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Church and State

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Editorial: Reflecting on our Christian Responsibility to the State

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The issue of the relationship between the church and state is an ancient one that the church has wrestled with since its very inception. Our Lord clearly taught the principle that the two realms are to be separated (see Matt 22:21), but the exact line of demarcation has been greatly disputed throughout the history of the church. Before Christianity became the favored and then official religion of the Roman Empire, believers followed Paul's instruction to be subject to the governing authorities (see Rom 13:1), except when that subjection conflicted with explicitly understood commands of God or the preaching of the gospel (see Acts 5:29). But by the end of the fourth century, a new arrangement existed between the church and state that required the need for closer definition of the relationships between them, which differed greatly depending upon whether the church took root in the East or West.

In the West, due to a variety of influences, the view of the two "powers" or "swords" developed, namely that God has established the power or sword of the church and the state. During the Middle Ages, this view was generally accepted, namely, the concept of a single society with two aspects, each with its own responsibilities, authority, and power, but the question of supremacy remained undefined. As a result, there was constant friction between the two over these precise areas. During the Reformation, Martin Luther sharply distinguished the temporal from the spiritual, but then considered many ecclesiastical functions, such as administration, as nonessentials thus providing the basis for most Lutheran States to develop a territorial system in which the political rulers supervised various church affairs. John Calvin, on the other hand, tried to argue for a clearer distinction between the spheres of church and state, but, at the end of the day, he still believed that it was the duty of the state to protect the church by maintaining peace and following biblical guidelines in civil affairs.

However, in the Anabaptist-Baptist tradition, we most clearly discover a more consistent separation of church and state, a view that, for the most part, was adopted in the new world. Thus, for example, in America, there was a greater separation between church and state than in Europe, but it must be quickly stated, unlike the rhetoric of many today, this never entailed the view that there was to be a complete separation of "religion" from national life. No doubt, in recent days, as America has become a more pluralistic country in the sense of diverse religious viewpoints outside of a Judeo-Christian framework, the exact role of "religion" (and which "religion") in public life has become more problematic, especially for evangelicals. In this regard, think about the recent discussion regarding whether an evangelical should vote for a Mormon, such as Mitt Romney, to serve in the White House, let alone whether a Christian should vote

for a Muslim or anyone else from a non-Christian religion to serve as the President of the United States.

Now given the fact that Christians have wrestled with these issues throughout the ages, and especially given the fact that 2008 is an election year in the United States, we thought that an edition of *SBJT* devoted to various reflections on the relationship between church and state would be not only be helpful for our readers, but also instructive and wise. Not only are reflections on this important area part of what is entailed by Christian discipleship and making every thought captive to Christ (see 2 Cor 10:5), but they are also necessary given the benefit we have as Christians who live in a democratic society. One of the great privileges that Western Christians have, unlike some believers in other parts of the world, is that we have the opportunity to participate in the political process. Even though our allegiance first and foremost is to the Lord of the church and not to the state, God has sovereignly ordained government(s) to establish his purposes in the world (Rom 13:3-4). And as citizens of the state, especially democratic governments, we have a privilege and responsibility to participate in the political process and express our views as Christians.

In this important way, the church has an important prophetic role, as salt and light in the world, to witness to the values that God demands for any society. To be sure, this kind of Christian political involvement does not cancel out the spiritual form of Christ's church and kingdom, nor does it call the state to promote the gospel with political power and muscle. But it does mean that as the church, we have a responsibility to call the state to carry out what God demands and expects of all governments, namely to protect and promote life, to uphold what is good, and to restrain what is evil, so that we may live at peace, and that the gospel may have free course in our society and in the world. No doubt, we must never think as Christians that salvation comes merely through the political order, a mistake sometimes sadly made by Christians. Rather, salvation only comes through the proclamation of the gospel, which leads to new birth, and people repenting of their sin and believing in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. But with that said, especially living in the West, we as Christians have a unique privilege and responsibility to make our views known and to bear witness to the gospel in every aspect of our lives, including the political process.

All of the articles and forum pieces of this edition of *SBJT* are written with the goal of helping us better to think of our Christian responsibility to the state. Even though each author is addressing a different aspect of this relationship, both in terms of historical and contemporary issues, all of them together are written with the conviction that Christians must biblically and theologically, carefully and wisely, wrestle with how to apply the Scriptures to our lives, including our political lives and involvement in society. It is our prayer that this issue of *SBJT* will better lead to this end so that we may learn afresh what it means "to be in the world but not of it," and what is entailed to live under the Lordship of Christ for his glory and our good.

From the House of Jacob to the Iowa Caucuses: The Future of Israel in Contemporary Evangelical Political Ethics

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In the year 2000, then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton revealed in her financial disclosure statements for her campaign for the United States Senate from New York that she had received a contribution from the "American Museum Association." The New York press corps painted the spelling error, actually the American *Muslim* Association, as an artful dodge designed to protect the candidate from too close an alliance with what is seen as an anti-Israel group in a state with a large Jewish population. This was especially relevant for Clinton, given the fact that her budding political career had been jeopardized by a videotaped image of her kissing the cheek of the "First Lady" of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, a group dedicated to the destruction of the State of Israel. This was significant because Israel is more than just another foreign policy concern, and Jewish voters are more than just another ethnic constituency. Wrapped up in a politician's support for Israel—or lack thereof—is an entire set of foreign and domestic policy commitments. And in the background of every decision related to Israel is a twentieth-century of bloody state-sponsored anti-Semitic genocide and a twenty-first century of potentially nuclear-armed nations devoted to the destruction of the Israeli state. A candidate's views on the security of Israel signal in many ways that candidate's vision for the future—and his or her view of the past.

If Israel is complicated for candidates for public office in the national political arena, though, it is even more so among evangelical Christians seeking to apply a "Christian worldview" to the social and political arenas of the era. A comprehensively Christian approach to sociopolitical concerns cannot ignore the most politically incendiary stretch of land on the globe, particularly when the name of the stretch of land takes up one-third of the pages in one's Bible concordance. Unlike some issues—such as the sanctity of unborn life, for instance—evangelicals have longstanding internal divisions over the nation of Israel. Moreover, these divisions are not incidental to the theological background of evangelical political engagement but run right through the middle of such questions. Even as evangelicals have overcome some seemingly intractable theological divisions that were impediments to a unified approach to political engagement, the question of Israel remains open.[1] As evangelical theologians seek to apply the biblical understanding of the Kingdom of God to the present political structures, how can they ignore a theological question so foundational to understanding the nature

of the Kingdom? Can evangelicals who reject a dispensationalist account of a future for political Israel still counteract anti-Semitism? Does an understanding of a future for Israel mean automatic support for all Israeli policies? These questions require an examination of the future for Israel in a Christian understanding of God's Kingdom purposes. This article will survey current evangelical options on the politics of Israel's future, followed by a proposal for an ethic toward Israel that centers on Jesus as the ultimate Israel of God.

