she compared herself with other girls, for she had few female friends and did not pay much attention to other girls. She hated herself because she did not measure up to a standard of her own imagining. What was remarkable about her situation was that she was one of the most striking beauties that I have seen. From talking with one of her friends, I learned that she had discouraged many a young man who had shown interest in her. She did so because she could not believe that they could be genuinely interested in one as homely as herself. What was the hated flaw in her appearance? She could not endure the fact that her nose was too big and veered a bit to the left. No one could see the basis of her complaint without studying her face for some time! This story is very common. Many young people condemn themselves because they are not gods like Adonis or Venus de Milo. This self condemnation is {43} nothing to be laughed at either, as many young women especially, will carry it to the point where they will starve themselves to death, on the grounds that they are too fat, or they will commit suicide in some other fashion for any number of imagined flaws.

In dealing with this kind of problem in a Christian way, we not only need to determine the exact history of the individual's problem, through listening to them, but we must determine whether they are regenerate or not. Grace is not some superficial icing on the religiously neutral cake of human existence. If a counselee has received the grace of God in Christ, then they must be dealt with as the new creatures that

they are; as citizens of the growing order over which Christ is Head (see R. J. Rushdoony, *Revolt Against Maturity* [Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1977], 165ff.). If they are not regenerate then they must be earnestly called to repentance. They must be shown that the evil root of their problems lies in their state of rebellion and spiritual death (cf. Rom. 1:18–3:18; or Eph. 2:1ff.). In short, they must be shown that their problem is much blacker than they thought, but that the most desperate part of their condition is common to all men. We must encourage them, though, that they are indeed blessed in having the particular problem that brought them for counsel.

It is a priceless opportunity to identify the raging cancer within, and to obtain the only cure possible.

False guilt implies both a false standard of righteousness, and a false atonement. The young woman mentioned above, though she was and is a regenerate Christian, labored under a false standard that comes straight from the rebellion in the Garden. She assumed that she should be perfectly symmetrical as a Greek goddess should be. Unknown to her, she was practically denying the biblical doctrine of creation in this false standard. If she had understood and believed the doctrine of creation in everyday life, she would have accepted her particular creaturely endowment as a wise gift from God. But as it was she labored under an idolatrous standard, and condemned herself for failure to measure up. Further, she atoned for her failure through self-imposed exile from the many young men and women who would have befriended her. Each weekend she would stay at home and punish herself with schoolwork. Her consolation was academic achievement, but even that was tainted by disappointment. She thought she was a failure even in this area, having received such low marks as three “A” minuses and one “B” in the three years of high school.

In dealing with this young woman, as mentioned above, it was necessary to get her to talk about her problem: how she perceived it, her feelings, etc. As the problem was rooted in a faulty doctrine of creation, I began by asking her if she believed that God created all things. Then I asked her if this meant that God had created her too. She said that she was a creature of God. I then asked her if God had played a dirty trick in making her the way {44} He had? She said that He had not. I asked her if she was telling me what she knew was the orthodox answer, or

what she really felt? She replied that she had real problems at this very point. I then pointed out to her that she hated herself because she was judging in the light of a false standard. I pointed out to her that the heart of all sin is our insane belief that we are somehow divine, and that she hated herself because she did not fit the supposed image of deity. I told her that men have always had the greatest hatred for their bodies and their emotions, because these most remind us that we are not divine, but creatures.

My second step in dealing with this young woman was to open Colossians 2:8–19. I pointed out to her that in Christ she had died not only to the righteous demands of the law against her as sinner, but that she died to all of the false claims that evil men and her own fallen self would lay on her. As to the results of the few sessions that I had with her, I am not very hopeful. She came from a mixed-up family, and I did not have as much time with her as I felt necessary to really help. Nor did I have the opportunity to meet her family or work with them, which would have been most helpful.

A second type of false guilt that both the counselor and teacher must often confront is that kind which is a direct evasion of the real sin in the individual's life. A fellow minister had a young woman come to him for counsel. She complained of not being able to eat. She said that when she sat down to a meal she would think of all of the starving and malnourished children in the third and fourth world nations. If this young woman had gone to some evangelical ministers with such a complaint, they would have praised her for her heightened sympathy with the poor and oppressed of the world, and encouraged her to major in Latin American studies. My friend, however, was not so inclined, and realized that her professed guilt was a cover up for something deeper. He asked her directly what the real problem troubling her was. She tried to fend off his probing, but he replied that she would get no healing until she was willing to confess the real sin that was troubling her. After a brief silence she tearfully confessed that she had been having sexual relations with her father. I do not know how this case came out, as I did not hear the rest of the story. Needless to say, it was not resolved in one or two sessions.

The cover up mechanism used by this young woman is familiar to us all, for we have all tried at one time or another in our lives to avoid a

real source of guilt by replacing it with some lesser or imagined sin. We can then punish ourselves, and avoid major surgery, or so we think. But when we try to make our own atonement for sin it becomes a matter of continual and growing slavery. We become obsessed with our problem, and sometimes our refusal to deal with the real sin and guilt leads to breakdown. Truly, when we do not acknowledge our sin we waste away (Ps. 38). The wonderful thing about owning up to the real sin is that there is a real and finished {45} atonement to cover it. The sin is confessed and behind us. We are then free to focus our energies on profitable endeavors, rather than on subjective and false guilt.

The third example of false guilt that we want to consider came upon the evangelical church in the mid-seventies. It is the result of the influx of revolutionary thinking through books such as *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (IVP/Paulist Press). This book by Ron Sider of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary opens by citing United Nations statistics on world hunger, and talks at length about the possibility of India or some other third world nation blackmailing the United States with a nuclear bomb to get food. Throughout the book Sider talks about the sin of the rich northern hemisphere nations as the prime cause of the lamentable plight of the underdeveloped nations of the world. Whether Sider intended to make his readers feel guilty and fearful is immaterial: he does it one way or another. By the way, for an excellent critique of Sider and the Radical Christian movement, see Robert E. Frykenberg, "World Hunger: Food is not the Answer," *Christianity Today*, December 11, 1981. He points out just how un-Christian and implausible the whole guilt-raising campaign on World Hunger is.

Sider's book is a masterpiece of proof-texting that violates all three of the guidelines that we noted in the introduction. First, he takes the doctrine of covenant redemption as it is in Exodus, and strips it down to nothing more than God liberating the oppressed Jewish people (*Rich Christians*, 60). He uses this example as an illustration of God's plenary concern for the liberation of all the physically poor and oppressed everywhere. This violates, among other things, the context of Exodus, which not only shows no concern for any oppressed people other than God's covenant people, but speaks of God's total wrath against Egypt culminating in the killing of the first born from the son of Pharaoh to the first born "of the captive in the dungeon" (Ex. 12:29). Why are the

Hebrew's spared? Because of the blood of the covenant on their doorposts. God saves the Jews because He remembers His covenant with Abraham (2:24). In the book of Exodus there is no saving concern outside of the covenant, and the same is true for the rest of Scripture.

Secondly, as noted above, Sider violates the biblical doctrine of salvation by making it into a purely physical liberation. At no place throughout the book does Sider talk about the relation of salvation and the covenant. He does not, because in the moment that he admitted the biblical concept of covenant redemption, his whole thesis would fall dead to the ground. Nowhere in the Bible is the physical plight of men separated from their spiritual plight as an object of God's direct concern. Every passage that speaks about the poor being oppressed has to do with inequities within the covenant community. The one possible exception is the story of the Good Samaritan. {46}

Thirdly, in his reduction of the doctrine of salvation to a purely physical liberation, Sider does violence to the whole counsel of God. Nowhere in his book does he talk about the physical plight of pagans as in some degree judgment upon them for their worship of the creature rather than the creator (Rom. 1:18ff.). He does not talk about the Gospel or the Kingdom, and how God seeks to totally restore us to profitable servanthood through the Gospel. Sider not only does a gross disservice to the counsel of God in taking Scripture out of context, but he does a gross disservice to the very poor that the radicals tell us they are so concerned about. By muddying up the waters with pop theology, economics, and lots of false guilt, he and his colleagues of like mind have simply succeeded in complicating what is already a very perplexing problem.

Someone remarked recently that radicals, whether they call themselves Christians or not, are like lemmings who are bent on their program of societal and self-destruction. Could it be that this insane desire for death is another instance of self-atonement for misplaced guilt? As R. J. Rushdoony has noted in the above-mentioned work, man's attempts at atonement are both sadistic and masochistic. The sinner is out to atone for his false guilt by destroying others as well as himself. The radicals, like their ancient forbearers the Pharisees, do not want to admit that evil is a matter of a corrupt heart. No, it is rather unclean hands, or immoral women, or publicans, or in these latter days capital-



ist parasites, or anything but my rebellious self that is the source of evil in the world. When we are faced with such teachers of false guilt and atonement, we must remember the words of Paul in Colossians 2, that we have died to the flesh and its ways. All of it was nailed to the cross, and we are free to serve!

### *The Atonement and True Guilt*

At first it may seem passing strange that men would load themselves with so much false or groundless guilt when they have so much to feel really guilty about—like the many blasphemies perpetrated against their Creator and His word. If we have understood what Scripture has to say about man, though, it should not surprise us that man creates his own guilt. Having rejected the one true God and His word, man must come up with his own idolatrous substitutes. Thus he must come up with his own idolatrous guilt and atonement as well. But no matter what he does man cannot at any time admit into court his real guilt, for at that moment his god, his guilt, and his law would vanish, and he would be left naked and helpless.

Believers in Jesus Christ, though they are righteous in Him, still have the inherent corruption from the fall within. As a result, we not only miss the mark of God's righteousness in our living, but we still set up our own false standards that have nothing to do with God's kingdom and righteousness. Thus we still struggle with both true and false guilt, but unlike those who {47} are outside of God's kingdom, we have an atonement made by our King for His servants. Whenever we are faced with guilt of whatever kind we must hold up the shield of the finished work of Christ. Where the guilt is false, baseless guilt, we must let it fall to the ground. Where it is true guilt from some lack of conformity to God's righteousness, we must by the power of the Holy Spirit endeavor to put such sin away from us, as that which is unworthy for children of the King.

One sin that is and always has been a pitfall to God's people is that of lawlessness. Paul deals with it in Romans 6:1ff., and applies the atonement to it. To those who say "let us continue in sin that grace might abound!" or to put it in modern words, "Christians aren't perfect: just forgiven!" Paul says, "how can we continue in the very thing that we have died to in Christ?" Those who have been baptized into Christ by

the Holy Spirit have been baptized into His death. Do dead men play tennis? No more than true Christians can live lives characterized by sin. The fact is that Christians still do sin, just as faithful Abraham did, but if they really belong to the Lord that is not what characterizes their lives.

There are those in the church today who say that as long as someone prays the prayer at the end of the Four-law booklet they are Christians, no matter what they do after that. Many of those who believe this do not realize what they are saying because they have been given a lawless view of Grace. There are a few, however, who know exactly what they are saying. If you probe such ones you will find out that they hate God's law, whether it be found in Old or New Testaments. They hate God's law because back of that they do not accept themselves as being creatures. Men hate law for the same reason they hate the body and the material aspect of the creation: because all three remind them that they are not the divine fire that they dream themselves to be. If man were the god that he claims to be, he would not need law. Only creatures need law as the structure within which they can function and live. Being limited, they have to have a structure, a basic direction within which to focus their creaturely energies: otherwise they dissipate like water does when it breaks out of the water main.

Paul's use of the atonement against antinomianism is brilliant! We must make note of it if we would deal effectively with believers who have been led into a lawless view of grace. If you start talking about a right view of law such believers may not understand what you are saying. The first step is to talk about the nature of the atonement. The cross is central to their view of grace, as it should be. However, just as they do not understand grace, so they do not really understand the focal point of grace—the cross. Paul's question is a good one to begin with, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Why not? Take them to the brink of the cliff that they are heading for anyway. Pull them to the very edge, so that they will begin pulling away. Next bring in Paul's second question, "How shall we that are {48} dead to sin, live any longer in it?" Was I really on that cross through faith in Christ? Was He really dying for me? If I believe, I must answer yes. Then I must also answer that I am dead to sin. An illustration will be of use here. Suppose that a student has failed two of three exams in a course on

which the course grade depends. At that point he is a slave to failure. There is no point in even showing up for the third exam. But if the professor calls him up and says that his whole grade will be based upon the third exam alone, he is no longer a slave to failure. He can now work toward success in the course. The analogy is theologically weak, but the basic point is there. Before I died in Christ through faith, I was a slave to sin. I had no hope of ever gaining God's favor. Now that I have died to sin in Christ, I am free to live unto God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

The law was written on the cross. The cross was the only answer, other than hell, to the law's just demands against sinners. Jesus Christ not only lived to fulfill all righteousness, but he died to fulfill the law as well. He died so that the law which was "good and spiritual" and "intended for life" might be life in Christ to those who trust only in His atoning death as their acceptance before God. The law was never intended to save anyone. It was always and only the righteous standard of God's kingdom. The people that know God's grace as their acceptance before Him know God's law (the Scriptures) as the way of life and blessing within God's grace.

The sin of antinomianism has many faces to it. We often see it in one form, but swallow it in another. Many people can readily recognize the form that says, "All you need is to pray to receive Christ as Saviour, and there is nothing that can separate you from God after that." Few, however, perceive the antinomianism of many who say all the right words, but do not abide by them. There are many individuals who learned the Augsburg, Heidelberg, or Westminster confessions and/or catechisms by heart, who nonetheless do not follow the great truths they have memorized. No matter how sparse or how detailed your confession, James says "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17, AV). Antinomianism may be a satanic hatred of law; it may be an incomplete or false view of grace, or it may be the belief that knowing and confessing are essential, but that doing is optional. No matter what form it comes in, it is dangerous. We can deal with it effectively, though, and one powerful tool available to us is a right understanding of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

In chapter 7 of Romans, Paul deals with a closely related sin—legalism. As in chapter 6, he applies the atonement to it, and so it is of inter-

est for our study. Legalism and antinomianism are Siamese twins, linked by a false or incomplete view of Creation. As such, they are like volitionism (Arminianism) versus determinism (hyper-Calvinism). In both of these so-called antinomies (pun intended) people fail to carry the doctrine of creation out {49} as Paul does in Romans 9. In the first case, both the legalist and the antinomian want to maintain their pretended independence by offering God the sop of lawless/heartless confession or a lawless/heartless obedience. Man is obligated to give God his entire created being—beginning with his heart—as a perpetual thanksgiving offering for his creation and sustenance by God. With regard to the other so-called antinomy—volitionism vs. determinism—man is not willing to accept the creaturely nature of his thinking. Both the Arminian and the so-called hyper-Calvinist believe that their thinking is not created (finite, dependent, and derived). So they try to resolve the mystery of God's total sovereignty and man's creaturely responsibility as if their thinking were divine and therefore ultimate.

When we think of legalism we think of a self-justifying legalism, but legalism, like its twin, has many faces. Paul in the first part of chapter 7 deals with our death to the law as our accuser and/or a means for self-justification. When we were alive in the flesh (our unregenerate and fallen selves), we were subject to the condemnation of the law. The law demands that one keep every point to be acceptable before God. No one can do that. But when we died at the cross with Jesus Christ, we died not only to sin but to the law as the standard of God's holiness, which could only condemn us. Having died to the law as our accuser, we are now free. We serve God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The law is to us what God intended it to be: the way of life and blessing to His redeemed covenant people.

However, legalism has a second face. It has always been a temptation for God's people who have begun in grace to believe that they can be sanctified by the law. Paul deals with this in the latter half of chapter 7 of Romans as well as in the epistle to the Galatians. In the latter half of chapter 7 Paul argues from his own experience that the law alone cannot sanctify. How could it? It lacks the power to create obedience. That is why in Romans 8, Paul teaches that we must walk by the Spirit.

### *The Atonement and the Meaning of Love*

But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8, NASV)

The Greek word that is rendered “demonstrate” is a beautiful term. Its root meaning is literally “to stand with.” It is used in this sense in Luke 9:32, where the apostles see Moses and Elijah standing with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration. In 2 Peter 3:5 it is used to speak of the creation “consisting” by the word of God. In the present text it is an illustration of what love means in the Bible. God demonstrates His love by standing with us even though we are sinners. Biblically, love is a commitment of the will at its heart. God proved His love for us, His people, by committing Himself to us, even while we were still rebelling. He did this in the most graphic way possible: He sent His Son to pay the penalty for our rebellion. The atonement, {50} then, stands as the graphic proof and definition of God’s love for His people.

Before going any further let us apply our three general principles for the proper application of a scriptural doctrine. First, Paul’s usage of it is consistent with the context of the Gospel accounts (cf. John 3:16). Scripture at many places speaks of the atonement as the outworking of God’s love. Secondly, his use is consistent with the nature of the doctrine itself. The atonement is at its heart a demonstration of God’s redeeming love. The second point that Paul draws from it in verses 9–11 is consistent with the nature of the doctrine as well: having paid such an unspeakably great price for our justification, how much more we can be assured of our sanctification and perseverance. And thirdly, Paul’s usage is harmonious with every other facet of the counsel of God as a whole: his usage of the atonement here does not violate any biblical teaching at all.

It remains for us to derive a proper usage of the doctrine from this passage for our own context as twentieth-century believers. First, in the atonement as the demonstration of God’s love, we can see an important principle of ministry. There is a lot of cheap talk about love these days both within and without the church. Sadly, there is a great lack of loving action. Part of this poverty of loving action flows from a confusion about what love is. We will deal with this confusion in the next point. But with so much talk and so little action people are rightly skeptical about our words. How are unbelievers to know that we really represent

the one true God? According to this text, they will know that we are credible witnesses to the gospel because we prove our love to them through loving deeds. After we have shown a tangible concern for them, our words will have a concrete meaning. How do I apply the atonement in my witness to my neighbor? Prior to beginning a gospel proclamation, I demonstrate a gospel concern for him. I start by getting acquainted. I help him work on his house, car, etc. I invite him to next Saturday's baseball game, or to come along on the next hunting trip. All during this I am secretly praying for his salvation. With all of this tangible concern, he will soon ask what makes me tick. Then I can tell him about God's love in the atonement.

Secondly, in the atonement we see the very definition of love. Love is a commitment of the will. God was committed to us His people while we were still rebelling against Him, so we know that His love is not some sentimental attachment based on our attractiveness. The world today, and unfortunately many Christians, sees love as a sentimental attachment that you have or you don't. In marriage, if you have it, you have the only reason for being married. If you don't "it's too late," and "it's over." With this view of love, we should not be amazed by the number of divorces amongst both Christians and nonbelievers. We should rather be amazed at the number of couples that do not get divorced! I had opportunity to counsel with a {51} Christian couple who were contemplating divorce because they didn't love each other anymore. Their marriage had been built on the false, sentimental view of love. What's more, they viewed God's love as essentially a heavenly version of their sentimental love. I shared with them the meaning of love from Romans 5:8. I told them that this is the kind of love that husband and wife are to have for each other (cf. Eph. 5:21 ff.). After the first session they moved back together, and now, a few years later, you'd think they were a couple of newlyweds just off their honeymoon. Love is a commitment of the will, as we noted above. As my will is committed unconditionally to my spouse, the marvelous thing is, the feelings follow right along. The more you work at the commitment, the more the feelings of attachment and abiding joy grow. The more I simply trust and obey God's word, and the atoning example of my Lord, the more my attachment to and delight in His kingdom, word, my wife, family, fellow believers, and my neighbor grow. Here is a powerful application

of the atonement that we must preach to the assembly of the church, and apply in counseling with broken individuals and families.

Finally, the term that is rendered “demonstrate,” as we noted above, gives us a beautiful illustration of the fruit of the atonement and the love that it exemplifies. As the word of God is the ground upon which the creation “stands together,” or “consists,” as Peter tells us, so too the atoning love of God in Christ causes us to “hold together” both individually and collectively. Christ died so that we might be redeemed from sin and its fragmenting force. As we build upon Christ’s atoning work, and the love that it exemplifies, we will become more solid and settled both individually and collectively.

As you think upon the above usages of the atonement as it is found in Romans 5:8ff., you will find that it satisfies all three of our stated guidelines. There are many more applications that can be derived from Paul’s usage of the atonement in this passage. You may discover them by chewing the passage over in your mind, and checking each application in the light of the above-mentioned principles.

### *The Atonement, Apologetics, and Education*

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in the wisdom of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void. (1 Corinthians 1:17)

In speaking of the homiletic usage of the doctrine of the atonement, we can hardly overlook this passage, as here Paul states that the cross of Christ dictates how he preaches. Many sermons have been preached on this passage that present Paul as the first among Christian anti-intellectuals. Nothing could be further from the truth. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that he did not in any way appeal to the baseless and arrogant knowledge of {52} the Greek mind. Paul did not appeal to their belief that salvation comes through knowledge. If he had done so he would have rendered void the very power of the cross. From the Garden of Eden to the Acropolis, man had maintained that his thinking was divine (and you shall be as gods): ultimate, uncreated, independent, and certainly unfallen. For Paul to have appealed to these people on their false terms would have meant the immediate emasculation of the gospel. No, they must be confronted with what seemed to them utter foolishness. Then and only then would the Spirit of God be

pleased to open some of the blind eyes in their number. We, too, with Paul of old, must think of the cross of Christ when we prepare our sermons, our apologies, and our presentations of the gospel message. We must in no way compromise the foolishness of the cross to make the gospel “relevant” to either the Jew (the religious man) or the Greek (the pagan intellectual). Rather we must confront them with the authoritative proclamation of their fallen estate, and of God’s solution for their redemption. We must, as Paul did at Athens, call them to repent of the ignorance that they call knowledge, lest they and their culture be damned. The way in which we give the authoritative call may vary, the authority and the scandal of the cross must not. We may give the call in a matter of fact, a friendly, or a confrontational tone—whatever godly wisdom dictates for the situation—but the message itself must not be changed.

Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae comes from the period of his first imprisonment at Rome, ca. AD 60. Paul writes the epistle to counter the influence of Greek thought that would later develop into the Gnostic heresy. This pagan thinking denies the doctrine of creation and views the world as consisting of two substances: spirit/mind on the one hand, and physical/material stuff on the other. To the Greek mind of Paul’s day, for the most part, mind and spirit are divine and good, while the material is evil. With those who held to this dualistic thinking, the Christian doctrine of creation and the doctrine of Christ’s incarnation were utterly hateful. They thus tried to deny both the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and His real substitutionary death on the cross. Paul writes what is the most detailed and one of the most powerful statements of the full deity and humanity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament to counter this creeping heresy. His references to the atonement in Colossians 1:19ff. and 2:8ff. are of special interest for the purpose of this article.

For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him. And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Col. 1:19–20, NASV)

First, Paul states that Jesus Christ was the incarnation of all that God is: “all the fulness.” He was not some emanation from Plotinus’s “One,” but the Creator and Sustainer; the Covenant God of Israel come in the



flesh. {53} Further, Paul states that the Father reconciled “all things” to Himself through the blood of the cross. In the last line of verse 20 Paul is more specific, when he adds, “whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

The redemption that Paul speaks of here goes as far as the created universe itself. Man is lord over the terrestrial heavens (the atmosphere) and the earth, but man’s fall tainted the whole creation, so it was necessary for Him to reconcile “all things” through the “blood of His cross.” Through His death, resurrection, and ascension, He becomes the firstborn of the new creation which He bought through His blood. Jesus won a victory at the cross that grew from that point through the resurrection, to His ascension, when “he led captivity captive” and distributed gifts to His church. It continues to grow as the church plunders Satan’s house (Mark 3) under the rule of the ascended Christ, who looks forward to the final and climactic victory of His kingdom through the reconciling and victorious cross.

Here is a view of the atonement that we can and must apply with as much power as it contains. Are those troubled saints who find themselves in the subjective slough of the twentieth century helped by a private, man-centered, pietist atonement? No more than they are by continuing to focus upon themselves. What they need is the universal atonement that Paul speaks of in this passage. It is the atonement of Calvary in history; it alone is able to tear them out of the mire of relativity, subjectivism, and sin; it alone is able to focus them on the victorious Christ who has made a superabundant provision for their redemption and their restored service in the new creation that is coming. It is this atonement, too, that is more than adequate to fuel victorious Christian endeavor in every area of life. The peace that Paul speaks of in Colossians 1:20 is an objective state of peace between those who had been adversaries, as in Romans 5:1. This passage sounds strange to ears trained by a Pietist faith, as much as it would have sounded disgusting to Gnostics in the first century. For neither is willing to think of the death of Christ as reconciling “things,” whether in heaven or earth. The Gnostic because of his hatred for the physical, as evil, and the Pietist because of his limitation of the faith to the saving of individual souls.

Pietism has had a great effect, especially on the application of doctrine to life. When we think of the pastoral usage of Scripture, we automatically think of comforting the bereaved, giving spiritual solace to those in doubt, or exhorting those who are weak or lax in faith. Who ever thinks of pastoral application of the teaching of Scripture to so-called “secular callings”? In this passage Paul applies the atonement to the whole of creation. Through Adam’s fall the creation was cursed, for Adam was federal head “over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air” as well as his own posterity. Jesus Christ, the fullest expression of the godhead bodily, died to reconcile all to God the Father. What does this mean? Simply, now not only man can be restored as God’s obedient servant-king, but man’s God-given realm, the {54} creation, is now at peace with God. The creation still groans under the remaining corruption, yet God’s redeemed servant-kings must work out the reconciliation of the creation that was purchased by Jesus Christ: in education, the arts, law, science, commerce, etc. It is this atonement, as well, that has the power to motivate believers to have done with the sin and compromise that so easily beset us. If Christ has redeemed all things in heaven and on earth, then our sanctification must flow out to all things—beyond the private and personal, just as God’s word is the all-encompassing standard for His universal kingdom.

In Colossians 2:11, Paul employs the atonement as part of a seven-point argument against the Colossian believers becoming involved in “philosophy which is vain deception,” or anything that does not have Christ as “head over all things.” Specifically, in verse 11, Paul refers to the atonement in the figure of circumcision. The death of Christ on the cross was “the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” The flesh in this passage as in many others is the sin nature inherited from Adam. In the atonement this was removed judicially. We are therefore dead to the flesh and the world of rebellion that it produces. Why should we avoid involvement with vain humanist philosophy? Because through the circumcision of Christ in our behalf, we are dead to it and all that does not subject itself to Christ.

The applications inherent in this Pauline usage of the atonement are limitless. For one, here is a usage of the atonement that should make glad the heart of every Christian school supporter. How can we, as those who have died to the world which does not know God in all that

it does, accept any education for our children or ourselves that does not begin with Christ as Lord? The apostle would emphatically say that we cannot, for we are dead to any such idolatrous education. Secondly, this text, as the text in 1 Corinthians 1, has often been used as a launching pad for sermons railing against “intellectualism.” Such preaching is illegitimate from this text, because in it Paul does not argue against philosophy *per se*, but only against that philosophy which is “vain deception.” Christians must separate themselves from philosophy which does not begin with the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, “head over all things.” Paul would applaud the work of Van Til and others in the tradition of Calvin and Kuyper who, in the words of the apostle himself, “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and ... take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, NIV). Because of the atonement wherein we died with Christ, we must “demolish” everything that does not begin with Christ as head over all, and begin to build a philosophy that does exalt Him. Providentially, this task has already commenced under the lead not only of Van Til, but also R. J. Rushdoony, Dooyeweerd, and Vollenhoven. It is now the godly duty of a new generation of Christian scholars to continue {55} this reformation of thought in the light of Scripture.

In Colossians 2:15 Paul makes a second direct reference to the atonement, only in this passage the focus is on the atonement as the public defeat of the powers of darkness. The verse is one of the most beautiful ironies in all of Scripture. Christ who was crucified naked on Calvary, in so doing was leading the principalities and powers (cf. Eph. 6) naked and in chains. Paul speaks of the death of Christ as though it were a Roman triumph. Paul can do this because it was a triumph, one much greater than those granted to all the generals of history. The cross was the triumph over the powers of evil for all of God’s people. This was the mortal blow to the head of the serpent’s seed (Gen. 3:15). Here is a text that has obvious application for the many individuals in our time who are oppressed by the occult in some way. There is complete deliverance in the blood of the atonement simply accepted as God’s redemption for sinners. This is the seal of God that will shield His saints against the wrath of Satan himself (cf. Rev. 7). Though they fight unto the shedding of their own blood for the kingdom, yet they themselves will not

be harmed. They will emerge triumphant in the train of their victorious Lord.

# THE ATONEMENT IN IRENÆUS OF LYON

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*Douglas Kelly*

The greatest theologian of the Christian Church in the second century was Saint Irenaeus of Lyon, the senior of the three (or four) Anti-Gnostic Fathers (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus; sometimes Clement of Alexandria is included). Irenaeus's strong and influential teaching led the Church safely through a theological and moral crisis of immense proportions, when the Gospel seemed in danger of being perverted and overwhelmed by the tides of a powerful, radical heresy known as Gnosticism. Irenaeus's writings effectively devastated the virulent forces of Gnosticism and set the church's fundamental dogma on a solid foundation upon which later theologians and church councils could reliably build. Irenaeus's writings are the turning point between the earlier "ad hoc" occasional apologetic writings of the first two centuries, and the later deeper and more systematic writings of the Church Fathers of the next few centuries of church history. He is also a major link between the subsequently divergent theological traditions of the Eastern and Western Churches. His testimony then is of central importance in tracing how the fundamental doctrines of Christianity have been understood, passed down, and developed over the ages. He faced many of the same basic issues that confront the church once more in our own generation. His stand for the truth in difficult times can give us valuable guidance as we "contend for the faith once delivered" against the modern resurgence of doctrinal error and moral darkness.

## *Life of Irenaeus*

Before we look specifically at Irenaeus's teaching on the atonement of Christ, we must first place him in his historical context, and then consider his general theological approach. Irenaeus was a native of Asia Minor, probably born around AD 140. As a young man he was taught by Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, the famous martyr, who in turn had

been taught by the Apostle John, beloved disciple of Christ. Thus Irenaeus had direct contact with the very origins of Christianity. While still young he went from Asia Minor to Gaul (France). He was a presbyter of the church in Lyon, and was sent to Rome in 177, to help Bishop Eleutherius deal with the Montanist Controversy. When he returned to Lyon he was chosen Bishop in the place of the martyred Pothinus. Later he wrote a letter to Pope Victor I {57} of Rome, urging him to make peace with the Eastern Church over the Paschal Dispute (as to when Easter should be observed). Some later sources claimed that Irenaeus was a martyr, but this is not at all certain.

### *Gnostic Threat*

During the latter half of the second century AD, the greatest threat to the spread of the Gospel, and indeed to the very life of the church, was not external persecution by the civil government (though thousands did seal their testimonies with their blood rather than acknowledge Caesar as Lord): the greatest danger was internal—a rampaging, cancerous heresy that was striking at the vital organs of Christian truth and life. Unchecked, Gnosticism would have leached the life out of Apostolic Christianity, and transformed its remains out of all recognition to the scriptural religion of redemption.<sup>30</sup>

We must see what Gnosticism was in order to understand Irenaeus's answer to it. The nature of the enemy he faced shaped in large measure the specific form in which he presented his teaching on Christian truth in general and atonement in particular. What is called "Gnosticism" was a hydra-headed movement in both Eastern and Western areas of the Roman Empire. Irenaeus and Hippolytus said its origins lay in pagan Greek Philosophy and in Greek mystery religions.<sup>31</sup> Probably the Eastern religions (such as Hinduism and Parseeism) as well as some aspects of late Judaism entered into this strange conglomeration

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30. Harnack's theory of the Gnostics as merely differing in detail but not in essence from the Early Church, and his praise of them as "the first Christian Theologians" is a travesty of the facts—Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma* (English Translation), vol. 2 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1896), 230–318. See on the other side: James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1901), 55; and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Historical Theology, An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 19.

of religious philosophy, superstition, and practice.<sup>32</sup> The various groups of “Gnostics” (from Greek *Gnosis*—knowledge; i.e., “the enlightened ones”), while disagreeing on particular details, were united in their dualism: holding that the “spiritual” is good while material creation is utterly evil. They posited a radical disjunction between the {58} Supreme God (*Buthus*—depth) and the world. To solve the problem of evil, as they saw it (the existence of material reality and man’s alienation because of it), they imagined a whole series of gods (or “aeons”) between the Supreme God and the world; each one producing a lower and inferior god. Creation, they held, was made by one of these inferior gods: the Demiurge, who was the same as the God of the Old Testament. Furthermore, Christ was one of these emanating “aeons.” The Gnostics—especially Marcion of the Valentinian School—radically rejected the Old Testament as harsh, materialist, and from an inferior God. They also—because of the material properties involved—denied the Incarnation of Christ and His bodily resurrection.

Although to the Gnostics creation was a disaster, still they believed a spark of divinity was implanted in some men. There were three classes of men: the spiritual, who had a bright spark of divinity, and would be automatically saved; the soulish, who had a little spark, and could go either way, depending on their use of “knowledge”; and the animal men, devoid of the spark, who could only be lost. To be saved meant to escape the material creation and rise up through the series of aeons back to the Supreme God by the proper use of knowledge and secret passwords.

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31. Irenaeus, A.H. 2.14.1–6; Tertullian, *De Prsc.* 7; Hippolytus, *Refut. Hr.* bks 1; 4; 5.6, 9, 16–24, 32, 47; 7.2.13, 17, etc. Carpocraton Gnosticism is said to have originated in magic according to Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 276.

32. See Hans Jonas, *Gnosis and spatantiker Geist: Teil I; Die Mythologische Gnosis. 3 Auflage* (FRLANT, Neue Folge, 33 Heft; Gottingen: Van den hoeck & Ruprecht, 1965); and A. D. Nock and A. J. Festugiere, *Hermes Trismegiste: Corpus Hermeticum, Tomes 1–4* (Paris, 1954–60). J. Danielou, *Theologie du Judeo-christianisme* (Paris: Desclee, 1958); James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1977); Robert Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York, 1959); and Gersham Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965).

Though Gnosticism was largely a matter of knowledge and theory, it did involve practice. The Gnostics took two different approaches to the despised physical body. In order to deny the body, some of them were ascetic. Others, however, were utterly licentious—on the theory that since the body is bad, what one does with it makes no difference anyway.<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, recent discoveries at Chenoboskion in Upper Egypt in 1945–46 of a whole library of ancient Gnostic writings have served to confirm the accuracy of the knowledge of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus of their theories and practice.<sup>34</sup>

### *Modern Principles of Gnosticism*

Without entering into further details of the Gnostic teachings, we may note certain of their cardinal, anti-scriptural principles, which underlay their deformed body of belief. First, they confused morals and metaphysics: that is, they thought man's problem is physical limitation rather than sin. In this they were not unlike Hinduism, Buddhism, and certain aspects of later Christian Neoplatonism and modern Existentialism. Secondly, as Bernard Lonergan points out with much insight, the Gnostics rejected propositional {59} truth.<sup>35</sup> Hence they must describe reality by means of myth-making. The parallel here to large segments of current Liberal Protestantism is too obvious to miss. Thirdly, as contemporary authorities on Gnosticism have noted, this movement rejected the "usefulness and meaningfulness of historical events."<sup>36</sup> Having rejected history, they turned to an extreme form of "idealism." Much post-Enlightenment theology (especially after Hume, Kant, and Hegel) has been entrapped in some of the same mythical assumptions as ancient, discredited Gnosticism (and yet, ironically,

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33. See Smith, *Clement of Alexandria*, 82, 185, 295ff., concerning Gnostic license.

34. See W. F. Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of John," in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology in Honour of C. H. Dodd*, ed. Davies and Daube (Cambridge, 1956); and also Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 4–10, 37, 207, 308, 329, 417, 435.

35. Bernard Lonergan, *The Way to Nicea* (a translation by C. O'Donovan of the first part of *De Deo Trino*) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 8.

36. Malcolm Lee Peel, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 151n156, which refers to Peuch and Laeuchli.



post-Enlightenment thought considers itself to be ultramodern in its liberation from the shackles of the past).

These cardinal principles of Gnosticism (which the Church faces in new forms today) effectively subvert the Good News of the Incarnation and Atonement of Jesus Christ. The way Irenaeus waged victorious battle against this perversion of the Gospel can give us light as we face the darkness of contemporary confusion which passes for relevant and liberated theology.

### OUTLINE

Irenaeus wrote several works, of which two remain: *Detection and Overthrow of the Pretended but False Gnosis* (better known as *Adversus Haereses*; hereafter cited as A.H.), in five books, and *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (hereafter cited as Demon.). These works are not systematic, and are thus difficult to outline in logical detail.<sup>37</sup> The structure of *Adversus Haereses* in particular is largely determined by the Gnostic theories he is refuting. Thus we may effectively enter the substance of Irenaeus's teaching on Christ's atonement by noting how he overturns certain of the cardinal principles of Gnosticism and establishes the Apostolic Truth in their place.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Gnostic Confusion Between Morals and Metaphysics*

Irenaeus clearly reaffirmed the biblical doctrine that man's problem is not metaphysical, but moral: his alienation derives neither from his materiality nor finiteness, but rather from sin-disobedience of God's Law.<sup>39</sup> {60} To establish this point, Irenaeus brings forward these facts: God is the creator of material reality; God entered the physical creation in order to save it; the creation needs atonement, not because it is phys-

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37. See Quasten's basic outline of *Adversus Haereses* and *Demonstration in Patrology*, vol. 1 (Utrecht-Antwerp: Spectrum, 1975), 289–92.

38. In this paper, which concentrates on the atonement, we shall consider only the metaphysical/moral and antihistorical principles of the Gnostics and not their epistemological position (denial of propositional truth).

39. Cornelius Van Til deals with moral/metaphysical confusion in modern theology (see *Defense of the Faith*); Francis Schaeffer deals with this confusion in modern philosophy (see *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*).

ical or limited, but because it disobeyed its Creator. Let us look at these propositions.

The one true God created the material world. The Gnostics taught that material reality is inherently unworthy of the “Supreme” God (*Buthus*), so without his knowledge, an inferior power created it: “And hence they declare material substance had its beginning from ignorance and grief, and fear and bewilderment” (A.H. 1.2.3).<sup>40</sup>

Irenaeus shows the foolishness of thinking there can be a Supreme God who is ignorant of what a lesser god does, and the impossibility of there being a Supreme God who does not contain all things in his own power:

For how can there be any other Fulness, or principle or power or God above Him, since it is matter of necessity that God, the Pleroma [Fulness] of all these, should contain all things in his immensity, and should be contained by no one? (A.H. 2.1.2)

For it must be either that there is one Being who contains all things, and formed in His own territory all those things which have been created, according to His own will; or again, that there are numerous unlimited creators and gods, who begin from each and end in each other on every side; and it will then be necessary to allow that all the rest are contained from without by someone who is greater.... (A.H. 2.1.5)

That God is the Creator of the world is accepted.... all men, in fact, consenting to this truth: the ancients on their part preserving with special care, from the tradition of the first-formed man.... while the very heathen learned it from creation itself. (A.H. 2.9.1)<sup>41</sup>

The Gnostics posited an impassible gap between God and (evil) material creation. Man’s only hope for redemption was to escape material reality by crossing over the gap. But far from avoiding the material world, Irenaeus shows on the contrary that God truly entered physical creation in order to atone for creation. He shows that the material can be redeemed: “For if the flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would in no wise have become flesh” (A.H.5.14.1).