The Politics of Israel's Future: An Historical Appraisal

An evangelical Christian political ethic is more concerned with the nation of Israel than with the nation of, say, Norway. All Christians agree that there will be Norwegians in the Kingdom of God for which we are to seek first. But most Christians also agree that there will not be a *Norway* there. By contrast, all Christians agree that there will be Israelites in the Kingdom of Christ. Evangelicals disagree though whether there will be a nation of Israel there. This question has everything to do with how conservative Protestants see world events, a just response to them, and, more importantly, the nature of biblical promise itself. Before evangelicals can contribute to the stance the international community ought to have toward the state of Israel, they must ask whether the Scripture reveals a particular place for this nation in the script of the end-times. For many evangelicals, the answer to that question is yes—a "yes" that is determinative of an array of public policy decisions. The politics of Israel's future is further complicated by ongoing controversies over evangelical theology itself, particularly over whether the apocalypticism of popular fundamentalism is itself driving U.S. geopolitical commitments in the Middle East.

The majority position in the history of the Christian church, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox, is that the blessings promised in the end-times to Israel are to be received by all those who are found in Christ. Within contemporary evangelicalism, this perspective is seen perhaps most clearly in Reformed theology. The covenant theology of Reformed confessionalism maintains that the church, not any current or future geo-political entity, is the "new Israel," the inheritor of Israel's covenant promises. "The modern Jewish state is not a part of the messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ," contends Reformed theologian O. Palmer Robertson. "Although it may be affirmed that this particular civil government came into being under the sovereignty of the God of the Bible, it would be a denial of Jesus' affirmation that his kingdom is not of this world order (John 18:36) to assert that this government is part of his messianic kingdom."[2] At the 1971 Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy, for example, Reformed theologian Herman Ridderbos expressed "embarrassment" with the conference since the evangelicals there were focused on Israel's place in prophecy rather than on an evangelistic endeavor to convert the Jews to Christ.[3] For Ridderbos, in continuity with Reformed theologians throughout the ages, the future for Israel is found just where it is for Gentiles, in Christ, not in a tract of land in the Middle East. Even those covenant theologians who believe Romans 11 teaches a mass conversion of Jews at the end of the age (John Murray, for example) still tend to see this future for Israel as an ethnic

rather than a political reality.[4] That is, they would see large numbers of Jews turning to faith in Christ and thus joining with the one Body of Christ in receiving the promises to Abraham rather than seeing the restoration of a state of Israel in the land of Palestine.

Most people interested in the political ramifications of an evangelical theology of Israel, however, are concerned more with the *Scofield Reference Bible* than with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. For evangelicals influenced by dispensationalist theology, the future of Israel as both an ethnic identity and as a nation-state is assured and indisputable from the Old Testament promises—which commit to the offspring of Abraham the land of Canaan and peace from enemies. New Testament passages such as Romans 9-11 seem to reconfirm the national and political character of these promises. Dispensationalist evangelicals—and those influenced by their eschatology—affirm an earthly millennial reign of Christ, centered on a reconstituted national Israel upon which God will lavish the geo-political promises He pledged to them in the Hebrew Scriptures. This eschatology of a future Israelite hope plays an unlikely role in the history of the contemporary state of Israel, and lurks in the background of ongoing debates over the place of America and the international community in the Middle East.

As from the beginning of the movement, some contemporary dispensationalist leaders warn against a "replacement theology" that sees Israel's future as belonging to the church. In a volume endorsed by influential pastor John MacArthur and leaders of several Messianic Jewish organizations, Barry Horner argues for a "Judeo-centric eschatology" as a "unifying teaching of Scripture" and labels "replacement theology" as "anti-Judaism."[5] Indeed, in a forward to Horner's book, Messianic Jewish leader Moishe Rosen labels any understanding of a fulfillment of the Old Testament eschatological promises to those who are in Christ to be "theological anti-Semitism."[6] Rosen sees this kind of "thievery" of Christians from the promises to the Jews in, among other places, children's Sunday school "where small children are taught to sing the song, 'Every promise in the book is mine, every chapter, every verse, every line.'"[7] This understanding would be more nuanced in the mainstream of dispensational scholarship. Progressive dispensationalists—led by theologians and biblical scholars such as Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock—argue for a more unified understanding of the people of God, and away from the language of "two peoples" with two sets of promises as articulated by earlier generations of dispensationalists. Nonetheless, progressive dispensationalists still maintain a unique future for political Israel. Indeed, the Israelite character of the Millennium may be the distinguishing feature of progressive dispensationalism from historic premillennialism. One dispensationalist argues that Israel's future is to serve a "mediatorial role" to the other nations in the coming millennial kingdom of Christ.[8] This special function does not make Israel superior to the other nations, he contends, any more than a complementarian view of male headship means that men are essentially superior to women.[9] For progressive dispensationalists, the future restoration of Israel as a political body is itself a corrective to the political isolationism of previous generations of conservative Protestants. The very existence of a political

rule of Jesus over a nation of Israel—with a government in Jerusalem and a global foreign policy—repels any notion that the gospel is unconcerned with politics or that redemption is focused simply on private "spiritual" matters. Blaising, for instance, contrasts the political nature of a dispensational understanding of millennial hope with the mystical "spiritual visionary hope" of Augustinian amillennialism, which reduces Christian expectation to inward spiritual blessing rather than historical political resolution.[10] While other Christians may hold to a "not yet" vision of Christ ruling the nations with a "rod of iron," dispensationalists, including the newer forms, can claim continuity with the specific politico-redemptive purposes initiated with Israel's past. Thus, the bookends of an imperfectly ruled Israelite theocracy in the Old Testament and a perfectly ruled Israelite Christocracy in the Millennium can provide, in the dispensationalist scheme, a standard of political righteousness by which to judge current claims to political justice.