Christ came into the very flesh that had been lost in order to save it:

40. In all cases I follow the translation taken from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975).

41. See also A.H. 2.30.9.

But flesh is that which was of old formed for Adam by God out of the dust, and it is this that John has declared the Word of God became. (A.H. 1.9.3)

But the thing which had perished possessed flesh and blood. For the {61} Lord, taking dust from the earth, moulded man; and it was upon his behalf that all the dispensation of the Lord's advent took place. He had Himself, therefore, flesh and blood, recapitulating in Himself not a certain other, but that original handiwork of the Father, seeking out the thing which had perished. (A.H. 5.14.2)

This axiomatic “gap” between God and man, instead of being an antiquarian curiosity, is very prevalent in twentieth-century theology. In particular, we see its influence in current views on the Incarnation and on the Old Testament.

In the Fundamentalist-Modernist debate earlier this century, the Modernists were operating on the basis of this assumption in denying the Virgin Birth. To them it was philosophically and religiously unthinkable that the Eternal God could become Incarnate. German liberal theology had operated on the same assumption all through the nineteenth century. T. F. Torrance has pointed out that liberal theology is ultimately docetic: first it denies the divinity of Christ, and ends up losing His humanity (as can be seen in the “New” and “Old” Quests for the Historical Jesus). Hans Kung, the liberal Catholic, recently dismissed from his teaching post in Tübingen by Church authorities, seems to be bound by this same “gap” when he transmutes the real Incarnation into a species of adoptionism.<sup>42</sup>

Closely related to this abhorrence of “God in the flesh” is the modern revival of the Gnostic hostility to the Old Testament. The Gnostics (particularly as represented by Marcion) claimed that a degenerate, inferior god, who had made the material creation, was the god of the Old Testament. Hence Old Testament law was harsh and evil, whereas the New Testament (at least some parts of it) was kind and good.<sup>43</sup> While no modern thinker would follow Marcion in these particulars, their hostility to Old Testament Law as something too barbaric to be applied in modern society is only too evident. If the true God has not

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42. Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1976), 444–57.

43. For Marcion's canon, see A.H. 1.27.2.

bridged the gap in the Incarnation of Christ, then there will inevitably remain a disjunction between Old and New Testaments.

In the face of this disjunction, it is salutary to hear Irenaeus:

For all the apostles taught that there were indeed two testaments among the two peoples; but that it was one and the same God who appointed both.... (A.H. 4.32.2)

... The Lord did not abrogate the natural [precepts] of the Law ... but He extended and fulfilled them.... [The Sermon on the Mount] does not contain or imply an opposition to and an overturning of the [precepts] of the past, as Marcion's followers do strenuously maintain; but [they exhibit] a fulfilling and an extension of them [as Mt. 5:20 shows].... Now He did not teach us these things {62} [i.e. not to lust] as being opposed to the law, but as fulfilling the law, and implanting in us the varied righteousness of the law. That would have been contrary to the law, if he had commanded his disciples to do anything which the law had prohibited. But this which He did command ... is not contrary to [the law]... neither is it the utterance of one destroying the law, but of one fulfilling, extending, and affording greater scope to it. (A.H. 4.13.1)

Preparing man for this life, the Lord Himself did speak in His own person to all alike the words of the Decalogue; and therefore, in like manner, do they remain permanently with us, receiving by means of His advent in the flesh, extension and increase, but not abrogation. (A.H. 4.16.4)<sup>44</sup>

The unity and consistency of the revelation of the one true God in both Old and New Testaments is important to the plan of salvation and to the mode of atonement. As we will see later in this paper, Christ's work of atonement was "according to law" (thus fulfilling, rather than replacing, Old Testament principles).

Having demonstrated that the problem of man and the world is not metaphysical (for the material creation is good, not evil), he shows that evil, alienation, and death spring from a moral disorder. That is, creation needs redemption, not because it is material and limited, but

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44. In A.H. 4.16.5, Irenaeus speaks of "laws of bondage" being cancelled by the new Covenant of Liberty, but of an "increasing and widening those laws which are natural and noble and common to all." Since in the next section immediately following this statement (4.17) he speaks of the true meaning of Levitical sacrifices, we are probably safe in assuming that the "laws of bondage" refer to the Levitical ceremonies, whereas the "natural, common laws" refer to the moral law.

because it disobeyed its Creator: “Because of the sin of disobedience, infirmities have come upon men.” (A.H. 5.15.2).

Hence the solution to evil—its atonement—will not be metaphysical (i.e., escaping the material through secret knowledge), but it will be moral (doing what is necessary to set right the original creation).

The need to redeem the created order leads us to examine Irenaeus’s refutation of another major Gnostic principle:

### *The Gnostic Rejection of History as Meaningless and Useless*

The position of Irenaeus is, in a word, that man fell in history, God made atonement in history, and therefore, history is redeemed. But to appreciate how Irenaeus works out this doctrine, we must consider more closely the Gnostic denial of history and their consequent myth-making. T. F. Torrance has rightly stated:

Hellenistic thought operated with a radical dichotomy between a realm of ideas and a realm of events, and it took its stand within the realm of ideas as the realm of the ultimately real. From this perspective it could only regard the Christian doctrines of God at work in {63} history, of the coming of the Son of God into human and creaturely existence, of the Eternal entering the world of space and time, as unreal, or at best as a “mythological” way of expressing certain timeless truths. Various attempts were made to solve this question, by the Gnostics who sought to give a philosophical interpretation to Christian “mythology” and so developed a highly intellectual system in which *gnosis* and ritual, the conceptual and the symbolic, while sharply distinguished, were religiously correlated; and by some early apologists who sought to “demythologize” the Christian Gospel by subjecting the crudities of faith (*pistis*) to scientific treatment (*episteme*) and so producing a Christian understanding (*gnosis*) acceptable to the world of culture and science. Both these attempts failed, although they have been revived from time to time, as in our own day, and of course with different thought-forms, by thinkers like Tillich and Bultmann.<sup>45</sup>

Inevitably man will have some explanation of reality. To deny history forces one to move into a realm of idealism and myth production. Modern philosophy since Immanuel Kant has encouraged the move-

45. T. F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 17–18.

ment of thought from history to idealism, and to this degree has followed the ancient Gnostic tendency.

Van Til has extensively demonstrated the effect of Kant's distinction between phenomenal and noumenal knowledge on modern theology.<sup>46</sup> Increasingly, theology has been relegated to an idealistic, unhistorical "noumenal" realm: a realm in which solid, historic realities are jettisoned in favor of ideals, symbols, and myths. This is thoroughly Gnostic and is widespread in the world of modern culture.<sup>47</sup>

R. J. Rushdoony has analyzed this Gnostic rejection of history for an ideal realm in the thought forms of contemporary Western Society:

[There] is no longer a belief that the entrepreneur will work to overcome problems but rather a belief in wish fulfillment, a faith that reality will bend to the imagination of man. Therefore, the counsel is, "Hold a good thought." When monetary crises developed in the 1960s and the 1970s, there were more than a few who turned on those who had forecast these things to blame them for it; all would have been well but for their negative thinking. "The power of positive thinking" had come to represent the implicit faith of modern man....

The radio and television keep man bathed in a dream world, and what they do not supply, his imagination does. The sexual revolution has deep roots in this flight from reality, in dreams of a consequence-free world {64} of perpetual youth.

In brief, modern man is a product of his epistemology. He lives in a dream world, implicitly believing that reality is somehow, or will be somehow, a part of man, and totally at the command of man's imagination some day. His awakening will be a rude one, and God will be in it.<sup>48</sup>

Irenaeus's answer to the anti-biblical idealism and myth-making of the Gnostics was to endeavor to stab them awake from their dreams by confronting them with the solid, historical reality of the Fall and Redemption of mankind, exemplified and accomplished in Adam and Christ.<sup>49</sup> Negatively, as we saw earlier, he proved the falseness of their

46. E.g., C. Van Til, *The New Modernism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1955), passim.

47. As an example of the unhistorical, almost Buddhistic relativism of the Gnostics, see the tractate "The Thunder, Perfect Mind," in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 271-77.

48. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Word of Flux* (Fairfax, VA: Thoburn Press, 1975), 96.

system by demonstrating the inherent contradictions and irrationality of their assumption of competing and finite gods. Positively, Irenaeus holds the truth before their eyes in the Incarnate Person and Atoning Work of the Last Adam. His central use of the Pauline First Adam/Last Adam schema demonstrates his insistence on the whole course of biblical history as the explanation of reality and font of redemption, over against all humanly invented dreams and theories and systems:

For it is thus that thou wilt both controvert them in a legitimate manner, and wilt be prepared to receive the proofs brought forward against them, casting away their doctrines as filth by means of the celestial faith; but following the only true and stedfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself. (A.H. 5.prf.)

### *Last Adam: True Man*

God became man in order to save man. Adam by his sin caused the human race to “depart from God.” Christ, as Last Adam, would come into the very place and condition in which the First Adam led the race astray, in order to turn it around and lead it back to God:

... the Word arranging after a new manner the advent in the flesh, that He might win back to God that human nature which had departed from God .... (A.H. 3.10.2)

For I have shown that the Son of God did not then begin to exist, being with the Father from the beginning; but when He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus. (A.H. 3.18.1)

The Last Adam had to be thoroughly human (true flesh) and thoroughly {65} divine in order to atone for man’s sin and restore the race to fellowship with God. First, let us note the necessity of full humanity.

He had to be true flesh because it was Adam (a fleshly being) who had sinned and whose race needed redemption:

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49. For Irenaeus’s desire to see the conversion and restoration of the Gnostics, see A.H. 4.prf.1.

... and because death reigned over the flesh, it was right that through the flesh it should lose its force and let man go free from its oppression. So *the Word was made flesh* that through that very flesh which sin had ruled and domesticated, it should lose its force and be no longer in us. (Demon. 31)

He [God] sent His creative word, who in coming to deliver us, came to the very place and spot in which we had lost life ... and hallowed our birth and destroyed death, loosing those same fetters in which we were enchained. (Demon. 38)

Irenaeus shows that Christ's manhood was real by exposing Gnostic subterfuges designed to avoid the contact of God with actual flesh. He denied their teaching that Christ passed through Mary as a mere tube, thus receiving no human nature from her (A.H. 1.7.2; 3.11.3; 3.19.3). He negated their claim that a heavenly Christ came temporarily upon an earthly Jesus, and then left Him before the shame of the cross (A.H. 1.24.4; 1.26.1; 3.12.2; 4.pr.f.3). Irenaeus denies that it could have been any other than human, Adamic flesh which Christ entered and redeemed (some Gnostics tried to invent a "super-celestial flesh" in order to avoid the patent New Testament statements):

But if he pretends that the Lord possessed another substance of flesh, the sayings respecting reconciliation will not agree with that man. For that thing is reconciled which had formerly been in enmity. Now if the Lord had taken flesh from another substance, He would not, by so doing, have reconciled that one to God which had become inimical through transgression. But now by means of communion with Himself, the Lord has reconciled man to God the Father, in reconciling us to Himself by the body of his own flesh, and redeeming us by His own blood, as the Apostle says to the Ephesians, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins ...." (A.H. 5.14.3)

For unless man had overcome the enemy of man, the enemy would not have been legitimately vanquished. (A.H. 3.18.7)

### *Last Adam: True God*

Secondly, we must briefly note that the Last Adam had not only to be true flesh, but also fully God in order to accomplish his reconciling mission:

And again: unless it had been God who had freely given salvation, we could never have possessed it securely. And unless man had been joined to God, he could never have become a partaker of incorrupt-



ibility. For it was incumbent upon the Mediator between God and men, by his relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord, and present man to God, while He revealed God to man. (A.H. 3.18.7.) {66}

... And thus He took up man into Himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in Himself: so that as in super-celestial, spiritual and invisible things, the Word of God is supreme, so also in things visible and corporal He might possess the supremacy, and taking to Himself the pre-eminence, as well as constituting Himself Head of the Church. He might draw all things to Himself at the proper time (A.H. 3.16.6)

Divinity was essential in the Last Adam not only for supernatural power but also for holiness. Unlike the blighted flesh of the First Adam, the flesh of the Last Adam is “righteous flesh”:

... the righteous flesh has reconciled that flesh which was being kept under bondage in sin, and brought it into fellowship with God. (A.H. 5.14.2)<sup>50</sup>

But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons? (A.H. 3.19.1)

### *Recapitulation*

The work of Christ, the God-man, was summed up by Irenaeus in terms of “recapitulation.” Borrowing from St. Paul (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:45–49), though developing the details in his own way, he sees Christ, the Last Adam, as taking up the disobedient, dying race of the First Adam in order to “recapitulate” its history and thus turn it back to God and restore its moral integrity and physical wholeness.

In general terms, the goal of Christ’s recapitulation of Adam is to restore the race to the image of God and to communion with God:

... when He became incarnate ... He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished us ... with salvation; so that what we had

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50. See also A.H. 3.18.7.

lost in Adam—namely to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus. (A.H. 3.18.1)

Wherefore also He passed through every stage of life, restoring all to communion with God. (A.H. 3.18.7)

Christ came as an infant in order to accustom us gradually and gently to be able to participate in the immortal life of God (see A.H. 4.38.1, 2).

Irenaeus shows that the Last Adam performed this turning back and restoration of the fallen race in terms of active obedience, passive obedience, and victorious battle. We shall look at each in turn. {67}

### *Active Obedience*

By his active obedience the Last Adam “recapitulates” the history of the First Adam. He takes up the human race into Himself and takes it back to the beginning of its moral history. This time the race is headed by an obedient Man, who when tempted obeys God instead of turning His own way. The idea here is not unlike Milton’s *Paradise Regained*.

Adam broke the law and brought death. Christ obeys the law and brings life:

The corruption of man, therefore, which occurred in paradise by both [of our parents] eating, was done away with by [the Lord’s] want of food in this world [i. e., the reference is to Christ’s refusal to turn the stones into bread, when tempted by Satan]... thus, vanquishing [Satan] for the third time, Christ spurned him from Him as being conquered out of the law; and there was done away with that infringement of God’s commandment which had occurred in Adam, by means of the precept of the law which the Son of Man observed, who did not transgress the commandment of God. (A.H. 5.21.2)

Irenaeus speaks of obedience of the Virgin Mary counterbalancing the disobedience of Eve, just as “the sin of the first created man receives amendment by the correction of the First-begotten ...” (A.H. 5.19.1).

As Christ through all stages of life kept the law, He turns our nature back to God, thus healing, sanctifying, and granting it new life. Irenaeus develops the idea (not found in St. Paul) that Christ’s very passage from infancy to adulthood sanctified the various ages and stages of life through which He grew. Indeed, he had the odd idea that Christ lived to be fifty years old, so that old men too could be sanctified:

Being a Master, therefore, He also possessed the age of a Master, not despising or evading any condition of humanity, nor setting aside in Himself that law which He had appointed for the human race, but sanctifying every age, by that period corresponding to it which belonged to Himself. For He came to save all through means of Himself—all, I say, who through Him are born again to God—infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness, and submission; a youth for youths, becoming an example to youths, and thus sanctifying them for the Lord. So likewise He was an old man for old men, that He might be a perfect Master for all, not merely as respects the setting forth of the truth, but also as regards age, sanctifying at the same time the aged also, and becoming an example to them likewise. (A.H. 2.22.4)

While the church has never accepted some of the speculative peculiarities of Irenaeus's teaching at this point, still his concept of active obedience is a sound one, thoroughly based on Scripture. In general, the Evangelical, Protestant {68} tradition has failed to do justice to this concept, which has perhaps made its stress on passive obedience more external and abstract than would otherwise have been the case. John Calvin reemphasized Christ's active obedience, but for the most part this renewed emphasis was not developed by the later Reformed and Evangelical tradition.<sup>51</sup>

In the famous British Westminster Assembly of the 1640s, there were debates as to whether or not the active obedience of Christ was imputed to the believer for his justification. The Assembly clearly decided that it was an integral part of the Work of Christ, and so included it in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (see chap. 8 on "The Mediator," and chap. 11 on "Justification").<sup>52</sup>

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51. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II.16.5. For the later seventeenth-century Reformed Theologians, see Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 458–63. John McLeod Campbell, a nineteenth-century Church of Scotland minister, attempted to develop the doctrine of Christ's active obedience in *The Nature of the Atonement* (the Church, however, judged this book heretical, and deposed its author). In the twentieth century, T. F. Torrance has done significant work on this doctrine (see his *Space, Time and Incarnation*).

### *Passive Obedience*

Irenaeus goes beyond the mere active obedience of the Last Adam. He shows that it took more than the positive obedience of Christ to save the lost race; suffering and death on the cross and shedding of blood “as a ransom for many” (i.e., passive obedience) was required. J. N. D. Kelly properly criticizes those interpreters who have accused Irenaeus of teaching a “physical” atonement, as though His mere incarnation automatically in and of itself saved the race, which He assumed.<sup>53</sup> Irenaeus’s writings make frequent reference to the death of Christ for sinners and His shed blood as their ransom. In other words, Christ’s Incarnation was in order to His atonement. His recapitulation of Adam leads the fallen race not only through life, but also through death to redemption and immortality.

Irenaeus’s references to the death of Christ as the head of the race are not at all systematic. In some places he merely states the fact that Christ redeemed us by blood “from the apostasy” (A.H. 3.5.3); that He “purified the Gentiles by his blood” (A.H. 3.12.6); that He “died and was buried for the human race” (A.H. 3.9.2). After quoting Matthew 23:35, Irenaeus states: “[Christ] thus points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own person of the effusion of blood from the beginning, of all the righteous men and of the prophets, and that by means of Himself there should be a requisition of their blood” (A.H. 5.14.1).

In other places, Irenaeus points out the results of Christ’s death: it {69} removed our condemnation (A.H. 4.8.2); it redeemed the fallen race from captivity and brought it to communion with God and to immortality (A.H. 5.1.1): “Our Lord also by His passion destroyed death, and dispersed error, and put an end to corruption, and destroyed ignorance, while he manifested life and revealed truth, and bestowed the gift of incorruption.”

What Irenaeus does not do with any adequacy is to explore the necessary connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sinners. He assumes that there is such a connection, but fails to inquire

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52. Alex F. Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1897), 154–60.

53. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978), 173.

into the meaning of it. Possibly the closest he comes to explaining the divine rationale behind the saving death of Christ is to be found in various remarks on the abiding validity of the moral law.

God required obedience to this implanted law: “For God at the first, indeed, warning them by means of natural precepts, which from the beginning He had implanted in mankind, that is, by means of the Decalogue (which, if any one does not observe, he has no salvation)” (A.H. 4.15.1).

Thus breaking the law means one has no salvation: “Because of the sin of disobedience, infirmities have come upon men” (A.H. 5.15.2); “Adam died [when] he disobeyed God” (5.23.2). Thus infirmities and death are the direct result of law breaking.

Being lawbreakers, according to Irenaeus, makes us into debtors to God. That is, he sees our sins in terms of debt: “... He is our Father whose debtors we were, having transgressed His commandments” (A.H. 5.17.1). Irenaeus traces our debts (or sins) to the original sin (or debt) of Adam in eating the fruit of the forbidden tree (A.H. 5.17.2,3). Somehow the death of Christ on “another tree” (the counterpart of the Tree of Knowledge) did something to cancel our debt to God:

For if no one can forgive sins but God alone ... He was Himself the Word of God made the Son of man, receiving from the Father the power of remission of sins; since He was man and since He was God, in order that since as man He suffered for us, so as God He might have compassion on us, and forgive us our debts, in which we were made debtors to God our Creator ... pointing out [*via* Ps. 32:1, 2] thus that remission of sin which follows upon His advent, by which “He has destroyed the handwriting” of our debt, and “fastened it to the cross;” (Col. 2:14) so that as by means of a tree we were made debtors to God, [so also] by means of a tree we may obtain the remission of our debt. (A.H. 5.17.3)<sup>54</sup>

In sum, Irenaeus is not clear on how the death of Christ cancels our debt of guilt before a Holy God, but he is very clear on the fact that it does so: “... the death of the Lord is the condemnation of those who fastened Him to the cross, and who did not believe his advent, but the salvation of those who believe in Him” (A.H. 4.28.3). {70}

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54. See also A.H. 5.29.1.

What is somewhat surprising about Irenaeus's lack of depth of clarity at this point in his teaching is that he had the Epistles of St. Paul available, which unfold in such detail the inner connections between the death of Christ and the redemption of sinners. Indeed, Irenaeus's central theological motif—Adam/Christ—is taken directly from Paul. In theological terms we might say Irenaeus has more insight into Paul's teaching on the active obedience of Christ than on His passive obedience. Irenaeus does often quote central Pauline texts which explicate the meaning of the finished work of Christ on the cross, but he does not inquire into the implications of the verses.

Although Harnack is frequently an unreliable interpreter of the early Church Fathers, still he spoke with genuine insight when he said: "... Irenaeus followed sayings of Paul, but adopted the words rather than the sense..."<sup>55</sup> Yet we who have 1,800 more years of theological resources at our disposal to help us interpret the doctrines of the New Testament must not be unduly critical of the pioneering efforts of Irenaeus at this point.

Some interpreters of Irenaeus have denied any teaching of vicarious atonement in his theology.<sup>56</sup> We may grant that this important doctrine is not sufficiently prominent in his thought, but nonetheless it is present:

...in order that God also might be pleased to offer up for all his seed His own beloved and only-begotten Son, as a sacrifice for our redemption. (A.H. 4.5.4)

...having become "the Mediator between God and men;" propitiating indeed for us the Father against whom we had sinned, and cancelling our disobedience by His own obedience.... (A.H. 4.17.1)

Irenaeus definitely posits a vicarious exchange in these words: "Since the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh ..." (A.H. 5.1.1). Elsewhere he states: "For this cause too did Christ die ... [to] set free His slaves." (A.H. 5.9.4); "... thou hast been redeemed by the flesh of our Lord, reestablished by His blood ..." (A.H. 5.14.4).<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, quoting Isaiah 53:8, Irenaeus speaks of God taking the judgment off of those who

55. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 270.

56. G. Aulen, *Christus Victor*, trans. A. G. Herbert (London: SPCK, 1931), 49ff.

believe in Christ (Demon. 69). And as we have already seen, he refers to our being reconciled through the tree (A.H. 5.16.3; 5.17.1; 5.2.2).

In Irenaeus's teaching on the atoning exchange in Christ, we notice far more emphasis on the resultant benefit of immortality and incorruptibility {71} for believers, than on the bestowal of the gift of righteousness. In this emphasis Irenaeus is more like the later Fathers of the Eastern Church than those of the Western theological tradition. R. S. Franks states it well:

The tendency to lay the chief stress on the gift of incorruption rather than on the gifts of righteousness or of faith (trust in God) marks the change experienced by Christianity in passing over from a Jewish to a Greek soil. From the very beginning of the Greek religion death is the object of a supreme fear.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, we do not find the forensic structure of penal satisfaction (which has given the Western theological tradition such profound insight into the divine rationale behind the atonement) present in the works of Irenaeus. J. Pelikan traces the development of a clearer doctrine of the atonement in the Western church through the introduction of the appropriately legal term "satisfaction" into theology by Irenaeus's student, Tertullian, the converted lawyer. Tertullian (in *De Pen.* 7.14) used this term to describe "the reparation made necessary for sins after baptism."<sup>59</sup>

Pelikan adds:

The momentous consequences of the introduction of "satisfaction" into Christian vocabulary did not become evident until later. The first to apply the term to the death of Christ seems to have been Hilary (in *Ps.* 53:12–13), who equated "satisfaction" with "sacrifice" and interpreted the cross as Christ's great act of reparation to God on behalf of sinners.<sup>60</sup>

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57. "reestablished by his blood" is in Latin "Et sanguine ejus redhibitus." The editor states that it corresponds to the Greek term *apokatastathis*. He adds: "Redhibere is properly a forensic term, meaning to cause any article to be restored to the vendor" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, 542).

58. R. S. Franks, *The Work of Christ* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), 32.

59. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 147.

Yet for all his lack of clarity, Irenaeus undoubtedly helped prepare the way for this significant advancement in theological understanding of the atonement of Christ. Its “seeds” are to be found in his thought on the canceling of debt through the cross of Christ.

To continue our explication of recapitulatory redemption, we have already seen that Irenaeus sets forth the atoning accomplishment of the Last Adam not only in terms of active obedience and passive obedience, but also in terms of Christ as the head of the race doing victorious battle for us. We must summarily look at this before considering how Irenaeus understands the application of the atonement to man in history.

### *Victorious Battle*

Previously we noted the lack of development of Irenaeus’s (truly biblical) concept of active obedience in our Western theological tradition. Christ’s work for us in terms of battle is even less familiar in both traditional Roman {72} and Evangelical teaching on the atonement.<sup>61</sup> This concept did have a later development—in a heterodox direction—in the Eastern theology, in the thought of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Irenaeus’s teaching on Christ’s victorious battle, however, does not go beyond the biblical categories: indeed, he does little more than quote the appropriate New Testament verses:

...By means of the Second Man [i.e. Second Adam] did He bind the strong man [Satan], and spoiled his goods (Mt. 12:29), and abolished death, vivifying that man who had been in a state of death. For as the first Adam became a vessel in his [Satan’s] possession ... wherefore he who had led man captive, was justly captured in his turn by God; but man who had been led captive was loosed from the bonds of condemnation. (A.H. 3.23.1)

For He fought and conquered; for He was man contending for the fathers, and through obedience doing away with disobedience completely; for He bound the strong man, and set free the weak, and

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60. *Ibid.*

61. Aulen, *Christus Victor*, has done much to rehabilitate this emphasis, but with considerable distortion (such as calling Origen’s “ransom” theory “classical” and playing down penal substitution and propitiation).



endowed His own handiwork with salvation, by destroying sin. (A.H. 3.18.6)

Christ's victory over Satan was on behalf of the imprisoned race which He assumed into Himself in his recapitulation. His victory was our victory and sets us free from evil powers. We shall return to some aspects of this concept presently, as we examine Irenaeus's teaching on the application of Christ's atonement to His people.

### *Application of the Atonement*

There is a rich, nonsystematic diversity in the various models Irenaeus uses to present the application of the victorious work of the "New" Adam to the needy descendants of the Old Adam. The very diversity of his models and concepts means that they do not always easily fit together with consistency, as we shall see. We may say of Irenaeus's teaching on the application of redemption what B. B. Warfield said of St. Augustine:

The extraordinary richness of his mind, and the remarkable variety of, so to say, the facets of his teaching, lent him more than ordinarily to the appeal of numerous and even divergent points of view ... within the one Augustine there were very various and not always consistent currents flowing, each of which had *its* part to play in the future.... In him are found at once the seed out of which the tree that we know as the Roman Catholic Church has grown; the spring or strength of all the leading anti-hierarchical and mystical movements which succeeded one another through the Middle Ages ... and, above all, the potent leaven of vital religion ... [which] burst all bonds and issued in the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.<sup>62</sup> {73}

As we shall soon see, "sacramentarian," and evangelical, and (to a much lesser degree) even "social gospeler" can all appeal to aspects of Irenaeus's teaching to buttress their particular theories of how the soul receives redemption (which is not to say that Irenaeus's total work, taken in context, gives them all equal support).

We may group Irenaeus's "means of grace" under four headings: resurrection, faith, sacraments, and imitation of Christ.

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62. B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), 309, 311–12.

## *Resurrection*

The resurrection of Christ as the channel of redemption to the race is entailed in Irenaeus's concept of Christ gathering up the lost descendants of Old Adam into Himself as the "new man," and taking them with Him through an alternative historical course of holy obedience, saving death, and victorious resurrection. Here he seems to be inspired in particular by Romans chapters 5, 6, and 8. (He quotes extensively from Romans 5 and 6 when discussing the saving significance of Christ's death and resurrection in A.H. 3.16.9, and from Romans 8 in A.H. 5.7.1 on the same subject.)

In general terms, the resurrection is what brings us into the victory of Christ:

... as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm [of victory] against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death. (A.H. 5.21.1)

Now Adam had been conquered, all life had been taken away from him: wherefore, when the foe was conquered in his turn, Adam received new life; and the last enemy, death, is destroyed, which at the first had taken possession of man.... For his salvation is death's destruction. When therefore the Lord vivifies man, that is, Adam, death is at the same time destroyed. (A.H. 3.23.7)

We observed earlier that Irenaeus sees the fruit of the atonement more in terms of restoration of life than of the granting of righteousness to the believer, though the latter concept is not entirely absent. When in fact we come to Irenaeus's teaching on faith as the means of receiving the fruit of Christ's work, we do find somewhat more emphasis on righteousness, though still the predominant concept is of the atonement restoring us to immortality and communion with God.

## *Faith*

The necessity of personal faith to have the benefit of Christ's work applied to us is inculcated extensively by Irenaeus. His clarity on this point represents a definite advance over the earlier church apologists. He was closer to the New Testament understanding of faith than any other Christian writer up to his time, and is superior to many who followed him chronologically. {74}

Arguing against the Gnostic error that one is “saved” automatically by nature (by being nonmaterial, i.e., “spiritual”), Irenaeus says: “For if nature and substance are the means of salvation, then all souls shall be saved; but if righteousness and faith, why should these not save those bodies, which equally with the souls, will enter into immortality?” (A.H. 2.29.1). Referring to John the Baptist’s preaching, he states: “This knowledge of salvation, therefore, John did impart to those repenting and believing in the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world” (A.H. 3.10.1).

After quoting Proverbs 1:7, Irenaeus says: “The sense of sin leads to repentance, and God bestows His compassion upon those who are penitent” (A.H. 3.34.5). Elsewhere, defending the evangelical character of the Old Testament Law, Irenaeus explains: “... Men can be saved in no other way from the old wound of the serpent than by believing in Him who in the likeness of sinful flesh is lifted up from the earth upon the tree of martyrdom, and draws all things to Himself, and vivifies the dead” (A.H. 4.2.7).

Again relating Old and New Testaments, he writes: “As Paul does also testify, saying that we are children of Abraham because of the similarity of our faith, and the promise of inheritance” (A.H.4.6.2). Once more, defending the unity of Old and New Testament saints, he speaks of the importance of preaching and of belief: “If then, those who do believe in Him through the preaching of His apostles throughout the east and west shall recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ... one and the same God is set forth ...” (A.H. 4.36.8).

Irenaeus says the Incarnation of Christ was to bring himself: “... within the capacity of those who believe, that He might vivify those who receive and behold Him through faith” (A.H. 4.20.5).

In a few places Irenaeus speaks of “justification by faith” and of “imputed righteousness” (see A.H. 4.16.2; 4.13.1; 4.25.1). Taking these phrases in their contexts, we cannot read back into them a full-blown sixteenth-century Reformation understanding of the terms. Reinhold Seeberg gives a fair interpretation of what Irenaeus seems to have meant:

Faith itself falls under the category of the commandment (4.14.1; cf. 16.5), and justifying faith in Christ is defined as “to believe him and do his will” (4.6.5). It cannot, therefore, be maintained that Irenaeus

understood the Pauline conception of the righteousness of faith, as he held simply that God regards as righteous everyone who acknowledges Christ and is ready to follow his teaching.<sup>63</sup>

Even so, we may add that Irenaeus probably came as close to the Pauline {75} understanding of faith as anyone before Augustine, who lived some 200 years later than Irenaeus.

Yet when we inquire of Irenaeus how one comes to saving faith in the “Last Adam,” we are confronted with one of the major inadequacies of his entire theology. In line with his immediate predecessors, the apologists of the second century, he had a rather superficial viewpoint of the depths of sin and of its effects on the human personality. He (and the apologists) failed to grasp the scriptural doctrine of the debilitating effects of the Fall on every part of man’s makeup. He did not see that sin brought man’s will into bondage that could be broken only by the specific impartation of God’s grace before it would and could believe.

From this viewpoint Irenaeus describes free will (with no sense of the effects of the Fall):

This expression [of our Lord], “How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldest not,” set forth the ancient law of human liberty, because God made man a free [agent] from the beginning, possessing his own power, even as he does his own soul to obey the behests of God voluntarily and not by compulsion of God.... (A.H. 4.37.1)

With the same perspective, quoting various passages from Luke, he adds:

All such passages demonstrate the independent will [to autezousion] of man, and at the same time the counsel which God conveys to him, by which He exhorts us to submit ourselves to Him, and seeks to turn us away from [the sin of] unbelief against Him, without, however, in any way coercing us. (A.H. 4.37.3)

Yet we must consider Irenaeus’s stress on free will in its historical context. Just as we cannot read back Luther’s definition of justification by faith into Irenaeus’s use of the terms, neither can we take the Pelagianism of two centuries later and transpose it onto his thought. Irenaeus was not attempting to defend the powers of man over against the grace

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63. Reinhold Seeberg, *Text-book of the History of Doctrines*, vol. 1, trans. C. E. Hay, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964), 132.

of God as was Pelagius. Rather, Irenaeus was fighting the Gnostics of his time, who explained the presence of evil by the sheer material nature of man. While there are a few “spiritual” ones (such as the Gnostics themselves), they assumed man had to be and do evil simply by virtue of what he was: a material creature. As we have seen, the problem of man was to them metaphysical, not moral.<sup>64</sup> The need to combat this false explanation of evil leads Irenaeus to lay such stress on human free will, in order to show that evil is a moral problem that derives from a choice made in history, not from a defect in original creation.

Moreover, Irenaeus seems at times to indicate a rather deeper understanding of the problems of the human will. He says that if one does not meekly {76} offer oneself to God, one can become hardened, and (presumably) lose the ability to come (A.H. 4.39.2). He does not work out this thought, however.

### *Sacraments*

Alongside faith and resurrection as modes of receiving the benefits of Christ’s redemption, Irenaeus elevates the sacraments: in particular baptism and the eucharist. In common with many early Christian writers, Irenaeus taught some form of baptismal regeneration:

For our bodies [i.e. members of the church] have received unity among themselves by means of that layer which leads to incorruption.... (A.H. 3.17.2)

And again giving unto the disciples the power of regeneration unto God, He said to them, “Go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (A.H. 3.17.1)

His teaching on the influence of baptism is much less developed than most other aspects of his thought: it is so underdeveloped, in fact, that it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from it. He makes far more references (perhaps as many as ten to one) to salvation through faith than to baptismal regeneration. It is clear, however, that he held to both concepts without having thought out the connection—or lack of it—between them.

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64. See A. H. bk. 4, chaps. 37–39.

He has far more to say on the sacrament of the eucharist as conveying the benefits of Christ's atonement and resurrection than he did on baptism; although here too he is not systematic nor always clear. His teaching on this subject has been appealed to by both Protestant and Catholic controversialists to enforce their own positions—which may not have been the clearest way to comprehend what he understood by the terms in his own context.

He sees the eucharist as nourishing the partaker with incorruptible life. The eucharist has a “heavenly” as well as physical reality, and is “offered” by the church to the Lord:

...How can they say that the flesh which is nourished with the body of the Lord and with his blood, goes to corruption, and does not partake of life? ... For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the union of flesh and Spirit. For as bread which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity. (A.H. 4.18.5)

In A.H. 4.17.5, Irenaeus speaks of the eucharist as having a sacrificial character, but he does not explicate or develop this concept. In A.H. 5.2.3, he speaks of the cup and bread “receiving the Word of God” and being {77} made “the eucharist of the blood and body of Christ,” which nourishes our bodies unto resurrection.

### *Imitation of Christ*

A fourth means by which we are connected to the Last Adam in His saving benefits is the continued imitation of Christ. Irenaeus may have been influenced here by the Epistle of James, which taught that “faith without works is dead” (he refers to James on occasion, but not to that particular verse). Even more influential than James was St. Paul, whom Irenaeus often follows fairly closely. Paul taught throughout his writings that the Spirit of God changed the life of the believer and produced “fruit of the Spirit” in the daily conduct. To profess Christ while having an un-Christ-like life was to both Paul and James a false profession indicative of an absence of new life. The same emphasis on the new life necessarily issuing in a Christ-like change in the believer is

also found in the Apostle John, teacher of Polycarp, teacher of Irenaeus (see 2 John 9).

Thus this internal, spiritual change is the background of Irenaeus's thought that continuing imitation of Christ keeps one connected to the blessings of the atonement and resurrection. His thought cannot be reduced to a merely external imitation of the life of Christ as a means of entry into forgiveness and immortality.<sup>65</sup>

Though Irenaeus is like Paul and the other Apostles in teaching that the communication of new life from God is evidenced by ethical changes, he is unlike them—and particularly unlike his great successor St. Augustine—in believing that one can receive new life, and then lose it through failure to walk in it. He says:

... Since in them continually abides the Holy Spirit who was given by Him in Baptism, and is retained by the receiver, if he walks in truth and holiness.... (Demon. 42)

We ought ... to fear, lest perchance, after [we have come to] the knowledge of Christ, if we do things displeasing to God, we obtain no further forgiveness of sins, but be shut out from His kingdom. (A.H. 4.27.2)

In sum, if we may consider the number of references to a term or concept as being indicative of its importance to a writer, then we may conclude that faith is primary in the theology of Irenaeus as the connection between man and the Incarnation and Atonement and Resurrection of Christ. Yet faith is primary in a way that does not exclude the other modes of grace.

### *Conclusion*

Faith in the One who became incarnate in space-time history, shed His {78} blood in the dust of the real world, and was bodily resurrected in history was the exact antithesis of the Gnostic rejection of history and substitution of idealist mythology as the way of salvation. The repentance of mind and morals called for by Christ's shed blood ends all confusion between morals and metaphysics.

Irenaeus endeavored to draw these people back from the pale, deathly land of their own unsubstantial imaginations into God's

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65. See A.H. 5.22.2.

revealed reality by the full bodied presentation of Christ, recapitulating a dying race in its own historical birth, obedience, death, and resurrection, and outpoured Spirit.

How many of the Gnostics may have been reclaimed for the true, substantial faith, we do not know, but we do know that Irenaeus's writings—plus those of his followers Hippolytus and Tertullian—effectively devastated this aggressive, humanistic idealism as a vital movement. No longer could it credibly mask itself as an acceptable—indeed superior—form of Christianity. The voluminous writings of the Gnostics soon passed into nonexistence, so little were they valued now that their true nature was revealed.<sup>66</sup> The movement became as unsubstantial as was its own theology: its vapid clouds scattered by the clarion notes of the silver trumpet of redemption.

Throughout this paper we have observed that the Church again confronts revived forms of “Gnostic” error parading as philosophically and scientifically enlightened statements of Christianity. We must—as did Irenaeus—trace every humanistic transmutation of the Gospel down to its false principles (which ultimately root in creatures attempting to substitute their own imaginations for the Creator's revelation). In answer to this creaturely arrogance, Irenaeus proclaimed—with no uncertain sound—that God's Being and Word determine reality, and are in turn undetermined by anything else (A.H. 2.13.3, 8; 2.25.4).