History would seem to bear out something of the claim that an emphasis on future Israel has a politicizing effect on even the most politically isolationist forms of conservative Protestantism. The hope of a future for Israeli Zion contributed to the transformation of dispensationalists from a politically withdrawn and spiritually focused sect to the driving force behind both the call for a secure Israeli homeland abroad and the Religious Right populist electoral movement at home. Historian Timothy Weber demonstrates how the rise of dispensationalism—originating with the separatist theology of Anglican dissident J. N. Darby—gained ground among some English and American Protestants in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries because it offered a "'sure word of Bible prophecy' to help them interpret world events and show how such events were leading to Christ's return."[11] A restored Israel seemed as distant and futuristic as the antichrist does to contemporary evangelicals, and so dispensationalist arguments seemed more focused on prophecy charts than on the daily newspapers. "For the first one hundred years of their movement, then, they were observers, not shapers, of events," Weber asserts.[12] This was not to continue throughout the twentieth-century. Weber continues,

> But that all changed after Israel reclaimed its place in Palestine and expanded its borders. For the first time, dispensationalists believed that it was necessary to leave the bleachers and get onto the playing field to make sure the game ended according to the divine script. As the world edged closer and closer to the end, dispensationalists became important players in their own game plan. When they shifted from observers to participants, they ran the risk of turning their predictions into self-fulfilling prophecies.[13]

For dispensationalists, the establishment of Israel in 1948 seemed to be a verification of a prophetic timetable in which most elements are, by definition, unverifiable until the Rapture. Indeed, dispensationalists were so sure of the truth of their prophetic futurism—and that it was at hand—that they fueled American support for a Jewish homeland. Thus, the activism of dispensationalists such as William Blackstone in the early 1880s toward a Christian Zionism can be traced directly to the eventual fulfillment in an Israeli state.[14] As historian Martin Marty notes, mainline Protestantism before and after World War II (such as the editorial board of *The Christian Century* magazine) received talk of Zionism with

ambivalence, if not outright hostility. Marty writes, "Protestant fundamentalists, who backed Zionism, gave a theological interpretation of events that was friendly to Israel but that no Jew could accept."[15] Clearly, few Protestant liberals could accept it either.

The support for a Jewish homeland, precisely because of its place in prophetic fulfillment, continued throughout the twentieth-century. Harold J. Ockenga, for example, proclaimed at a Jerusalem prophecy conference organized by Carl F. H. Henry, that the "restoration" of national Israel was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of the budding of the fig tree (Luke 21:29-34). Thus, the establishment of the Israeli state paved the way for the return of Christ. "If the fig tree represents Israel, as we believe it does, then the return of Israel to Palestine, in fulfillment of many passages of Scripture, is the putting forth of shoots by the fig tree," he said.[16] Ockenga, hardly an exemplar of reckless apocalyptic speculation, represented in this viewpoint a broad number of evangelicals nationwide. Evangelical political support for Israel found further theological anchoring in the flurry of end-times interest in the 1970s and 1980s, led by popular writer Hal Lindsey. Lindsey applied Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 that "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" to mean that the "Countdown to Armageddon" began with the establishment of Israel in 1948. "A generation in the Bible is something like forty years," he argued. "If this is a correct deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place. Many scholars who have studied prophecy all their lives believe that this is so."[17] The doctrinal roots of Lindsey's support of the Israeli state led him to accuse covenant theology of a dangerous anti-Semitism replete with terrifying geo-political consequences.[18] Lindsey's Israel-centric eschatology tapped into the imagination of the evangelical consumer base with the *Left Behind* series of novels penned by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in the 1990s and shortly thereafter.

Support for Israel became a key component of the political agenda of the so-called Religious Right. Though Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority attempted to make clear that their movement rested on "no common theological premise," the organization acknowledged that many Moral Majority members supported the Jewish state "because of their theological convictions."[19] Under siege from opponents ranging from the Palestinian Liberation Organization to the United Nations, the Israeli government happily accepted evangelical support regardless of its theological foundation, especially in light of the influence the Religious Right had on American political leaders such as Ronald Reagan. The Israeli government bought tourism advertisements in *Christianity Today* and other evangelical publications while Israeli Prime Ministers such as Benjamin Netanyahu met with evangelical leaders such as Falwell and Pat Robertson. Jewish journalist Zev Chafets argues that these alliances were driven by the strategic plans of Israeli leaders who were more concerned about national security than about American evangelical prophecy beliefs or about American liberal sensibilities. Chafets contrasts Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's courting of evangelical Christian leaders with the disdain that greeted these evangelicals from traditional American power centers. Begin "didn't judge Christians by where they went to college, their rural accents,

or, for that matter, what political party they belonged to (at this stage, the late 1970s, many, including Pat Robertson, were still Democrats, although they were quickly trending Republican). The Christian Zionists supported Begin's policies, and that was enough."[20]

American Jewish leaders seemed ambivalent to evangelical support for Israel. Some, such as the signatories of the pre-September 11th-era *Dabru Emet* statement on Jewish-Christian relations, hailed evangelicals for recognizing that the Palestinian land is part of an eternal covenant between God and the Jewish people. "Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics," they noted. "As Jews, we applaud this support."[21] Other American Jews have charged pro-Israel evangelical political leaders with an ironic anti-Semitism, pointing to, among other items, Jerry Falwell's suggestion that the antichrist would be Jewish, Pat Robertson's cryptic writings about a conspiratorial cabal of international bankers, and former Southern Baptist Convention president Bailey Smith's (most often reported out of context) declaration that "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew."

Critics of Christian political activism, such as Karen Armstrong, warn that dispensational support for Israel masks "genocidal tendencies," which are equally informed by dispensational prophecy charts. "At the same time as Protestant fundamentalists celebrated the birth of the new Israel, they were cultivating fantasies of a final genocide at the end of time," she notes. "The Jewish state had come into existence purely to further a Christian fulfillment."[22] Others object that prophetic support for Israel is counterproductive because it fuels the already apocalyptic religious tensions in the Middle East.[23] Israel's American critics on both the left and the right of the political spectrum have been frustrated by what they consider to be the political *carte blanche* given by evangelicals to the Israeli state. Former United States Congressman Paul Findley (R-Ill.), for example, in a critique of the powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), blames the prophetic beliefs of evangelicals for helping to make support for Israel the untouchable third rail of American foreign policy.[24] As conservative commentator Patrick J. Buchanan attacked the Israeli "amen corner" in the United States for "beating the drum" for war in the Persian Gulf in 1990, he must have realized that much of that "amen corner" was composed of conservative evangelicals whose support he would court in the next three primary campaigns for the Republican presidential nomination. While not seeing Christian Zionists as significant as the so-called "Israel lobby," controversial academic critics of Israel John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt nonetheless call dispensationalist evangelicalism "an important 'junior partner' to the various pro-Israel groups in the American Jewish community."[25]

The period of war and tumult following the attack on the United States by Islamic jihadists refocused attention on the eschatological bases for evangelical political thought, especially in the arena of geo-politics. British ethicist Michael Northcutt argues that the foreign policy of American President George W. Bush is motivated by a dispensationalist apocalyptic eschatology envisioned for Bush in a theology fleshed out by Bush religious advisers such as Franklin Graham and

James Robison. "Even the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, and terrorist acts against the invading nations, is interpreted by dispensationalists as an end time event, because Revelation 9:14-15 speaks of the release of 'four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates' who will destroy one-third of men on the earth."[26] This apocalypticism supported by state action is because, Northcutt contends, the theologically oriented Bush Administration is committed "financially and strategically to rebuilding Zion as the State of Israel," in fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Mainline Protestant theologian Gary Dorrien also sees dispensationalist futurism behind Bush Administration foreign policy, Zionism, and "American imperialism." Dorrien implies a dual meaning behind a purported statement by Bush Administration national security advisers that "the road to Jerusalem runs through Baghdad."[27]

Some have seen two forms of apocalyptic utopianism, one Christian and one secular, coming together in a neoconservative/Religious Right alliance for conservative internationalism in support of Israel. "In building on the biblical foundations for an apocalyptic confrontation in the Middle East, the Christian Right came to support the neo-conservative agenda concerning Israel after having little interest in foreign policy during the 1980s and the early 1990s," write foreign policy analysts Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke.[28] Halper and Clarke call this a "marriage of convenience" between evangelicals who draw on a missionary zeal and an apocalyptic Israel-centric eschatology to support the aggressive interventionism of the neoconservatives.[29] Dorrien argues that Jewish neoconservatives such as Norman Podhoretz overlooked the fact that the restoration of Israel in the dispensationalist eschatology of Religious Right leaders such as Pat Robertson is "a prelude to Christ's second coming at which Jews would be converted to Christianity or condemned to hell" in order to claim Christian support for the Israeli state and a united front against Islamic jihad.[30] Apparently, this accommodation works both ways, as in late 2007 Robertson endorsed Podhoretz's candidate for President of the United States, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, despite the candidate's support for abortion rights, long a central plank of the Religious Right's public agenda. Robertson said the "global war on terror" was now the most important issue facing the country, and the decisive factor in his choice of the socially liberal, thrice-married New Yorker.

There is no question that social and religious conservatives—led by evangelical Protestants—and foreign policy hawks—led by the so-called neoconservatives—have in recent years shared as part of an alliance within the Republican Party. Regardless of whether one supports the foreign policy proposals of the Bush Administration or the Republican Party platform, though, it is an exaggeration to say that this is the result on the part of evangelicals of an apocalyptic end-times scenario centering on the nation of Israel. First of all, claims to evangelical "engineering" of Armageddon are themselves a popular apocalyptic conspiracy theory worthy of the 1970s-era *Thief in the Night*. One must remember that the very same language now used of dispensationalist influence on foreign policy was also used during the Reagan Administration. Critics of President Ronald Reagan's hawkish Cold Warrior foreign policy and of his

closeness to the then-novel evangelical political movement warned of a scary Armageddon scenario in which a religiously-motivated Reagan might force the end-times confrontation between Israel and "Gog and Magog," a nuclear Soviet Union. On the one hand, such warnings seemed to have some justification. After all, as historian Garry Wills points out, Reagan made statements such as this to a pro-Israel lobbyist:

> You know, I turn back to your ancient prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if we're the generation that's going to see that come about. I don't know if you've noted any of these prophecies lately, but believe me, they certainly describe the times we're going through.[31]

And yet, if Reagan were driven by a fanatical prophetic conviction, he quite obviously failed. The Reagan Administration did support Israel, but Israel's interests did not, for better or for worse, drive American foreign policy in every instance, as the American withdrawal from Lebanon demonstrated. Reagan did employ clear language against the Soviet Union, but if he believed the "Evil Empire" to be the Gog of Ezekiel's oracle, destined for a nuclear showdown with the Israeli state, then why did the Administration spend so much time in peace negotiations with this Gog? And why did Reagan invest so much effort in the idea of a space-based "shield" of nuclear arms? Yes, Reagan and Bush utilized language drawn from dispensationalist evangelical eschatology from time to time, but is this because they are mapping out foreign policy with a *Scofield Bible* or a Tim LaHaye novel or is it because—whatever their personal religious convictions—they are also politicians for whom evangelical Christians are an important constituency? Perhaps a healthy dose of cynicism and political realism could help some secular and liberal religious observers to see a more nuanced situation, and enable a more carefully thought through consideration of the wisdom, or lack thereof, of American involvement in Palestine, Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere.

Second, much that has been written about the alleged dispensationalist apocalyptic and Israel-supportive influence on American foreign policy fails to take into account the waning influence of dispensationalism as a theological system in contemporary American evangelicalism. Previous generations of evangelicals included large figures who incorporated a dispensationalist understanding of Bible prophecy into primary aspects of their teaching ministries. These would include, for example, W. A. Criswell of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, and even (for a time) evangelist Billy Graham. In the contemporary era, however, the sources of theological energy in American evangelicalism include such disparate streams as a resurgent Reformed theology (as in the ministry of John Piper and an array of conferences and publishers around the country), a semi-liberalizing theology (as in some forms of postmodernist "emerging church" accommodation), and a missional pragmatism that hardly touches on any theological concerns eschatological or otherwise. Even those evangelical leaders who are clearly dispensationalist have identities in the evangelical world in which their dispensationalism is almost incidental; not the core of their support. Dispensationalists are still around in evangelical leadership, but they are more likely to be leading a seminar on cell group ministry or a breakout session on

effectual calling than a conference on the place of Israel in biblical prophecy.

In this sense, some professional "evangelical watchers" treat dispensationalism much the way they treat, to a greater degree, theonomic Reconstructionism. While a small minority of evangelical Christians are theonomists or Reconstructionists, sociologists and political scientists have made a cottage industry sorting through the writings of Rousas Rushdoony and others, warning of a "dominionist" influence on American foreign and domestic policy. There is no doubt that there are multitudes more dispensationalist premillennialists than theonomic postmillennialists in America today (as both sides of that equation would affirm), but often the same paradigm is at work in some critics of American evangelicalism. Often the very same critics charge the Religious Right with *both* a pessimistic apocalypticism dragging the world toward nuclear winter *and* a domineering cultural mandate hurling the world toward stoning pits for adulterers without ever seeming to realize how incoherent these two theological systems are.[32] A more careful analysis of the politics of Christian eschatology should view the ideological motives and inclinations of evangelical Protestants with the same kind of complexity with which one analyzes the ideological motives and inclinations of, for example, America's Catholic or Jewish populations.