Then—along with Irenaeus—we must call those who are “alienated in their minds from God” to repentance by setting forth in its own light and majesty the Incarnation and Atoning Work of Jesus Christ. As we do this, our life and efforts may serve to establish truth and righteousness for coming generations, as did Irenaeus.

For all its imperfections, Irenaeus's work brought the Church through her greatest crisis up to that point in history, and set its official teaching concerning the Person and Work of Christ on a sound basis upon which succeeding theologians and Church councils could safely build.

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66. For a different interpretation of the disappearance of the Gnostic writings, see Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 20.



2.  
CHRISTIAN  
RECONSTRUCTION

# ANIMISM IN SCIENCE

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*Magnus Verbrugge, M.D., F.R.C.S. (C.)*

## PART I. THE EVOLUTION OF ANIMISM

### *1. Spirits and Their Production*

On a hot day in summer some 2,400 years ago, a young fellow called Phaedrus, majoring in Philosophy under Socrates, proposed to his teacher that they move to a cool place under a tall plane tree near a little stream called Ilissus. And so they lay down on the grass in the shade, cooling their feet in the water, and had a quiet talk.

Phaedrus noted that people believed that a lady named Orithyia had been carried off from that very spot by Boreas, who killed her by throwing her over the rocks nearby, and asked Socrates whether he believed the story. “The wise are doubtful,” replied he. Once you begin inventing stories like that you “must go on and rehabilitate Hippocentaurs and chimeras dire.” There is no end to that: “this sort of crude philosophy will take up a great deal of time. Now I have no leisure for such enquiries.” The reason: “to be curious about what is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance about my own self, would be ridiculous.”<sup>67</sup>

Boreas was the name the Athenians had given to the great North Wind, and in their mythology they gave this wind a personality who could act like a human being. Invisible, Boreas became the fearful spirit who had carried off Orithyia.

The Latin word *anima* means breath, wind, soul, and spirit. This explains why the belief in spirits such as Boreas has been called *animism*. What is this animism and where did it come from?

Webster’s dictionary defines animism as:

the belief that all forms of organic life have their origin in the soul; that all natural objects have a soul.

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67. Plato, “Phaedrus,” in *Dialogues*, 229.

The Oxford dictionary puts it this way:

1. the doctrine that the phenomena of animal life are produced by an immaterial *anima*, soul or vital principle distinct from matter. The doctrine of the *anima mundi*, upheld by Stahl;
2. the attribution of a living soul to inanimate objects and natural {80} phenomena.
3. the belief in the existence of *soul* or *spirit* apart from matter and in a spiritual world generally; spiritualism as opposed to materialism.

It is clear that the word animism refers to something invisible and yet capable of “acting,” “producing,” “giving life.” The *anima* is a spirit which men believe in although they can not see it. Another word for it is “soul.”

As a small child I was often afraid to be alone in the dark and imagined all kinds of beings that could do something to me. As soon as the light went on I was reassured because *they were not really there*. Modern education soon dispels such “primitive” fears by pointing out that there are no spirits, that mankind has given up such ideas long ago, at least when we have grown up. And our teachers then tell us of people of long ago who believed in spirits all their life and often worshipped them in their “primitive” religions. A few examples may show that there were a few different types of spirits which gave rise to different forms of animism.

### A. Concrete animism

The Egyptians made persons out of objects such as the sun and planets, the Nile, and even the sycamores. They gave them names, assigned power to act like humans to them and called them their god: Horus, Ra, Osiris.

The Babylonians practiced similar forms of animism by lending life to the sun, the moon, the stars, earth, planets, fire, and the waters. And in India animism reigned supreme and still does in some places by worship of heavenly bodies, mountains, rivers (Ganges), trees, plants, shells, stones, implements, etc. There is no end to the number of objects that have been given a spirit with power to act and affect man’s life in the course of human history. The one thing these forms of animism have in common is the fact that spirits were assigned to concrete phenomena, be they objects one could see, touch, taste, and hold, or

phenomena one could feel, hear, or sense in some way, such as Boreas, the North Wind of Athens.

### B. Abstract animism

We noted that Socrates did not believe in the mythological spirits of his fellow citizens. He called enquiring after them ridiculous. His great pupil Aristotle felt the same way. E.g., he treats the practice of astrology with contempt in his *Metaphysics* when he discusses the sun and its planets. The forefathers have handed down the tradition that they are gods with the form of men and animals. But this tradition

... has been added later in a mythical form with a view to the persuasion of the multitude and to its legal and utilitarian expediency.<sup>68</sup>

It is obvious that Aristotle saw the worship of celestial bodies as a fraud, {81} perpetrated by the forefathers, and had no use for such animism in science.

However, there is a more sophisticated form of animism which seemed to have escaped the keen eyes of the Greeks. S. Reinach in his book on the history of religions remarks that:

...Greek animism gave “a body, a spirit, a face” even to the most *abstract conceptions*.... It was Greece which created the images of Peace, Mercy, Concord etc. After having endowed all bodies with thought, *she endowed all thought with bodies*.<sup>69</sup>

The Greeks “abstracted conceptions,” says Reinach, personified them and worshipped them. That is how gods like Venus, Bacchus, Poseidon, and the other inhabitants of Mount Olympus reached their exalted position in Greek religion. They were idolized abstractions of cultural activity, just as their predecessors had been idols representing concrete phenomena. The culture religion replaced the nature religion. But Socrates and other philosophers began to doubt these gods too. Did they abandon animism altogether? Did they stop assigning human power to the abstractions of their own mind? Did pure science replace *abstract animism*?

68. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, bk. 12, 1074b.

69. S. Reinach, “Orpheus,” in *A History of Religions* (New York: Liveright Inc. 1930), 85; emphasis added.

## 2. The Spirits of Ancient Greece

The Greeks knew of no Creator. The cosmos they observed was held to have been there from all eternity. That has been the belief of every scientist who denies the Lord of Creation until today. All they may differ on is what form it took and whether it exploded with a big bang long ago or not. But there must always have been something because of the law on the conservation of energy.

Lacking a Creator Who made the cosmos while not being a part of it Himself, man had to look for some principle *inside* of the cosmos with the *power* to make things develop and grow. And since a power has no body, no material substance, it was conceived of as a spirit. That is what the early philosophers set out to do. Let us look at two of the best known: Plato and Aristotle.

### A. Plato on origins

Parmenides, one of the oldest Greek philosophers, speculated how the things we see arise out of the “eternal flow of becoming and decay.” The origin is the *concept* of “to be,” *estin einai*, which is the same as “thought”:

This is evident from Parmenides’ identification of true being with logical thought: ... all Being is being of thought and thought is thought of Being.<sup>70</sup> {82}

It is clear that Parmenides made the concept of thought, an abstraction of his own thinking, into a spirit, indeed The Spirit, the origin or Demiurge, who made everything out of eternal matter by giving it form. This is one of the oldest attempts to present animism as philosophy and the science of the mind. But it remained a religious belief.

Plato modified the concept of this Demiurge, the “artificer” or Former of things:

... in the dialogue Philebus all *genesis* is conceived of as an ideal *paradeigma*, an ideal pattern for the form-giving activity of the divine *Nous*, the Demiurge of the world of becoming and decay.<sup>71</sup>

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70. H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953), 56.

71. *Ibid.*

But the real Spirit as origin has not changed: it is still the *Nous*, human thought elevated to the level of divine spirit. This spirit does the forming of things. It *acts* in the unchanging ways of the religion of animism, no matter how abstract. But it never can *create* out of nothing. It forms, fashions out of pre-existing material.

In “Timaeus” the leader of the dialogue (Timaeus) distinguishes between what is eternal, grasped by reason, and that which always keeps “becoming and perishing” without ever really existing, and is apprehended by the senses and opinion (28). The “artificer” who forms things out of chaos looks “to that which is eternal” for a “pattern” (29). His artificer “creates” order out of preexisting material by copying:

And having been created in this way, the world has been framed in the likeness of what has been apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable, and must therefore of necessity, if this is admitted, be a copy of something.<sup>72</sup>

Obviously, Plato declares here that the artificer is a creation of reason and a product of man’s imagination. This artificer (*demiurg*) copies ideas and brings form and order to chaos, and both chaos and *demiurg* are merely mythological figures.<sup>73</sup> The *demiurg* is human *nous*, theoretical thinking, personified and elevated to the position of divine former of material beings. It shows that Plato assigned an anima to the abstraction of his own faculty of theoretical thought. He therefore was an *abstract animist*.

## B. Aristotle

Aristotle did not adopt the habit of his masters Plato and Socrates, who taught mainly from what they had heard or thought. He was one of the greatest naturalists who spent years investigating and observing natural creatures and phenomena. He even managed to have Alexander the Great {83} appoint men to collect materials and specimens on his expedition to the East, to be sent back to Aristotle in Macedonia.

From his monumental writings we will have to restrict ourselves to choose some pertinent passages out of *De Anima*, translated as *On the*

72. Plato, “Timaeus,” in *Dialogues*, 29.

73. F. M. Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology* (London, 1937), 37, as quoted by H. Dooyeweerd in *Reformatie en Scholastiek in de Wijsbegeerte* (Franeker: Wever, 1949), 363.

*Soul*. The only exception we make is the following quotation from *De Generatio Animalium—On the Generation of Animals*:

There are four causes underlying everything: first, the final cause, that for the sake of which a thing exists; secondly the formal cause, the definition of its essence ... thirdly the material; and fourthly, the moving principle or efficient cause.<sup>74</sup>

The first of these has been rejected by modern scientists on the basis that time in respect to physical events is irreversible.

... as soon as we study the process of [physical] interaction itself, irreversibility is unmistakably present.<sup>75</sup>

We can also say that Aristotle here makes the concept of goal the *end state* of a living being or physical subject, into an agent or invisible spirit which can “cause” the earlier changes that take place in this thing. The end state (*telos*) cannot go back in time and cause its own cause. This abstract *telos* is used here by Aristotle as a spirit: abstract animism.

Aristotle places the study of the soul “in the front rank” for gaining knowledge because

... the soul is in some sense the principle of animal life.<sup>76</sup>

But it is more. First, “the soul is the final cause of its body.” The reason is that:

... Nature, like mind, always does whatever it does for the sake of something, which something is its end.<sup>77</sup>

It is remarkable here that he openly states that Nature and mind, both abstract concepts of his own thinking, “do” things for a reason. Thus he personalizes them, an obvious case of abstract animism. He looks at all living beings and concludes that they have one thing in common: they use food and reproduce. Through this, “life” manifests itself as:

... the most primitive and widely distributed power of soul being indeed that one in virtue of which all are said to have life.<sup>78</sup>

74. Aristotle, *DeGeneratio Animalium*, bk. 1, 3, 4.

75. M. D. Stafleu, *Time and Again* (Bloemfontein, South Africa: Sacum Beperk, 1980), 123.

76. Aristotle, *De Anima*, 402a.

77. *Ibid.*, 415b.

Soul seems to be identical with life here. He confirms this a bit further on:

The soul is the cause or source of the living body ... in all three senses {84} which we explicitly recognize. It is (a) the source or origin of movement, it is (b) the end, it is (c) the essence of the whole living body.<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately, the personification of life as well as soul amount to the same animistic mistake. Living beings eat and reproduce. That indeed makes us conclude that they live. But it is not “life” that eats or reproduces, life does not “cause” nutrition and reproduction. And since “soul” is another word for “life” we must say the same about this soul. It does not cause anything.

From his own “explanation” that follows the above quotation it becomes obvious that Aristotle has painted himself into a corner. He begins by proving (c): that the soul as its essence is the cause of the living body. Here is his argument:

... for in everything the essence is identical with the ground of its being, and here in the case of living things, their being is to live, and of their being and their living the soul in them is the cause or source.<sup>80</sup>

He introduces the word “essence” here as a substitute for the words cause and source. Thus he says: the soul is the essence, cause, source, ground of being of the living being. That is merely saying what he already said in other words, a mere play on words which explains nothing. All we are left with is his original statement: the soul is the cause of “life.” This is circular reasoning not based on scientific evidence but on his animistic belief.

We said earlier that soul or life does not eat and reproduce. Life does not “manifest itself” in nutrition and reproduction. Living beings display these functions which mere physical things such as stones lack. *Life is a mode of being which living things display.* It is an aspect of certain individual things which allows us to distinguish them from other things that do not have it. We abstract this aspect in our thinking. But giving it a name and using a noun to indicate what we mean does not

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78. *Ibid.*, 415a.

79. *Ibid.*, 415b.

80. *Ibid.*



give life an existence of its own. It remains an abstraction. It can never act like a human being. To believe that life or its equivalent soul “causes” or does something is to assign a personality to a concept. And that was the mistake of Aristotle and all scientists after him who failed to see the aspects of the things in our world for what they are. To give them a human face is to introduce animism into science.

This abstract animism came to its highest expression in the theology of Aristotle. He saw the ideal of absolute theory realized in the spirit of pure thinking:<sup>81</sup>

... for the actuality of *thought* is life, and *God* is that actuality.<sup>82</sup> {85}

Everything that lives has a soul for him. Plants have an *anima vegetativa* or nutrient soul. Plants possess an *anima animalis*, mainly characterized by the sense of touch. Man has an *anima rationalis*: he can think. In all these cases the soul is the cause or source of the individual living things, as we saw. Now human thought is elevated to the highest position as the “actuality of thought—God.”

Here we have the ultimate of human hubris. Man declares the various souls, his own inventions, as the causes, the creators of all living beings. And the crown of creation is his own thought, which he declares to be God. Animism reveals itself as the religion of man who wants to be god.

### 3. *Spirits Going Cosmic*

#### A. The Skeleton of Descartes

The animism of Plato and Aristotle wound its way through the history of philosophical thought for 2,000 years. Because it was not accompanied by a steady growth of knowledge in the biological aspect of plants, animals, and man, I gladly leave a description of it to the experts in these matters. We shall now pay a brief visit to that old skeptic, Renee Descartes.

81. H. Dooyeweerd, “Individualiteits-Structuur en Thomistisch Substantiebeprip” (“Individuality Structure and Thomistic substance-concept”), in *Philosophia Reformata* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1943), 68.

82. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1072b.

He formulated a number of rules to be followed by scientists. The second strikes our fancy because he advises us not to busy ourselves with things we cannot know as surely as those of arithmetic and geometry. For example, he says:

It is thus that all Astrologers behave, who, though in ignorance of the nature of the heavens, and even without having made proper observation of the movements of the heavenly bodies, expect to be able to indicate their effects.<sup>83</sup>

So much for concrete animism as practiced by astrology, even today.

We must also make sure that our thoughts move in a continuous series.

Wherever the smallest link is left out the chain is broken and the whole of certainty of the conclusion falls to the ground.<sup>84</sup>

And if we hit upon a step in the series that we cannot understand, “we must stop short here.” If we fail to do that, we are in for trouble. We risk admiring “certain sublime and profound philosophical explanations...”

... even though these are for the most part based upon foundations which no one had adequately surveyed—a *mental disorder* which prizes the darkness higher than the light.<sup>85</sup>

In doing that ,

the learned have a way of being so clever as to contrive to render {86} themselves blind to the things that are ... known by the simplest peasant.<sup>86</sup>

It is like “trying to find a knot in a bulrush,” and Descartes had already in his college days discovered that:

...there is nothing imaginable so strange or so little credible that it has not been maintained by one philosopher or other...<sup>87</sup>

He then begins to build his scientific structure by doubting everything he has learned before. He then ends up with himself and concludes with his famous:

83. R. Descartes, *Rules*, Rule 5.

84. *Ibid.*, Rule 7–8.

85. *Ibid.*, Rule 11.

86. *Ibid.*, Rule 12.

87. R. Descartes, *On Method*, pt. 2.

... whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the “I” who thought this should be somewhat, and remarking that this truth “*I think, therefore I am*” was so certain.... I came to the conclusion that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the Philosophy I was seeking. And then, examining attentively that which I was, I saw that I could conceive that I had no body, and that there was no world nor place where I might be; but yet that I could not for all that conceive that I was not.... From that I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is not any need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing; so that this “me,” that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body....<sup>88</sup>

After we took notice of what Aristotle had to say about the soul as the cause of the living being, we can not help but feel that Descartes without his body and its needs for a place to be and things to eat has contrived something “so strange” and “so little credible” that the simplest peasant knows better.

His soul without his body is a mere abstraction which he refurbishes with a personality which thinks. He reduces himself to an abstract skeleton and then says: behold the real me. It is another example of abstract animism and flies in the face of his own advice on rules.

### **B. A Critique of Pure Spirit**

Immanuel Kant undertook to fight metaphysical speculation and submitted theoretical thinking to a rigorous critique. In the section on the transcendental doctrine of method he tells us that reason has little interest in speculating about things like the immortality of the soul, because:

...our conception of an incorporeal nature is purely negative and does not add anything to our knowledge, and the only inferences to be drawn from it are purely fictitious.<sup>89</sup> {87}

It sounds like animism has found an effective enemy in Kant. However, what are we to make of this:

Pure understanding distinguishes itself not merely from everything empirical, but also completely from all sensibility. It is a unity self-sub-

88. *Ibid.*, pt. 4.

89. I. Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, in *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 234.

sistent, self-sufficient, and not to be enlarged by any additions from without.<sup>90</sup>

But we cannot eliminate faculties such as our sensory perception from our act of thinking, just as we cannot think without at the same time functioning in the aspects of physicochemical, juridical, moral, and all the other “additions” which we as humans display.

Kant abstracts his “pure understanding” here in the same manner as did Descartes with his abstract “I think,” and it, too, amounts to abstract animism.

Herman Dooyeweerd spent a great deal of effort trying to unravel this cleverly woven web of Kant, made up of difficult words that sound quite impressive, and have exerted enormous influence. Says Dooyeweerd,

...an absolutizing of the transcendental logical function of theoretical thought . . . is ... the attempt ... to detach the logical function of theoretical thought ... from the intermodal coherence of meaning and to treat it as *independent*.<sup>91</sup>

Yet, ... “it is merely an abstract concept.”

In other words, Kant tries to make his “pure understanding,” an abstraction, independent, i.e., into a spirit which thinks. But that is impossible, says Dooyeweerd:

Kant assumes a final *logical* unity of thinking *above logical* multiplicity.... Logical unity *above* logical multiplicity, however, can not possibly exist.<sup>92</sup>

The reason is that the only unity of logic is the *concept* of logic which I as selfhood, form:

In Kant’s transcendental logic the *I-ness* has become a *formal concept*.... The selfhood, as the unity above the diversity of meaning, *can never be grasped in a concept*.<sup>93</sup>

And so, for all his efforts to avoid metaphysical speculation, Kant failed to see that his elevating a concept which he abstracted first from the activity of his own thinking, and then giving it the power to act—such

90. *Ibid.*, 38.

91. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique*, vol. 1, 19–20; emphasis added.

92. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 502.

93. *Ibid.*, 503; emphasis added.

as to “understand”—amounted to nothing better than *abstract animism*. {88}

### C. The Soaring Spirits of Man

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel carried abstract animism to its pinnacle. In fact, he carried it aloft above and beyond the mountain tops of human understanding, where it was lost in the mists of fantasy whence it came: the ancient mythology of the dawn of history.

In his *Philosophy of Right and Philosophy of History* he sets the stage for what has proven to become the greatest battle for man’s mind the world has as yet known. It is the battle between the power of the God of creation and power of the idol, the spirit of man’s own making. And he leaves no doubt in his reader’s mind that he considers his own words to be those of one who has heard the voice of truth. He needs no confirmation from any witness as to its authority. His is the voice of revelation.

No doubt he felt equal to his friend Plato, who in his *Republic* declared:

And when I speak of ... that other sort of knowledge which *reason* herself attains by the power of dialectic, using hypotheses ... as steps and points of departure into a world which is above hypotheses, in order that she may soar beyond them to the first principle of the whole; ...<sup>94</sup>

That first principle of the whole was for Hegel the same: *reason*. And the first task he sets himself in the introduction to his *Philosophy of History* is to find the origin of this reason, “whose sovereignty over the world has been maintained....” And boldly he observes that the ultimate design of the world “belongs to the world of the spirit,” which he first produced in his own imagination:

On the stage on which we are observing it—universal history—spirit displays itself in its most concrete reality.

And what is this spirit?

Spirit ... may be defined as that which has its centre in itself ... it exists *in and with itself* ... spirit is *self-contained existence*.<sup>95</sup>

94. Plato, “Republic,” in *Dialogues*, 511.

95. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* in *Great Books*, vol. 46, 160.

Its destiny is rather ambitious, for the consciousness of the spirit's own freedom is "the *final cause of the world at large*...."<sup>96</sup> In this way all the activities of individual human beings are brought under the direction of this invention of Hegel:

The vast congeries of volitions, interests and activities, constitute the instruments and means of the *world-spirit* for attaining its object.<sup>97</sup>

And so the genie is out of the bottle: Hegel has abstracted the common reason and aspirations of all the constituents of the world of man into one vast {89} Spirit, called freedom, which is the cause of the course of history. A grander conception of the field of action could not easily be imagined for the anima of Hegel. Not without reason his belief has been called a "cosmic animism." We will visit with the author of this statement later on.

We are in pursuit of that bane of modern science: faith in nonexisting, self-sufficient spirits. It has waylaid many from the difficult path leading to understanding the phenomena of living beings. And one of the dead-end roads which has trapped many modern scientists is inhabited by the ghost of Hegel's *dialectics*. The first major victims of that trap were Marx and his friend Engels, to be followed by the unsuspecting victims of dialectical materialism. For that reason we must have a brief look at this wraith.

Hegel formulated his well-known sequence of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. On the battlefield of human history this takes the *necessary* form of freedom of man's exercise of his will, which action evokes a reaction, often of necessity, against his intention, whereupon history "obtains" her end unexpectedly in a new "synthesis."

Great men have formed purposes to satisfy only themselves. But they serve a larger purpose, not known to them:

For that spirit which had taken this fresh step in history is the inmost *soul* of all individuals.... These observations may suffice in reference to the means which the worldspirit uses for realizing its idea.<sup>98</sup>

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96. *Ibid.*, 161.

97. *Ibid.*, 164.

98. *Ibid.*, 170; emphasis added.

The World Spirit has an idea, and men who believe they act in freedom really serve this spirit and *realize its and only its idea*. They cannot escape the iron necessity of this spirit.

The state is the divine idea as it exists on earth ... the definite substance that exists in that concrete reality which is the state—is the spirit of the people itself. The actual state is animated by this spirit....<sup>99</sup>

And behind it all the World Spirit carries man towards his destiny, a better world, because:

This peculiarity in the world of mind has indicated in the case of man an altogether different destiny from that of mere natural objects... namely, a *real* capacity for change, and that for the better, an impulse of *perfectibility*.<sup>100</sup>

So it is that human history is ruled by that invisible World Spirit of Hegel's making, which propels mankind—even against its own will—towards an ever better future. It is a necessary development, *an inevitable evolution*. It is the epitome of the soaring optimism of the spirit of man. {90}

#### 4. The Spirit of Revolution

##### A. The Pro's and Con's of Animism with Marx

Karl Marx was more concerned with real people than Hegel. But his philosophy bore the marks of Hegel's animism, although he “turned it upside down.” He likes to speak of philosophy itself as if it were an independent person that acts:

...as this philosophy turns outside against the appearing world, as will, the system has degraded to an abstract totality.<sup>101</sup>

Hegel has society gradually evolving into its highest structure: the state. Marx does not believe that things will automatically change for the better. He has seen too much suffering, and religion, which with Hegel

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99. *Ibid.*, 171.

100. *Ibid.*, 178.

101. J. van der Hoeven, *Karl Marx: The Roots of his Thoughts* (Toronto: Wedge, 1976), 18, quoting Marx from his *Fruhe Schriften*, ed. H. J. Lieber and Furth, trans J. van der Hoeven (Stuttgart, 1962), 69.

could still play a role under the guidance of the World Spirit, is for Marx an obstacle for progress:

Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people.... Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself.<sup>102</sup>

Marx claims to use the dialectic method of Hegel, but he realizes that without a helping hand from the side of man, “revolving about himself,” the spirit cannot become free. While the language remains animistic in color, the content is a message of man taking his lot in his own hands:

... but theory itself becomes a material force when it seizes the masses. Theory is capable of seizing the masses when it demonstrates ad hominem as soon as it becomes radical.<sup>103</sup>

But time and again, his thoughts leave reality behind and the old devil of animism rears its head:

It is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality must also strive towards thought.<sup>104</sup>

The coming revolution must begin in an animistic abstraction:

... a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a *particular redress* because the wrong which is done to it is not a *particular wrong but wrong in general*.<sup>105</sup> {91}

Marx also clings to a certain necessity and inevitability in the course history takes. Man, he says, becomes alienated from himself. And that self-alienation becomes a significant *power in itself* for changing society. It is a necessary ingredient for the progressive development of history.<sup>106</sup> And with that we are right back again in the personification of

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102. T. B. Bottomore, *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, quoted by van der Hoeven, *Karl Marx*, 35.

103. *Ibid.*, 52.

104. *Ibid.*, 54.

105. *Ibid.*, 63.

106. *Ibid.*, 93.



one of Marx's abstractions—alienation—which he grants power to act, to change society, i.e., abstract animism.

Marx wanted to avoid a mechanical materialism exactly because he refused to let man be completely dominated by the structure of matter. Man operates from a material basis, but he will intervene in the process of history by means of active *revolt*. Man can use matter to suit his own purpose. Without realizing it, perhaps, Marx indicates here that he refuses to let man be the impassive victim of the spirits, of the animism he and his predecessors had brought upon the scene. It is the “negation of his own negation.”

### **B. The Cosmic Animism of Friedrich Engels**

Friedrich Engels worked with Marx from his early twenties. A cotton manufacturer like his father, he soon became dissatisfied with the position of the workers and turned to communism. At age twenty-seven he wrote the first draft for the Communist Manifesto in London which Marx rewrote later. Marx lived in the slums of Soho in London for the last thirty-four years of his life, and nearly all he lived on was provided by Engels.

Like Marx, Engels admired Hegel. Although an amateur in philosophy, he undertook the ambitious project of writing a comprehensive book on Natural philosophy called *Dialectics of Nature*. He never got beyond collecting material and some organization of his notes, which were published in English translation in 1940, after having languished unnoticed for decades after his death in 1895.

I have found that many Christian scientists today are not aware of the influence Engels has exerted upon the philosophy of nature and, via his views on the origin and evolution of life, upon the philosophy of the social sciences. There is one man who almost single-handedly has shaped the thinking of the great majority of modern scientists on the manner in which life originated on earth. His name is Aleksandr Ivanovich Oparin, a Marxist biochemist in Russia. And he based his theories on the *Dialectics of Nature*, by Engels, which he read long before it was available in English. We will deal with Oparin's applications of Engels's dialectics in the second part of this essay. But we cannot understand the course of theoretical biology and its animistic basis without learning what Engels had to say in his notes on the dialectics of nature.

Engels saw the entire cosmos with all that lives in it in very simple terms: {92}

Motion in the most general sense, conceived as the mode of existence, the inherent attribute of matter, comprehends all changes and processes occurring in the universe, *from mere change of place right to thinking.*<sup>107</sup>

The investigation of the nature of motion began with that of the motion of the planets. The motion of molecules came next, followed by that of atoms, which established the sciences of physics and chemistry. And only when these had reached a certain degree of development

... could the explanation of the processes of motion represented by the life process be successfully *tackled.*<sup>108</sup>

All motion amounts to is a “change of place.” Engels reduces this notion still further until all he has left is “change.” And he gets this idea from the changes which take place in nature and human society in the footsteps of Hegel:

It is, therefore, from the history of nature and human society that the laws of dialectics are abstracted.<sup>109</sup>

There are three such laws, “All three are developed by Hegel”:

The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and *vice versa*;  
 The law of the interpenetration of opposites;  
 The law of the negation of the negation.<sup>110</sup>

Today scientists agree that “matter” displays four different characteristics called “physical forces”: gravity, electromagnetism, weak and strong nuclear forces. Motion is not a “force that causes a change of place.” It is the other way around: two bodies with mass display a mutual attraction (gravity) by *moving* towards each other unless counteracted by friction.

Engels abstracted the concept of motion from the interaction we observe between physical bodies. He then assigned to this concept the

107. F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, trans. J. B. S. Haldane (New York: International Publishers, [1940] 1960), 35; emphasis added.

108. *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

109. *Ibid.*, 20.

110. *Ibid.*

power to cause the evolution of everything in the cosmos, “from mere change of place right to thinking.”<sup>111</sup> Thus he replaces the Unmoved Mover or Demiurge of the ancient Greeks and the World Spirit of Hegel with the bare concept of Motion as the origin of everything in the universe. This is the ultimate of abstract animism. It is “cosmic animism,” as Jacques Monod, Nobel prize-winning microbiologist, has said, and amounts to an “epistemological disaster.”<sup>112</sup> {93}

The application of the new dialectics to the understanding of natural phenomena is as drastic as it is mythical. Engels ridicules the “old metaphysical categories”<sup>113</sup> now that “modern facts prove the dialectics in nature.” Their “fixity” has gone, now that the dialectic sciences have found that:

Physiology—the cell—(the organic process of development, both of the individual and the species, by differentiation, the most striking test of rational dialectics), and finally the identity of the forces of nature and their mutual convertibility, which put an end to all fixity of categories.<sup>114</sup>

All this demonstrates a lack of understanding of the most basic facts of the real world, even taking the less developed state of the natural sciences of his day into consideration. It would be easy to smile at the naiveté of the pontifications of our cotton manufacturer if they did not dominate the philosophical and practical notions of such an immensely powerful portion of the scientific establishment in this world. And when we consider its implications for the education of our children, irony changes into tragedy. For side by side with the expansion of human knowledge we have seen the consequences of the awesome dimensions of the evolution of cosmic animism. Today, its main consequence is the spirit of the Marxist revolution.

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111. *Ibid.*, 35.

112. J. Monod, *Chance and Necessity*, trans. A. Wainhouse (New York: Vintage Books, A. Knopf Inc., 1971), 39.

113. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 154.

114. *Ibid.*

## PART II. THE ANIMISM OF EVOLUTION

### 1. *The Spirits Are Coming*

#### A. Eels From the Earth's Guts

Aristotle was a careful observer of nature. He was trained to speculate about such things as life by his teachers. As we saw in part 1, chapter 2. A., his fantasies about what makes living beings alive were as animistic as those of all other Greek philosophers. But he also used his eyes. He did not know the Lord, Creator of all that is. But neither did he see any evidence of a Spirit giving rise to the birth of animals which seemed to have no parents. Since no one had an explanation for this fact, he simply accepted man's lack of knowledge in these matters without trying to do the impossible. If science could not find a cause of the origin of certain living things, he was satisfied simply to acknowledge that ignorance. Their generation was *spontaneous*.

He observed and investigated where possible. And he asked those who had traveled where he could not go what they had seen, writing down as accurate an account as he could of what he heard. And from all his information he concluded that a number of species seemed to arise through *spontaneous* {94} *generation*. A common place where these originated was "putrifying earth" or vegetable matter, mud or humid ground, the earth's guts and the like. And among the species that arose in this way were eels, some insects, testaceans, oysters, cockles, hermit crabs, sponges, etc.<sup>115</sup>

People believed in the spontaneous generation of many organisms but opinions were divided as to where they came from. Initially it was believed that only organic matter, derived from plants or animals, could produce them. Organic matter was sometimes seen as a living substance, which was called "biomolecules" when molecules had been discovered. This process was called *heterogenesis*: living beings arise from matter that can only result from the decay of living beings which died. And the adherents of this view were often called *vitalists*.

Heterogenesis died a natural death with some scientists after chemists succeeded in producing "organic" compounds in their laboratories

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115. Aristotle, *De Generation Animalium*, bk. 1, 715a, 715b, and bk. 3, 762b, 763a, 763b.

beginning with Wohler, who in 1828 made the first one: urea. Since then, untold numbers of organic compounds have been made. So that left only the organisms “without parents.” As late as 1819, J. Bremser<sup>116</sup> argued that the parasitic worms in man’s gut must arise there when through some disharmony of the body more organic material is accumulated in the gut than it can absorb. After 2,500 years the eels of the earth’s guts were merely replaced by the worms of man’s guts.

Steady improvement of techniques such as that of making better lenses allowed an ever-growing number of mysteries to be resolved. The reproduction of parasitic worms via intermediate hosts was discovered, and finally the experiments of Pasteur convince most people that all living beings arise from living predecessors today.

### **B. From Molecules to microbes**

With Pasteur the problem of the origin of living beings *today* was settled: only from eggs or spores. But whence did they come *in the past*? Since very few scientists believed that life had been on earth from all eternity, and its arrival from another celestial body did not solve the problem of its origin, it seemed logical to look for it here on earth. Those who believed in a Creator found their faith strengthened by the outcome of the demonstrations of Pasteur. But atheists still had the same old problem of the origin of life.

With heterogenesis, the spontaneous generation of organisms from organic material, discarded they saw only one way out. The first living organisms must have arisen from inorganic matter, the only material on hand “in the beginning.” So that became their working hypothesis and they called it *abiogenesis*: the origin (genesis) of life (bios) not (a) through a power outside matter. {95}

When Wohler had managed to produce the first organic molecule, chemists the world over began to manufacture thousands of ever more complicated organic molecules. And soon they began to assume that even if they could not yet produce a living being in their test tubes, the first living thing on earth must have arisen from organic matter which was produced in nature’s large laboratory: the primeval oceans that covered much of the earth after it had cooled off enough since its fiery

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116. J. G. Bremser, *Über lebende Würmer im lebenden Menschen* (Vienna, 1819), 108–9.

birth. The bolder among them even expected to one day indeed produce a replica of themselves in the tubes.

Newton had introduced the concept of physical forces acting between material bodies. This gave some scientists the idea that perhaps a similar force of nature could play a role in the formation of animals, as Pierre-Louis de Maupertuis asked in France in 1745.<sup>117</sup> His fellow countryman Georges-Louis de Buffon speculated that a “moule interieur,” a mold which acts like the force of gravity, imprints itself upon organic matter and so forms living beings.<sup>118</sup>

In England, Abbe Turberville Needham assumed a “vegetative force” for both vegetable and animal generation: a “real productive force in nature.”<sup>119</sup> This led him to believe that microscopic animals could arise spontaneously through *a power that could act*, produce, i.e., a spirit.

It is clear that both de Buffon and Needham had construed an abstract concept similar to that of the anima of Aristotle and given it personality and power to act, to produce living beings. It was the same type of abstract animism.

D. Diderot started out as an orthodox deist but later became a political radical and an active atheist. In 1769 he published *Le reve de d’Alembert*. There he stated that perhaps an elephant had started as an atom, “this enormous mass, organized, the product of fermentation.”<sup>120</sup> Here we have another twist of animism: fermentation, a chemical process, is personalized and given the power to produce a quadruped. And curiously, all these new forms of animism returned to the acceptance of spontaneous generation, be it as an on-going process or as the initial transition from matter to life. Here the new spirit was a chemico-physical one.<sup>121</sup>

Another factor entered the debate. The Christian church of the day had adopted the doctrine of *preexistence*: the germ for all living beings is created by God in the beginning and conserved until the moment of

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117. J. Farley, *The Spontaneous Generation Controversy from Descartes to Oparin* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 22.

118. *Ibid.*, 23.

119. *Ibid.*, 24.

120. D. Diderot, *Le reve de d’Alembert* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1951), 14–15.

121. *Ibid.*, 59.

its {96} development. Spontaneous generation represents “unquestionable atheism” (Priestly).<sup>122</sup> It had to be rejected as against biblical teaching. Now the emergence of materialism as advocated by Diderot was seen as an attack upon the church, associated with atheism and political radicalism and eventually held responsible for the French Revolution. This demonstrated the danger for the church to engage in scientific theorizing. And one result was that biology became politicized.

In Germany a different “spirit” arose among the *Naturphilosophen*. George-Ernest Stahl taught that the soul directs all processes of the generation of life. Schelling introduced the concept of pure being, and Carl Carus carried this into his view of nature as a living spirit which pervades all of nature. All its individual organisms are part of a greater living whole:

... the totality of individual lives of individual organisms led to the conclusion that there was a unity of life in all of nature, rather than a plurality of individual lives.<sup>123</sup>

This is of course a direct reflection of the philosophy of Hegel.

So now we are back into cosmic animism. The entire cosmos was seen as organic and thought to be in a creative process, “gradually manifested over time.”

In France around 1800, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck began to teach that the fossils of extinct species were evidence that species change over a long period of time into different forms of life. The doctrine of evolution was beginning to take shape. Initially, however, what was lacking was the method by which this could take place.

Jean-Georges Cabanis, a materialist and an ideologue of the revolutionary period, believed that:

all phenomena in the universe have been, are and always will be the result of properties of matter.<sup>124</sup>

He also believed with Lamarck that the more primitive forms of animal life continually arise by spontaneous generation, thus feeding the evolutionary “escalator” from the bottom up. We will now examine

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122. J. Farley, *Spontaneous Generation*, 44.

123. *Ibid.*, paraphrasing Carus, 33.

124. *Oevres completes de Cabanis* (Paris, 1824), Memoire 10 vol. 4, 253n.

which were these properties of matter, responsible for the phenomenon of life, the rise from molecules to microbes.

### C. The Stage Gets Set for Battle

In 1847 four Germans formed the *Physical Society* so as to put physiology on a chemico-physical basis and so give it equal rank with Physics. One of its members was Theodor Schwann. He formulated a concise theory of the materialistic origin of living organisms. He started with {97} the assumption that an organism comes into being by the blind laws of necessity, “by powers which, like those of inorganic nature, are established by the very essence of matter.”<sup>125</sup> In other words, the forces which are abstracted from physical matter such as gravitation create organisms, merely by “another combination of these materials.” And that brings the ancient spirits who dwelled in the idols of wood and stone back to us. *Concrete animism* is now to fight the vital spirit of Aristotle and the cosmic spirit of Hegel.

From this point on, we can distinguish three main denominations of the religion without revelation or Creator. They all agree on the basic doctrine of abiogenesis: there never was a special act of God which established any living being. Life started with a primitive organism which evolved into the diversity of life as we see it today. Their adherents disagree on the way all this came about. We recognize: (1) Vitalistic animism; (2) Physicalistic animism; and (3) Cosmic animism.

#### 1. Vitalistic animism.

Vitalists believe in a living force which directs matter to serve the ends of the organism. As we saw, Aristotle called this force *soul*. It is the “cause, the source of the living body.” It is the “final cause, that for the sake of which a thing exists.”

Needham assumed that a vegetative force was the “real productive force in nature.” Many others have held similar views and still do. In this century among the more famous were Henri Bergson and Hans Driesch. Bergson believed in a vital urge, his *élan vital*, which traverses all of nature in the form of evolution and so forces matter into organized forms as living beings.