Third, assessments of evangelical support for Israel often fail to take into account the evangelical reaction to seemingly overwhelming anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli ideologies rooted in counter-biblical mythologies—whether those mythologies are nationalistic Islam or anti-supernaturalistic Christian liberalism. When evangelicals hear the speech about Jews on some Arabic television stations, they hear—accurately, I think—echoes of an idolatrously murderous Third Reich. Yes, some conservative evangelicals have applied incorrectly the Old Testament promises directly to the current Israeli state. But what of mainline Protestant denominations who boycott the "Israeli occupation" by diverting funds, often by canonizing the Palestinians as new Israelites in bondage to a rather ironically cast new Pharaoh. One can hardly blame conservative evangelicals for seeing the silliness of a Presbyterian Church (USA) that reconfigures the Trinity and embraces religious pluralism but warns its church members that the *Left Behind* series is "not in accord with our Reformed understanding of covenant theology."[33]

The Politics of Israel's Future: A Theological Reappraisal

A vision of Israel's future has played a significant role in an evangelical ethic of political involvement, even if, for some evangelicals, this understanding of Israel was more at the level of intuition than at the level of full-orbed theological reflection. It could be that somewhere in the future there will be resurgence of dispensational premillennialism, but this seems unlikely in the near term. Rather, it appears that among the younger generation of evangelical Protestants, covenant theologian Vern Poythress's prediction has proven true: progressive dispensationalism has "progressed" all the way out of anything recognizable as dispensationalism and toward historic premillennialism or even amillennialism.[34] If so, does this mean that Israel as a political body would occupy the same

place as, say, a more strategically located Norway in an evangelical political ethic? How should post-dispensationalist evangelicals understand Israel as the nation relates to their theological identity and to their ethical engagement?

One of the positive contributions of some of the more orthodox forms of the so-called "emerging church" is a reemphasis on the centrality of narrative to biblical truth. This insight is, of course, not unique to "postmodern" forms of Christianity—see the Patristic writings or, closer to our own era, those of C. S. Lewis. Seeing the Scripture as a story—a true story—rather than as simply a systematic theology to be mined is the first step to getting beyond some of the disputes over a future for Israel, disputes that at times have tended to ignore the literary unity of the text. The story of Israel's God shows us that God's cosmic purposes are also intensely personal and particular, seen in the way God has chosen to bring about these purposes through covenant promise and fulfillment, mediated through the line of Abraham.[35] After demonstrating God's creational origin of the whole universe—and his salvation of all animal and human life through the Noahic flood, God builds a vision of the end of all things through covenant promises with a chosen people, beginning with Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant promised material land, a name of great renown, and a multitude of offspring (Gen 12:1-7; 17:1-14). Thus, faith itself is defined as forward-looking and eschatological from the very beginning—as Abraham offers up the promised son, knowing God could raise him from the dead (Gen 22:1-19; Heb 11:17-19) and as Joseph pleads with his brothers to carry his bones into the promised land, knowing that his death could not annul God's covenant purposes for Israel (Gen 50:25; Josh 23:32; Heb 11:22).

With the foundation of the Abrahamic promise, God further reveals the contours of biblical hope. Through the Mosaic covenant, he outlines the blessings of an obedient nation and the curses of a disobedient people. In the Davidic covenant, he promises a son to David who will build a dwelling-place for God, who will defeat God's enemies, and rule the people in the wisdom of the Spirit (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 2, Psalm 73; Psalm 89). In the prophesied new covenant, God promises to unite the fractured nations of Israel and Judah into one people, a people who all know Yahweh, are forgiven of their sins, and are restored as a nation in the promised land (Jer 31:31-40).

The covenants look forward—past Israel's then-present disobedience—to the day in which the vine of God bears fruit (Ps 80:8-19; Isa 5:1-7; 27:6; Ezek 15:1-8; 17:1-24; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1-2), the harlot of God's people is a faithful bride washed of all uncleanness (Isa 54:5-6; Jer 3:20; Ezek 16:1-63; Hosea 2:1-23), the exiled refugees are returned to a secure homeland, and the flock of God is united under one Davidic shepherd who will feed them and divide them from the goats (Jer 3:15-19; 23:1-8; Ezek 34:1-31; Micah 5:2-4; 7:14-17). In this coming future, Israel will be what she is called to be, the light of the world, a light that the darkness cannot overcome (Isa 60:1-3). In this future, God's favor on Israel is clear to the nations because he is present with his people. The repeated promise of the covenants is "I will be your God and you will be my people." As Joel prophesies, "You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, that I am the Lord your God and there is none else" (Joel 2:27). With this in view, the covenants

picture their fulfillment not just in terms of inheritance blessings, but also in terms of a restoration of Eden (Ezek 36:33-36; 37:22-23), the building of a glorious temple (2 Sam 7:13; Ezek 40:1-47:12), the return of a remnant from exile (Isa 11:12-16), and the construction of a holy city of Zion in which Yahweh dwells with his people in splendor (Ps 48:1-14; 74:2; Isa 18:7; Lam 5:17-22; Ezek 48:30-35).[36] The covenants will come to their goal when Israel is judged for sin, raised from the dead, and anointed with the Spirit of Yahweh—a public act in the face of hostile nations (Ezek 20:21, 35-49; 37:11-27). These covenant promises are then inherently eschatological and messianic—a truth seen in the fact that the patriarchs themselves died and rotted away without seeing the realization of the promises (Heb 11:13-16).

The gospels apply the covenant fulfillments to Jesus directly, equating him with Israel itself. Indeed, Jesus recapitulates the life of Israel. Like Israel under pagan rule, he escapes from a baby-murdering tyrant, and is brought out of Egypt. "Out of Egypt, I have called my son," says Hosea, referencing the exodus of God's "son" Israel from Egypt, and yet Matthew applies this prophetically to the young Jesus (Matt 2:15; Hosea 11:1). The nations, represented by eastern Magi, stream to Jesus and give him gifts of frankincense and myrrh (Matt 2:1-12), exactly as Isaiah had promised would be true of Israel in the last days (Isa 60:1-6). Like Israel, Jesus passes through the Jordan River (Matt 3:13-4:1). In the temptation accounts, Jesus wanders for forty days in the wilderness, where he is tempted (1) with food, (2) with proving God's vindication of him, and (3) with grasping for the Kingdom promises (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). He explicitly ties these events to Israel's wilderness wanderings when Israel believed their present plight annulled their revealed eschatology. Jesus, however, overcomes. Advancing forward God's Kingdom, Jesus applies temple language to himself—to his own body (Matt 12:6). Like Ezekiel's eschatological temple, the living water of the Spirit flows from Jesus bringing life as it streams toward the Tree of Life (John 7:37-39; Ezek 47:1-12). He applies the vine language of Israel to himself—and to his disciples as branches sharing the blessings with him. He speaks of himself as the Davidic shepherd-king who will fight the wolves and establish the flock of Israel under one head (Mark 14:27; John 10:1-21). Like the prophecy of Israel's latter day glory, Jesus announces that he is the "light of the world" in whom the nations will see God (John 8:12-20). Jesus applies Israel's language of the coming restoration of the nation by the Spirit to personal regeneration and entrance into the Kingdom itself. He confronts a teacher of Israel inquiring why he would not know that only the regenerate remnant of the nation can enter the promised Kingdom (John 3:1-13). When Jesus is rejected by Israel, he announces that the prophets of old foresaw this aspect of the Kingdom as well (John 12:36-43).

Jesus applies the inheritance language of Israel (the meek inheriting the land, Ps 37:11, 22) directly to his followers now (the meek shall inherit the earth, Matt 5:5). Jesus demonstrates that, unlike for Adam, nature itself is "under his feet," as his voice itself commands tumultuous winds and waves to be still (Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41). He has authority over death as he turns back disease and raises those who have died, just as the prophets promised would happen in the last days (Luke 7:1-23; 8:40-56). He casts

out demons through his Spirit anointing and announces to the religious authorities of Israel, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I casts out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28). When asked by the Pharisees when the promised Kingdom would come, Jesus told them "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:2-22). When followers mention the eschatological day of resurrection, Jesus says, "I am the Resurrection" and "I am the Way" (John 11:24-25; 14:6). Jesus speaks of his inauguration of the Kingdom as signaling the judgment and eviction of Satan as the "ruler of this world" (Mark 2:22-30; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), as God is once again restoring his rule through a human mediatorial King. This is seen in Jesus' triumphal entry into the holy city Jerusalem, when he fulfills the prophet Zechariah's promise of a humble messianic King riding to victory, foreshadowing the global rule that is to follow (Matt 21:1-11).

At his crucifixion, Jesus relives the attack of the nations and the abandonment by God typified by his ancestor David. The curses of the Mosaic Law come upon Israel there. With Day of the Lord imagery, the sky turns dark and the earth quakes. As David was warned, the kingly son of David is beaten with rods as the discipline of God, though not for his own sins but the sins of the world (2 Sam 7:14-15; Ps 89:32-33; Matt 27:29-30; Mark 15:18). The Gentile nations deride him—even gambling for the faux royal garments with which they had mocked his claimed kingship (John 19:16-24). He is a hanged man and thus, according to Deuteronomy, exempt from the inheritance promises of Israel—and indeed the very sight of such a cursed man imperils the nation's inheritance of the Land (Deut 21:22-23). He must be removed and buried immediately. Jesus speaks prospectively of this crucifixion as a fiery baptism he must undergo in order to receive his Kingdom (Matt 3:11-12; Mark 10:35-40; Luke 12:49-50), evoking the language used by the prophets of the coming fiery judgment of God upon his people Israel (Ezek 20:48).

By his resurrection, Jesus marks the cataclysmic onset of the new Kingdom order. Like Israel was promised, the righteous remnant—one man—is raised from the dead through the Spirit in view of the nations. Upon his resurrection, Jesus identifies his disciples as his "brothers" (John 20:17)—language used in the Old Testament to identify the parameters of the inheritance, the people of Israel (Lev 25:46; Deut 17:15, 20). He eats with his disciples and commands Peter to "feed my sheep"—royal imagery that speaks of the coming of the last days glory of Jerusalem in a restored Israel (Jer 3:15-18). When Jesus' disciples ask him if he plans now to restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus points to the coming of the Holy Spirit and the apostolic authority to proclaim the kingdom to the nations (Acts 1:6-8).

In Jesus' resurrection from the dead, the apostles see the onset of the last days—the enthronement of the promised messianic king. At Pentecost, the disciples proclaim that the long-awaited eschatological Spirit has now been poured out on Jesus' followers, thus signaling that God has vindicated him as the true Israel, the righteous Son of David, and the faithful King whom God will not abandon to the grave (Acts 2:14-41; Rom 1:1-4). The coming of the Spirit is seen as a sign that God's anointing was upon Jesus, an anointing he has now poured out on those who identify with him (Acts 2:34). This means that Jesus

is the Davidic messiah whose enemies will be made a footstool for his feet, in keeping with the ancient prophecies. Peter identifies the coming of the Spirit with the prophet Joel's promise of the last days, and the climactic Day of the Lord (Acts 2:16-21). In the resurrection, the apostles preach God is keeping his promises to Abraham and to David, and through it God will bring about the promised restoration of Israel (Acts 3:17-26).

The Apostle Paul explains that the resurrection of Jesus is inherently eschatological; indeed, it is the very hoped for last-days resurrection of the dead anticipated for centuries by the twelve tribes of Israel (Acts 26:6-8). Paul sees those among the Gentile nations turning to Christ as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise to bless all peoples through Abraham's seed (Rom 15:8-13; Gal 3:7-4:7). The apostles, meeting at the Jerusalem Council, identify the Gentile conversions as evidence that God, as promised, has granted the Davidic throne to Jesus in a global, indisputable latter-day reign (Acts 15:1-29). They see this as the rebuilding of David's tent, the promise of a restored Israel. This is why Jew/Gentile unity in the new covenant church is about more than human relational harmony. Instead, it acknowledges that God's kingdom purposes are *in Christ*. He is the Last Man and the True Israel, the bearer of the Spirit. A Jewish person who clings to the tribal markings of the old covenant acts as though the eschaton has not arrived, as though one were still waiting for the promised seed. Both Jews and Gentiles must instead see their identities not in themselves or in the flesh, but in Jesus Christ and in him alone. Jesus is the descendant of Abraham, the one who deserves the throne of David. *He* is the obedient Israel who inherits the blessings of the Mosaic covenant. *He* is the propitiation of God's wrath. *He* is the firstborn from the dead, the resurrection and the life. Those who are in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—receive with him all the eschatological blessings that are due to him. In him, they are all, whether Jew or Gentile, sons of God—not only in terms of relationship with the Father but also in terms of promised inheritance (Rom 8:12-17). In Christ, they all—whether Jew or Gentile—are sons of Abraham, the true circumcision, the holy nation, and the household and commonwealth of God (Gal 3:23-4:7; Eph 2-3; Col 2:6-15; 3:3-11; 1 Pet 2:9-10). In the church, the eschatological temple is built, this time with "living stones" indwelled by the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet 2:4-5; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16-18). The church now experiences what Israel longed for, the "ends of the ages" have come upon them (1 Cor 10:11). The church is the Israelite vine that bears the promised "fruit" of the eschaton, that of a dawning age of the Spirit as opposed to the collapsing age of the flesh (Gal 5:15-24).