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125. T. Schwann, *Microscopic researches into the accordance in the structure and growth of animals and plants*, trans. H. Smith (London, 1847), 187.



Driesch did his famous experiments with the eggs of sea urchins. He concluded that there is order in their development which leads to a purpose. He spoke of the “essential form,” a notion of order, and called it “entelechy.” It is the same word which Aristotle used, although he maintained that it did not have any metaphysical meaning. Yet, in his *Philosophie des Organischen* Driesch wrote:

The *being* of the natural agent entelechy depends in no way upon anything that is material....<sup>126</sup>

The reason for Driesch’s view is clear enough. He divided the egg of a sea urchin in two in the early stage of its development. To his astonishment he saw two perfectly normal larvae develop. Yet, his concept of entelechy as a goal or ordering power that acts by directing material processes was abstract animism in a new form. The *being* of entelechy is immaterial, i.e., that of a spirit. {98}

Driesch himself saw a crucial problem in all this: how can an immaterial entelechy influence the cause—effect constellation of matter? And how can matter, determined by its mechanical laws, be affected by an immaterial entelechy?<sup>127</sup>

These questions cannot be answered by Driesch. The reason is:

An entelechy in Driesch’s neovitalist sense cannot exist in temporal reality; for it is nothing but a theoretical *abstraction* of the biotic modality of experience, absolutized to an “immaterial substance.” This concept of entelechy is nothing but the counterpart of the mechanistic concept of “matter,” which modern physics was obliged to relinquish because of its incompatibility with the micro-structures of energy.<sup>128</sup>

In the 1950s the phenomenon of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin burst upon the scene. In his *The Phenomenon of Man* he cut a broad swath through the subtle structures built by philosophers and evolutionary biologists over the years. He asked the old question of how matter obtains its form and stated:

Without the slightest doubt *there is something* through which material and spiritual energy hold together and are complementary. In the last

126. *Philosophie des Organischen*, quoted by Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique*, vol. 3, 739

127. *Ibid.*, 742; paraphrased.

128. *Ibid.*, 745; emphasis added.

analysis, *somehow or other*, there must be a single energy operating in the world.<sup>129</sup>

He then proposes the following solution:

We shall assume that, essentially, *all energy is psychic in nature*.<sup>130</sup>

And his explanation for the origin of living beings on this earth is just as simple:

The mineral world and the world of life seem two antithetical creations ... but to a deeper study, when we force our way down to the microscopic level and beyond to the infinitesimal, or (which comes to the same thing) far back along the scale of time, they seem quite otherwise—a single mass gradually melting in on itself.<sup>131</sup>

And so the psychic energy of de Chardin, the animistic spirit of his imagination, produces the answer. Through its power the early oceans:

... here and there *must* unquestionably have begun writhing with {99} minute creatures.<sup>132</sup>

In spite of a lengthy and sympathetic preface to his book by none less than Sir Julian Huxley, the views of de Chardin are rarely mentioned among scientists today. They have disappeared along with those of most other forms of vitalist animism, including that of Driesch.

## 2. The Spirits in the Soup: The Return of Concrete Animism

Space does not permit a historical review of the development of this brand of animism. Instead, I will let the recent discoveries and their interpretation pass the reviewing stand.

We have seen that the creative spirit of this point of view is held to be the physical forces inherent in matter. It arose long before modern molecular science and before the advent of Charles Darwin. And as so often happens, it was met with vigorous opposition at first. But the acceptance of the theory of evolution as proposed by Darwin made it easier to adopt the concept of abiogenesis:

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129. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. B. Wall (New York, 1959), 63; emphasis his.

130. *Ibid.*, 64; emphasis added.

131. *Ibid.*, 77.

132. *Ibid.*, 77; emphasis added.

Indeed, the materialists and Ernst Haeckel were enthusiastic about Darwin's theory precisely because spontaneous generation and the unification of the organic and the inorganic into "one great fundamental conception" were implied. The materialists themselves were not particularly concerned with the problem posed by the discrediting of spontaneous generation, since *abiogenesis was a metaphysical necessity requiring no proof*.<sup>133</sup>

After all, as one of them said, anyone who sees an essential difference between matter and living things suffers from a "mental barrier."<sup>134</sup> Just as de Chardin declares the energy of matter to be psychic in nature, the materialists put it the other way around and declare everything to be physical and deny that life exists as a separate "quality."

When biochemists demonstrated some of the vital processes, such as reproduction and metabolism, to rest on chemical reactions and to be carried out with the help of DNA molecules and proteins, particularly the enzymes, materialism seemed to have won the battle. Vitalism had never proved the existence of vital forces and few pay attention to it today.

Because abiogenesis was the doctrine on which the faith of the materialist was built, scientists began to hanker after a scientific proof. If living things arose out of inorganic matter in the past, why should it not be possible to repeat this event in the laboratory? So the astrophysicists spelled out what the atmospheric conditions *must* have been on the young earth. Then the {100} physicists could tell how earth, water, and other elements *must* have interacted. And finally the chemists got into the act of reproducing the chemical processes that *must* have occurred before life began and led up to that.

Untold billions of public moneys have been expended on this endeavor, the "metaphysical necessity requiring no proof." What have our chemists found?

Following the method of Descartes, they broke down the large molecules of living cells, *after having killed them first*. Proteins, fat, carbohydrates, and many other compounds were split up into their smaller constituents and their structural formula established. From there on

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133. J. Farley, *Spontaneous Generation*, 142; emphasis added.

134. A. I. Kendall, "Bacteria as Colloids," in H. N. Holmes, ed., *Colloid Symposium Monograph* (New York: Chemical Catalogue Co., 1925), vol. 2, 195.

they tried to imitate the conditions as they must have prevailed on early earth, submitting elements such as hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, and others to extreme changes in temperature, electromagnetism, pressure and the like. In this way Miller managed to produce large molecules, some of which occur in living things, along with many more that are foreign to them, in 1953.<sup>135</sup>

In 1926 the American geneticist H. J. Muller stated that life originated from a chance combination of chemicals in the early environment on earth in the form of a gene. This was the first “living” molecule, capable of reproducing itself, of mutating, and of producing enzymes.

Muller claims that at least two large molecules, formed by purely physical forces, accidentally formed a chemical bond. The resulting molecule suddenly *sprang to life*, began to show metabolism and to reproduce itself, to mutate and to evolve through the operation of natural selection.<sup>136</sup> The key here is: “sprang to life.” These three words do not explain anything since words do not create “life” out of a dead molecule. They are words of magic, spoken by a chemist who endows his concrete molecule with a creative spirit: *concrete animism*.

In 1978 Lawrence S. Dillon published *The Genetic Mechanism and the Origin of Life*.<sup>137</sup> After 412 pages filled with information about our present state of knowledge on the biochemistry in the cell, he formulates what he calls “The early Sequence of Events” during the earliest portion of life’s history. Here are the critical passages:

... as the shallow oceans became enriched with organic molecules and polymers, two polyamino acid chains accidentally came into contact which were mutually compatible in such a manner that each could *replicate* the other (or, alternatively, a single self-replicating peptidoid {101} molecule arose)... This first accidental combination of two short interacting polyamino acid chains thus was the *first living organism*....<sup>138</sup>

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135. S. Miller, “A Production of Amino Acids Under Possible Primitive Earth Conditions,” *Science* 117 (1953): 528. In this article Miller emphasized that his experiments were started as “suggested by Oparin.”

136. H. J. Muller, “The Gene,” *Proc. Roy. Soc. London* 134 (1947): 1–37.

137. L. S. Dillon, *The Genetic Mechanism and the Origin of Life* (New York: Plenum Press, 1978).

Again, no explanation as to how dead molecules spring to life. Mere words of magic. The only force that is acknowledged to be capable of performing the miracle of giving life to a dead molecule is that of chemistry. And that can not be proved but must be believed. So all the work done has come to naught. Physical forces, assigned the capacity of creating life, are thus made into the spirits of creation that float in the imaginary “hot thin soup” of the primeval oceans.

### 3. Cosmic Animism

We noted before that Descartes warned against leaving out a link in the chain of an argument because then “the whole of certainty of the conclusion falls to the ground.” In the two cases of concrete animism just discussed we saw that the critical link in the chain of the progressing argument was missing: the link between a dead molecule and a living organism. And that destroyed the argument. In fact, Descartes called basing a conclusion on a foundation “which no one had adequately surveyed” a “*mental disorder* which prizes the darkness higher than the light.”<sup>139</sup>

Around 1927–1929 scientists in Russia were told by Stalin to start applying the teachings of Engels in biology. Until 1929 none of the members of the Academy of Sciences belonged to the Communist Party.<sup>140</sup> But now they were to clean up their act, to remove all traces of concrete animism by replacing it with cosmic animism and to bring the struggle into the laboratory and the lecture hall.

Aleksandr Ivanovich Oparin, a young biochemist, gave his first public lecture in Moscow for the Botanical Society in 1922, which was published in 1924. At that time he followed the then current line of the materialists who saw no difference “between the structure of coagula and that of protoplasm.”<sup>141</sup> He saw a moment when a first coagulum was formed as the point in time when “the transformation of organic compounds into an organic body took place.” That was the standpoint, held by the *concrete animists* such as H. J. Muller. But after 1929 he had

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138. *Ibid.*, 412; emphasis added.

139. See note 84; emphasis added.

140. Farley, *Spontaneous Generation*, 172.

141. A. I. Oparin, “Origin of Life,” in J. Bernal, *Origin of Life* 211, as quoted by Farley, *ibid.*, 166.

to apply the dialectics of Engels to the problem of origins. He has done so throughout the past half century with great agility.

The British biochemist J. B. S. Haldane was a communist like Oparin and began working at Cambridge in the U. S. in 1923. He believed that the first organic compounds had been formed in the primitive oceans by the action {102} of ultraviolet light on CO<sub>2</sub>, water, and ammonia, until the water resembled a “hot dilute soup.”<sup>142</sup> Up till then these men held a materialistic view consistent with that of most earlier concrete animists. But now their theories had to be politicized. Now Engels had to be given the floor.

Hegel had elevated his thought processes to the cosmic level of the World Spirit, his homemade replacement of the Creator of the cosmos. Engels had heard from his friend Marx that Hegel had turned things upside down. In his *Dialectics of Nature* he gently raps Hegel on the knuckles for this after mentioning the three laws of dialectics developed by Hegel:

The mistake lies in the fact that ... the universe, willy nilly, is made out to be arranged in accordance with a system of thought which itself is only the product of a definite stage of evolution of human thought. If we turn the thing around, then everything becomes simple, and the dialectical laws that look so extremely mysterious in idealist philosophy at once become simple and clear as noonday.<sup>143</sup>

We note in passing that Engels personifies “evolution” (of human thought) and assigns to it the power to produce a system of thought: another example of abstract animism.

We saw that Hegel believed in the impulse of perfectibility in the case of man. The World Spirit drives man inexorably towards a better future. And he does this through the operation of the three laws of dialectics. We will now examine the interpretation of Engels given by Oparin.

The *first law* is that “of the transformation of quantity into quality.” This addition of quantities comes in minute amounts:

From our point of view ... the modern process of evolution of living organisms is fundamentally nothing more than the addition of some

142. J. B. S. Haldane, “Origin of Life,” in Bernal, *Origin of Life*, 246–47.

143. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 26.

new links to an endless chain, the beginning of which extends to the very dawn of existence of our planet.<sup>144</sup>

Engels drew the evolution of things back into the material beginnings.

Matter is in constant motion and proceeds through a series of stages of development. In the course of this progress there arise ever newer, more complicated ... forms of motion of matter, having new properties which were not previously present...<sup>145</sup>

Oparin criticizes the physicalists for their mechanistic view because they see all phenomena of life merely as physicochemical processes. That way, he says, they deny that there is any difference between organisms and inorganic objects. That leads to absurdity because: {103}

We are thus in a position where we must say either that inorganic objects are alive or that life does not really exist.<sup>146</sup>

That is indeed the position of, e.g., J. Monod, who calls living beings chemical machines.<sup>147</sup> Not so, says Oparin. Life has “specific biological properties,<sup>148</sup> qualitatively different from those of the inanimate world. And the transformation from one quality to another is brought about by minute changes in quantity. The astonishing thing here is that Engels and Oparin believe that they can abstract the *concept* of number (quantity) from existing material things and then give it the power to produce more complex ones, eventually leading to living organisms. This is another example of their animistic frame of mind.

One of Engels’s more famous instances of transformation of quantity into quality involves ethyl alcohol,  $C_2H_6O$ . If you add to that the *numbers* of 3 C and 6 H atoms you get amylalcohol:  $C_5H_{12}O$ , a poison. When you drink this, you get quite sick:

... one could say that the intoxication, and subsequent “morning after” feeling, is also quantity transformed into quality...<sup>149</sup>

144. A. I. Oparin, *The Origin of Life*, trans. S. Morgulis (New York: Dover Publishing, 1938), 244–45.

145. A. I. Oparin, *Genesis and Evolutionary Development of Life* (New York: Academic Press, 1968), 6.

146. *Ibid.*, 5.

147. Monod, *Chance and Necessity*, 45.

148. Oparin, *Genesis*, 6.

Engels simply confuses real atoms with numbers. Atoms and alcohols have numerical functions but numbers have no alcoholic functions. You don't get drunk on numbers. This type of philosophical confusion Monod rightly calls an "epistemological disaster."<sup>150</sup> But Oparin's theories on the origin of life are based on it.

The *second law* is that of the interpenetration of opposites. For that reason Oparin emphasizes the opposite processes of anabolism and catabolism and the role they play in the process of genetic change.<sup>151</sup> That implies that the highly abstract concept of opposition or conflict is personified and given power to affect living beings: more animism.

The *third law* is even more curious. Engels observed that "living means dying."<sup>152</sup>

So by using the law of the negation of the negation we negate death, as the negation of life, and end up with life again, employing the good offices of dialectics. Even the concept of negation is made into a spirit which is given the power to even negate itself and so to come up with something substantial.

Jacques Monod, world famous biochemist and Nobel Prize laureate, discussed {104} these "laws" of Engels and saw in them only a subjective experience of the thinking process. However:

... to retain these subjective laws just as they are and to make them serve as those of a purely material universe, this is to effect the animist projection in the most blatant manner...<sup>153</sup>

We can only agree that Engels's laws are not based on reality. Therefore, to assign them power to create living beings out of "matter of motion" amounts to cosmic animism of a "blatant" type.

And so it is that the world of natural science has become divided into two major camps, fighting over the origin of life. The fight is going to be unequal, because the concrete animists are dwindling in number and the forces on the side of cosmic animism are gaining the upper

149. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 32.

150. Monod, *Chance and Necessity*, 39.

151. Farley, *Spontaneous Generation*, 172.

152. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 164.

153. Monod, *Chance and Necessity*, 34.



hand. The spirits of Engels and Oparin are coming, and who is there to stop them?

## 2. *The Spirit That Came and Conquered*

### A. The Class Struggle of the Droplets

The old teleology has gone to the devil, but the certainty now stands firm that matter in its eternal cycle moves according to laws which at a definite stage—now here, now there—*necessarily* give rise to the thinking mind in organic beings.<sup>154</sup>

Fortified by this revelation from the lips of Engels, A. I. Oparin only had to show how matter began its present cycle. Engels warned that matter moves slowly from one stage to the next:

... it has become foolish ... to believe it is possible by means of a little stinking water to force nature to accomplish in twenty four hours what it cost her thousands of years to bring about.<sup>155</sup>

There is only one way to solve the problem of the origin of life, says Oparin, and that is the way Engels has shown us with his materialistic dialectics:

Life has neither arisen spontaneously nor has it existed eternally. It must have, therefore, resulted from a long evolution of matter, its origin being merely one step in the course of its historical development.<sup>156</sup>

Oparin agrees with the idea of the growing complexity of chemicals that appeared in the primeval oceans. But once they exist, he *decides* on a course for them to follow that differs from that of the physicalists. In 1929 the Dutch chemist Bungeberg de Jong described his work with drops that were rich in colloidal compounds, floating in a noncolloidal liquid. Oparin *chose* {105} these drops as the best form of matter that could over millions of years become so complex that they resembled the protoplasm of living cells. These drops were called *coacervates*.

Once we have these complex drops, we have something which looks like an individual, different from its environment. All it needs now is to become alive. As he says, these drops must now shed randomness and:

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154. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 187.

155. *Ibid.*, 189.

156. Oparin, *Origin of Life*, 33.

acquire properties of a yet higher order, properties subject to biological laws.<sup>157</sup>

The way to do that is simple enough. All they need is natural selection of the hardiest drops with the best chemical systems. Almost unnoticed he slyly introduces the order of a system into the random solution within the drops, no doubt imposed by the “necessity of progress” of the World Spirit. The selection of the fittest is a term he borrows from the study of biology, dealing with living things. To ascribe the process of natural selection to little drops filled with unorganized chemicals is to give a human concept power to organize their internal chaos.

Oparin cannot stand still. His newly organized systems *must* become ever more coordinated, new chemical processes appear, and so, at his bidding:

... systems of a still higher order, the simplest organisms, have emerged.<sup>158</sup>

From here on the appearance of all the diverse forms of life was merely a matter of increasing natural selection. That is the easy part. The creation of the first living organism was the most difficult act. The world spirit of progress which Hegel discovered, albeit upside down, set rightly on its feet by Marx and Engels, moved into the drops of Oparin and got them fighting for survival. And since this spirit bent their chemical reactions to his will, he gave to some better enzymes than to others. And so the best became so perfected that they began to live. In this way the World Spirit has created the parent of all that lives on earth. And the method he chose would later on be called the class struggle. We hear this from the great pioneer himself:

... this question [of the origin of life] was always the focal point of a sharp philosophical struggle which reflected the underlying struggle of social classes.<sup>159</sup>

### **B. What Spirit Will Win?**

Today very few scientists working on the materialistic theory of the origin of life believe the accidental collision of two complex molecules

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157. *Ibid.*, 160.

158. *Ibid.*, 195.

159. *Ibid.*, 1.

could have resulted in a living being. Even the most primitive form of life that we know, the smallest virus, is so complicated and has so many large {106} molecules, all working in harmony, that even most hardy evolutionists can not believe that they came from a single molecule. Nearly all of them have adopted the view of Oparin and abandoned concrete animism.

The idea of a droplet that undergoes a slow but steady improvement appeals to them. Moreover, they can make such drops and work with them and perfect them. This concept has provided thousands of the most brilliant chemists the world over with the chance to do fascinating chemical work during a lifetime. And the taxpayer willingly provides the funds since he believes that in science everything is possible as long as we try hard and long enough and pour sufficient funds into it.

Oparin seemed to have taken the gamble out of working with the random collision of large molecules. Even evolutionists had come to the conclusion that the theory of probability rules out the likelihood of such a random collision resulting in "life." The coacervate droplet seems so much more promising.

After World War II Oparin managed to organize international conferences. At the First International Symposium on the Origin of Life at Moscow in 1957, Oparin stated that "the principle of the evolutionary origin of life" was shared by all participants. But there were still several adherents of the physicalistic version of animism as we have described it above. The cold war was fought even there between the "mechanists" from the West and the Marxists from both East and West, many of the latter coming from the U.S.A.<sup>160</sup>

Today, there are few physicalists left. Indeed, as Oparin has often pointed out, their "random collision" amounts to spontaneous generation. Not many scientists can maintain their belief in it now. John Farley wrote *The Spontaneous Generation Controversy from Descartes to Oparin* in 1977. In his introduction he correctly observed,

That spontaneous generation is no longer an issue to most biologists, stems, in the final analysis, from the work of Oparin, not Pasteur.... Most scientists today have abandoned such a belief. They have

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160. Farley, *Spontaneous Generation*, 177.

accepted the evolutionary concept as expressed by the Russian Marxist biochemist Aleksandr Oparin.<sup>161</sup>

And so cosmic animism has conquered both vitalistic and concrete animism, not just in Marxist Russia, whence came its most eloquent advocate ever since 1922, and it is still going strong. Cosmic animism is the prevalent spirit that is instilled into the young minds of all the countries that still have freedom of expression. But, as the founder of the school of sociology at Harvard University once wrote, “evolution is a jealous god.”<sup>162</sup> {107}

If cosmic animism prevails for long because our citizens do not demand that this primitive religion be removed from our public schools, the freedom to teach creation at our own schools may not last. And then animism will have really conquered. Are we willing to do battle against this hideous animism in science?

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161. *Ibid.*, 7.

162. T. Parsons, *Structure and Process in Modern Society* (1960), 3, quoted by B. C. Wearne, *The Development of “The structure of Social Action” in the early writings of Talcott Parsons* (Hamilton, New Zealand: University of Waikato, unpublished masters thesis, 1978), 106.

# WHAT I BELIEVE TODAY

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*Cornelius Van Til*

I believe today what Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, says he believes in his day. He says, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us,” and adds, “since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom. 5:8–11).

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* expresses this belief very well. It tells us first who God is, who man is, and what is the nature of the relation between the two. It asks: “What is God?” and answers: “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” It goes on to ask: “Are there more Gods than one?” and answers: “There is but one only, the living and true God.” And it asks: “How many persons are there in the Godhead?” and answers: “There are three persons in the Godhead: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.” (Q. 4–6).

At the beginning of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin points out that man cannot know himself for what he is unless he accepts what God in Christ through Scripture says he is. Says B. B. Warfield: “The tripersonality of God is conceived by Calvin, ... not as something added to the complete idea of God, or as something into which God develops in the process of his existing, but as something that enters into the very idea of God, without which he cannot be conceived in truth of his being.”<sup>163</sup> For Calvin the doctrine of the trinity was involved in his experience of salvation (in the Christian’s certainty that the redeeming Christ and sanctifying Spirit are each Divine Per-

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163. B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (New York: Oxford, 1930), 10.

sons).<sup>164</sup> Again: “The main thing was, he insisted, that men should heartily believe that there is but one God, whom only they should serve; but also that Jesus Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier is each no less this one God than God the Father to whom we owe our being; while yet these three are distinct personal objects of our love {109} and adoration.”<sup>165</sup> It was because of his deep religious interest in making the triune God the starting point of all theology that Calvin found it necessary to exclude every last vestige of subordinationism which might be said to be sanctioned by the language of Nicea. He therefore used the word *autotheos* with respect to the Son of God.

The triune God of Scripture is, then, alone ultimate, self-sufficient and self-referential. No man can say anything intelligible about anything except on the assumption that such is the case. This I believe; believing this, I am a Christian.

In opposition to this claim the non-Christian assumes that such is not the case. If my belief were to be accepted, the non-Christian contends, it would spell the end of significant personal thought and action on the part of man at every point.

Man must be thought of as being his own final point of reference in all his reactions to any thing. Socrates wanted to know what “the holy” was regardless what any god might say about it. Rene Descartes thought that he could intelligently doubt the existence of God but that he could not intelligently doubt the existence of himself. Immanuel Kant said that absolutely nothing can be said about any god that is not the projection of the self-sufficient moral consciousness of man.

Thus there are two mutually exclusive points of view with respect to man and the world about him. Christians are Christians because they believe in the triune God of Scripture as the final reference point of human speech and action; the non-Christians are non-Christians because they believe in man as the final reference point in all significant human speech and action.

I believe, secondly, that the triune God of Scripture “did, by the most holy and wise counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of

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164. *Ibid.*, 195.

165. *Ibid.*, 251.

sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established” (*Westminster Confession*, chap. 3).

To this we may add at once the words of the *Larger Catechism*: “God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence; according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of his own will” (answer to Q. 14).

So far we have the Triune God of Scripture by His decree ordaining whatsoever comes to pass. This is, in a nutshell, my philosophy of history.

The non-Christian assumes or affirms that such is not the case. If my belief with respect to the decree of the Triune God were true, he contends, it would spell the end of all significant human thought and action. To my {110} non-Christian friend, my belief on this point constitutes an intolerable determinism in the field of being, an intolerable authoritarianism in the field of knowledge, and intolerable tyranny in the field of morals.

My non-Christian neighbor believes in a philosophy of history that is marked by eternal process. For him  $7 + 5$  is an eternal *novelty* and, at the same time, an *eternal* novelty. The non-Christian believes that the distinction between divine, eternal, absolute being and human, temporal, and derivative being, is one of degree only. “God” as well as man springs forth from the womb of pure contingency. Man, as well as God, has existed “from all eternity.” The distinction between “God” and man and his world falls within the idea of the idea *universe* or *reality*. This universe never started and will never be complete. There has been no creation out of or into nothing, by a self-sufficient, self-complete, eternally self-existent God. The idea of creation stands for the novelty aspect of reality. There could not have been anything like creation out of nothing.

The man Jesus of Nazareth was not because He could not have been the sort of being that the *Chalcedon Creed* (AD 451) made Him out to be. There was not because there could not have been a “Person” who had two natures, the one eternal and the other temporal, without mixture. The distinction between the eternally divine and the temporally human in Jesus of Nazareth must be one of degree only. Accordingly, there is not, because there could not be, any basic distinction between

the personality of Jesus and the personality of any other man. As a real man Jesus shared in the absolute contingency that marks all other men. As real men all other men share in Jesus's consciousness of identity with the eternal Father. Again, as there has never been, because there could never have been any such person as the *Chalcedon Creed* describes Jesus as being, so the work that He did was not, because it could not have been, that of a finished redemption of his people. Jesus did not, because He could not have executed His office of a prophet "in revealing to us, by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation." Jesus did not because He could not have executed his office of a priest, "in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us." Jesus did not because He could not have "executed his office as a king, in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining all His and our enemies." If Jesus was distinct as a prophet, a priest, and a king, He was, at most, distinct from other men as being ahead of them in the eternally ongoing development of human personality.

Finally, there will never be because there can never be anything like a final judgment day in which Jesus, as the Son of God and Son of man, will consign to His left hand those who have in their life refused to own Him as their Savior and Lord. All men have, because they must have, to be men at all, the principle of victory of the good over evil built into them. To have {111} any meaning to any man the idea of judgment must be that whereby the self-sufficient moral consciousness of man evaluates itself. *The True*, *the Beautiful*, and *the Good* are what they are as ideals which the ever developing consciousness of man always sets before itself.

It appears *then* that there are only two kinds of people in the world, non-Christians and Christians; covenant breakers and covenant keepers; these two kinds of people have mutually exclusive beliefs about everything.

Now if I am worth my salt as a Christian, I want my non-Christian neighbors and friends to rejoice with me "through our Lord Jesus." But how can I reach other men with the good news of redemption from sin through the atoning death of Christ for men? As for men, may the triune God keep me from thinking, even for a fraction of a second, that I



have accepted my belief because I am wiser or better than my friend. I am, of myself, like all other human beings, one of the children of disobedience. I am of myself one of those who persecute Christ. But He who is the Prince of Life has sought me in my blood. He has called me forth from the tomb, and behold I live. I was blind but now I see.

Like Noah I have found grace in the sight of God, and by that grace I seek to walk with God and become a “preacher of righteousness.” I tell my contemporaries that Christ has instructed me to warn them of impending judgment. My reasoning with them is identical with my witnessing to them. If they do not repent and turn for the forgiveness of their rebellion against Him who calls them to Himself, they will ere long call upon the mountains to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb. You know, my friend Jones, that your wisdom is foolishness even in your own eyes. May the Holy Spirit who took the scales from my eyes give to my friend Jones to see, that is, to believe what I now believe. May he and I together be present with the multitude that no man can number when they sing “you are worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being” (Rev. 4:11).

What then is the use of my reasoning with Mr. Jones? Well, there is much use in my reasoning just because he *is not* what he believes he is but *is* what I believe he is. If he were what he believes he is and the world about him were what he believes it is, he could not identify himself, any other person, or any thing about him. He, and all other men, would be like whitecaps washed up by a shoreless, bottomless sea. Whitecap I would not be able to distinguish himself from Whitecap II. Whitecap II would not be able to distinguish himself from Whitecap I, and the two could not begin to give any sign of identification or recognition to one another before their whiteness would be lost in the blue about them.

Mr. Jones knows that this is the case. He knows modern existential philosophy. He knows, too, that the principles of modern existentialism {112} resemble those of Greek philosophy. He knows that both ancient and modern philosophy assume: (a) the idea of the self-sufficiency of man as the final reference point for all human speech and action, (b) the idea of pure contingency or chance as a principle of

individualization of all reality, and (c) the idea of pure or abstract being as a principle of unity.

Mr. Jones knows that these three principles involve the rejection of my position in advance of any dialogue between us. These principles amount to saying: (a) Nobody knows anything about the ultimate nature of reality; to begin with, *any* hypothesis must be as good as any other, (b) but your hypothesis is wrong because it claims that God does know, and (c) my hypothesis is right because it assumes that nobody knows.

I have often pointed out to Mr. Jones that this position of his presupposes that he has done and can do what in my belief the God of Christianity has done.

My friend knows well enough that he cannot in terms of his assumed view of reality say anything intelligible about anything. If what I believe were not true and what he believes were not false, neither of us could say anything intelligible about anything. Mr. Jones knows that this is the case, but he does not want this to be the case; he is spending his days and his nights trying to suppress this knowledge. Mr. Jones cannot escape seeing the face of God in everything of which he has any awareness (Rom. 1:19). He knows that he is responsible for what God said to him in Adam (Rom. 5:12). He knows that he is “without excuse” for not repenting from his covenant-breaking attitude toward God. The claim that my position is more in accord with the “facts” that both of us know, and better satisfies the law of contradiction that both of us have to take for granted if we are to have to converse together at all, distresses him and then he draws back in horror.

He will ask me how I can expect him to appeal with me to facts and to logic, when what I really want him to do is to accept the nature of fact and logic to be what they are in terms of my authoritarian deterministic philosophy of history. If you offered your position, he will say, as a hypothesis which might or might not be established by research, then it would be reasonable that I should listen to you. But you claim to prove your position to us by an appeal to facts while you have, in advance, excluded even the possibility that these facts might be what on my hypothesis they are. If you offered your position as more nearly approaching the ideal that reality is what man by logic says it must be, it would be reasonable that I should listen to you. But you claim that

the function of human logic is to discover order into a universe that has already been ordered by your God. If I were to accept your view of man and his world, I would, in advance, have to crucify myself as a free, developing personality and reject the possibility of a developing reality in which I may grow as a scientist and a philosopher. When you have learned what scientific and philosophical inquiry requires {113} the nature of fact and of logic to be, then I shall be glad to have you speak to me. I am always glad to hear of some new hypothesis that might enable me to enter more deeply into the process of our ongoing universe, than I have so far been able to do.

Well, what can I say in return? Shall I retreat from my bold assertion that “facts” and “logic” can fruitfully unite only and alone if they are first interpreted in terms of the Christian philosophy of history? Shall I plead with my non-Christian friend, Mr. Jones, to think of Christianity as a hypothesis that may possibly be true to the facts and in accord with logic? But this would be to betray my Savior, who said: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” He never appeals to logic and/or to facts as having any light in them that did not derive from Him. Shall I then simply say: “Well, this is what I believe; if you don’t believe what I believe I have no more to say to you”? Shall I “witness” to Mr. Jones instead of reasoning with him? This would be impossible. I cannot witness to him unless I show him the need of accepting my belief instead of his. I must therefore distinguish what I believe from what he believes. But I am not doing this unless I point out to him that my faith spells life and his spells death.

But will he be able to follow me in my reasoning with him? Haven’t I just before, myself, portrayed him as unable and unwilling to see anything for what it really is? Indeed I have.

This is how Jesus pictured those who rejected Him; He tells them that they are of their father, the devil. This is how Paul pictures the “natural man.” Paul tells us that “those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires, but those who live according to the spirit have their minds set on what the spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the spirit is life and peace, because the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God” (Rom. 8:5).

Well, Mr. Jones, I *was* controlled by my sinful nature, no less than any other man, but now I have been washed from my sin by the blood of Him who gave Himself to the death of the cross and sent His Holy Spirit who gave me new birth. May this soon be true also for you and your family.

**3.**  
**CONTEMPORARY**  
**THEOLOGICAL TRENDS**

# GREASE

*John A. Nelson*

Not too long ago a pastor I know asked me what our fellowship group was currently “into.”

I replied, “We’re studying the Law of God.” A slight frown crossed his face, and after a moment of thought he warned, “That’s okay if the law of God is balanced with the love of God.”

In so saying, that pastor betrayed a heresy which puts forth its deadly blossoms in every quarter of the Church today. Somehow the Church has come to believe that God’s love counteracts His Law, that love and law stand in opposition to one another. Law has become an ogre of oppression and repression; love has come to be that which panders to a vague something called human need; and grace has become grease—a greasy escape from the rules of life. Or, said another way, the Church today sees sanctification as a sort of boxing match with Love in one corner and Law in the other: grace is the grease on Law’s glove which prevents him from landing a solid punch.

Misguided pastors to the contrary, love and law—under God—are not in the least opposed to one another. There is no such thing as love without the law; such a lawless “love” becomes an embrace of death, a willful drink of a poisoned cup. To understand the relationship of law and love, it is needful to understand or, better said, see God, for in Him are all tensions dissolved.

So let us consider God, taking as our text Romans 11:12, “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.” St. Paul furnishes us not only our text for consideration but also the vehicle through which we shall consider it. To an immature church—the Corinthian—Paul says, “Doth not even nature itself teach you...?” (1 Cor. 11:14).

Nature should have taught the Corinthians concerning the wearing of long and short hair, and nature should have taught us that we serve a God in whom love and law are not conflicting attributes for, in the words of Dr. Cornelius Van Til, “All created reality is inherently revelational of the nature and will of God.”

Nature teaches us, as it reveals the nature and will of God, that law is the very context of life, of love. Without law, there is no love or life.

Our God is the God of law inasmuch as He defines what is. The rigidity of nature teaches us the rigidity of God's nature. Scripture declares that {115} a man who sets aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. The revelation of God in nature echoes the Scripture, for anyone going outside in December at Barrow, Alaska, dies without mercy if he is not dressed properly. At -70 degrees you'll freeze to death in a pair of shorts—that's the law. Step off a 100-foot precipice and you'll die just as quickly—without mercy. If you plant beans, don't expect to harvest corn; beans produce beans, and that's the law—rigidly, without mercy. If you breed your mare to a mule, you'll still be looking for a colt one year later. Mules are sterile—that's the law! Consider well the pages of nature's revelation for in that book, as in the Bible, we find revealed a God of rigid law.

### *The Mother-earthers*

The “back-to-the-land” thing is old enough now for most people to know or know of folks who just couldn't handle the move to the country. The “mother-earthers”—for the most part—are like today's Christians: they sit at home reading the *Mother Earth News*, dreaming of a paradise where meat suddenly fills the freezer, canned goods miraculously appear on pantry shelves, wild fruits and nuts are found in the forest in bushel baskets, ready-picked, and the skies are not cloudy all day.

Let it never be said that these blithe spirits left their apartments for the country-life in any lack of love. They were chock full of love for mother-earth and all her little living things. The trouble was that no one told them that before the freezer fills with meat there is death, and stink, and viscera. No one told them about blisters, weeds, hail, and potato bugs. They left the pavement and city lights secure in the knowledge that in wildness is the preservation of the world, only to find that the law of the wild reads, “Conquer or die.” Christians are like that: they sit and read their Bibles and dream of paradise, and are surprised when they find they're dealing with a God who says, “This is the way it must be.”

Nowhere in nature do we find revealed a “mushy” God or a God who sets aside His law out of love. If you wander around at  $-70$  degrees with a heart full of love and praising God, that is how you’ll die—praising God, but you’ll die nevertheless. Consider, indeed, the severity of God! Love, then, seen properly, is not some greasy setting aside of the law on the part of God, but love is God’s letting you in on the truth that you must dress warmly at  $-70$ . You may not like the truth; you may not want to save enough money to buy an Eddie Bauer down coat, but God has loved you when He let you know to dress warmly. Grace, by the way, is when He gives you the ability to buy a down coat, and mercy is when God sends help if you get stuck at  $-70$ . But never, never, never is love to be understood as God giving you some special ability to cavort around naked in the snow in violation of the law of freezing. Consider well the severity of God! {116}

Closely akin to the matter of misunderstanding the relationship between God’s love and God’s law is the unwillingness on the part of goody-two-shoes Christians to understand the opposite of love—hate. The opposite of love is not law; the opposite of love is hate, and God does hate. “Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated.”

If a man doesn’t love what God loves and hate what God hates, then he will love what God hates and hate what God loves. There is no middle ground. Love without the law, or love that sets aside the law, or love that overlooks sin, becomes a love of evil, for the essence of sin is lawlessness. Christians who set aside the reproof of evil in the law, and who scorn the counsel of God unto righteousness that is His law, begin in simplicity and end in wickedness:

How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? ... Turn you at my reproof.... They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (Prov. 1:22–23, 30–32)

### *Logical End of Lawlessness*

All this is to but say that many “Christians” today are worshipping, not the God revealed in Scripture and nature, but a god of their own making. Think well on it: one worships the God who is there or one



worships an idol. That God could really be all that “strict” will come as a surprise to many, but that should not surprise us in an age like our own with leaders telling us that the study of God (theology) will divide us. Small wonder most Christians worship the Cosmic Blur.

Rudyard Kipling, in a telling passage that could be directed to the Church of today, notes the logical end of lawlessness:

Ever since Akela had been deposed, the Pack had been without a leader, hunting and fishing at their own pleasure. But they answered the call from habit; and some of them were lame from the traps they had fallen into, and some limped from shot wounds, and some were mangy from eating bad food, and many were missing. But they came to the Council Rock, all that were left of them, and saw Shere Khan's striped hide on the rock, and the huge claws dangling at the end of the empty dangling feet.

“Look well, O Wolves. Have I kept my word?” said Mowgli. And the wolves bayed, Yes, and one tattered wolf howled:

“Lead us again, O Akela. Lead us again, O Man-cub, for we be sick of this lawlessness, and we would be the Free People once more.” (*The Jungle Book* [Grosset & Dunlap, 1950], 109.)

Wolves or churchmen, it makes no difference; we worship, obey, and follow the God of Law, finding our freedom in His law-word, or we, like the wolf pack in Kipling's jungle, become lame and mangy. Witness, if you {117} will, the saltless church of today—poised for rapture out of a decadent culture, gathered in cozy little communities where all is peace and joy, or worst of all, blithely unaware of any problems. This is the “dispensation” of grease indeed!

Christian, realize that you're dealing with God who decrees and has decreed the law. He may and does accept simpletons but He doesn't take pleasure in them for long. He has given us a deposit—revelation—and on that deposit He expects a return. Many today are preaching unity, togetherness, community, for out of the collected wolf pack comes the voice (supposedly) of God. Nonsense! God has spoken. It is not the voice of God that we lack—it is obedience to God, who means what He says, that we lack. Success will not come overnight; we have come a long way downhill—with lots of grease on our skids. No matter how hard you shake your tambourine, no matter how many times you pray in tongues, no matter how many times you gloss over evil in the

name of love, the earth will tremble beneath our tread only when we are obedient to the Law of God.

That Law stands written in Scripture. We don't need clever men abounding with "spiritual" insights, we don't need wonder-workers, we don't even need unity, for that will come in God's good time. What we do need is to read and obey the law of God.

Fundamentalists are fond of calling the Bible "God's love-letter to men"—but do they even believe it? Modern dispensationalism has torn the "love-letter" in seven (or is it eight?) pieces. God grant us teachers who will give us the whole counsel of God! Christian, the love of God in no way stands opposed to His law-word. Reject all leadership and doctrine which leads you to believe there is any tension between the two. Reject grease and embrace the grace of God, which is the ability to obey His law-word.

# THE CHRISTIAN CASE AGAINST ABORTION

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*Kenneth L. Gentry Jr.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1967, Garrett Hardin, professor of biology at the University of California at Santa Barbara, wrote the following words (which at that time would have been considered quite shocking to most Americans): “My thesis is this: *any woman, at any time, should be able to procure a legal abortion without even giving a reason....* If my reasoning is correct, it is almost impossible to imagine circumstances in which society would be morally justified in withholding the right to abortion.”<sup>166</sup> Today his thesis is the law of the land, thanks to the Supreme Court of the United States.

A tremendous moral and legal upheaval has occurred in the United States since Professor Hardin’s thesis was presented in 1967. Evidence of the overwhelming success of the “abortion revolution” is best and most easily illustrated statistically. In 1969, two years after he wrote, there were 20,000 reported legal abortions in America.<sup>167</sup> The latest available government statistics put the number of abortions in America at 1,238,987 for 1980. This represents a ratio of 358 abortions for every 1,000 live births.<sup>168</sup> However, the Alan Guttmacher Institute projected the 1979 abortion level at 1,540,000.<sup>169</sup>

Thus in ten years legal abortions have increased by over 5,700 percent. To make matters worse, Willard Cates Jr., chief of the Abortion

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166. Garrett Hardin in Alan F. Guttmacher, ed., *The Case for Legalized Abortion Now* (Berkeley, CA: Diablo Press, 1967), 70.

167. Harold O. J. Brown, *Death Before Birth* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1977), 15.

168. *Annual Summary 1980 of the Reported Morbidity and Mortality in the United States*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 103.

169. Walter Isaacson, “The Battle Over Abortion,” *Time*, April 6, 1981, 22.

Surveillance Branch for Disease Control, has said: “We think we’re pretty lucky to have 85 percent of them [i.e., abortions] recorded.”<sup>170</sup> Former abortionist and cofounder of the radical National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws (1969), Bernard N. Nathanson, M.D., has noted that “in the period since the Supreme Court decisions abortion has become the most commonly performed surgical procedure on adults in the United States...”<sup>171</sup> {119}

The abortion issue is one which demands Christian involvement if Christians are even to begin to pretend to take seriously their calling to be the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:13–14). True civil justice is preeminently a Christian concern, for as the writer of Proverbs 24:11–12 warns: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth the soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works?”

The abortion controversy is not only of momentous concern to the Christian in terms of the number of innocent human lives being snuffed out, but also due to the broader cultural and legal ramifications it has in terms of the Christian community at large. The abortion revolution represents only the tip of the iceberg of secular humanism which is slowly wearing down the principle of freedom of religion and diminishing the hope of Christian cultural transformation in this age. Francis Schaeffer put it well when he said:

Recent history shows us the unthinkable today can through callousness become the thinkable tomorrow. To fail on this question of abortion will be the failure of the greatest moral test of the century. It is my serious opinion that this could possibly be the last chance for Christians to stop our society from becoming totally secular and humanistic. If Christians do not take this opportunity to take up leadership, I doubt if we will get another.<sup>172</sup>

The January 22, 1973, *Roe v. Wade*<sup>173</sup> U.S. Supreme Court decision made the abortion revolution complete by instituting abortion-on-

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170. Cited in Linda Bird Francke, *The Ambivalence of Abortion* (New York: Random House, 1978), 16.

171. Bernard N. Nathanson, *Aborting America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 270.

demand as the law of the land. The landmark *Roe* decision is the watershed which radically divided American ethico-cultural history in terms of this significant moral issue. Before *Roe*, America was essentially an antiabortion society; since *Roe* it has become a proabortion society—with all that that entails.<sup>174</sup> That *Roe* was in fact an abortion-on-demand edict is seen not only from the resultant dramatic increase in abortions, but also from Associate Justice Byron White's dissent in which he stated that *Roe* allowed abortion “for any ... reason or no reason.”

*Roe v. Wade* represents a major and disturbing breach with legal trends in American jurisprudence. As such it is a classic demonstration of the {120} ascendancy of arbitrary, existential law. In 1957, Glanville Williams (a proabortion activist somewhat later) commented on the then prevailing tendency in law in terms of the unborn:

At present both English law and the law of the great majority of the United States regard any interference with pregnancy, however early it may take place, as criminal, unless for therapeutic reasons. The fetus is a human life to be protected by criminal law from the moment when the ovum is fertilized.<sup>175</sup>

Well over a decade later, attorney Douglas Strip wrote much the same thing in an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*:

... the law of property ... grants to a fetus yet unborn a conditional legal personality. That is to say, if a fetus is subsequently born alive it may immediately receive a legacy, obtain an injunction, have a guardian, or even be an executor, even though it was at the critical moment, en ventre sa mere.

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172. From the present writer's notes taken at the December 4, 1979, Francis Schaeffer lecture at the “Whatever Happened to the Human Race?” film seminar in Nashville, Tennessee.

173. *Roe v. Wade* 410 U.S. 113 (1973). For an excellent, nontechnical summary of *Roe* see Brown, *Death Before Birth*, chap. 4, and C. Everett Koop, *The Right to Live; The Right to Die* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1976), 34–43.

174. Harold O. J. Brown and others have noted that the substantial gains achieved by the late 1960s and early 1970s by the abortion rights movement were only precariously held and were in serious danger of being washed away—until *Roe*, that is. Cf. Brown, *Death Before Birth*, 14.

175. Glanville Williams, *The Sanctity of Life and Criminal Law* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1957), 149.

Moreover, according to a steadily growing number of recent cases in the area of tort law, a fetus can maintain an action for the death of a parent while it is still in utero. It has been recently held by several courts that an action can be maintained on behalf of the child who was born deformed because of prenatal injuries negligently inflicted upon it; and, that an action can be maintained against a tort-feasor if the child dies—regardless of whether the death occurred before or after birth.

Moreover, as early as 1965 eight American courts when dealing with cases in tort law followed a biological approach and now hold that life begins at conception; thereby according legal personality to the zygote.<sup>176</sup>

Yet, in keeping with the radical nature of *Roe*, Justice Blackmun defended abortion as a *constitutional right* not only in despite to legal precedent, but also by side-stepping the most crucial questions involved in the matter. Blackmun's majority opinion stated: "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins...." Subsequent to the issuance of *Roe* there was widespread legal criticism from a host of prominent legal authorities, including Harvard Law School's Archibald Cox<sup>177</sup> and John Hart Ely,<sup>178</sup> the University of Texas's Professor of Jurisprudence Joseph P. Witherspoon,<sup>179</sup> Notre Dame Law School's dean J. O'Meara,<sup>180</sup> University of [121] California's Professor of Law John T. Noonon Jr.,<sup>181</sup> and others.<sup>182</sup> For example, Cox commented that

... the opinion fails even to consider what I suppose to be the most compelling interest of the state in prohibiting abortion: the interest in

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176. Douglas Strip, "Questions and Answers: When Does Life Begin?" *Journal of the American Medical Association* 214:10 (December 7, 1970): 1893. Cf. also Edwin Patterson's *Law in a Scientific Age* (1963), 35.

177. Archibald Cox, *The Role of the Supreme Court in American Government* (New York: Oxford, 1976), 57ff.

178. Cited in Nathanson, *Aborting America*, 261.

179. J. Witherspoon in *Texas Tech Law Review*, vol. 6 (1974–1975).

180. J. O'Meara in *Human Life Review* 1:4 (1975).

181. J. T. Noonon Jr., "Why A Constitutional Amendment?" *Human Life Review* 1:2 (1975).

182. Cf. discussion in Brown, *Death Before Birth*, 77ff.; Nathanson, *Aborting America*, 260ff.; and Koop, *Right to Live*, 34–43.

maintaining that respect for the paramount sanctity of human life which has always been at the centre of Western civilization.<sup>183</sup>

Interestingly, the breach with legal history was so radical, unexpected, and ill-defended that even Bernard Nathanson, while an abortion rights advocate, was taken aback at the magnitude of the abortionists' victory before the Court. In his semiautobiographical *Aborting America*, he wrote:

I was pleased with Justice Harry Blackmun's abortion decisions, which were an unbelievably sweeping triumph for our cause, far broader than our 1970 victory in New York or the advances since then. I was pleased with Blackmun's *conclusions*, that is. I could not plumb the ethical or medical reasoning that had produced the conclusions. Our final victory had been propped up on a misreading of obstetrics, gynecology, and embryology, and that is a dangerous way to win....<sup>184</sup>

Clearly, *Roe* represented a miscarriage of justice that effected a radical discontinuity with traditional Western jurisprudence. Furthermore, in his majority opinion Blackmun specifically discounted arguments which were in any way based upon conclusions drawn from the Judeo-Christian ethico-legal tradition. He even went so far as to discredit the validity of the Hippocratic Oath's statement against abortion on the grounds that it was popularized mainly due to Christian influence. He noted instead that "ancient religion did not bar abortion." Such an argument demonstrates what most Americans are only gradually realizing: *America is in the midst of a radical de-Christianization*. American social mores are being shifted from their traditional Christian ethical base to a wholly secular, humanistic one. Indeed, David Louisell, while Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, noted that *Roe* was almost the "perfect challenge" to Christianity.<sup>185</sup> Harold O.J. Brown concedes that *Roe v. Wade* has confronted us with the formal challenge of paganism.<sup>186</sup> Blackmun was historically correct in noting the strong Christian influence on anti-abortion {122} sentiments in Western culture.<sup>187</sup> The tremendous

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183. Cox, *Role of the Supreme Court*, 53.

184. Nathanson, *Aborting America*, 159.

185. Cited in Harold O.J. Brown, "Legal Aspects of the Right to Life," in *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, ed. Richard L. Ganz (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1978), 123.

186. *Ibid.*, 124.

impact of Christianity on the development of Western culture and jurisprudence is well-attested.<sup>188</sup> In light of the fact that Christianity has been the major formative influence at work molding Western civilization, it should be obvious that its role will be diminished today only at great cost. That cost doubtless will be the total reorientation of America's entire sociopolitical order. Such would be extremely dangerous, for as Paul G. Kauper, distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, has commented: the "Judeo-Christian understanding of the worth and dignity of man...has much to say in defining the ethos of our democratic order."<sup>189</sup> *As Christianity goes, so goes our political order.*

In light of the prominence of Christianity's influence in our society and law, Malcolm Muggeridge has written:

The abortion issue raises the question of the very destiny and purpose of life itself; of whether our human society is to be seen in Christian terms as a family with a loving father who is God, or a factory-farm whose primary consideration must be the physical well-being of the livestock and the material well-being of the collectivity.<sup>190</sup>

In an interesting article in the *British Medical Journal* a few years back, Sir Roger Ormrod noted:

Codes of ethics, like the Highway Code and the Ten Commandments, receive very little consideration once the "L" plates are taken down. This is not because they are ignored, but because they have been absorbed and have become part of our way of life which we do not think about and feel that we have no need to think about unless and until a crisis is upon us.... When the profession as a whole has to face

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187. That Christianity has historically promoted an antiabortion ethic is easily demonstrable. Rushdoony has cited a variety of historical documents in support of this thesis, including the *Didache* and writings by such prominent early Christian theologians as Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Basil, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine. See Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, NJ: Craig Press, 1973), 264–65.

188. E.g., William E.H. Lecky, *A History of Western Morals* (New York: Brasiller, 1955) and Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1976).

189. Paul G. Kauper, *Religion and the Constitution* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1964), 85.

190. Malcolm Muggeridge, "What the Abortion Argument is About," *Human Life Review* 1:3 (1975): 4.



new and difficult problems such as abortion, euthanasia, or the transplanting of organs there is a sudden revival of interest in the code of ethics.... The medical profession is approaching a crisis of this kind at the present time. The Western World is changing over from a community or communities based more or less firmly on what is called the Christian Ethic—which, however vaguely defined, is and has always been perceived as a powerful force in shaping conduct of all kinds—to {123} one based on humanist or sociological principles.<sup>191</sup>

C. D. Leake brought some similarly important observations to the attention of the medical profession when he reviewed a medical colloquium on ethical dilemmas in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. He noted that one participant cited atomic scientist Robert J. Oppenheimer as saying: “I believe the strength and soundness of Christian sensibility, the meaning of love and charity, have changed the world as least as much as technological development.” The speaker cited went on to add:

If we accept the importance of continuity with the past, Dr. Oppenheimer’s words, which sound more like something coming from a theologian than a scientist, should give pause about making any drastic changes or departures from the basic Judeo-Christian concepts of ethics and morals that are the foundation of all the law of Western civilization.<sup>192</sup>

Few statements have been so bold and clear in speaking to the relationship of abortion advocacy to Western culture as the following one cited by the Christian Action Council:

Jerome Lejune, a French geneticist of international renown, reports that a prominent European pro-abortionist flatly stated: “We are fighting to destroy Judeo-Christian society and civilization. To destroy it we have to destroy the family. We have to destroy its weakest point and the weakest point of the family is the unborn child. Hence, we are for abortion.”<sup>193</sup>

Doubtless the “prominent European pro-abortionist” finds a sympathetic, if not so bold, spirit embodied in the *Roe v. Wade* decision.

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191. Sir Roger Ormrod, “Medical Ethics,” *British Medical Journal* 2 (April 6, 1968): 7.

192. C. D. Leake, “Technical Triumphs and Moral Muddles,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 67 (1967): supplement 7.

193. *Action Line* 4:4 (June 1, 1980): 3.

Many strong secular arguments against abortion have been published, such as Thomas Hilgers and Dennis J. Horan's *Abortion and Social Justice* (1972), Baruch Brody's *Abortion and the Sanctity of Human Life* (1976), and Bernard Nathanson's *Aborting America* (1979). Nevertheless, due to both the infallible character of revealed Christianity and the necessity of having epistemologically defensible presuppositional foundations for moral discourse, it is imperative that a distinctly Christian position against abortion be outlined. Thankfully, there are several excellent publications from a Christian perspective, such as Clifford Bajema's *Abortion and the Meaning of Personhood* (1974), Harold O.J. Brown's *Death Before Birth* (1977), Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop's {124} *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979), and others. In light of the fact that there are already available several Christian analyses of abortion, the present article will seek to accomplish two limited purposes: (1) to *emphasize* the two fundamental issues involved in the ethics of abortion, and (2) to *develop* the Christian position regarding these two issues more fully than any current studies have done.

## 2. THE GENESIS OF INDIVIDUAL HUMAN LIFE

The initial and most fundamental question which must be confronted in the debate regarding the morality of abortion is the very one which the U.S. Supreme Court refused to consider: *At what point in time does human life begin?* No argument for or against abortion can be taken seriously which is not informed by this prime consideration.

In seeking to resolve this crucial question a great variety of argumentative data has been explored, including data from such realms as mathematics (e.g., John T. Noonan Jr.), sociology (e.g., Mary Anne Warren), biology (e.g., Bernard Nathanson), genetics (e.g., James Humber), philosophy (e.g., Baruch Brody), and theology (e.g., John Frame), as well as others. The conclusions elicited from these studies have been used not only to determine whether fetuses possess human life or not, but also comatose patients, mental incompetents, physical defectives, the elderly, and other groups. Actually, in light of man's instinctive awareness and society's historic concern, it would be more accurate to say such arguments have been employed negatively in an attempt to *deny* that certain classes of persons possess human life. The

question before us is not one capable of resolution via democratic survey, as some are inclined to think.<sup>194</sup> Due to the potential far-reaching moral and social consequences which can result from such research (e.g., abortion, infanticide, genocide, euthanasia, genetic engineering, cloning, organ farming, etc.) the question's resolution requires rigorous ethical argumentation based on and consistent with adequate presuppositions.

Until recent times it was largely taken for granted that the fetus possessed human life. This assumption is questioned on all sides today, however. Unfortunately, even some of the most conservative and staunchly pro-life Christian scholars have recently expressed doubt as to whether or not it can be *demonstrably argued* that the fetus possesses personhood. Reformed scholar John M. Frame, who vigorously opposes abortion for any reason (except *possibly* the impending danger of the death of the mother), has written: "There is no way to prove, either from Scripture or from science or from some combination of the two, that the unborn child *is* a human person from the point of conception."<sup>195</sup> {125}

The question concerning the status of the fetus has, in terms of recent negative research, become unnecessarily complicated due to the dehumanizing direction of rebellious man's technological advances. Despite Frame's concern, the present article will seek to answer the question in terms of the scientific evidences as they are considered against the backdrop of Scripture.

### A. The Scientific Data

The present age is one which has seen the scientist elevated in the minds of many virtually to the level of omniscient and omnipotent deity. Increasingly "Technocratic Man" has become more confident that *all* of life's issues will find resolution in the laboratory. Such is a false hope doomed to failure.

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194. E.g., Andie L. Knutson, "When Does Human Life Begin? Viewpoints of Public Health Professionals," *American Journal of Public Health* 57:12 (December 1967): 2163ff.

195. John M. Frame, "Abortion from a Biblical Perspective," in Ganz, *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, 60.

Nevertheless, science does play an important role in the proper subduing of the earth. Thus, technical data gleaned from the life sciences deserve due consideration.

The scientific data touching on the issue of the beginning of human life are clearly quite supportive of the pro-life contention that human life begins at conception. As a matter of fact, the material from the objective sciences is *so* supportive that it is obvious why the current discussion is shifting to the subjective pseudoscientific fields, such as psychology and sociology. Below will follow a brief, and hopefully illuminating, survey of the various scientific pronouncements relevant to the issue of the genesis of individual human life.

In a medical text widely used in embryological studies in colleges of medicine, Bradley M. Patten has observed in very simple and dogmatic terminology that “*fertilization ... marks the initiation of the life of a new individual*” and that fertilization “*can be said to have occurred when the chromosomes from the male and female pronuclei become aggregated together...*”<sup>196</sup> Hymie Gordon, while Chief Geneticist at the Mayo Clinic, wrote in the *South African Medical Journal* that

...from the moment of fertilization, when the deoxyribose nucleic acids from the spermatozoon and the ovum come together to form the zygote, the pattern of the individual’s constitutional development is irrevocably determined.... Even at that early stage, the complexity of the living cell is so great that it is beyond our comprehension. It is a privilege to be allowed to protect and nurture it.<sup>197</sup>

Ashly Montagu, a geneticist who has taught at Harvard and Rutgers, agrees when he writes: “The basic fact is simple: life begins, not at birth, but at {126} conception.”<sup>198</sup> Louis Fridhandler, contributor to a medical textbook entitled *Biology of Gestation*, speaks of fertilization as “that wondrous moment that marks the beginning of life for a new unique individual...”<sup>199</sup> E. L. Potter and J. M. Craig write in their technical *Pathology of the Fetus and the Infant*: “Every time a sperm cell

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196. Bradley M. Patten, *Human Embryology*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), 43–44.

197. Hymie Gordon, “Genetical, Social and Medical Aspects of Abortion,” *South African Medical Journal* (July 28, 1968). Cited in Thomas W. Hilgers and Dennis J. Horan, *Abortion and Social Justice* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1972), 5.

198. Ashley Montagu, *Life Before Birth* (New York: Signet Books, 1977), vi.

and ovum unite a new being is created which is alive and will continue to live unless its death is brought about by some specific condition.”<sup>200</sup>

A popular photographic series on human embryology in a 1965 edition of *Life* magazine asserted the same fact: “The birth of a human life really occurs at the moment the mother’s egg is fertilized by one of the father’s sperm cells.”<sup>201</sup> Landrum B. Shettles, of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, wrote in 1970:

Concerning when life begins, a particular aggregate of hereditary tendencies (genes and chromosomes) is first assembled at the moment of fertilization when an ovum is invaded by a spermatozoon. This restores the normal number of required chromosomes, 46, for survival, growth, and reproduction of a new composite individual.

By this definition a new composite individual is started at the moment of fertilization.<sup>202</sup>

Bart T. Heffernan, Director of the Calvin Heart Center and Chief of the Department of Medicine at St. Francis Hospital, Evanston, Illinois, has written that:

From conception the child is a complex, dynamic rapidly growing individual. By a natural and continuous process the single fertilized ovum will, over approximately nine months, develop into the trillions of cells of the newborn. The natural end of the sperm and ovum is death unless fertilization occurs. At fertilization a new and unique individual is created which, although receiving one-half of *its* chromosomes from each parent, is really unlike either.<sup>203</sup>

In an address to the United Nations World Population Conference in Budapest in 1974, Andre E. Hellegers, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Professor of Physiology and Biophysics at Georgetown University, said:

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199. Louis Fridhandler, “Gametogenesis to Implantation,” *Biology of Gestation* vVol. 1, ed. N. S. Assau (New York: Academic Press, 1968), 76.

200. E. L. Potter and J. M. Craig, *Pathology of the Fetus and the Infant*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1975), vii.

201. “Life Before Birth,” *Life*, April 30, 1965, 57.

202. Landrum B. Shettles, “Questions and Answers: When Does Life Begin?” *Journal of the American Medical Association* (December 7, 1970): 1895.

203. Bart T. Heffernan, “The Early Biography of Everyman,” in Hilgers and Horan, *Abortion and Social Justice*, 4.

I believe that in abortion human life is indeed killed.... Each life {127} biologically begins at conception.... Biologically, all species are identified by their genetic composition and the fetus is human from conception. In brief it is a *biological human being*.

In brief, I would hold that the human, including the fetus, should be assessed genetically rather than sociologically, economically, or relationally. The analysis is objective, rather than subjective.<sup>204</sup>

In the fall of 1967, the First International Congress on Abortion, held in Washington, D.C., was attended by sixty prominent medical authorities. This Congress adopted the following statement: "We can find no point in time between the union of sperm and egg and the birth of an infant at which point we can say that this is not a human life."

Such data as that above has led theologian Harold O. J. Brown to seriously ask: "... if a fetus is not a human being, what, then, is it? Certainly it is not a vegetable or mineral, nor is it a fish or fowl."<sup>205</sup> Delving somewhat more deeply into the reasons for making such scientific pronouncements as previously cited, and demonstrating the reasonableness of Brown's query, Gordon Bourne has written:

The newly fertilized egg has twenty-three pairs of chromosomes of which half come from the mother and half from the father, thus creating a new individual with its own particular blueprint of genes which every cell in his body will contain the whole of his life.<sup>206</sup>

French medical researcher Jules Carles has made some additional important observations in light of such genetic data:

The first cell [formed by sperm-and-egg union] is already the embryo of an autonomous living being with individual hereditary patrimony, such that if we knew the nature of the spermatozoid and the chromosomes involved, we could already at that point predict the characteristics of the child, the future color of his hair, and the illnesses to which he would be subject. In his mother's womb, where he will grow, he will not accept everything she brings to him: thereby he will realize his hereditary patrimony. In that first cell the profound dynamism and

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204. Andre E. Hellegers, "Abortion: 'Another Form of Birth Control'?" *Human Life Review* (n.d.), 23–24.

205. Brown, *Death Before Birth*, 34.

206. Gordon Bourne, *Pregnancy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 55.

the precise direction of life appears.... In spite of its fragility and its immense needs, an autonomous and genuinely living being has come into existence.... It is rather surprising to see certain physicians speak here of “potential life” as if the fertilized egg began its real life when it nests in the uterus. Modern biology does not deny the importance of nidation, but it sees it only as a condition—indispensable, to be sure—for the *development* of the embryo and the *continuation* of a life already in existence.<sup>207</sup> {128}

Eric Bleschmidt’s technical medical research explains the issue even more clearly and in greater detail. His words bear lengthy consideration:

A one-celled human ovum has a mass of about 0.0004 mg. After about two weeks growth the gradually visible anlage of the embryo measures only about 0.2 mm. And yet in these small dimensions something characteristically human may already be discovered. The knowledge of the physical changes of the tiny primitive organs gives us insight into the beginnings of individual human performances and the fundamental functions of organs.<sup>208</sup>

He adds later that:

The cells which we know in the adult are undoubtedly the descendants of a *human* ovum cell. He who has the rare opportunity to see a fertilized human ovum cell and compare it with, say, monkey ova, recognizes that even in these early stages they differ significantly. The early peculiarity of the human ovum is a prerequisite for the later peculiarity of the human embryo, of the child, and of the adult.<sup>209</sup>

The question why a human ovum develops into a man while another ovum becomes another organism... has often been discussed. There is today a clear answer: because the human ovum is a human being and the chicken egg is something essentially different, namely the egg of a chicken.

A human ovum possesses human chromosomes as genetic carriers, not chicken or fish. This is now manifest; the evidence no longer allows a discussion as to if and when and in what month of

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207. Jules Caries, *La fécondation*, 5th ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), 81–82. Translated and cited by John W. Montgomery in *Journal of the American Medical Association* (December 7, 1970), 1893–94.

208. Eric Bleschmidt, *The Beginnings of Human Life* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1977), 2–3.

209. *Ibid.*, 15.

ontogenesis a human being is formed. To be a human being is decided at the moment of fertilization of the ovum. For this reason we have to regard the intrinsic quality of the fertilized ovum as an essential prerequisite, decisive for all subsequent ontogenesis.

... The often-repeated question of why the human ovum produces a man is therefore wrongly put. Man does not *become* man; he *is* man and behaves as such from the very commencement and in each phase of development from fertilization onward.

... The young germ develops as a human germ and not as an undefined something from which later—perhaps by accident—a man can arise. A human germ is not a product to which, later on, the attribute of humanity can be added.<sup>210</sup>

In dealing with abortion as a moral issue, conclusions of scientific research do have a significant bearing and should not be discounted altogether—and certainly they should not be wholly overlooked. Many works on ethics recognize such data. For example, Professor Alan Donagan of the University of Chicago has written in his *The Theory of Morality*: “The question of when the life of a human being begins is a biological one, {129} since human beings are rational *animals*: and biology answers it simply and unequivocally: a human life begins at conception when the new being conceives the genetic code.”<sup>211</sup> Paul Ramsey, Christian ethicist and Professor of Religion at Princeton, likewise employs the scientific data in his ethical argumentation:

Thus it might be said that in all essential respects the individual is whoever he is going to become from the moment of impregnation. He already is this while not knowing this or anything else. Thereafter, his subsequent development cannot be described as becoming something he is not now. It can only be described as a process of achieving, a process of becoming the one he already is. Genetics teaches us that we were from the beginning what we essentially still are in every cell and in every generally human attribute and in every individual attribute.<sup>212</sup>

210. *Ibid.*, 15–16. Cf. also his discussion on 25, 29–30.

211. Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 183.

212. Paul Ramsey, “Points in Deciding About Abortion,” in *The Morality of Abortion: Legal and Historical Perspectives*, ed. John T. Noonan Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 66–67.



Interestingly, the scientific data are so strongly supportive of the position that human life begins at conception that an editorial in *California Medicine* noted:

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as anything but the taking of human life would be ludicrous if not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

It further stated:

Since the old ethic has not been fully displaced it has been necessary to separate the idea of abortion from the idea of killing, which continues to be socially abhorrent. The result has been a curious avoidance of the scientific fact, which everyone really knows, that human life beings at conception and is continuous, whether intra- or extra-uterine, until death.<sup>213</sup>

It would seem, then, that in terms of “objective science” the issue of the genesis of individual human life is clearly demonstrated to be at the point of conception. It is lamentable that modern society—which so prides itself in being scientific—refuses to maintain laws that protect the unborn in spite of the scientific data.

### ***B. The Biblical Data***

Having pointed out that the best scientific research is indicative of the existence of human life in utero, it still must be recognized that the issue cannot properly be conceived of as a purely scientific one. It is crucial that science be not mistakenly construed to be a final court of appeal. It is necessarily {130} the case that scientific endeavor must be conducted within and scientific data must be interpreted in terms of a fundamental philosophy of science. Not being an independent discipline, science therefore cannot be a final authority. Furthermore, by the very nature of the case science has strict limitations necessarily inherent within it. The scientist can only investigate the objective-material realm; he can make no final pronouncements regarding other realms, such as the spiritual or ethical, which are just as much a part of reality. Consequently, Frame’s warning to pro-lifers must be taken to heart:

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213. “A New Ethic for Medicine and Society,” *California Medicine* (September 1970): 68.

At the outset it must be seriously asked whether any narrowly scientific argument could possibly, even in principle, establish whether the unborn child is or is not a human person. The question of whether the unborn child is a human person is essentially the question of whether, from God's point of view, the child has an ontological status entitling him to a full human right to life. The question is religious, metaphysical, and ethical.<sup>214</sup>

Thus, even though the conclusions of scientific research are important, nevertheless, the question of personal status of embryonic life must be investigated in terms of a discipline better suited for metaphysical discourse. Scientific evidence cannot stand alone. For the Christian this will mean that a consideration of the biblical data will be required. The question at this point becomes: what saith the Scriptures? The following survey of scriptural data will be limited to a consideration of the arguments drawn from three key passages.

### 1. The Argument from Psalm 139

The 139th Psalm has long been recognized as one of the loftiest in the entire Psalter.<sup>215</sup> Most commentators agree with Aben Ezra's designation of this Psalm as the "crown of all Psalms." Its lofty theological content and stylistic beauty are not all that bids our attention. It has also received considerable attention of late in regard to the abortion debate.

Presently the primary employment of Psalm 139 is twofold: (1) to demonstrate the intimacy of God's involvement and concern with human life during fetal development, and (2) to demonstrate embryonic personhood by means of pronominal inference. Doubtless, its primary utility is its relevance in establishing the fact of embryonic personhood. However, despite its frequent citation in the latter connection, Frame has discounted its usefulness in providing argumentative demonstration of the personal status of the fetus. He warns that a reliance on mere pronominal inference reads too much into the Psalm: {131}

As we have seen, in these passages personal pronouns are used to refer to life in the womb—"me," "my," "thou," "thee." From this premise it has been argued that these passages regard the unborn children in

214. Frame, "Abortion," 57.

215. W. S. Plummer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, [1867] 1975), 1161.

question as human persons, and that personhood goes back to conception. Such an argument, however, reads too much into these passages. In the first place, if the fetus were not a person from conception, it is not clear that the writers would have avoided the personal pronouns.... In the second place, we have seen that according to Jeremiah 1:5 and other passages the “personal continuity” of a man’s life extends in a sense not only back to conception, but even *before* his conception.<sup>216</sup>

Frame’s hesitancy in using Psalm 139 thus deserves careful consideration. It is true that the simple employment of a personal pronoun does not establish the existence of personhood. For instance, Job 10:10 refers pronominally to the *sperm* that led to Job’s conception: “Didst Thou not pour *me* out like milk, and curdle me like cheese?”<sup>217</sup> But I do not believe that the personhood argument has been fully pursued in research heretofore. There is a wealth of exegetical evidences supportive of fetal personhood within Psalm 139 that has simply been overlooked. These evidences need to be explicated in terms of this vital question. At this point lengthy consideration will be given this Psalm in demonstration of its supreme usefulness in the debate. In light of the following considerations, I believe Psalm 139 to be the *locus classicus* for the personhood debate, in contrast to Frame’s indication that Psalm 51:5 probably is.<sup>218</sup>

To begin with, it is imperative that the thematic thrust of the Psalm be duly grasped. This Psalm has been widely used in terms of its material for theology proper, i.e., its references to the divine attributes of omniscience and omnipresence. Despite its valuable material in this regard, the *ethical* purpose of the Psalm seems to be its overriding theme. The theological material concerning the divine attributes is mentioned and developed in order to heighten its ethical purpose. And this dominating ethical purpose is relevant to the issue at hand.

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216. Frame, “Abortion,” 57.

217. For a discussion of the issue regarding the “milk” here as being the sperm, see: Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *Job*, ed. C. F. Keil and G. B. Gray; *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, of *The International Critical Commentary*, ed. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, reprinted 1977), 100.

218. Frame, “Abortion,” 61.

J. A. Alexander has well-noted that the theme of the Psalm is “to be regarded as a confession and profession made not merely for himself [King David] but for his successors on the throne of Israel, and intended both to warn them and console them by this grand view of Jehovah’s constant and {132} infallible inspection.”<sup>219</sup> It is about God’s perfect knowledge of man as a free moral agent living before a holy God. The main point of the Psalm is not merely that God is everywhere present and all-knowing; but that God is everywhere that David the *free moral agent can go*, that God knows everything that David the *responsible person knows or thinks*. God’s presence and knowledge are His presence and knowledge as they relate to free moral agency and moral accountability. Along these lines Kidner has commented that

This divine knowledge is not merely comprehensive, like that of some receptor that misses nothing, capturing everything alike. It is personal and active: discerning us (2b); sifting us (3a)... ; knowing our minds ... (2b, 4); surrounding us ... , handling us (5).<sup>220</sup>

Consequently, the first verse is understood to contain “the sum of the whole Psalm.”<sup>221</sup> “O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me.” The divine inspection of this personal moral agent is prominently expressed in the opening words.

The word for “search” in verse 1 is the Hebrew *haqar*, which means to dig in search of something, as for precious metals (e.g., Job 28:3). It is employed here “metaphorically to a moral inquisition into guilt.... It is here used in the intermediate sense of full investigation.”<sup>222</sup> This awareness gives birth to a sense of fear in David in light of his own sinful condition and conduct. Thus, David, as it were, attempts to *flee the holy presence of the Lord* in the first stanzas. The Psalmist’s attempt at flight herein is so prominent that one biblical scholar, Father Sanchez, attributed its authorship to Jonah in light of Jonah’s flight in Jonah 1:3. Interestingly, the Gelineau version gives this Psalm the heading “The

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219. J. A. Alexander, *The Psalms, Translated and Explained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, [1873] 1977), 538.

220. Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 464.

221. E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Psalms*, in *The Works of Hengstenberg*, vol. 7 (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack, n.d.), 494.

222. Alexander, *Psalms*.

Hound of Heaven,” as in Francis Thompson’s famous poem.<sup>223</sup> The desire for escape from God’s searching presence clearly dominates most of the first two stanzas.<sup>224</sup>

And no wonder! Consider the extent of God’s exhaustive knowledge of the Psalmist’s every word, thought, and deed: verses 2 through 4 read: “Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, Thou dost know it all.” The actions {133} here listed are representative of the totality of the various motions of human life and conduct, as in Psalms 1:1 and 27:2. Delitzsch has noted that *rea* (“thought”) expressed “the totality or sum of the life of the spirit and soul of man” and *derek* (“ways,” v. 3b) “the sum of human action.”<sup>225</sup> God scrutinizes (3a) man’s life and fully knows its every aspect. He is not too far away to prohibit the knowledge of man’s innermost thoughts (2a, cf. Job 22:12–14; Jer. 23:23–24) or to consider his every word (v. 4, cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 12:36–37).

Consequently, this realization prompts his desire to escape, as related in verses 5 and following. Verse 5 reads: “Thou hast enclosed me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me.” Here, according to Cohen, he feels that “God has, as it were, besieged him so that there is no escape,”<sup>226</sup> just as Job felt in his own situation (cf. Job 3:23; 13:27; 14:5, 13, 16; 19:8). And, as Weiser has noted, “this is a perception which at first is not so much cheering as depressing.”<sup>227</sup> Such a perception on God’s part is incomprehensible to David (v. 6).

With verse 7, the Psalmist begins the second stanza (vv. 7–12) which poetically searches all possible avenues of escape from God—but to no

223. Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 464.

224. See for example: Kidner, *Ibid.*, and Edward J. Young, *Psalm 139: A Devotional and Expository Study* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), 56, 66.

225. Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 3, *The Psalms*, 345. See also: Hengstenberg, *The Psalms*, 495.

226. A. Cohen, *The Psalms* (London: Soncino Press, 1950), 452. See also: Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 347, and J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, [1878] 1976), 439.

227. Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 803.

avail: “Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night, Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee.”

Whether or not the talk of flight is a “literary device to dramatize God’s ubiquity,”<sup>228</sup> the point is clear: “the uncanny and overwhelming impression which the divine presence produces on him afflicts him.”<sup>229</sup> Clearly, the ethical thrust of this passage is quite powerful. Calvin has emphasized this point:

They misapply this passage who adduce it as a proof of the immensity of God’s essence; for though it be an undoubted truth that the glory of God fills heaven and earth, this was not at present in the view of the Psalmist, but the truth that God’s eye penetrates heaven and hell, so {134} that, hide in what obscure corner of the world he might, he must be discovered by him.<sup>230</sup>

With this in mind we arrive at the third stanza (vv. 13–18) which deals expressly with the point at issue. The foregoing study emphasizing the ethical thrust of the Psalm was vital to the following argument, as will be shown. It demonstrated that man’s responsibility as a *morally accountable person* is inescapable. Stanza three, rather than dropping this ethical intent, intensifies it. Stanza three reads: “For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. How precious

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228. Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 464.

229. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, 803.

230. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua and Psalms*, in *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: A. and A., n.d.), 1103.

also are Thy thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with Thee.”

Kidner,<sup>231</sup> M’Caw,<sup>232</sup> and others see this stanza as a shifting of its ethical concern from the realm of space to the realm of time in terms of David’s perpetual openness before God. Yet, still David is unable to avoid accountability unto God. The “for” shows that what precedes (i.e., the holy searching of God and the fleeing of David) is continued in what follows; it ties the two stanzas together. M’Caw’s comments are revealing:

In his search for a way of escape from God it almost seems as though the psalmist is saying: “All my life I have been within thy view, thy reach and thy knowledge. My only hope lies in my unconscious life. I cannot trace its present extent but I can go back to that initial period when, within my mother’s womb, I had no knowledge of my own existence and maybe then thou also wast unaware of me...”<sup>233</sup>

His *flight from ethical responsibility* before the Most Holy takes him back in time to his *antenatal development*. But, alas, he finds the darkness of the womb is no hindrance to God’s searching eye, just as the preceding mention of darkness in verses 11 and 12 was not. As a matter of fact, God was actively at work in the darkness of his mother’s womb (v. 13). David was *not* “hidden” (v. 15) in his earliest beginning (which poetically compares the dark womb to the “depths of the earth,” cf. v. 15 with v. 8).<sup>234</sup> That from {135} which the Psalmist desires escape—i.e., accountability to God—stretches back to his personal beginning in time and history in his mother’s womb, just as it reaches forward throughout all the days of his life (v. 16). *David considered himself as a morally accountable person under the scrutiny of God even while in the womb*. Only persons are morally accountable beings.

231. Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 465.

232. Leslie S. M’Caw, “The Psalms,” in *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis Davidson (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, reprinted 1968), 507.