The place of Israel in an evangelical theology and an evangelical political ethic must start with the understanding that the future has a name: Jesus of Nazareth. We must further recognize that *Israel* has a name: again, Jesus of Nazareth. All Christians everywhere believe in a future for Israel. Where Christians disagree is on exactly who *Israel* is. Dispensationalists insist that Romans 9-11 reaffirms the OT covenant promises to Abraham's genetic descendants—promises of a rebuilt temple, a restored theocracy, and reclaimed geography. For dispensational premillennialists, this is a primary purpose of the Millennium—ethnic Israel is reconstituted as a political state and

serves as a mediator of God's blessings to the rest of the nations. Some dispensationalists further argue that this future for Israel demands current support for Israeli claims to all of what once was Canaan—along with virtual *carte blanche* support for Israeli policies since "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse" (Gen 12:3). Covenant theologians argue that the future restoration of Israel will be fulfilled—but fulfilled in the church, a largely Gentile body that has "replaced" the Jewish theocracy since the nation rejected her Messiah at Jesus' first advent. Covenant theology then (quite wrongly) sees great continuity between Old Testament Israel and the new covenant church—both are mixed bodies of regenerate and unregenerate members (believers and their children), and the sign of circumcision is replaced with the sign of baptism (and, like circumcision applied to new converts and to covenant children).

Both covenant theology and dispensationalism, however, often discuss Israel and the church without taking into account the Christocentric nature of biblical eschatology. The future restoration of Israel has *never* been promised to the unfaithful, unregenerate members of the nation (John 3:3-10; Rom 2:25-29)—but only to the faithful remnant. The church is not Israel, at least not in a direct, unmediated sense. The remnant of Israel—a biological descendant of Abraham, a circumcised Jewish firstborn son who is approved of by God for his obedience to the covenant—receives *all* of the promises due to him. Israel is Jesus of Nazareth, who, as promised to Israel, is raised from the dead and marked out with the Spirit (Ezek 37:13-14; Rom 1:2-4). *All* the promises of God "find their Yes in him" (2 Cor 1:20), as Paul puts it, and this yes establishes a Jew like Paul with Gentiles like the Corinthians "in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor 1:21-22). The Spirit guarantees what? It guarantees that all who share the Spirit of Christ are "joint heirs with Christ" of his promised inheritance (Rom 8:17 NKJV).

This is the radical nature of the gospel in the New Testament. Dispensationalists are right that only ethnic Jews receive the promised future restoration, but Paul makes clear that the "seed of Abraham" is singular, not plural (Gal 3:16). Only the circumcised can inherit the promised future for Israel. All believers—Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female—are forensically Jewish firstborn sons of God (Gal 3:28). They are *in Christ*. Circumcision is not irrelevant. Instead, both Jews and Gentiles in Christ *are* "the circumcision" because they have "the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11-12). In Christ, I inherit all the promises due to Abraham's offspring because I am "hidden" in Abraham's promised offspring so that everything that is true of him is true of me. As Paul puts it, "Christ is all and in all" (Col 3:11). It is not that God changes his mind about a rebuilt temple. He fulfills it—in the temple of Christ's body, a temple Jesus builds with living stones. Thus, dispensationalists are right to argue for a Judeo-centric eschatology, provided they center it around one particular Jew; just as Christians are right to argue for an anthropocentric theology provided they center it on one particular Man.

The future of Israel then does belong to Gentile believers but only because they are in union with a Jewish Messiah. Paul speaks of a future conversion of Jewish

people, but he is careful to denote this salvation as the growth of a single olive vine with a Jewish root—with a grafting on now of Gentiles and a future grafting on of more Jews. The church, as Israel was promised, does now "bear fruit"—the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5)—but it does so only because Jesus is the vine of Israel. We share his inheritance because we are the branches, united to him by faith (John 15:1-11). Is there a future for Israel? Yes. Does this future mean material and political blessings? Yes. Does this future mean the granting of all the land promised to Abraham in Canaan? Yes, along with the entire rest of the cosmos (Rom 4:13). Does this promise apply to ethnic Jews? Yes, one ethnic Jew whose name is Jesus. Do Gentile believers share in this inheritance? Yes, if they are in Christ, one-flesh with him through faith (Eph 5:22-33), they receive the inheritance that belongs to him (Eph 1:11).

This kind of focus on Christ as Israel puts evangelical Christians in line with the oldest apologists of the church, such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Justin Martyr. In his dialogue with Trypho, a Jewish interlocutor who argued that the lack of a political restoration of Israel means the Messiah the Old Testament promised could not have come, Justin laid out an "already/not yet" framework of inaugurated eschatology and also carefully delineated the meaning of "Israel"—a meaning found not in genetic bloodlines but in union with a Jewish Messiah.[37] As patristic scholar Robert Lewis Wilken points out, a turning point in the dialogue between Trypho and Justin came when the Jewish thinker realizes that they have two divergent views of Israel.[38] While Trypho assumed "Israel" refers only to descendants of Abraham, according to the flesh, he asked Justin, "What is this? Are *you* Israel and is he speaking these things about *you*?" To this, Justin answered in the affirmative.[39] Justin identified Israel with Jesus, literally translating "Israel" as the One who overcomes in power, a name merited by Jesus alone.[40] In this is recognition of what the Protestant Reformers would later rally the churches around: *solus Christus*.

So would a Christocentric evangelical eschatology mean that evangelicals would abandon support for the contemporary Israeli state? By no means should this be the case. Dispensationalists have served the church by pointing us to our responsibility to support the Jewish people and the nation of Israel through a century that has seen the most horrific anti-Semitic violence imaginable. We need not hold to a dispensationalist view of the future restoration of Israel to agree that such support is a necessary part of a Christian eschatology. Novelist Walker Percy pointed to the continuing existence of Jewish people as a sign of God's presence in the world. There are no Hittites walking about on the streets of New York, he remarked.[41] There does appear to be a promise of a future conversion of Jewish people to Christ (Romams 9-11), although they are part of the same vine onto which we are grafted. The current secular state of Israel is not the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham; Jesus is. Nonetheless, the state of Israel is the guardian of post-Holocaust world Judaism. This does not necessitate that we support every political decision of the Israeli government. It does mean that we stand with Israel against every form of anti-Semitic violence because we know that these are the kinsmen according to the flesh of our Messiah. And it means that even as we support Israel we keep

our even more urgent commitment to proclaim the gospel of our global Messiah "to the Jew first" (Rom 1:16), repudiating as the truest form of anti-Semitism any notion that our Jewish neighbors can approach God without the only Mediator through whom any sinner—Jew or Gentile—can approach a holy God. This is the spirit evidenced in a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) resolution against anti-Semitism, adopted surprisingly as early as 1873. The SBC resolution asserts "our unspeakable indebtedness to the seed of Abraham" and recognizes "their peculiar claims upon the sympathies and prayers of all Gentile Christians," while longing for "the day when the superscription of the Cross shall be the confession of all Israel, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'"[42]

Evangelicals must also recognize that Romans 13 is as important for our understanding of the contemporary Middle East crisis as is Romans 11. The Israeli people are currently under ongoing terrorist attack by groups devoted by their own declaration to the destruction of the Israeli state. When Israel, with justice and temperance, defends itself against terrorist groups, the nation bears the sword with the authority of God Himself (Rom 13:1-5). This authority is limited and derivative, but real. The Southern Baptist Convention, then, was correct in a 2002 resolution of support for Israel to maintain both that "Israel must always be accountable to the same standards of national righteousness as any other nation, particularly in light of the Old Testament mandate that Israel maintain justice for the strangers and aliens in her midst" and that the Convention supports "the right of sovereign to use force to defend themselves" against "inexcusable, barbaric, and cowardly acts" of terrorism.[43] American evangelicals—as long as they are rooted in a biblical worldview—understand supporting legitimate authority, even as they understand speaking truth to power. As long as this is the case, American evangelicals will support the Israeli state so long as it maintains democratic principles and a commitment to human dignity.