233. *Ibid.*

234. Hengstenberg has noted that the “depths of the earth” “has to do here only with what took place in his mother’s womb.” It is “an abbreviated comparison, in a place, as dark and concealed as the depths of the earth.” *The Psalms*, 501.

This point of personal moral accountability in the womb is not just suggested by the thematic drift of the Psalm, but also by the order and content of the subject matter treated of in verses 13 and following. Notice that man's "inward parts" (NASV) or "reins" (AV) receive initial mention in this discussion of his embryonic formation: "For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb..." (v. 13). This is significant to the discussion. The Hebrew word *kilyah* ("inward parts, reins, kidneys") here employed is commonly used in poetry to designate the "seat of emotion and affection ... hence, as involving character, the obj[ect] of God's examination."<sup>235</sup> Preisker notes, "The 'reins' are the hidden parts, Ps. 138:13 [sic], where a. grief is most bitter (Job 16:13), b. conscience sits (Ps. 15:7), and c. there is the deepest spiritual distress, cf. Ps. 72:21..."<sup>236</sup> The significance of *kilyah* here is widely noted by commentators as indicative of personal moral status. Note the following citations regarding the term's meaning. J. J. Stewart Perowne has written: "It seems to denote the sensational and emotional part of the human being, as afterwards 'the bones' denote the framework of the body"<sup>237</sup> S. R. Driver interprets it as "the inward man."<sup>238</sup> E. W. Hengstenberg commented that "the reins are known as the seat of the desires and feelings, the region where sinful passion boils, and where pain also plants its seat."<sup>239</sup> J. A. Alexander noted in his discussion of this verse:

The meaning of his first clause seems to be: thou hast in thy power and at thy control the very seat of my strongest sensibilities, my pains and pleasures; and this subjection is coeval with my being, for even before birth I was under thy protection and command, as I am now.<sup>240</sup>

Edward J. Young likewise observes:

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235. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, reprint 1972), 480, see at *klh* II-2.

236. H. Preisker, "Nephros," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 911.

237. Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 441.

238. Driver et al., *Commentary of the Book of Psalms*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, 496.

239. Hengstenberg, *The Psalms*, 499.

240. Alexander, *The Psalms*, 539-40.



To use the expression “kidneys” seems so strange. Yet by this expression David is simply referring to what may be called the seat of his pains and pleasures, of his strongest sensibilities. If God has created the reins, then God has control of David in such a way that the control {136} reaches to the innermost part of his being.<sup>241</sup>

Franz Delitzsch’s comment is especially clear: “The reins are made specially prominent in order to mark them, the seat of the tenderest, most secret emotions, as the work of Him who trieth the hearts and the reins.”<sup>242</sup> This *special prominence afforded the creation of the reins* is again emphasized by Rotherham as highlighting God’s creation of a true person in the womb. His translation of verse 13 reads: “For thou thyself didst originate the first rudiments of my being, didst weave me together in the womb of my mother.”<sup>243</sup> A few pages later he observes: “[God’s creatorship] is expressed by almost every form of language by which the idea could be conveyed: *He originated the first rudiments of my being*. Then he carried on the formative work so begun: *He wove me together...*” Thus, “He knows me thoroughly because he made me. He made, not only my spirit, but my body also.”<sup>244</sup> Indeed, “he made the whole man, the entire compound psychic individual.”<sup>245</sup> As Clarke has noted: “As the Hebrews believed that the *reins* were the first part of the human fetus that is formed, it may here mean, that thou hast laid the foundation of my being.”<sup>246</sup>

In the second line of verse 13 the parallel to the “reins” is the pronominal suffix “me.” Thus it would seem that the pronoun “me” is not really being pushed “too far” (as Frame fears) when it is in *this* particular place pointed to as a demonstration of personhood. Despite obvious points of similarity, this verse does not employ the pronoun “me” in the same manner in which Job 10:11 (mentioned earlier) does. There the “me” designated merely the material body of Job which was in the process of formation. Here the “me” synonymously parallels the reins, i.e.,

241. Young, *Psalm 139*, 66–67.

242. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 349.

243. Joseph Bryant Rotherham, *Studies in the Psalms* (London: H. R. Allenson, 1911), 561.

244. *Ibid.*, 564.

245. *Ibid.*, 565.

246. Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, n.d.), 664.

the “compound psychic individual.”<sup>247</sup> This dissimilarity seems to be the case on the basis of at least two considerations: (1) Job 10 makes no reference to the “reins” as does Psalm 139, and (2) the Psalm mentions the formation of the bones and the material body separately in verse 15.

Another aspect of verse 13 which merits consideration is the reference to embryonic formation in terms of the weaving process. This will be developed in connection with verse 16. At this point the following conclusions can be drawn from the exegetical analysis of verse 13: (1) God creates the reins first in the womb, (2) the reins are the fundamental aspect of human personality, and thus personal status is properly attributed to the embryo. {137}

Such a realization as this causes the fleeing David to cease his flight. He turns instead in verse 14 to praise of God for His special concern for him in his creation in his mother’s womb.<sup>248</sup> The attitude within the Psalm shifts from fearful desire for escape to exalted praise of God’s omnificence. God’s thoughts toward David are seen to be, at last, very previous (cf. vv. 17–18). Following upon this “conversion” in his thought he then raises up in warning to the wicked regarding God’s judgment of evil men. He expresses an invigorated desire, not to flee, but to disassociate himself from the wicked (vv. 19–22). God’s searching then is held as something desirable (vv. 23–24).

Verse 15 resumes his treatment of his formation in utero: “My frame was not hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the depths of the earth.” His reference to his bodily formation is here limited. He specifically mentions the making of his *osem*, here translated “frame.” Hengstenberg noted that it “undoubtedly signifies *strength* in the two other places where it occurs,” and he further commented that “my strength is a poetical expression” for “my bones or skeleton....”<sup>249</sup> Apparently the miraculous formation of the bones

247. See Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 349 for a discussion of the proper meaning of *sakak*.

248. For an intriguing treatment of this verse which may have some additional bearing on our interpretation, see: Young, *Psalm 139*, 71ff. Here Young suggests that this verse teaches that David is referring to himself as set apart from the lower beings that God created in that he as man is “distinguished.”

249. Hengstenberg, *The Psalms*, 500. See also: Alexander, *The Psalms*, 540.

within the womb were a cause for much curiosity and amazement to the Hebrews, for it receives special mention in several other places, e.g., Job 10:11 and Ecclesiastes 11:5. He also speaks of his being “skillfully wrought” in his mother’s womb. Here he seems to refer to the mystifying system of veins which colorfully ramify the body in that he uses the word *ruqam* which signifies “to embroider.”<sup>250</sup>

Verse 16a reads: “Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance.” The word here translated “unformed substance” is *golem*. This *hapaxlegomenon* indisputably refers to the “unformed embryonic mass.”<sup>251</sup> Alexander emphasizes that it refers to the embryo “before assuming recognizable form,”<sup>252</sup> i.e., very early in antenatal development. It should be recalled that the “reins” were initially created and were embodied in this early embryo.

The remainder of verse 16 is noted for its difficulty of interpretation. The Authorized Version seems to have greatly missed the point in its rendering: “and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” Delitzsch argued well for the following translation: “And in thy book were they all written: days which were {138} already stretched out, and for it one among them.”<sup>253</sup>

In referring to God’s “book,” David draws upon a familiar Old Testament concept: *God’s preestablished will for man* spoken of in terms of a *prewritten book* (see Ex. 32:32; Ps. 56:8; 69:28; Mal. 3:16). Almost all commentators, whether Reformed, liberal, or Jewish, agree as to the basic idea back of the concept of “God’s book.”<sup>254</sup> Witness the following references. Von Rad calls the book “a book of destiny in heaven.”<sup>255</sup> Schrenck says it is “the book in which God has laid down in advance all human destinies, sorrows and joys.”<sup>256</sup> Kidner interprets the idea here as meaning: in the book “*the days* of my life were mapped out in

250. See: Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 349 and Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, 665.

251. Hengstenberg, *The Psalms*, 501.

252. Alexander, *The Psalms*, 540.

253. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 343. See also: Cohen, *The Psalms*, 453–54. Note that the negative “not” is properly to be excluded. However, even if it were translated as a negative the sense would not be radically altered. The idea then would be that his days—even of embryonic development—were assigned to him long before any of them existed in history.

advance.”<sup>257</sup> Young has written: “The thought here is that the entirety of the Psalmist’s being, even including the days of his life, are inscribed in the book that belongs to God.”<sup>258</sup> Hengstenberg noted that the writing in the book “is often used of the divine predetermination....”<sup>259</sup>

In this book are written *all* the *days* of the Psalmist’s life. By the reference to the “days” which are predetermined, Alexander notes that we are to “understand not merely the length but the events and vicissitudes of life.”<sup>260</sup> Bultmann has noticed that “‘Life’ and ‘days’ (of life) can be used synonymously, and the seeking, desiring or promising of life applies primarily to the continuation of existence.”<sup>261</sup>

All of this has a bearing on the issue of embryonic personhood. The *days* of the Psalmist’s personal life, which were inscribed in God’s book, include those days of his earliest embryonic development. Lines 16b, c, and d are vitally connected with line 16a—and, hence, with verses 13 through 15. Delitzsch made an important observation when he interpreted the lines under consideration thusly: “Among the days which were performed in the idea of God ... there was also one, says the poet, for the embryonic beginning of my life.”<sup>262</sup> Cohen agrees: “... we have here the doctrine of {139} predestination. God has a book in which is recorded against each person, from the embryonic stage, the number of days which would be lived.”<sup>263</sup>

Consequently, *David specifically included his embryonic existence in the allotted “days of his life”—days allotted to him as an ethical being.*

254. The “almost” in this sentence is necessary in light of some specious positions held by certain scholars. For instance, Leupold understands this as a reference to “the book of divine foreknowledge, where as it were, the days are known as to their number, and a blank page is provided for each.” H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, [1959], 1969), 947.

255. G. von Rad, “Zao,” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 2:845.

256. Gottlob Schrench, “Biblion” in Kittel, *Ibid.*, 1:620.

257. Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 466.

258. Young, *Psalm 139*, 80.

259. Hengstenberg, *The Psalms*, 501.

260. Alexander, *The Psalms*, 541. Young agrees with this emphasis, *Psalm 139*, 80.

261. Rudolf Bultmann, “Zao” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 2:849.

262. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 343.

263. Cohen, *The Psalms*, 454.

There is an express *continuity of person* from embryo through adulthood: it is an ethical-personal continuity that is *unbreakable* by arbitrary definitions of when life begins. Doubtless, David's sinful status at conception (Ps. 51:5) is listed, as it were, on his first "day" in God's book.

Before closing the exposition of Psalm 139, it should be pointed out that there is possibly another allusion to the continuity of human life and personhood from embryo to adult. This one can be developed in tracing out the "weaver-theme" touched upon in verse 13. There David speaks poetically of God's forming him in his mother's womb in terms of the weaving process.<sup>264</sup> The necessary continuity between the initial weaving of a thread and the finished woven product is quite obvious in the natural weaving process.

Interestingly, this weaver-theme is alluded to on several occasions in Scripture in terms of man's life. Job refers to it on at least three occasions of significance. In Job 7:6a, he laments to his friends that his days (the days of his personal, human existence) seem to pass too quickly; "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." In Job 6:9 he bemoans his miserable condition by saying: "Would that God were willing to crush me; that He would loose His hand and cut me off!" Here he dreads continuance in such a lamentable existence. Driver's exegetical notations on this verse are helpful. He translates *ybs'ny* as "snip me off" and comments that it implies "cut off the thread of my life."<sup>265</sup> Later, in Job 27:8, he returns to the weaver-theme when he says, "For what is the hope of the godless who is cut off, when God requires his life?" Again, the idea here is "to cut off the thread of life."<sup>266</sup>

In another passage, Isaiah records Hezekiah's words regarding his own personal existence employing such imagery. Isaiah 38:10, 12 says, "I said, 'In the middle of my life [literally: "days"] I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years'.... Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; as a weaver I

264. The AV has "covered" as the translation for *sakak*. This is clearly erroneous. See: Brown et al., *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 697 (at *sakak*, 2) and Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 349.

265. Driver et al., *Commentary on the Book of Job*, 61.

266. Delitzsch, *Job*, 70. Cf. Driver, ad loc.

rolled up my life. He cuts me off from the loom; from day until night Thou dost make an end of me.” Hezekiah sees his imminent death at this time—in the prime of life—as a death in the midst of his expected life span. Again, Delitzsch’s commentary (on verse 12) is of interest:

I rolled or wound up my life, as the weaver rolls up the finished piece {140} of cloth: *i.e.* I was sure of my death, namely, because God was about to give me up to death; He was about to cut me off from the thrum.... *Dallah* is the thurm, *licium*, the threads of the warp upon a loom, which becomes shorter and shorter the further the weft proceeds, until at length the piece is finished, and the weaver cuts through the short threads, and so sets it free....<sup>267</sup>

Considering the implications of the recurring weaver-theme in terms of its poetic expression of human life, we can deduce the following conclusions: (1) Each individual human life is a continuum, just as the thread is a continuous element in the material that comes from the weaver’s loom. (2) Thus, death can be poetically expressed as a “cutting off” of the thread from the weaver’s loom. (3) According to Psalm 139:13 the continuum of an individual’s life is initiated in utero.

In conclusion, the arguments to be drawn from Psalm 139 which are argumentatively demonstrative of *antenatal personhood* may be summarily stated as follows:

First, the ethical thrust of the Psalm suggests that David was considering his *guilt and moral accountability to God* even back through the period of his embryonic development. His search for escape from God’s scrutinizing presence exhausted both geographic and temporal possibilities: even in utero he was a free moral agent open to God’s holy eye. David was morally accountable as a person *en ventre sa mare*.

Second, the *initial* creative activity of God in the womb is that of the reins of man, *i.e.*, the creation of the “compound psychic individual.” The reins represent the very center of man qua man; man as a morally accountable person. The reins (13a), significantly, are paralleled to “me” (13b) in the poetic structure of the Psalm. Only later—in verse 15—is the formation of the body *per se* mentioned.

Third, in *God’s book*, which predetermines the entire course of human life and includes all the vicissitudes of life’s experiences, there is

267. Franz Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, in Keil and Gray, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2:117.

included an entry for *man's embryonic beginning*, thus strongly suggesting that personhood begins at conception. In scriptural terminology "day" is virtually equivalent to "life." The Psalm includes in man's allotted days his antenatal existence.

Fourth, the *weaver-theme* in Scripture, when speaking of human existence, demands a *continuity of life*, just as the thread of material is a continuous element in a piece of woven cloth. To arbitrarily choose a point for personhood's beginning along this continuum would be totally contradictory to the express symbolism involved.

Though Psalm 139 is certainly the *locus classicus* for arguing for embryonic personhood, there are at least two other significant passages that {141} deserve consideration. These will be treated somewhat more briefly in the following paragraphs.

## 2. The Argument from Psalm 51

Psalm 51:5 reads: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." This verse is generally recognized as the *locus classicus* in the Old Testament for formulating the doctrine of inherent sin. And since it attributes a sinful status to the conceptus, it would seem to strongly teach the conceptus's full moral status and, therefore, its personhood. Again, however, Frame expresses hesitancy in appealing to this argument:

This is perhaps the strongest scriptural argument in favor of the person-from-conception thesis, and can be very persuasive. Yet a closer look reveals inadequacies. David, after all, is not reflecting upon the origin of his humanity, but upon the origin of his *sin*. And all Reformed theologians have maintained (on the basis of this very verse, along with others!) that in some senses the origin of our sin antedates the origin of our existence as persons. Ultimately, sin has its mysterious origin in the eternal plan of God; proximately, our sin begins with Adam.... Thus "my" sin, my personal sin, the sin for which I am guilty, exists before I do....<sup>268</sup>

Frame's point here does not appear to be well established. It is true that our sin ultimately has its "mysterious origin in the eternal plan of God" and that proximately it originated with Adam, but these issues are well-beyond the scope of David's concern. Consider the following:

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268. Frame, "Abortion," 61–62.

First, David seems concerned to trace his own personal, existential involvement with sin, i.e., he is confessing *his* sin as experienced in the course of his own existence. He feels an inescapable sense of personal accountability for his involvement with sin, as is evident with the frequency of his references to *my* transgression (vv. 1, 3), *my* iniquity (vv. 2, 3, 9) and *my* sins (vv. 3, 9). He pushes the confession back only as far as his purpose merits: from his sinful misconduct with (apparently) Bathsheeba, to his sinful status at birth, and ending with *a statement regarding his sinful state at conception*—and no further. He is confessing personal sin, not giving a theological treatment of the origin of sin *per se*.

Second, the fact that he does mention his conception and its entanglement with sin is significant in that *sin cannot be predicated of things material*. Sin is an *ethical* question and is characteristic only of a *responsible moral agent, a person*—not a nonpersonal conceptus (if it were nonpersonal). What would be the purpose of mentioning his conception if it did not involve him as a person? {142}

Third, as is generally the case with Old Testament statements, there is *little concern with searching out secret things*. Delitzsch's comments on this verse are worth noting:

...the fact of hereditary sin is here more distinctly expressed than in any other passage in the Old Testament, since the Old Testament conception, according to its special character, which always fastens upon the phenomenal, outward side rather than penetrates to the secret roots of a matter, is directed almost entirely to the outward manifestation only of sin, and leaves its natural foundation, its issue in relation to primeval history, and its demonic background undisclosed.<sup>269</sup>

Thus, in keeping with this general tendency, the Psalmist focuses on *his* sinful status as he comes into being at conception.

Fourth, many commentators understand this verse in such a way as to suggest its proper concern with *the beginning of David's earthly moral existence*. Calvin, for instance, says:

The expression intimates that we are cherished in sin from the first moment that we are in the womb. David, then, is here brought, by reflecting on one particular transgression, to cast a retrospective

269. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 137.



glance upon *his whole past life*, and to discover nothing but sin in it.... David does not charge it upon his parents, nor trace his crime to them, but sits himself before the divine tribunal, confesses that he was formed in sin, and that *he was a transgressor ere he saw the light of this world.*<sup>270</sup>

Delitzsch writes similarly that

The declaration moves backward from his birth to conception, it consequently penetrates even to the most remote point of life's beginning....<sup>271</sup>

And:

That from his first beginning onwards, and that this beginning itself, is tainted with sin....<sup>272</sup>

Anderson follows suit when he writes: "The Psalmist confesses his total involvement in human sinfulness from the very beginning of his existence."<sup>273</sup>

Fifth, though tentative and not to be pushed too far, it should be noted that some commentators see a close grammatical connection between verses 5 and 6 that suggests verse 6 is actually to be understood as *referring to the fetus*. Anderson comments on verse 6 thusly:

Dalgish (123f) suggests that "the inward being" (tuhot) and "my secret heart" (satum) may refer to the womb, and that there the {143} Psalmist had been taught wisdom by God.... so that he has sinned knowingly and has no excuse. The Talmud (*Niddah* 30b) states that already the embryo is taught the whole Torah, although at birth he forgets completely.<sup>274</sup>

Perhaps John 9:1–3 could be brought into the discussion at this point.

Whether or not the fifth consideration is accepted in the debate, it can be properly argued on the other four considerations that Psalm 51:5 does teach personal moral status at conception. Consequently, this verse is quite useful in the embryonic personhood debate.

### 3. The Argument from Job 3

270. Calvin, *Commentaries*, 515, 520; emphasis mine.

271. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 136.

272. *Ibid.*, 137.

273. A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 1: 395–96.

274. *Ibid.*, 396.

Job 3 is an interesting passage which contains several factors rivaling those from Psalm 139 in terms of the personhood debate. To assess properly the significance of these factors, again, it is necessary that the general structure of the passage be understood.

In the closing verses of chapter 2 is presented a scene wherein Job's three friends arrive and sit sadly and quietly with their anguished friend. Chapter 3 opens after seven days of solemn silence with Job beginning to curse "his day" (literally). According to Job 3:3, he curses not only the day of his birth but also the night of his conception: "Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night which said, 'A boy is conceived.'" These words open an extended curse which continues through verse 10.

It is crucial that the *curse* be properly applied to both *his birth* and *his conception*. There is a quite broad consensus—though by no means unanimous—among commentators that the curse is two-pronged and is not simply an exercise in poetic license whereby Job curses only his birth, under two figures. The *day* of his *birth* is cursed in verses 4 and 5 and the *night* of his *conception* is cursed in verses 6 through 10.<sup>275</sup> Peake notes that "it is fitting that Job should curse not only the day of his birth, but the night of his conception."<sup>276</sup> Anderson explains that "*That day* is cursed in verses 4 and 5; *that night* is cursed in verses 6 and 10."<sup>277</sup> Reichert further notes some of the Jewish traditions that grew up around the idea of conception: "Behind {144} the day of birth lay the night of conception. The rabbis remarked: 'The angel appointed over conception was named Layelah' [the Hebrew word for "night"]."<sup>278</sup> Though Driver disagrees with the necessity of distinguish-

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275. That v. 10 refers to the prevention of ingress rather than egress is evident in that the "closing of the doors of the womb" is frequently used in reference to the prevention of conception. See: Gen. 16:2; 20:18; 1 Sam. 1:5. See also related ideas in Gen. 29:3 and 30:22. For fuller commentary note: H. H. Rowley, *Job*, in *The Century Bible*, ed. H. H. Rowley and Matthew Black (Ontario: Thomas Nelson, 1970), 45. A. S. Peake, *Job*, in *The Century Bible: A Modern Commentary*, ed. Walter F. Adeney (London: Caxton Pub. Co., 1904), 73. Victor E. Reichert, *Job*, in *Soncino Books of the Bible*, ed. A. Cohen (Hindhead, Surrey: Soncino Press, 1946), 11.

276. Peake, *Job*, 70.

277. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 102. However, he does not see much point in emphasizing the fact.

ing the two events, he cites Bickell and Duhm as proponents of the distinction in light of “the fact that it was the night of conception which properly gave Job being.”<sup>279</sup>

Having recognized that Job did in fact curse his conception, cognizance needs to be taken of the *specifics of the curse*. In verse 3 that which is cursed is called a *geber*, a “man.” This term is elsewhere used of an adult male and possesses a “connotation of health and vigor.”<sup>280</sup> Here it is applied to the conceptus on the very night in which it was conceived. Certainly Peake is correct in commenting that such language properly looks at Job in terms of “what he essentially is, not at the stage of development he has reached.”<sup>281</sup> Nevertheless, it is most significant that Job went out of the way, as it were, to call his conceptus by a term expressly used of adult human beings.

Some have suggested that this is purely a poetical device in that no one could possibly have known the moment of conception in order to report it, much less the very sex of the child conceived. But the text does not attribute such knowledge to human understanding; rather it is attributed to the *night*. As Driver notes:

The night is personified, and so able to bear witness to what had happened in it: the poet ... endows it with the faculty of knowing what no human being could know, the sex of the child at the moment of conception.<sup>282</sup>

Delitzsch further elaborates that

the night alone was witness of this beginning of the development of a man-child, and made report of it to the High One, to whom it is subordinate.<sup>283</sup>

After sifting through the poetic expressions, it becomes apparent that *God knows the sex of the child at conception* (or rather, the child at

278. Reichert, *Job*, 9. See Isaiah Sonne, *Kiryath Sepher*, vol. 11, 500, citing *Chesek Shelomah*.

279. Cited in Driver et al., *Commentary on the Book of Job*, 30.

280. Robert Cordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 35.

281. Peake, *Job*, 70.

282. Driver et al., *Commentary on the Book of Job*, 31. See also Rowley, *Job*, 42.

283. Delitzsch, *Job*, 77.

conception has a particular sex) and would even have the conceptus designated as a human male.

The next paragraph (vv. 11–19) opens with a statement that bears especial consideration. Having just cursed both the night of his conception and the {145} day of his birth, in verses 11 and 12 Job continues his lament by asking why it would not have been better had he died either in utero, or at birth, or just after birth, or in early infancy. The American Standard Version translates verses 11 and 12 thusly: “Why did I not die from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when my mother bare me? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should suck?”

Regarding these four queries, Delitzsch makes an important observation:

The four questions, ver. 11 sqq., form a climax: he follows the course of his life from its commencement in embryo [11a] ... to the birth [11b], and from the joy of the father who took the newborn child upon his knees [12a] ... to the first development of the infant [12b], and curses this growing life in four phases....<sup>284</sup>

He notes that the first phrase in verse 11a deals with the “first period of his conception and birth,”<sup>285</sup> i.e., his existence in utero. Several translations and commentators have wrongly understood verse 11a to mean “at birth” (cf. the NASV and the RSV). That it does, in fact, refer to his antenatal existence is evident upon the following considerations: (1) The grammatical structure of *merehem* (“from womb”) uses *m* as the “mem of condition” which properly means “while in the womb,” rather than “coming from the womb.”<sup>286</sup> Thus the period mentioned is coextensive with the entire period of pregnancy. The Septuagint properly translates it as “in the womb.” Death at any stage of antenatal development would have satisfied this death wish. (2) The general idea reappears in abbreviated form in verse 16. Verse 11a speaks of antenatal death by use of the common term for death (*mut*), whereas the figure is changed to a miscarriage (*nepel*) in verse 16. The *death* of verse 11 is the *miscarriage* of verse 16; miscarriages are premature expulsions of

284. *Ibid.*, 80.

285. *Ibid.*

286. Cordis, *The Book of Job*, 36. Cf. Delitzsch, ad loc.

the fetus from the uterus during its antenatal development. (3) There is obvious development in Job's questionings in verses 11 and 12 which would necessitate verse 11a as referring to antenatal death rather than death during the delivery process (11b), neonatal death (12a), or early infant death (12b).

Job lamented that he had not died at some very early stage in his life because of his great affliction. And there was a reason for this: so that he could have entered the *peace of Sheol* with the departed dead. This fact is elaborated on in verses 12 through 19. Witness, for example, verses 12 and 13a (which immediately follow his death wish, a part of which desired death at conception): "For now would I have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest, with kings and counselors of the earth..." Sheol is a place, not of non-being, but of departed beings who {146} had existence in time. *Had Job died at any stage of his antenatal development he would have departed thence.*

Several significant conclusions can be drawn from this brief study of Job 3. First, at the moment of conception God knows the sex of the person conceived and that conceptus can properly be referred to as a *man* (if a male). Second, at any stage of antenatal development death (*mut*) can occur. For death to occur in utero life must have been resident in utero. Third, and most importantly, upon the death of this nascent life the person dying enters into Sheol with deceased adults, i.e. he enters the realm of death, the after-life. (Some have feared the overpopulation of Heaven if this were the case, but this is carrying the overpopulation myth a little too far! Christian pro-abortionist William Hasker expresses this fear in sincerity.)<sup>287</sup> This interpretation of death in the womb must be understood as referring to *any* point between conception and birth because: (1) conception is expressly included in the context of Job's lament and curse (v. 3), (2) the expression "in the womb" is a broad term equivalent to "during the course of pregnancy" (v. 11a), and (3) a "miscarriage" is the failure of a pregnancy at any given stage (v. 16).

Before leaving this study, a brief word needs be given in anticipation of a possible rejoinder to the forgoing exposition. The possible rejoinder

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287. William Hasker, "Abortion and the Definition of a Person," *Human Life Review* 5:2 (n.d.): 31.

der could employ verse 16 to teach that a miscarried fetus is a non-being; the verse reads: “Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, as infants that never saw light.” Here it might seem that Job considered a miscarried conceptus as a nonbeing. That this is not his intention is apparent in that the surrounding context (vv. 13–19) implies that the critical phrase—“I would not be”—is to be understood solely in terms of the phenomenal realm. Those in Sheol are separated from the land of the living and, for all practical purposes, “are not.” Furthermore, it would contradict the connection between verses 11 and 12—which expressly say he longed to die in the womb—and verses 13 through 19—which teach that he would then have entered the after-life existence. In addition, commentators such as Delitzsch,<sup>288</sup> Heavenor,<sup>289</sup> and others point out that he is thinking of “his company in the dormitory of death” (Heavenor) in the entire section from verses 14 through 19. This company would include himself (had his miscarriage wish been granted) and others who gained entrance via intrauterine death.

### 3. THE VALUE OF HUMAN ANTENATAL LIFE

The foregoing study was essential to setting the abortion question in the {147} proper discernment of the *value* of that human life which exists in utero. Christians must be careful to not assume secular humanists will naturally have the same attitude in regard to all human life as they themselves do. Such would be gross presumption. Because of the totality of man’s depravity and the intensity of his rebellious attempt to suppress the image of God within, *it is dangerous to assume the abortion question revolves around only the one issue*. We cannot simply appeal to men as if the abortion issue is merely an intellectual problem that will be resolved when all the facts are straight. It is not an intellectual problem, but *an ethical and spiritual problem*.

In an article entitled “Controlled Reaction,” Ellen Wilson argues well that antiabortionists are sadly mistaken if they assume the entire abortion debate rests upon the question of the humanity of the fetus. She

288. Delitzsch, *Job*, 81.

289. E. S. Heavenor, “Job,” in Davidson, *The New Bible Commentary*, 390.

notes that many pro-abortionists are “strangely unmoved” by the arguments.<sup>290</sup> Thus, Paul Feinberg is surely wrong when he writes:

Clearly, the central point of contention between pro-abortionists and anti-abortionists has to do with the status of the fetus. If this issue could be decisively resolved, the controversy over abortion would be well on the way to settlement.<sup>291</sup>

Consequently, before surveying the biblical data in terms of the value God has bestowed upon the fetus, it would serve well as healthful “shock therapy” to briefly demonstrate the impossibility of refuting abortionist argumentation from a lone base.

In an editorial in the (aptly titled) *New Republic*, the following statement was made:

There clearly is no logical or moral distinction between a fetus and a young baby; free availability of abortion cannot be reasonably distinguished from euthanasia. Nevertheless we are for it. It is too facile to say that human life always is sacred; obviously it is not, and the social cost of preserving against the mother’s will the lives of fetuses who are not yet self-conscious is simply too great.<sup>292</sup>

Magda Denes, a psychologist, pro-abortionist, and aborted mother, has written: “I do think abortion is murder—of a very special and necessary sort. And no physician ever involved with the procedure ever kids himself about that.”<sup>293</sup> Yet she insists on the “rights” to abortion-on-demand and asserts that every abortion is an “absolute necessity.”<sup>294</sup> Philosopher Judith Thomson concedes the argument of human personhood to pro-lifers, but continues to argue against the fetus’s absolute right to life, averring {148} that it is an *insignificant right* when weighed against other possible rights it would void: “I am inclined to think ... that we shall probably have to agree that the fetus has already become a human person well before birth.” Yet, she argues on, “having a right to life does not guarantee having either a right to be given the

290. Ellen W. Wilson, “Controlled Reactions,” *Human Life Review*, 5:2 (1979): 49ff.

291. Paul Feinberg, “The Morality of Abortion,” in Ganz, *Thou Shalt Not Kill*, 128.

292. “The Unborn and the Born Again,” an editorial in the *New Republic*, July 2, 1977, 6.

293. Magda Denes, “The Question of Abortion,” *Commentary* 62 (December 1976): 6.

294. Magda Denes, *In Necessity and Sorrow* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 247.

use of or a right to be allowed continued use of another person's body—even if one needs it for life itself.<sup>295</sup> Her argument boils down to this: the mother's few months of inconvenience are to be more highly valued than the child's very life.

Philosopher Michael Tooley has presented arguments “justifying” infanticide, pure and simple.<sup>296</sup> World-renowned geneticist James Watson, too, argued for infanticide when he said in an interview in 1973:

Perhaps as my former colleague Francis Crick suggested, no one should be thought of as alive until about three days after birth ...

If a child were not declared alive until three days after birth, then all persons could be allowed the choice that only a few are given under the present system. The doctor could allow the child to die if the parents so chose and save a lot of misery and suffering. I believe this view is the only rational and compassionate attitude to have.<sup>297</sup>

Medical journals are replete with cases of infanticide under the label of “benign neglect” of defective infants.<sup>298</sup> Even Christian gynecologist R. F. R. Gardner has argued for the “compassionate” employment of abortion in the case of potentially defective children.<sup>299</sup> Thus it is patently obvious that due consideration need be given the issue of the *value* of antenatal human life. Since ethical valuation is totally beyond the pale of science, this question shall be considered solely from the Bible.

295. Judith Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1971): 141, 148.

296. Michael Tooley, “Abortion and Infanticide,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2 (1972): 37–65.

297. James D. Watson, “Children From the Laboratory,” *Prism* 1:2 (May 1973): 13.

298. For example, see: Anthony Shaw, “Dilemmas of ‘Informed Consent’ in Children,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 289:17 (October 25, 1973): 885–90; Raymond S. Duff and A. G. Campbell, “Moral and Ethical Dilemmas in the Special-Care Nursery,” *Ibid.*: 890–94; John Lorber, “Results of Treatment of Myelomenian gocele: An Analysis of 524 Unselected Cases with Special Reference to Possible Selection for Treatment,” *Developmental Child Neurology* 13 (1971): 279–303; “Criteria for Selection of Patients for Treatment,” Abstract, Fourth International Conference on Birth Defects, Vienna, Austria, 1973.

299. R. F. R. Gardner, *Abortion: The Personal Dilemma* (Old Tappan, NJ: Spire, 1972), 60 and elsewhere.



To begin with, the question which requires initial consideration is: “What is man that we should be mindful of him?” Even at this early stage of the argument the Christian finds himself at odds with the non-Christian. Evolutionary thought—the pseudoscientific basis of secular humanism—necessarily devalues man by conceiving of him as an absurd {149} accident in space and time. Man is nothing more than a chance collusion of meaningless molecules. *In such a conception of things man can have neither meaning, value, nor purpose.*

Christianity, however, conceives of man in radically different terms. Although God was actively involved in the entire creative process by which He created all things from nothing by successive divine fiats, when we come to the revelation in Genesis which deals with *man’s* creation we notice a significant difference of treatment. When God created man, the creational activity engaged in was far more intimate than that for the rest of the created order. We discover not simply a creative fiat in the formation of Adam, but (1) a special, personal formation of Adam’s body from the dust by the very hands of God (Gen. 2:7a) and (2) a unique, divine, spiritual inbreathing causing Adam to spring to life (Gen. 2:7b). All of this occurs as the climax of the creative week.

But there is more. Man is distinguished from all other forms of life on earth by alone being created in the “image of God” (Gen. 1:26–27). This *imago dei* is the fundamental attribute of man qua man. It immediately and forever distinguished man from all the rest of creation and granted him special status in the universe—a derivative, created status, to be sure, but still a status of high regard. Though man is finite, he is inhered with *infinite worth*. Having created man uniquely in His own image, the Lord God blessed him and gave him dominion as His own vice-regent over all of creation (Gen. 1:28–30; Ps. 8).

Thus, man’s unique, supreme *value* is found to be due to *divine purpose*. Only the Lord God can diminish or void that value placed on man. As Francis Schaeffer has said in his abortion seminars: “There is an unbreakable link between the infinite personal God and the uniqueness of human life.”

Furthermore, not only did God create man *imago dei*, and thus with infinite worth, but He specifically safeguarded the sanctity of human life by prohibiting its wanton destruction. By divine decree the only suitable punishment for the intentional destruction of innocent human

life is *capital punishment*. This punishment is specifically instituted in light of the fact that man is, in fact, in God's image: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, *for* in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6). In exacting just and equitable retribution for murder the only payment commensurate with the crime is the extinguishing of the life of the murderer himself.<sup>300</sup>

Having noted that Adam—who, in keeping with the concept of a mature creation, was created as an adult—was created *imago dei*, the question arising at this point concerns the status of the fetus: does it partake of *imago dei* so as to possess the same sanctity of life? In researching relevant {150} Scriptures there are strong indications that the *fetus* is considered *imago dei* (whether expressly stated or not) and that it inheres with the same value as adult life. Basically, these indications fall into two distinct classes: one discernible in terms of *creational design* and the other evident in *legal protections* granted fetal life.

### A. The Argument from Creational Design

In reviewing the creation week it is discovered that the divinely instituted order is for life to reproduce "after its kind" (Gen. 1:21, 24–25)—*even in its seed* (Gen. 1:11). The begetting of life is truly reproductive: it reproduces the same "kind" in the seed as that which exists in the parent. *There is an unbreakable continuity between parent and offspring.* Now it is true that the same language ("after its kind") is not directly employed in speaking of man's reproduction. Yet it is proper to assume begetting-in-kind within the human race. This is due to a variety of reasons: (1) The created orderliness of the world suggests that man reproduces *in kind* just as does the rest of the animate creation. (2) Man is specifically commanded to "be fruitful and multiply" just as the animals are (cf. Gen. 1:22 with 1:28). Certainly for him to multiply himself he would have to multiply *in kind*.

Genesis 5:1ff. substantiates these assumptions: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

300. Cf. my "The Church and Capital Punishment," *Presbyterian Journal* 38:27 (October 31, 1979): 8ff.

When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.” Note here that the concept of Adam’s creation *imago dei* is made prominent by direct reference and in repetition of that which was already stated just a few chapters earlier in Genesis 1:26–27. Then it is immediately pointed out that Adam, the image of God, fathered a son in *his* image. So at birth a child is clearly the image of God.

In light of the continuity of human personhood from conception onward, and in light of the intimacy of God’s involvement in the formation of man in utero (Job 10:3, 8–11; Ps. 139:13–16) and ex utero (Jer. 18:1–6), and in light of the direct statement demonstrating that man is in the image of God not only in adulthood but as a neonate, what logical argument can be urged to sever this *continuity from antenatal development*? It is of more than just passing interest that persons in utero are designated by terms identical with those expressive of born persons.

In Genesis 25:22, the occupants of Rebekah’s womb are called “children” by use of the plural of the Hebrew word *ben* (“son”). This word occurs over 4,800 times in the Old Testament and speaks of *already born sons* of all ages in hundreds of these occurrences. In Job 3:3, the conceptus<sup>301</sup> is called a “man” but the term used in the Hebrew is *geber* (“mighty man”). In this term’s {151} sixty-six occurrences it always refers to grown men, never to animals or anything else—except here. In Exodus 21:22, the pregnant woman in this case law (to be studied later) is said to have “children” within who are delivered into the world after an unintentional striking of the mother. The word here used is the plural form of the Hebrew *yeled* (“child”), which occurs in the Old Testament of born persons almost always.

In the New Testament, Elizabeth is said to have *conceived* a *huios* (“son”) in Luke 1:36. This common term is found in over 300 references in the New Testament and is almost always employed of sons *already* born and of various ages. In Luke 1:41 and 44, Elizabeth is said to possess a “baby” at six months gestation. The Greek here is *brephos*, which occurs eight times and is used of already born babies (e.g., 2 Tim. 3:15 and Luke 18:15).

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301.[*Conceptus* refers to the entire process of conception until birth.]

Such employment of these terms commonly applied to persons already born bears out the notion that *the personal status of the unborn is equivalent to that of the born* and is to be *equally valued*. Rather than referring to the “products of conception” solely by words of a more neutral connotation—e.g., “embryo” (as in Ps. 139:16), “substance” (as in Ps. 139:15), “seed” (as in Gen. 4:25), or “body” (as in Deut. 28:4)—the inspired Scriptures can and often do employ these more personal words; words that in other connections refer to human life definitely considered *imago dei*.

### ***B. The Argument from Legal Protection***

The next argument in support of the infinite value of the fetus is even of a stronger nature than the forgoing. In a nutshell, the argument is that biblical law has instituted specific penal sanctions against those who would destroy fetal life; those penal sanctions are identical to those protecting adult life. The location of the case law protection of the fetus is the well-known legislation found in Exodus 21:22–23. The Authorized Version of the text reads: “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” Hebrew linguist Umbreto Cassuto gives the following expansive translation of the relevant portions of the law: “When men strive together and they hurt unintentionally a woman with child, and her children come forth but no mischief happens—that is, the woman and the children do not die—the one who hurt her shall surely be punished by a fine. But if any mischief happens, that is, if the woman dies or the children die, then you shall give life for life.”<sup>302</sup> {152}

An excellent exposition of this important case law has been given elsewhere by Frame.<sup>303</sup> The details of his fine exposition need not be

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302. Umbreto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), 275. Cf. C. F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, in Keil and Gray, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 2:135–36.

303. Frame, “Abortion,” 51–56. Cf. also: Keil, *The Pentateuch*, 2:135ff.

exhaustively rehearsed here, but it is imperative that a summary of the exegetical observations on the passage be given and that some of Frame's faulty observations be corrected.

In terms of the particular case-setting presented, two men are engaged in a struggle and somehow (unspecified) a pregnant woman is struck in the process. The case as presented seems to indicate that the woman is only *accidentally* struck, for it is the men who are "striving together." Upon being struck, the woman goes into labor and delivers a child prematurely. The Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and some other versions erroneously translate the resultant action here as a miscarriage. The phrase "her fruit depart from her" is literally to be translated: "her children go out." The noun translated "fruit" here is *yeled*, which is almost always translated "child" elsewhere. (It occurs here in the plural, which is of no particular significance to the present discussion.) More importantly it is imperative to note that the verb *yasa'* ("go out") does *not* in any way necessitate the death of the child, as would be the case if the Hebrew word for "miscarry" were used here. It simply means that the unborn child comes out into the world from within the womb. The term is commonly used for *normal deliveries*, as in Genesis 25:26; 38:28–30; Jeremiah 20:18; etc. Only in one lone instance does it refer to a stillbirth (Num. 12:12). Thus, what is being described here is a *premature delivery*, irrespective (at this point) of whether the action produces a living or a dead child.

The terms of the case law then turn to give consideration to the potential damage caused in the unfortunate event. Two possibilities are considered. In the first it is said that if *no harm* ("mischief" in the AV) follows, there shall only be a pecuniary fine levied against the man who struck the pregnant woman. Significantly, the terms of the case law do not specify to whom the harm happens. Were it the case that only the possible harm to the mother were to be considered, the text would doubtless have specified this by use of *lah*, "to her." Cassuto,<sup>304</sup> Keil,<sup>305</sup> and other eminent linguists mention the exegetical significance of the omission of *lah*. So, if neither child or the mother is hurt then only a

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304. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 275.

305. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, 2:135n.

fine is levied, possibly in compensation for either the emotional stress, potential danger, or economic costs incurred in terms of caring for a premature baby.

The law continues in verses 23 and 24 to consider a second possibility: “But if harm follow, then thou shalt give life for life,” etc. (ASV translation). Again, this harm is also left unspecified as to its victim. Thus it necessarily {153} includes harm either to the mother or to the child subsequently delivered. At this point the *law of retaliation* comes to bear on the situation. If either person involved—mother or child—is harmed, then the punishment shall be equitable to the loss: if either life is lost, then the life of the assailant shall be forfeited.

Before drawing final conclusions, a couple of errors in Frame’s exposition need to be rectified. The first has to do with the assumed gestational stage of the *yeled* who is delivered. Frame, following such exegetes as Keil<sup>306</sup> and some others, makes the following observation: “the term *yeled* in verse 22 never refers elsewhere to a child lacking recognizable human form, or to one incapable of exiting outside the womb.”<sup>307</sup> The implication drawn from this is that the case law deals only with the late gestational fetus. Such an implication is patently false on a variety of considerations.

First, the point cannot be pushed to such a conclusion due to the paucity of the evidence undergirding it. The Hebrew word *yeled* in Scripture normally does not refer to an unborn child at *any* gestational stage. In its eighty-nine occurrences in the Hebrew Old Testament, this is the *only* instance of its reference to a child in utero.<sup>308</sup> Consequently, there are no grounds for demanding its reference be to “recognizable” human form solely. Consider this: it could be argued that *geber* can only mean an *adult* upon lexical considerations and in terms of its usage in every occurrence in the Old Testament—every occurrence, that is, except for Job 3:3. There it is applied to the zygote formed at conception.

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306. *Ibid.*, 134n.

307. Frame, “*Abortion*,” 54.

308. The verbal form of the term means literally “to give birth.” Thus, strictly speaking, it etymologically refers to a person already born.

Second, it is significant that the case law is given to protect both the mother and the child. In verse 22 the setting mentions that the woman is “with child.” The unfortunate woman in this situation is designated as “with child” or “pregnant.” The Hebrew word here translated thusly is *harah*. In light of both its lexical signification and its various textual functions, *harah* refers to a woman *at any stage of pregnancy*. In Genesis 16:11, Hagar is said to be “with child” (*harah*) as soon as it was noticed that she was pregnant (cf. preceding story, 16:1–10). In Genesis 38:24, it is noted that at three months gestation Tamar is said to be “with child.” Undoubtedly, if technology had allowed, even in the earliest stages of pregnancy the maternal condition would still have been designated *harah*. This term covers the *maternal condition during the entire course of antenatal development of the child*, i.e., from conception to birth. Thus, the case law specifies only that if a pregnant woman is struck and labor is thereby induced, then the terms of the law must be applied. If the delivery produced a {154} dead child or miscarriage at any stage, “harm” was done, retaliation was called for.<sup>309</sup>

Third, the use of the term *yeled* was not given to limit the range of concern for the developing child. Frame argues that *golem* (“embryo”) should have been employed as a more suitable term if early embryonic life were included in the law’s consideration. Consequently, he avers that early embryonic life is excluded from consideration by employment of the term *yeled*.<sup>310</sup> Upon closer consideration, however, it appears that this observation is in error. For if *golem* had been used, then the twofold situation would have been impossible. That is, if *golem* had been mentioned, then there would have been no alternative possibility to the outcome of the induced labor: an embryo could not have been delivered alive, so that “no harm” could be said to have eventuated.

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309. Certainly extremely early miscarriages might have escaped the notice of the mother, but this does not invalidate the terms of the law. The terms are to be applied where the proper conditions calling for them are discovered. That is, the fact that it would be difficult to apply this law at the loss of the conceptus, say, during the blastocyst stage, does not make the law null and void altogether.

310. Frame, “Abortion,” 54.

One final observation regarding Frame's exposition needs to be made. He comments on the punishment meted out for the harm caused to the child thusly:

Since mother and child are under the same protection, some would argue, the child must be there regarded as a human person. We must however reject this inference. The passage does not specify how the law of retaliation is to be applied.<sup>311</sup>

Frame seems to be involved in a contradiction with his own previous exegesis here. Earlier he noted that the lack of *lah* in both verses 22 and 23 is exegetically significant. He commented that

The expression *lah* ("to her"), which would restrict the harm to the woman as opposed to the child, is missing. Thus the most natural interpretation would regard the "harm" as pertaining either to the woman or to the child.<sup>312</sup>

Yet, only a few sentences later he argues that the protection afforded the child is not the same protection given the mother despite the lack of *lah* in verse 23, which reads: "And if any mischief follow, thou shalt give life for life." A natural reading of the verse (understanding the significance of the omitted *lah*) suggests strongly that if the mother or the child dies then thou shalt give life for life. This is the law of retaliation spelled out equally for the loss of the mother's or the child's life. The punishment meted out is "indefinite in its reference"—capital punishment ensues in either eventuality. {155}

One final note on this text is in order. It should be observed that the case law gives an *a fortiori* argument regarding the value of fetal life. *This is the only case in the Law of God wherein an accidental death merits capital punishment.* If God considers the accidental destruction of fetal life as deserving capital punishment, it is obvious he holds that life in highest esteem and would certainly so punish intentional abortions.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Christian case against abortion derived from Scripture may be summarily stated as follows:

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311. *Ibid.*, 62.

312. *Ibid.*, 55.



1. Human life begins at the *moment of conception*, rather than at some later gestational stage, or at birth, or after a certain degree of socialization. The life initiated at conception is on a continuum with adult life.

2. Human life possesses *infinite worth* by right of divine creation in the image of God. Worth is not predicated of human existence at some advanced stage of development, but is that which inheres in man at the very beginning of his existence.

3. God safeguards innocent human life by the institution of the *strictest punishment* for its destruction: capital punishment.

4. *Abortion is proscribed* both by inference based on the nature of man (even in antenatal development) and by direct statement in Exodus 21.

5. Abortion is both *immoral and criminal*. It requires both the Christian's disapprobation and the state's equitable punishment, i.e., capital punishment.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

We hope this article against abortion will make you want to do something to stop this holocaust. The truth of the matter is, you can help a great deal in turning the tide. The Pro-Life Movement is gaining ground throughout the country, but it needs the assistance of the readership of this *Journal* to carry out its high mission. If many of you will make some phone calls, write a few letters to legislators, and give regular support to some of the organizations leading the battle, a surprising amount could be accomplished within the next several months.

Burke was right when he said: "For the triumph of evil, it is only necessary for good men to do nothing." Let us do something: even if it is only a little, and He who multiplied the few loaves and fishes to feed thousands, will multiply our influence beyond all we could imagine.

Here are some addresses (and introductions) of Right to Life Organizations. At very least get involved with one or more of these. (These addresses and introductions are reprinted with kind permission from the booklet *Abortion in America*, by Gary Bergel, with remarks by C. Everett Koop, M.D., Intercensors for America: P.O. Box D, Elyria, OH 44036, 1980.) {156}

## *National Organizations*

### **AMERICANS UNITED FOR LIFE**

**230 N. Michigan Avenue #515, Chicago, IL 60601  
312/263-5385**

AUL does research for scholarly publications, involves itself in litigation of abortion cases, and maintains a national nonprofit public interest law firm, the AUL Legal Defense Fund. A periodic newsletter, *Lex Vitae*, focuses on the legal aspects of life issues.

### **BETHANY CHRISTIAN SERVICES**

**901 Eastern Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616/459-6273**

A network of adoption and related service agencies with branch offices in Colorado, Iowa, Missouri, and New Jersey.

### **CITIZENS FOR INFORMED CONSENT**

**286 Hollywood Avenue, Akron, OH 44313  
216/864-1865**

An effective research and consultation service for fully informed consent and citizen advocacy headed by Mr. Marvin Weinberger. The group helps sponsor and author late-abortion legislation like the “Akron Ordinance” to oversee and restrict abortion clinics and practices. Such legislation has now been successfully passed in more than twelve states and scores of U. S. cities.

### **NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE INC.**

**529 14th Street NW, #341, Washington, D.C. 20045  
202/638-4396**

NRLC seeks the eventual passage of a federal human life amendment. This organization provides national leadership in the right to life movement and they have almost 2,000 local chapters. They maintain a lobbyist on Capitol Hill and are in constant communication with all the states through legislative alerts mentioned above. *NRL News* is available bimonthly at \$12 per year. NRL-PAC is the group’s Federal Political Action Committee.

### **NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR A HUMAN LIFE AMENDMENT**

**1707 “I” Street NW, Rm. 400, Washington, D.C. 20036  
202/785-8061**

The NCHLA is organized along congressional district lines with a specific goal of the passage of a human life amendment. They provide technical assistance in

terms of personnel and are organizing congressional districts.

### **THE CHRISTIAN ACTION COUNCIL**

**788 National Press Building, Washington, D.C. 20045  
202/638-5441**

The Christian Action Council promotes proper Christian involvement in {157} constitutional and political discussion and works to bring biblical truth before legislators. The CAC newsletter, *Action Line*, is available upon request.

### **AD HOC COMMITTEE IN DEFENSE OF LIFE INC.**

**8810 National Press Building, Washington, D.C. 29945  
202/347-8686**

This group supports congressional or constitutional convention groups, in order to produce a human life amendment. Their periodic newsletter is very informative and presents up-to-the-minute news in staccato style.

### **AMERICAN LIFE LOBBY INC.**

**P. O. Box 490, Stafford, VA 22554  
703/659-6556, 202/783-4328**

This group lobbies Congress, educates the public and supports only those legislative activities which will outlaw all abortion. *A.L.L. About Issues*, their monthly newsletter, is available upon request.

### **U.S. COALITION FOR LIFE**

**Export, PA 15632, 412/327-7379**

This group focuses primarily on federal tax supported antilife policies and programs and is engaged in legislative research, lobbying, and congressional testimony. Their publication is a periodic newsletter, *Pro-Life Reporter*.

## ***Independent Political Action Committees***

### **NATIONAL PRO-LIFEPAC**

**4848 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60640, 312/728-2844**

### **LAPAC—LIFE AMENDMENT POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE INC.**

**National Press Building, Suite 357, 529 Fourteenth St. NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20045, 202/638-3961**

### **LIFE-PAC**

**1735 DeSales St. NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20036  
202/543-0153**

**4.**  
**DEFENDERS OF**  
**THE FAITH**

# LESTER ROLOFF: AN EXTENDED REVIEW OF HIS RECENT BIOGRAPHY

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*Caroline S. Kelly*

With an Appendix by R. J. Rushdoony

Lester Roloff is the ultimate enigma to the liberal humanist: on the one hand a traveling evangelist, preaching with urgency the saving grace of God and the need for personal repentance, and yet on the other, the director of what must be the country's largest group of homes for social outcasts and delinquents with a success rate that puts the statist homes to shame.

His biography, written three years ago by his wife, is a personal guide through his career, and is instructive both as an example of a man determined to walk in God's ways at all costs, and as a sad evidence of the increasing resistance to uncompromising obedience to God. This he met first in the denominational church, and finally in society at large as the State of Texas passed legislation to close the homes, resulting in jail sentences on Brother Roloff.

Mrs. Roloff's approach to his story does not dwell on the principles we should draw from his life: rather, like her, we follow in amazement as his deep commitment to "living by faith"—and not by sight—has led him out in directions he never imagined beforehand. His determination to preach and follow the *whole* Word, meant that compassion on the *whole* lives of the lost, and the call to genuine action and holy living on the part of the converted, is not an optional matter.

In retrospect we can see that the "social action" was inevitable, given his love for lost souls and faithfulness to the Word. Perhaps it is not coincidence, either, that his own godly and loving but highly disciplined upbringing should bear fruit in later years in providing the saving atmosphere for so many who had never known anything of the love or truth of God.

His first step beyond “ordinary” pastoral duties was in 1944, when the “Family Altar” radio program was started—at which time he met his first resistance from outside the church, for his preaching against definite sins. In fact, although that radio station eventually forced him out, the door opened to go onto a far larger station. However in 1954 he was also removed from this station for being “too controversial.” Though deeply hurt by this, funded by friends of the ministry, he pressed on using other stations until in the providence of God, within months the owners of the very station that {159} had dropped him needed to sell. As in so many of his later enormous purchases, he went ahead in assurance from God, and the money was all donated before the deadline.

His growing nationwide radio audience, and those he met through his immense traveling ministry, can be seen to provide a reservoir of prayer, encouragement, and financial resources that have made the other developments possible. Though he had ended his highly successful pastorate of Second Baptist Church, Corpus Christi, in 1951 for full-time traveling evangelism, he yearned for the support of a loving church family. Thus in 1954 he organized with a few friends the Alameda Baptist Church in Corpus Christi. Within six months it had grown to 372 members, of whom he testified, “these people have the sweetest spirit and the greatest vision for missions and service of any church we’ve served” (63).

It was at this point that the portentous step was made when the church took over the Good Samaritan rescue mission in the town—but Brother Roloff found he could not stop with temporary help for “spiritual lepers and those crippled by sin” (83). Thus in February 1957, on eighty acres of donated land, the “City of Refuge” was started. With characteristic compassion and colorfulness, he reminded his radio audience “[God] said if we stop our ears to the cry of the poor, it will stop the answer to our prayers. The City of Refuge is not a flop farm for bums and ne’er do wells, but for angels off the rail” (85).

This home, with its strict regimen of discipline, work, and Bible study, resulted in many, many remarkable conversions and utterly transformed lives. It was followed in 1958 by the “Lighthouse”—an inaccessible haven on the Inland Waterway for delinquent boys. Some at first were as young as nine, many literally rescued from lives of drugs

and crime, while others more recently have been sent by judges across the country in place of serving prison sentences. In 1961 the Boys Ranch opened, and then in 1965 the Enterprises added a new “City of Refuge” in Culloden, Georgia, in an almost miraculously acquired beautiful old Southern plantation.

The year 1967 saw the beginning of a work for girls when a desperate hopeless girl approached Brother Roloff for help at an evangelistic meeting. A year later, his appeals for help to build up the rapidly growing “Rebekah Home” in Corpus Christi reveal both the theological and practical basis: “There is not a drifting wayward daughter anywhere who we could not make whole through the finished work of Christ on the cross...”; and then—“There is no way for us to keep on keeping on or to minister to the poor pieces of wrecked humanity that come as delinquents, narcotic agents, alcoholics (both men and women), poor little girls in trouble—apart from the love that Jesus gives ... love, the only motive for acceptable service to the Lord,” and the only way to press on without bitterness in the face of vicious condemnation and cruel press reports (124–26). {160}

The Anchor Home for Boys began in 1972 in Zapata, Texas, followed by the Bethesda Home in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, for unwed girls and other girls in trouble. Also in that year, the Rebekah Christian School was built—consistent with principles of full obedience to the Word of God—and to Brother Roloff’s own convictions on the matter, reaching back to 1946 when he had started a school during his pastorate of Second Baptist Church.

Interestingly, his compassion for God’s people coupled with requests from supporters led to the opening of another home: this time for the elderly—“Peaceful Valley Home” near Mission, Texas, in 1969—“a haven where the rescuers can rest, pray, and sing together. It has become the house of prayer” (131).

The cost of the work has in every sense been enormous. In the providence of God, Roloff’s stepping beyond the bounds of a regular pastorate into a radio ministry provided a link to thousands nationwide who wanted to hear uncompromising preaching, and who became active supporters financially and through prayer. In addition, from the time Brother Roloff began his traveling ministry, he has met thousands more with whom he can share his burden for the work.

This writer feels that some of the strength of his preaching is found precisely in the fact that he exhorts no one to do what he has not done: he is not preaching theory but practice. And his appeals for funds always have a specific goal in view, one which his own track record testifies is worthy. While we have all met those who will talk at length about their personal dealings with the Lord—and seem very little affected by Him—Lester Roloff restores our faith that man can know God genuinely and be led step by step by Him.

Mrs. Roloff is in a position to share with us some of the deep struggles of the soul her husband has endured at crisis points in the work, and the heartbreak caused by unjust criticism or attacks on the homes. At times the financial needs alone have been almost unbearable, as he refuses debt: as he put it, “I’d feel like a backslider if I begged a banker to loan us what God’s people ought to have the privilege of giving”; thus he has to be clear that expansion to meet the needs of those begging for help is of the Lord, before going to his supporters with plans and requests for funds. “Readers did not know about the agonizing hours he spent in prayer asking the Lord for direction...” (127). However, the burden of where to secure funds was relieved when, in his own words in 1967: “... God told me our friends and His friends would be our bankers, [and] a new day dawned. Since that day, the clouds have rifted and the burdens passed” (133).

Several evidences are given of his personal commitment to serious discipleship. He often talks of the “three F’s”: the first is that faith is the key to a dynamic Christian life; the second, fasting, is a discipline he {161} thoroughly believes in and regularly practices, for “it will clear the channel between God and us” (73), and increase the power and quality of our Christian living. The third “F” he practices is the discipline of sound nutritional principles—“food.” Having been of a rather unhealthy disposition in early years, this conviction grew out of his desire to be as healthy as possible so as to be able to serve the Lord as long and as well as he could. His testimony is that his change to natural foods has remarkably improved his health. Once the deliberate change was made, he finds he “enjoys eating more than [he] ever did before, because of the simple truths the Lord has taught [him]...” (79).

One rather remarkable accomplishment is that of being a licensed pilot—more so given the fact of his initial hearty dislike of flying and



the very hard time he had learning the necessary skills. But for the sake of gaining “the most time to preach and keep up the growing work” he disciplined himself at this point too. And the occasional close calls have only been (afterwards!) more cause for praise to and faith in the Almighty God!

His faith is simple, clear-cut, deep, and honest. He resorts to the Word and prayer at all times. His preaching is always fresh and gripping, fed by being constantly in the Scriptures. Interestingly, his premillennial views have been the motivation for him to do battle with the world to rescue those sucked under by what he sees as the growing influence of sin. Yet far from retreating from society, he has ended up literally affecting the laws of the State of Texas and the thinking of many throughout the country on the issue of church of state. Is not this a challenge to action to those of us who hold more optimistic views concerning the impact of godly living on society?

The amount and range of the work achieved has been enormous. “We work with tomorrow’s criminals today, but by God’s grace, we have seen victory in the lives of thousands of them, even rapists and murderers. We know that Christ is the Answer,” Brother Roloff is quoted as saying. His wife describes the girls coming to the Bethesda Home as “disillusioned, bewildered, embittered and sad. They will leave transformed—reborn, self-confident, and able to take their place in society.” Many, many residents from all the homes have gone on to higher education to Bob Jones University and Tennessee Temple Schools, often to become preachers themselves, Christian School teachers, or missionaries; or even to return as dedicated workers in the Roloff Homes. The quality and power of the Work of God in the lives of those reached by his ministries is testified to by many outside the fundamentalist or even church sphere, as in this article from the *Houston Chronicle*:

Upon graduation from the Lighthouse and the “City of Refuge,” many of the boys set out to “make a preacher,” living by the Bible and eschewing tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, dancing, and mixed swimming, even the very appearance of sin. {162}

The simple morality, often couched largely in negative terms, is warmed, sweetened, and ennobled by a compassion for others who stagger and stumble under the burden of a broken home, parents who

love alcohol more than their children, and the terrifying loneliness which is the lot of the unloved.

These “preacher boys” were turned aside from the reform school and a life of crime by this view which looks at good and evil in black and white. Their conviction that they had something to share will put evangelistic fervor into pulpits across the nation for many years to come. (94, Roloff Biography)

And here precisely is the rub. Though Mrs. Roloff refrains from discussing the motives of the Welfare Department of Texas, it seems clear to many that the nationwide interest in this remarkable and (to the Department of Social Services) unorthodox work challenges the very basic presuppositions of what the humanist state can offer the needy in society: thus such an embarrassing challenge could not be allowed to continue.

The last part of the story, to this date, is still not settled, though the majority of the homes are currently open. At issue is the question of the state claiming the right to license—and ultimately regulate—this Christian work. The first step the State of Texas made was to demand compliance with the rules and regulations under which the Welfare Department operated their institutions. The absurdity of such requirements could easily be demonstrated not only by the exceptionally high standards and cleanliness of the physical plant, but also the wonderful success rate of the ministries. Furthermore, not only had it operated without one cent of tax funds, it had saved thousands of dollars by keeping criminals and delinquents out of state institutions by giving the homeless a livelihood other than crime, drugs, or welfare.

Since 1971, the life of the Homes (especially those for juveniles) has rocked from one legal wrangle, court judgment, appeal, and stay of execution to another. Fines have been imposed on several occasions, amounting to thousands of dollars. But the culmination has been two jail sentences on Brother Roloff himself. In addition to this, different homes were totally or partially closed down at different times. The Texas Senate even passed a bill in 1975 to forbid unlicensed homes from caring for children under eighteen—adding further pressure on Roloff to submit to licensing.

These stressful years were greatly aggravated by an extremely unsympathetic local press: so bad indeed, that in mid-1974, Roloff’s

lawyers “filed libel suits against those publishers and the media who had slandered the Roloff Enterprise’s name and had viciously attacked them” (168). On the other hand, as the issue has become known and understood throughout the country, Christians have rallied round in even greater numbers, continuing to support the work and to put themselves on record as doing so. On two or three occasions thousands from all over the country have gathered in {163} Texas for pro-Roloff rallies. Well over one thousand preachers have pledged to stand together to keep the Homes open.

Roloff has maintained his unrelenting determination to keep his homes open, to lay his life on the altar for the Lord and for those in such desperate need: “if loving and living for others is a crime, I will have to rejoice as a criminal and be exceeding glad” (153). He speaks constantly of the need for Christians to see his difficulties as not merely an event that could happen in only one part of the country.

It could truly be said that the Roloff Enterprises are suffering to educate the rest of the church. They express the key issue this way:

We Christians must recognize there are legitimate fields of governmental regulations ... God ordained government and he intended it to reign over men within certain boundaries. But the issue we faced ... went much deeper than merely applying for a license from the State of Texas. The issue definitely is separation of church and state. If the state takes upon itself licensing of Christian charity, then it also takes upon itself other powers that do not belong to it. (153)

While Brother Roloff agrees that any home receiving government funds should be licensed, he maintains that “the state was never trained and never will be trained to run our churches and our church homes and schools.”

Lester Roloff’s biography is instructive, therefore, not merely as a look at the Christian commitment and zeal of one man, nor even the remarkable ministries he has founded, but is of paramount importance to the whole church in America today. For, to quote him in conclusion: “When the chains go on the pulpit, the pen will lose its liberty. And when the church loses its liberty, the nation will go into captivity and final destruction” (163).

## *The Significance of the Roloff Case* *A Note by R. J. Rushdoony*

The Roloff trials have now extended into their eighth year or more, and the end is not yet. Their significance is very great for all of us. What is at stake is freedom for the faith, and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Anyone who has ever visited the various homes established by Dr. Lester Roloff is sure of one thing: they are an intensely and passionately missionary activity and an embodiment of Christian faith. They represent an aspect of the life of the faith and the church from very early days.

Why then the challenge by the state to their legitimacy? Technical legal questions are raised by the state, as they are by the Internal Revenue Service and other agencies, both in this case and in others involving churches, {164} Christian Schools, and other arms of Christ's Kingdom.

In effect, the state and federal governments are claiming the right to define the church and what constitutes a legitimate church or Christian mission. This is, of course, contrary to the First Amendment, but the power to *define* and *control* Christianity is a first step towards its destruction.

In the early church, the activities of the church and its mission included teaching the young, rescuing the unwanted and discarded babies of the pagans and rearing them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and much, much more. It included the care of the poor, the sick, and the aged. The church not only preached the word but it applied it to every area of life and thought. The church not only worshipped the Savior, but it also manifested His merciful, saving power to one and all.

Now, humanistic statisticians are telling us that the life of the church means worship in a sanctuary. If the life of faith is reduced to "meetings," it is dead indeed.

What is at stake in the Roloff case is the life of the faith itself.

# 5. BOOK REVIEWS

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## *The Atoning Death of Christ*, by Ronald S. Wallace

Foundations For Faith, An Introduction to Christian Doctrine,  
Peter Toon, Editor (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1981), xii + 147  
pp.; \$6.95

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### Reviewed by Douglas Kelly

Since this issue of the *Journal* is devoted to the Atonement, it seems very appropriate to review a book that has just been published on this subject by Dr. Ronald Wallace, who will be known to many of our readers as the author of two excellent books on the theology of John Calvin (which are soon to be reprinted in Tyler, Texas). Dr. Wallace holds a Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, and has served as Pastor of various Churches of Scotland, and also as Professor of Theology in Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia. He is currently writing more books in his retirement than most scholars produce in a lifetime.

*The Atoning Death of Christ* is largely written for theological students and laymen as an introduction to the subject, but there will be few ministers or professional scholars, for that matter, who will not learn much from it. In the earlier part of the book, he surveys the Old and New Testament evidence for the doctrine of atonement, and then in parts two and three, he surveys the atonement in the history of Christian thought, and lays down guidelines for a fruitful understanding of it today. This reviewer found the last two parts of the book (i.e., chapters 5–9) of most interest and help.

Methodologically, Professor Wallace wisely says:

We have to seek as wide a field of discussion as possible. We have to avoid selecting one theory, or one aspect, and giving it undue importance. We cannot afford to neglect any avenue of thought. My own experience of preaching twice a Sunday for many years in the ministry before teaching theology to students has shown me that different biblical texts and stories point us towards quite different aspects of the cross in order to spotlight its significance.

If we are to do full justice to the varying witnesses, and let them fully illuminate the meaning of the Gospel, we shall require now one “theory” of the atonement and now another to help us in our exposition.... We must allow our thinking to be dominated by the shape and dynamic of the biblical text.... (93)

Perhaps this book’s greatest value lies in the rich suggestiveness of Dr. Wallace’s clear insights into various biblical and theological approaches to the meaning of the atonement. His overview of the church’s increasing understanding of this doctrine is particularly helpful in this regard (63–82), as are the guidelines he gives us for “clarification in diversity” of this multifaceted Christian doctrine (92–125).

The profound way in which he relates the doctrine of the incarnation to that of the atonement will repay careful study by the evangelical preacher. His remarks on Christ’s defeat of principalities and powers (43–45; 118ff.) shed light on important psychological and historical realities. Very few studies {166} of the atonement have so clearly and fruitfully explained the inner connections between the active and passive obedience of Christ, showing how His holy obedience turns our humanity back to God as well as gives value to His atoning death. What he has to say about atonement and intercessory prayer, and about the cross and sanctification, should serve as an impetus to a deeper Christ-like-ness in every believer who considers these matters.

Having considered many different viewpoints, Wallace shows that Christ’s atonement must always be understood as substitutionary: that although Christ is indeed our representative, He is more than that: he is the holy substitute for sinners (115ff.).

Dr. Wallace sees the New Testament teaching an atonement for all men. (For an exegesis of the relevant passages from the perspective of limited atonement, one should study John Owen’s *Death of Death in the Death of Christ* [Banner of Truth Trust, reprint, n.d.] 214–309.) Although he does deal with the wrath of God (e.g., 50, 78, 98), his work at this point might be supplemented and strengthened by reference to a study of objective wrath and retribution such as G. L. Bahnsen’s “Law and Atonement in the Execution of Saul’s Seven Sons” (*Journal of Christian Reconstruction* 2, no. 2 [Winter 1975–76]: 101–9). He gives considerably more emphasis to expiation than to propitiation, and here again the discussion could profitably be filled out by reference to other

works such as John Murray's *Commentary on Romans* (116ff.). Along these same lines, the interested student of atonement should read B. B. Warfield on "Imputation" (*Biblical and Theological Studies*, chap. 10) to compare it with Dr. Wallace's viewpoint (that legal imputation is not a helpful category—116).

*The Atoning Death of Christ* is written by one who obviously knows the power of the atonement himself. Although in this reviewer's opinion, the book needs supplementation in the areas mentioned above, it will repay reading because of the author's commitment to present effectually the substitutionary atonement to the needy twentieth century.

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***Reformatio Perennis: Essays on Calvin and The Reformation  
in Honor of Ford Lewis Battles,***  
**edited by B. A. Gerrish in collaboration with Robert Benedetto**

Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series #32  
(Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick Press, 1981), ix + 213 pp.

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**Reviewed by Douglas Kelly**

On Thanksgiving Day, 1979, Ford Lewis Battles, who had done the splendid translation of John Calvin's *Institutes* (1960, Library of Christian Classics edition), died at his home near Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Battles was one of the foremost Calvin scholars in the entire world, and one of the very top Calvin translators of this century. He had exceptional ability in the Classical languages, massive knowledge (and discernment) of the whole range of church history and theology, was widely and deeply read in English and American Literature, and was a thoroughly effective teacher as well as the profoundest of scholars. With all his attainments, he was always a humble, approachable person (who more than once was of much service to this reviewer).

This book of essays was to have been a "Festschrift" in his honor, but owing to his early death became a memorial volume. The volume opens with an {167} excellent eight-page "appreciation" of Battles by Donald G. Miller. It closes with an extensive bibliography of all Battle's



writings by Peter De Klerk. *Reformatio Perennis* would be well worth its price to Calvin scholars if it contained only these two items. There is, however, much more of value and interest in this series of essays.

The book contains nine essays by Calvin scholars of various backgrounds, which deal with different aspects of the theology of Calvin, or with some phase of the Reformation.

I. John Hesselink writes concerning Calvin's devotion to the "third use" of the Law (i.e., a positive guide to the Christian life). He shows the centrality of the law for Calvin's thought: that it is the way love can be fulfilled; that it is the norm for sanctification—"The law of God contains in itself that newness by which his image can be restored in us" (*Institutes*, bk. 3, chap. 6, sec. 1). Hesselink shows the impossibility of opposing law to Christ in Calvin: "He knows no either/or, i.e., either the Old Testament or the New Testament, either the law or Christ" (19). This emphasis on the "third use of the law" is never an external legalism, but a life of love "in Christ, for Christ, and by his Spirit" (20).

Joseph N. Tylenda sheds new light on the young Calvin's desire to mediate in the sacramental dispute between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli by turning attention from the "curiosity" of how Christ's body and blood were present in the supper to the central meaning of the sacrament—the Lord feeding His faithful: "... Christ the food of the soul, protects us, invigorates us, and grants whatever is necessary to live the Christian life" (29). Tylenda shows the importance of Calvin's use of the Latin verb *exhibere* (to show forth) rather than *adesse* (to be present): "*Exhibere* does not bring about a presence but presupposes a presence and manifests it" (31). Calvin appears to have influenced Melancthon to change Article 10 of the Augsburg Confession in 1540 to a more Calvinist definition of Christ's presence in the sacrament. Later, however, the Lutherans changed Article 10 back to a more explicitly bodily presence definition.

Calvin's desire to unite Luther and Zwingli failed after Joachim Westphal launched an aggressive pamphlet war against Calvin insisting on Luther's definition of Christ's bodily presence in the Lord's Supper as opposed to Calvin's view of Christ's presence as spiritual.

John Leith gives a clear examination of the doctrine of the will in Calvin's *Institutes*, drawing the important distinction of Calvin between the voluntary character of the will and compulsion of the will. He

shows that owing to the Fall, man is not compelled to sin by an outside force, but rather due to internal corruption voluntarily chooses to sin. “The will is free in the sense that the origin of its actions is in itself. There is no other necessity for sin than that which exists in the corruption of the will. Hence, necessity and free assent exist together” (54). Further, “The necessity of the will means that the will must be itself, that the will cannot escape itself, and that in some deeply personal areas of life such as the self’s relation to God, the will through its own power cannot change its direction or commitments... What man cannot do in changing his evil will into a good will, God does for him by his Word and Spirit” (55–56). Finally, Leith compares Calvin’s doctrine of the will with that of William Temple, showing both similarities and great differences.

B. A. Gerrish compares and contrasts a rather unlikely couple: Calvin and Schleiermacher. In particular he is interested in the way they both felt true piety keeps the theologian from a speculative doctrine of God. Gerrish, quoting B. B. Warfield, holds that Calvin’s doctrine of God gives “the {168} commanding place...to the Divine Fatherhood” (76). Schleiermacher is said to have given preeminence to “God’s disposition of love” (77). Gerrish then raises the question whether restricting one’s doctrine of God to pious nonspeculation would not rule out asserting the (apparently speculative) Trinity. For Calvin “pious experience itself shows us in the divine unity God the Father, his Son, and the Spirit”; to state this is “not speculating further than Scripture raises us but only giving its simple and genuine meaning” (79). Schleiermacher, on the other hand, thought it was “a defect ... of the Reformers that they made no attempt to revise the trinitarian and christological dogmas ...” (80).

In “A Way to Win Them,” Robert Paul deals with the limitations (briefly) and major contribution (at length) of the English Reformation. He shows that the Church of England was only partially reformed, and was not rich in original theological treatises. Its major contribution to modern church history was an altogether unintended one: owing to political realities, it debated more thoroughly than anywhere else the doctrine of ecclesiology, and unwittingly led the way to the rise of the modern denominations.

James Cameron deals with “Scottish Calvinism and the Principle of Intolerance.” There is much good sense in this article as he places sixteenth and seventeenth-century intolerance in its intellectual and cultural context. He shows the perhaps surprising extent to which John Knox desired to see the Old Testament Law enacted into the civil legislation of Scotland. “To live according to the Word of God entailed both the upholding of the validity for Christians of the Old Testament law and the responsibility of seeking from those who exercised the civil sword their full cooperation and compliance” (117). Cameron shows that although the *Book of Discipline* (1560) called for capital punishment on blasphemers, it was not until 1661, a century later, that this was enacted into civil legislation. No one actually received the supreme penalty of this law until 1697, well on into the age of toleration and “moderationism.”

George Hunston Williams gives a detailed account of Calvin’s relationship to the Reformed Church in Poland during the “Superintendency” of John Laski (1556–60). Unfortunately for the Reformed Church there, Laski was (according to Williams) a better administrator than theologian, whereas what the Reformed Poles most needed was expert theological guidance through several (mostly inter-Protestant) lacerating controversies, such as the mediatorial work of Christ in His two natures, which involved other Christological and Trinitarian questions. Williams plausibly suggests that if Calvin had spent more time and effort addressing the Polish situation, devastating schism might have been averted.

From the standpoint of the growing struggle for Christian and civil liberties that is now spreading throughout all of the so-called “three worlds,” Robert Kingdon’s discussion of the political ideas of Peter Martyr Vermigli on the Christian right of revolt is certainly the most important part of the book. Vermigli (1500–62), one of the Italian Reformers, who at one time taught at Oxford, seems to have said more on the Christian’s relation to the secular state than any of the Reformers of his generation. In addition to the Bible and the Aristotelian philosophy, Vermigli was well acquainted with Roman civil law and with the history of the Holy Roman Empire (especially in its late medieval phase). Well before George Buchanan and *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, Peter Martyr sets forth a contractual theory of resistance to tyrants “if

led by duly created inferior magistrates” (164). He does not base this right to revolt upon Scripture {169} (which he assumes requires obedience to an evil government—164), but rather upon historical covenantal arrangements in some of the major governments of his day (which he was undoubtedly aware were inspired by the covenantalism of Scripture): “... if the prince perform not his covenants and promises, it is lawful to constrain and bring him into order ... and that by war when it cannot otherwise be done” (165). According to Kingdon, Vermigli “concedes, like Luther, that the New Testament does not allow any sort of armed resistance to a legitimate government. But he argues that this prohibition does not apply in states whose laws, like those of the Holy Roman Empire, permit resistance if led by duly constituted inferior magistrates” (169). These arguments would be taken up by later theologians and statesman, and would transform much of Europe and prepare the way for the United States of America.

The final article by Markus Barth also deals with the question of the Christian in the state. Barth endeavors to understand Romans 13:1–7 (which has been traditionally interpreted as requiring utter submission even to an evil state) in light of Paul’s wider theological framework, which stresses the liberty we have in Christ over defeated “principalities and powers.” Barth very properly wishes to show that Romans 13 is not actually inimical to the contemporary Christian struggle for freedom from evil powers in the state and elsewhere. One cannot fail to appreciate his valiant efforts to interpret Romans 13 in this light. His goal is a good one, but this reviewer has some problems with the way he reaches this goal.

He questions whether Romans 13 should be erected into a “timeless Pauline ‘philosophy of the state’” since it was “a pastoral letter with a very particular *Sitz im Leben*” (176). That is, the Christians were not under persecution by the Roman Empire at the time Romans was written, and Barth speculates that Paul might have written differently had it been otherwise. He may of course be right, but the point surely is that in the providence of God Romans 13 was written just as it was. Furthermore, if we fail to accept the teachings of passages of Scripture that are addressed to particular historical situations as abiding principles, then what will we have left?

His study of the term “authority” is very useful, and his explanation of “principalities and powers” contains much clear insight that should be of help to preachers. What he says about Christianity humanizing personal relationships within human government (and in every area) is excellent. And his point that “submission” to proper authority has a voluntary dignity at its basis, rather than “the attitude of a beaten dog” (182), is well stated.

Again, however, the way he reaches the goal of the Christian’s voluntary dignity under authority rather than a beaten dog attitude is somewhat tenuous. The means by which the Christian becomes a man of dignified submission, or, if necessary, of proper resistance, is, according to Barth, the conscience. Much of what he says about the conscience, indeed most, is right: one still wonders if conscience is a bridge that will bear all the weight he puts on it.

He asserts (I think wrongly) that according to the New Testament, conscience “... signifies a gift of God found only in elect people” (190). Then he says that “conscience rejoices in knowing” that all human beings are to be saved (191). He seems to give back with one hand what he takes away with the other. Moreover, he admits that Paul in Romans 13:4, “presupposes capital punishment and war” (191). But then in a totally gratuitous fashion, he adds: “But one of the consequences of his appeal to conscience is in {170} escapable: in our time Christians cannot stand up for the execution of criminals nor for a general theory of “just wars” (192). Many of us would draw precisely the opposite conclusion: Christian conscience shows us that the only way out of the disintegration of modern society is by returning to a definite application of the principles of Scripture (which include capital punishment).

Barth’s remarks under point 5 (192–93) concerning the unquestionable propriety of the civil resistance of Zwingli, Calvin, John Knox, Oliver Cromwell, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are excellent.

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*The Bible For Every Day: Abraham, Genesis 12–23,*  
by Ronald S. Wallace

(London: Triangle SPCK, 1981), xii + 145 pp.; £1.85.

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**Reviewed by Douglas Kelly**

For many years this reviewer has longed to see some evangelical Bible commentator appear, who would have a good measure of the remarkable communicative ability of the late William Barclay—his clarity, simplicity, geniality, and interest, but who at the same time would hold to a high view of Scripture. Professor Ronald S. Wallace (whose credentials are mentioned in another review in this *Journal*—on *The Atoning Death of Christ*) comes as close as anyone on the current scene to meeting this need. He is presently preparing a series of commentaries on Genesis (presumably to be followed by other books of the Old Testament) which, “... instead of taking the form of textual sermons or a series of lectures, have been arranged to take the reader continuously through the printed biblical text, sometimes from chapter to chapter, sometimes from oracle to oracle, sometimes from incident and sometimes from verse to verse, following the order of the text, and trying not to leave out what is important or what might be difficult. They are arranged in easily readable units divided by carefully chosen headings. This arrangement will enable those who customarily have a daily Bible reading to use the book for such a purpose” (xi–xii).

Dr. Wallace brings to this series years of theological scholarship, pastoral and professorial experience, and a rich devotional life. In the line of John Calvin he deals with the text in a sober, historical way, yet always seeing its final focus in God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. Unlike some devotional writings, he seriously wrestles with the historical, literary context, and deals honestly with varying interpretations, but always comes out honoring the truth of the written Word. On the other hand, unlike some academic antiquarians, he constantly and straightforwardly applies the truths of the text to the dealings of God with His people today:

This story of the God-Abram relationship is told with such significance and emphasis that we can never regard it as merely the example

of a unique achievement in the history of God and man, a starting-point to be cancelled out once the glorious world-embracing fellowship is consummated. What God's love expresses and achieves between himself and Abram is meant to be taken as typical of what he wants to achieve with each of his people. It is the real and joyful beginning of the final harvest of the blessing—a firstfruit complete and glorious in itself and the promise of a crop that will be universally the same. (5) {171}

His interpretation of the relationship of Abraham and Lot, and of Abraham's descent into Egypt (when he lied about his relationship to Sarah) contains helpful psychological insights of wide applicability in the contemporary church. His explanations of Melchizedek and of the sacrifice of Isaac are models of wisdom and devotion. His remarks on sodomy and on the judgment of God are sober and faithful. He makes frequent and compelling reference to parents' need to pray for their children (e.g., 91, 104, 121). A depth of spiritual experience is revealed in Wallace's discussion of the deepening stages of sacrifice in the Christian life (117–18). The believer's connection to and influence over the world is not neglected (as in his comments on Abraham's relationship to the Hittites). His reminder that individual believers are meant to be, and can become, a delight to God (129) is an encouragement to closer obedience to God.

This book will be very beneficial to laymen and students, and is particularly recommended to pastors as an excellent help in the preparation of sermons on Genesis 12–23.

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***Medicine Out of Control:***  
***The Anatomy of a Malignant Technology,* by Richard Taylor**  
(Melbourne: Sun Books Pty. Ltd., 1979), 278 pp.; \$7.95.

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**Reviewed by Ian Hodge**

In an age when man's faith is in himself and his own ability to improve the world, a book such as Richard Taylor's *Medicine Out of Control* is an important reminder that man is prone to self-deception and will not realize the limits of his own endeavors. The author is a qualified doctor who worked in England and the United States before

returning to Australia. Taylor's subject is modern medical science, not the medicine of the past, but the relatively new application of scientific technology to the field of medicine.

We have seen, he says, the development of "science-fiction medicine" because "industrialized society has been characterized by a preoccupation with tracing the progress and achievement of its institutions, rather than their adequacy, their adverse effects, or their social and economic cost" (1). In other words, there is so much preoccupation with the fact that *something* has been done that the worth of that *something* is never evaluated, hence the continued use of things that often have little value.

The preoccupation of medicine with its newly acquired gadgetry and flashy technology in the face of the meagre evidence as to the usefulness of many of these new methods in diagnosis and treatment, leads to the conclusion that contemporary "medical science" would be better labeled "science-fiction medicine." (3)

Thus, "a technology is out of control when it is *still used* despite the fact that it is counter-productive, ineffective in achieving desired goals, wasteful of resources, inhumane, or socially destructive" (105). And the problem is caused by the fact that new inventions in equipment and medicine are *not* being adequately tested either before or after their introduction. Theoretical grounds, rather than the results of painstaking research, are quite often the only reasons for the introduction of a new drug (57).

The "malignant technology" is {172} having its effect. No one is considered healthy unless they attend regular medical check-ups and produce "continued negative reports for hidden disease.... Health is thus portrayed as a state of successive negative tests for hidden disease" (3, 196). Yet there is no evidence that regular check-ups do any more than increase the size of the doctor's bank account! "Screening has been born in an era in which the medical establishment is engaged in a vast overselling campaign of its importance in the 'War against disease' in order to justify the ever increasing money that it plunders from the national coffers" (189). According to Taylor the mortality rate is *not* affected by periodic check-ups (186).

The over-selling of modern medicine has "resulted in a generation of hypochondriacs, the undermining of the confidence of us all to be able



to distinguish if we are healthy or not, and seem[s] to be part of a determined plot by the medical establishment to turn us all into nervous wrecks” (197). “Instead of encouraging self-sufficiency, independence and self-reliance in health and illness, doctors have persistently contrived to produce dependent hypochondriacs” (196). Little wonder, considering that “one of the most fundamentally normal functions of the human species: pregnancy and childbirth” (133) is now classed as a disease. We are experiencing the “patientization of the population” (173).

More importantly, from the continued use of medical science has come an “epidemic” of iatrogenic diseases. Iatrogenic diseases are those which originate from the doctor; they are the result of “medical intervention” (42). These can be caused by adverse reactions to drugs, by complications in surgery or diagnostic tests, or be a product of the imagination. Says Taylor, “there is more than a little irony in the use of screenings as treatment for a state of mind which is in fact iatrogenic” (192). And the treatment of iatrogenic illness by further drugs thus exposes “the patient to the possibility of yet another iatrogenic disease.” This is called “*Second Level Iatrogenesis*.” In a hospital setting these situations are not uncommon. It is even possible for third and fourth level iatrogenesis to occur (47). Specialization has contributed to this, as each doctor prescribing medicines may not be aware that a colleague had previously prescribed something which will adversely react to his prescription.

Iatrogenic diseases may occur inside and outside hospitals. Taylor lists suicide as one, with its relationship to barbiturate sedatives. Another example occurred in Tasmania (Australia) when, during the 1960s, “the bread supply was supplemented by iodine in an effort to prevent goitre.” The result was “an epidemic of thyroid overactivity” which “started within four months of the iodine supplementation and lasted for five years” (61).

Not only are there medicinal, but also surgical causes of iatrogenic diseases, and these are particularly tragic when the surgery was unnecessary in the first place. “Unfortunately, there is much evidence to suggest that a considerable amount of unnecessary surgery is performed specially in fee-for-service medical systems” (63). An example of diagnostic iatrogenesis cited is mammography, which is advocated for the

detection of breast cancer even though it is known that this will eventually lead to some cases of iatrogenic radiation-induced cancer (64).

The problems of life, and the cures for them, are essentially religious, as Taylor is aware. “The current excessive, and often capricious, medical intervention is a reflection of the inflated expectations that an evolving technological society has in its ethos and its high priests” (64). Thus, {173} rather than lining up at the local church (not just for “healing” but for total salvation!) people prefer to queue in the local casualty ward to await “free” treatment, or join the procession on its way to the newest diagnostic center in town.

Because science and technology have given us so much, there is a tendency to assume that any human activity that involves these machines is superior to those which do not. Thus there is a general feeling by the public and doctors alike that diagnosis involving technological methods must be more accurate, and reveal conditions which are somehow more relevant than diagnoses using simpler techniques—if for no other reason than “science” itself is involved. (74)

But according to Taylor there is too much faith in “high technology methods of diagnosis.... Anyone who has ever taken a medical history will realize that a computer cannot yet detect the nuances in a patient’s description of his or her symptoms which are often of such crucial importance in diagnosis” (70). Diagnostic testing is becoming routine rather than the specialized case it ought to be where it may successfully “clarify the situation and lead to the institution of effective treatment” (70).

In other words, the personalized service of the local G. P. is likely to be far superior to that offered by the specialist with his technological gadgets. Even admitting the “great problem” that exists for a doctor to keep up with the growth of medical knowledge, Taylor says the “super-specialists have solved this problem by placing limits on what they are expected to know.”

This is a form of intellectual laziness. The superspecialists are thus able to pose as extremely knowledgeable, because of their intimate knowledge of their field, while remaining ignorant of the vast amount of medical knowledge outside their specialty. Because of their restricted knowledge they are apt to make the diagnosis which is the instantly recognizable hallmark of the superspecialist—“not in my

field.” Besides being intellectually easier, sub-specialization is also personally less demanding. (93)

The result is “a decline in the standards of medical practice and clinical competence, escalating costs of medical care, patient mismanagement, maldistribution of doctors within the community, and to a frightening loss of perspective of life and death which was formerly the strong suit of the medical profession” (95).

An important question arises, and that is whether modern medicine has prolonged life, especially where “killer” diseases such as cancer are involved, or is it just that there is earlier detection? In other words, the time from diagnosis to death is *not* extended by medicine but by the simple fact of earlier diagnosis. According to Taylor, the inadequate studies conducted to date do not provide an answer. But statistics available point to the fact that modern medicine cannot support its claim. For example, “statistics” show that there is a decline in mortality rates from patients with coronary heart disease when admitted to Coronary Care Units. However, initial studies indicate that what is actually happening is that a larger number of patients with only mild attacks are being admitted and released and these numbers are “watering down” the statistical findings. Conclusion: C.C.U.s are not necessarily prolonging life at all! In fact, “it is just conceivable the whole medical technology of coronary care units designed to prevent deaths, may actually cause {174} them” (115). You might well be better off to stay at home where the peace and quiet needed is available, rather than risk hospital and the anxiety that goes with separation from loved ones and the drugs and devices used.

Taylor’s purpose is not to decry medicine altogether but to point out that it is obviously on the wrong track.

The major part of the decline in mortality in the Western nations over the last 150 years occurred prior to the advent of modern medicine and in association with substantial improvements in nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, water supply, housing, and general social conditions. Unfortunately these factors have not received the attention they deserve. Rather, medical science has been given the credit for spectacular improvements in health which it could not possibly have influenced. (14)

This “myth” (7) concerning the effectiveness of medical science is having serious effects on underdeveloped countries that are blindly

buying medical technology when what is needed is basic improvements in social conditions. These nations need doctors “trained in the basic therapeutics of the common diseases which are present in their own regions, a training best received in their own country.... The underdeveloped countries do not need doctors trained in Western-style technological medicine” (231). Medicine should thus be attempting to prevent diseases rather than simply finding cures. In Third World countries this means the improvement of social factors; in industrialized societies it may mean “the conversion of hospitals into gymnasia” (22).

Taylor’s book is well-documented to support his thesis and is an important study for three reasons. First, it causes each of us to carefully evaluate our misplaced confidence in medicine and the medical profession. Secondly, it provides valuable information to assist us in answering a growing dilemma in our society: who is to have final say in medical matters, the patient or his legal guardian, relatives, the medical profession, or the state?

Thirdly, and most importantly, this book is a valuable tool in the hands of the Christian Reconstructionist who is endeavoring to overcome “philosophy and vain deceit” which is “after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).

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***“Reaganomics”: Supply Side Economics in Action,***  
by Bruce Bartlett

(Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1981), 229 pp.;

\$14.95 cloth

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**Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers**

Bruce Bartlett, the author, is a staff member of the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress. He is a knowledgeable and able economist. His “*Reaganomics*” is a technical and practical exposition of supply-side economics. Supply-side economics is said to be classical economics rediscovered in the recognition that it is productivity rather than ability to consume which sets limits to the satisfaction of human wants.

By the end of World War II Keynesian economics had virtual total allegiance of younger members of the economics profession. The inefficacy of Keynesian economics was heuristically demonstrated during the recession of 1974–75 when the unemployment rate hit its highest mark since the depression {175} notwithstanding a \$45 billion federal budget deficit which, at that time, was the largest since World War II, together with a soaring inflation rate. With the largest peacetime deficit in history, Keynesians could hardly call for more deficit spending and, according to Keynesian doctrine, reduction of the deficit to dampen inflation would exacerbate the already critical unemployment problem. Keynesian economics had demonstrated its effect in the long run.

Irving Kristol was one of the earlier observers to point to supply-side economics as replacement for the demonstrated inadequacy of Keynesianism. Increasingly, others have recognized the viability and promise of supply-side economics.

Bartlett's work is an explanation of the theory and impact of supply-side economics, including discussion of such questions and relationships as taxes and revenues, the cost of progressive tax rates, the income-transfer wedge, taxation and regional growth and decline, inflation and taxation, econometrics and politics, the Mellon tax cuts, rediscovery of incentive, the Kemp-Roth revolution, the Kennedy tax cuts, Proposition 13 and its aftermath, the balanced-budget question, the high cost of Jimmy Carter, taxes in Great Britain, supply-side economics abroad, and economic policies for the eighties and beyond.

Bartlett recognizes that although we cannot turn back the clock, it is never too late to stop making mistakes and begin practicing sound economic principles, the first step of which might usefully be an across-the-board reduction in tax rates. Not only is there ample demonstration that high tax rates can be counterproductive in terms of raising revenue, an even greater problem is that the nation loses far more than mere tax revenue when so much of the time, effort, creativity, and ingenuity of the citizenry is occupied by efforts to shelter taxes. Furthermore, Bartlett writes, society unfortunately loses a great deal more than revenue when high marginal tax rates prevent entrepreneurs from accumulating wealth. He feels that the present tax climate severely retards competition and creates monopolies and quasi monopolies by making it so difficult for new enterprises to challenge the established

order. Suppression of competition and stifling of innovation caused by the punitive tax system is, perhaps, the most detrimental effect on the economy in the long run.

With respect to why people continually press for planning despite its demonstrated inability to improve on the performance of a free economy, Bartlett suggests that a primary reason is that businessmen, particularly big businessmen, desire regulation in order to prevent competition. Although most businessmen are said publicly to proclaim their devotion to the free market (at least in the abstract), they do so with a “but” usually followed by explanation about how *their* situation is different and how the “national interest” or the specter of “unfair competition” requires government intervention.

The author is convinced and makes persuasive argument for the view that what American business desperately needs is not more government intervention in the economy to compensate for prior intervention, but *a radical reduction in the overall burden of government*. He proposes across-the-board tax-rate reductions instead of subsidies; regulatory reform instead of tariffs; a cut in government’s share of the GNP rather than loan guarantees. Bartlett further suggests that the tax code needs to be adjusted to inflation since it is extraordinarily harmful to the economy to have individuals pushed into higher and higher tax brackets and corporations forced to pay taxes on nonexistent capital gains. Since the total burden of government must be reduced, cutting {176} taxes is not enough; spending must be cut, too. Regulations, government loan guarantees, veteran’s welfare emoluments unrelated to any actual service deprivation and compensation, and government loan programs must be cut back as well.

This is a tremendous explanation of the theory and promise of supply-side optimism, and persuasive credible argument for developments which, if accomplished, would enable our economy to “take off on its own. This is the essence of supply-side economics.”

This is a meritorious work and deserves careful evaluation by persons interested in restoring economic health in the nation. The title “*Reaganomics*” is an admitted afterthought (after the work was completed) and does not reflect the content except to the extent that the President’s economic program focuses on economic restoration through policies which are aligned with the reasoning expounded in

this book, which is not a political treatise or exposition of the president's economic policies.

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*Social Security: The Inherent Contradiction,*  
by Peter J. Ferrara

(San Francisco: CATO Institute, 1980), 484 pp.; \$20.00

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**Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers**

Sophisticated econometric studies show that social security is costing Americans hundreds of billions of dollars annually because of its negative impacts on the economy. Persons entering the labor force in recent years, on the average, will not receive a reasonable return on the taxes they pay into the system. The program is fundamentally coercive. System inequities fall most heavily on some of the most vulnerable groups—blacks, the aged, and women. The program is financed by a regressive payroll tax that causes economic inefficiency and imposes a hardship on the poor. It has been chicanerously marketed and promoted.

The reason we have the program “even though there is no rational justification for it, and all generations are made worse off by it” is described as “social security’s dirty little secret.” “[I]t allows the initial generation that adopts it to tax future generations to pay free benefits to itself. These free benefits are simply a function of the pay-as-you-go system. When such a system is begun, huge tax increases are generated with nowhere to go because there are no accrued benefit obligations.... These tax payments, however, are not saved and invested to pay future benefits to current taxpayers.... They are therefore paid out to the first generation of retirees as free benefits. The fatal flaw of social security, its operation on a pay-as-you-go basis, is the real reason for its creation in the first place, as well as the reason why it must ultimately meet its downfall” (305).

The individual taxpayer coercively caught in social security’s increasingly burdensome tax extraction loses in contrast to what he could obtain by investing a similar amount privately. Social security is the world’s biggest welfare program. It is one of the federal govern-

ment's largest sources of income. Total social security taxes, which reached \$8.9 billion in 1959, doubled by 1965 to \$17.2 billion and doubled again by 1970 to \$39.7 billion. They reached \$106.2 billion in 1978. Total social security taxes in 1979 were \$124.6 billion, equal to all federal taxes extracted in 1965. The tremendous explosion in taxes and benefits in recent years has made the program so large that its impacts on the economy and social life {177} are enormous.

The idea that social security has a "trust fund" exemplifies what Ferrara appropriately describes as "politics and the art of lying" (66-74). Among the negative economic impacts are severe losses in savings and capital investment, a reduction of national income and economic growth, and decreased employment. Its coercive nature makes it morally questionable. As the program is shifting from its relatively worry free start-up phase of about forty years to its mature stage, the focus has shifted from passing out free benefits to the raising of taxes to meet escalating obligations. Likely substantial recession in the early 1980s along with continued inflation "will almost certainly throw the whole system into bankruptcy in the mid-1980s unless there are additional tax increases" which will take 25 to 33 percent of the taxable payroll.

... Paternalists contend that individuals are too stupid to take care of themselves, and therefore the government must take care of them. But none suggest that the government should not be run on a democratic basis.... The paternalist position, therefore, is simply that individuals are too stupid to run their own lives but not too stupid to run everyone else's. The very same people who are supposed to be incapable of making intelligent choices on relatively simple issues in their own personal lives are supposed to be perfectly capable of making complex public policy choices on how to resolve issues in the personal lives of everyone in the entire society.... Somehow it seems hard to accept the proposition that the very same people who are expected to make intelligent choices on these issues are incapable of making a simple choice concerning how much of their current income they want to save... (281-82)

Buying an insurance policy (which may very well be fraudulently marketed itself) is not a total answer. But, neither is government social security. Ferrara has provided a comprehensive discussion of the program and major reform proposals. Rationales for the current system are analyzed and found wanting. The author also discusses important



philosophical questions which the social security apparatus raises for a free society.

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*The Future Under President Reagan,*  
Edited by Wayne Valis

(Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1981), 194 pp.;  
\$12.95 cloth

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**Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers**

The election of President Reagan, and the accompanying Congress, particularly the Senate, was a refreshing, resuscitating, uplifting breath of hope, renewal, and optimism for the American Republic. This book, written by persons who played key roles in Reagan's California governorship and/or in his presidential campaign, is not an official statement of the new administration. It is an expression of views and assessments from persons who have been in position to observe and evaluate the new president's style and philosophy of government. It addresses issues which were central to the campaign and which will be instrumental in gauging the success or failure of the new administration.

The first essay, by Aram Bakshian {178} Jr., "Introduction: The Once and Future Reagan," outlines the president's "truly remarkable career, one that has either defied the smart money or proved that it wasn't all that bright to begin with." Truly, if Bakshian is right in only a fraction of his predictions, "Americans and our friends abroad will have a lot less to be embarrassed about and a lot more to feel good about when they look at Washington...." John Lenczowski, "Moral Leadership: The Foundation of Policy," feels that Ronald Reagan "is a moral leader with a philosophy marked by both intellectual and logical consistency" wherein in each of the three realms of political economy, foreign policy, and the sociocultural realm, we may expect a reaffirmation of the goodness of traditional American values and institutions and a defense against those ideas and policies that threaten them. This moral defense is said to signify above all a pride in these institutions that contrasts

with the guilt that has too often characterized a generation of liberal leadership.

Wayne Valis, “Ronald Reagan: The Man, The President,” focuses on the formidable task which faces the president following decades of liberal steering of the ship of state. His task of untangling the web of dilemmas is Herculean, perhaps insurmountable, and he will be given precious little time. Valis feels that if the president is successful in converting his voting coalition in the Congress into a governing one by cementing his new coalition around a core of basic policy issues, he can have profound effects on government and the political structure and usher in the beginnings of a new American renaissance. Essay 4, also by Valis, “A Reagan Presidency: The Congress and the Courts,” looks at the significance of “style” and its importance in getting things done in the nation’s capital.

Essay 5, “Economics, Inflation, Productivity—and Politics,” authored by Rep. Jack Kemp, calls attention to the necessity to restore incentives for productivity and jobs, to restrain the growth of federal spending, and to reform monetary policy as necessary ingredients to setting the country back on a course of full employment without inflation. David Wheat Jr., author of the chapter “Energy: Security With Confidence,” provides suggestions on avoiding and overcoming the previous policy of surrender to bureaucracy. James C. Miller III and Jeffrey A. Eisenach, “Regulatory Reform Under Ronald Reagan,” explore the nature of the regulatory problem, previous attempts at reform, and clues to Mr. Reagan’s views. They feel that Americans have every right for confidence that the president will move for a decreased omnipotence of the major social regulatory agencies.

Robert B. Carleson, “Taming the Welfare Monster,” sets forth some desirable principles for welfare reform. These are: those who are not physically able to support themselves should receive adequate benefits; those who are not physically able should be assisted to receive treatment and/or training leading to complete or partial self-sufficiency; those who have children should support them, married or not; no honest work is demeaning; for an able-bodied person to take something for nothing is demeaning; the economy, and therefore the poor, cannot survive in a system that pays able-bodied people for doing nothing;

those who are able-bodied should work for their benefits; local and state governments bear the brunt of welfare responsibility.

Chapter 9, "The Reagan Foreign Policy: An Overview," by Gerald Hyman and Wayne Valis, analyzes the task of reconstructing a more realistic, consistent, and convincing foreign policy and restoring the military and economic strength necessary to execute it. Lawrence J. Kolb, "The Foreign and {179} Defense Policies of A Reagan Administration," enumerates the obstacles and hurdles faced in achieving a new course in national defense strategy and supportive programs. "Middle East Changes," written by Dale R. Tahtinen, sets forth the need to regain respect for this country so that friends will be reassured in their trust and potential friends need not fear the consequences of supporting the United States.

Pedro A. Sanjaun, "Opportunities in the Western Hemisphere," looks at common economic problems shared with other nations of the hemisphere, the issue of hemisphere defense, and the need for sending appropriate and consistent signals to neighbors within the hemisphere. The author sets forth some of the less publicized opportunities that he feels are readily available for improvement of relations between the U.S. and other nations of this hemisphere, including Cuba, if we recognize that "Cuba" as a concept embodies the ultimate fulfillment of the will of a people and not the continued imposition of the will of a totalitarian government.

Cuba is an unfortunate reality of today, and represents a harrowing possibility of which the United States must be aware. However, Castro, rather than ten feet tall, is a dismal failure. Castro is described by the author as not only a socialist, but as "an incompetent socialist even when measured against socialism's usual failures." Castro, states the author, "is neither a world leader nor a worthy antagonist of the United States," although U.S. actions have been so confused and easily manipulated by the theatrical Cuban dictator that Castro's miserable failures inside Cuba in social, political, and economic terms have actually contributed to an increase in Castro's international stature. Castro is said to be

... capable only in the art of maintaining personal power in a country he oppresses, in an economy he has caused to deteriorate rather than improve, in a once-proud nation he has reduced to the status of a ser-

vile puppet of the Soviet Union.... A burdensome Soviet subsidy barely bails out Fidel's bankrupt economy.... In 1959 Cuba had the third largest per capita income in the Hemisphere. Today it ranks eleventh, having been surpassed by many countries that have not seen the need to enslave their people in order to promote a program of development. Twentieth-century socialism has proved to be an economic system subordinated to a series of political objectives that guarantee the continued distribution of scarcity....

Cuban socialism provides no model for the other nations of the Caribbean. The Cuban farmer still lives in squalor. Havana, once one of the most beautiful and vibrant urban areas of the hemisphere, is said to resemble an enormous urban slum. Cuba is said to have enormous unemployment problems "principally evident in Castro's ability and willingness to export Cuban cannon fodder to Africa and other parts of the world. In a country where the economy is underproductive, excess labor, particularly from among youth, is conscripted and sent to fight in foreign lands.... Another Cuban way of solving the embarrassing evidence of unemployment is to assign the same task to several people so that everyone 'looks' employed."

In the new socialist order, countries with a history of sectoral poverty will become economies of general disaster. Political liberty is abolished; food rationing is instituted and institutionalized; and opposition is eliminated by the use of summary justice and the expansion of the criminal code to encompass broad new categories of political {180} crimes. Signs derisively critical of Castro are said to have begun appearing throughout Havana, and robberies and other forms of lawlessness are said to have increased dramatically.

Unfortunately, for over two decades the U.S. has dealt with Castro through a form of "respectful" antagonism which has "unwittingly provided him with stature in the third world. We have created a myth about his ability to withstand the wrath of the U.S. colossus. The image of Castro, which we are doing little or nothing to puncture, is that in spite of the U.S. embargo, he has been capable of thriving economically."

H. Joachim Maitre, in "Of Mice and Paper Tigers: Europe in Disarray," observes that "Europe in general believes that America needs to restore a sound monetary policy, to balance the budget, and to bring inflation under control."

*The Future Under President Reagan* is not an official statement of promise or policy, but is an assessment of what persons who are positioned to know speculate we might expect from his presidency. At the same time, it lifts out some of the more important policy questions with which the new administration is dealing and will continue to face through the rest of its tenure, and sheds valuable insights into some of the directions toward which the country may greatly benefit from appropriate and effective leadership.

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***The Government Against the Economy*, by George Reisman,  
Introduction by William E. Simon**

(Ottawa, IL: Caroline House Publishers Inc., n.d.), 217 pp.;  
\$12.95 cloth.

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**Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers**

The imposition of price controls to deal with inflation is as illogical as would be an attempt to deal with expanding pressure in a boiler by manipulating the needle in the boiler's pressure gauge. Or so argues Dr. George Reisman, professor of economics at St. John's University, in his book on the destructive effects of price controls. A government which imposes price controls is in process of destroying the economic system of its own country.

The author explains how the existence of a free market would have enabled the United States to mitigate the hardships we have experienced with price controls, including those associated with the Arab-led oil cartel. Rising prices in the United States are said to be the result of an increase of money in the economic system rather than the result of falling supply. In the absence of rise in aggregate demand, price increases would result in a reallocation that would put an end to such increases. When new money enters the system, the rise in aggregate demand enables price increases, whether initiated by labor unions, wholesalers, or retailers, to take place as a generalized phenomenon. The generalized rise in prices is the resulting symptomatology.

*The Government Against the Economy* is a positive exposition of the free market as well as a devastating critique of price controls. After dis-

cussion of the free-market principles and applications, which occupy the first two chapters, the author turns attention to the relationship between price controls and shortages. He also proffers a rebuttal of the conspiracy theory of shortages and of the charge that a free economy lacks freedom of competition. The fourth chapter, which continues the examination of the effects of price {181} controls and shortages, examines resulting chaos in the personal and geographic distribution of consumer goods as well as the resultant administrative chaos, price increases, and supply limitations.

Chapter 5, a discussion of universal price controls and their consequences, looks at the tendency toward universal price controls, and universal shortages, the destruction of production through shortages, and socialism on the Nazi pattern. The following chapter further details the consequences of socialism. Socialism brings about the same chaotic effects as price controls for the same reason, destruction of the one and only source of economic harmony in the world: private property rights and the profit motive.

The essential fact to grasp about socialism ... is that *it is simply an act of destruction*. Like price controls, it destroys private ownership and the profit motive, and that is essentially *all* it does. It has nothing to put in their place. Socialism ... is not actually an alternative economic system to private ownership of the means of production. It is merely a *negation* of the system based on private ownership.

In a capitalistic system, the author states, each individual engages in economic planning through the price mechanism which coordinates the plans of each individual with the plans of all other individuals. Capitalism and the price system bring about a harmoniously integrated planning of the entire economic system. Socialism, by destroying the price system, destroys the possibility of economic calculation and the coordination of the activities of separate, independent planners. It therefore makes rational economic planning impossible and creates chaos.

A fundamental feature of socialism is that government ownership of the means of production constitutes an attempt to make intelligence and initiative in production a monopoly of the state. Socialism *prohibits* the independent planning of millions of free, self-interested individuals that is requisite to run an economic system in a rational and

ordered way. Corollary consequences are the technological backwardness of socialism and the utter powerlessness of the plain citizen under socialism. It follows from the powerlessness of the plain citizen that the government of a socialist country is not and has no reason to be interested in anyone's values but those of the rulers. The only kind of production a socialist government is interested in is the production of weapons, spectacles, and monuments which enhance the power and prestige of the rulers, and of just enough consumer goods which would prevent a revolt or mass starvation, either of which would weaken its power. In the final chapter, Dr. Reisman turns attention to the tyranny of socialism and its necessity for terror and forced labor.

Once the government assumes the power to determine the individual's job, it obtains the power to decide whether he must spend his life working in a coal mine in a remote village somewhere, or in the comparative comfort of one of its offices in the capital. It obtains the power to decide whether he will pass his life as an obscure nobody living in poverty, or enjoy a flourishing career ... living in comparative opulence. This, of course, goes along with the government's power over the distribution of consumers' goods.... In accordance with its powers of distribution, a socialist government decides what kind of house or apartment the individual is to occupy ... what kind of food he is to eat, whether or not he is to own an automobile, and so on. {182}

The existence of a system of naked aristocratic privilege is said to be the natural outgrowth rather than a contradiction of the principles of socialism. This follows from the fundamental moral and political premise that the individual does not exist as an end in himself, but as means to the ends of "Society." Since society is not an independent entity with a will and voice of its own, the alleged ends of Society are necessarily the ends determined by the elite of the socialist state. Under socialism, an individual is a means to the ends of the rulers. It would be difficult to imagine a system that is more aristocratic in nature. The only values that actually count in a socialistic system are those of the rulers.

The work is an excellent and impressive one of substance. As Mr. Simon observes in the introduction, Dr. Reisman gives an excellent explanation of what free-market prices actually accomplish, develops a cohesive set of economic principles which explain major facets of how the price system of the free market works and the coordination and

planning it achieves, and provides a systematic analysis of price controls and the consequences to which they lead. It deserves to reach a large audience.

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*Is Public Education Necessary?*  
by Samuel L. Blumenfeld

(Old Greenwich, CT: The Devin-Adair Company, 1981),  
263 pp.; \$12.95.

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**Reviewed by Tommy W. Rogers**

There is probably no more deeply ingrained religious belief in America than in the necessity for and ultimate desirability of public education. Most considerations of public education are addressed to the question of how government can do a better job in a task which is an inherent, if not the highest, responsibility of collective enterprise. Some voices, however, are being raised with respect to the appropriateness of government engaging in the wholesale indoctrination process of formal education. Blumenfeld is among them, and his message is worth careful evaluation.

*Is Public Education Necessary?* is concerned more with etiology than with documentation of contemporary ills, though these results are not ignored. Precisely, they represent the outworking of an idea which Blumenfeld feels was wrong in origin, and, given an understanding of the historical roots of statist education, the long run effects were inevitable. Blumenfeld answers the question which forms the title of his book by examination of the historical movement for adoption of the doctrine that government should assume the responsibility for educating the children of the citizenry.

The framers of the Constitution made no mention of education. Education, which was left to the parents, communities, churches, school proprietors, and the states, was recognized to be of no rightful concern of a central government. Apart from New England, where tax-supported schools existed under state law, the United States, from 1789 to 1835, had a laissez-faire system of education. The public school movement in the United States is seen as largely the accomplishment of



a New England Unitarian elite, of which nineteenth-century Harvard served as the fountainhead. Educational statism, modeled on the Prussian design, was the method by which an intellectual and financial elite could work out the higher purpose of promoting utopia.

Blumenfeld traces the selling of statist education with the arguments set forth by the proponents of statist education as well as the spokesmen of educational freedom. The Unitarians, {183} who made their worship of God conditional on His being what they wanted Him to be, felt that cultural uplift through education would provide salvation. The idea of an intellectual elite formulating and promoting social policy appealed to Unitarians because it gave a higher purpose to their lives based on their superior or “enlightened” status. Moved by an exalted vision of human perfectability, the Harvard-Unitarian elite gave promotion of statist education top priority. Driven by the need to prove that man was not the hopeless fallen creature portrayed by Calvin, the Unitarians saw public education as the instrument of human redemption.

Socialists similarly recognized that the general Calvinist belief in the innate depravity of human nature was a major obstacle to socialist utopia. The competitive system, of which private education was a part, was opposed by the Owenites in particular in their drive to do away with the individual. Progressive statist education devoted to scientific and technical instruction, based on observation of the material world, and devoid of moral values or inferences, was expected to lead to the adoption of a scientific, rational worldview free of religious dogma and superstition.

Simultaneous with the socialist effort to make public education the primary instrument of their efforts to reform the character of man preliminary to their reform of society, American educators began to organize into substantial pressure groups in favor of public education. By the early 1830s, public education was being promoted by socialists, Unitarians, and religious conservatives—each for different reasons.

Horace Mann, rather than the father of American public education (which existed early in the history of New England in the form of common schools), is more appropriately described as the progenitor “of centralized, state-controlled public education, governed by a state bureaucracy, and financed by taxes on property.” Mann’s unique contri-

bution was in changing American education from its libertarian, free-market course to a statist one. Mann believed public education and the creation of normal schools to be “a new instrumentality in the advancement of the race.” And, writes Blumenfeld, “Once a nation’s teachers’ colleges become the primary vehicle through which the philosophy of statism is advanced, this philosophy will soon infect every other quarter of society, for the most potent and significant expression of statism is a state educational system. Without it, statism is impossible. With it, the state can and has become everything.”

Blumenfeld feels that the only bright spot in the whole picture is the technological wonder that capitalism has brought to mankind through the very individual competitive system that the socialists and New England intellectual elite railed against. “Neither liberal altruism, nor universal public education, nor socialism lifted the poor from their lower depths. Capitalism did.”

Perhaps there will emerge a consciousness that educational indoctrination is not a rightful province of government, and may, in the long run, be incompatible with a concept of government as limited agent rather than omnipotent and omnipresent actor. Government education is inevitably an instrument of government policy. This does not bode well for American freedom. But, as Blumenfeld observes, we ought not be surprised since totalitarian governments have long considered public education as their most important tool for indoctrinating and controlling the young. Current widespread public belief to the contrary notwithstanding, public education, the author asserts, is not necessary. It is, in fact, misplaced.

## PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

### VOLUME 9

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Volume 9 (1982) of the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* will feature a symposium on “Immediate and Specific Christian Reconstruction.” Many highly encouraging things are taking place in churches and other Christian institutions across the land, where numbers of people are being won to Christ and the tide of evil is slowly being turned in local situations. In this issue we concentrate not on what God’s people expect to do after some hypothetical, future breakdown, or after some major revival (which is a good subject in and of itself), but rather on what is being done now to win victories for the Lord in this present time. Many churches and institutions of various denominations across America and in Britain and Australia have awakened to new forms of biblical, Christ-honoring ministries that are making a definite impact in their area. Other churches are experiencing powerful renewal and outreach through more traditional channels of service that have come to life in their midst.

We will feature articles on how Christians are reaching out to the poor in new ways; on how Christian schools are changing communities; on how expository preaching of the Word backed by intercessory prayer is both winning spiritual victories and changing politics. There will be articles on what Christian lawyers are doing to preserve liberty and bring reconciliation; on how blacks are being reached; and on plans to spread the light of Christ through the media in surprising new ways.

These subjects and many more will give an overview of what the Lord is doing in our time, and should give encouragement to Christ’s soldiers to march on in faith, hope, and obedience.

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# 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 overestimate 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*