Conclusion

The perception of a recklessly apocalyptic evangelical Christianity, supportive of the State of Israel unconditionally to the point of nuclear meltdown, is not based in reality. Evangelicals, informed by dispensationalist eschatology, have seen uniqueness to the contemporary state of Israel, and a unique responsibility to stand against violence directed toward the Jewish people and their homeland. This impulse is biblically justified, even for those of us who reject a particularly dispensationalist understanding of the last days. Evangelical Protestants should recognize the promises to Israel as finding their Alpha and Omega in a virgin-conceived Man, not in a United Nations-initiated state. Our commitment to the Christic fulfillment of all the promises of God ought not to cause us to turn our backs on our Lord's kinsmen according to the flesh, but to redouble our efforts to support them when they are attacked by the forces of anti-Semitic hatred. In so doing, we are focused, ultimately, not on geopolitics but on Jesus. We are reminded of what our Christmas hymn tells us of a small Israeli village: "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

ENDNOTES

[1]For a discussion of the evangelical consensus on the Kingdom of God, see

Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).

[2]O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2000), 194.

[3]Herman Ridderbos, "The Future of Israel (View I)," in *Prophecy in the Making: The Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy (*ed. Carl F. H. Henry; Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971), 321-22. Ridderbos's view was placed alongside John Walvoord's dispensationalist defense of a future for national Israel.

[4]John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

[5]Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007).

[6]Ibid., foreword.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Robert L. Saucy, "A Rationale for the Future of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985): 438-39.

[9]Robert L. Saucy, "Response to *Understanding Dispensationalists* by Vern S. Poythress," *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (1989): 140.

[10]Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (ed. Darrell L. Bock; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 162-63.

[11]Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 15.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism* (New Haven: Yale University, 2007), 92-97.

[15]Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion*, Vol. 3, *Under God, Indivisible* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 63-64.

[16]Harold J. Ockenga, "Fulfilled and Unfulfilled Prophecy," in *Prophecy in the Making*, 308.

[17]Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 53-54.

[18]Hal Lindsey, *The Road to Holocaust* (New York: Bantam, 1989). It should be noted that this polemical volume was published one year after the biblical "generation" from the founding of Israel had passed. Reconstructionists Steve Schlissel and David Brown responded to Lindsey with a counter-polemic, *Hal Lindsey and the Restoration of the Jews* (Edmonton: Still Water Revival Books, 1990).

[19]Carl Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 37-38.

[20]Zev Chafets, *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists, and One Man's Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 11.

[21]"Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity" (paid advertisement), *New York Times*, 10 September 2000, 23.

[22]Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 218.

[23]Daniel Wojcik, for example, gives the rather extreme example of premillennialist support for renegade Israeli groups bent on destroying the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in order that their prophetic expectations regarding the Jewish Temple might be expedited. See Wojcik's *The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York: New York University, 1997), 146.

[24]Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1985), 238-64.

[25]John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2007), 132.

[26]Michael Northcutt, *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and the American Empire* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 67.

[27]Garry Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 182.

[28]Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the New Global Order* (New York: Cambridge University, 2004), 109.

[29]Ibid., 70.

[30]Dorrien, *Imperial Designs,* 205.

[31]Garry Wills, *Head and Heart: American Christianities* (New York: Penguin, 2007), 374.

[32]For instance, John Gray, *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

[33]Overture 01-25, "The *Left Behind* Series" from the Presbytery of Sierra Blanca to the 213th General Assembly of the Presbyterian

Church (USA), *Church and Society* 91 (2001): 108-09.

[34]Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 137.

[35]Much of the biblical material to follow is adapted from Russell D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church* (ed. Daniel L. Akin; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 858-926.

[36]For an excellent discussion of an Old Testament eschatology of temple and presence, see Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 2004).

[37]For a good translation of this seminal work, see Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* (trans. Thomas P. Halton; Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2003).

[38]Robert L. Wilken, "*In novissimis diebus*: Biblical Promises, Jewish Hopes, and Early Christian Exegesis," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 15.

[39]Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 184-86.

[40]Ibid., 188.

[41]Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other* (New York: Picador, 1954), 6.

[42]"On Anti-Semitism," resolution adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Mobile, Alabama, May 1873.

[43]"On Praying for Peace in the Middle East," resolution adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, June 2002.

Christian Engagement in Secular Society: Politics, the Gospel, and Moral Influence

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Introduction

Political solutions that entail bringing Christian moral convictions to bear on public policy and legislation may at times be described as *the art of the impossible*. This seems particularly true in our "post" culture—what is said to be postmodern, post-Christian, and perhaps generally post-past. One of the features of the contemporary moral landscape in the West is to consider many moral issues, which were once thought to be in the public domain, to be matters of private choice (call it "post-public" morality). Curiously, despite an emphasis on community in the postmodern era, the privatization of morality has only increased. This has had a profound effect on political and legal judgments on issues such as contraception, sex, abortion, marriage and divorce, homosexuality, euthanasia, stem cell research, cloning, and assisted reproductive technologies, to name a few. Though such issues are increasingly relegated to a supposed private sphere, it is clear that they involve very public consequences. Given that this is the case, the question that is pressed upon Christians—and all citizens—is this: How should we seek to engage with and influence our culture, if we should at all, when it comes to matters of morality? If, for instance, we believe that a certain type of reproductive technology is immoral, should we seek to prohibit it in the law? There are a variety of options by which we may have influence, each of which may have a place. However, the first and most significant way in which Christians ought to influence the surrounding culture is by the witness of proclamation, personal influence, and example, and not first and foremost by the political process.

Proposals for Influencing Culture

United States politics has always had a strong presence of Christian *individuals*, many of whom have exerted significant influence. What has been remarkable over the last several decades is the growth of Christian political *groups* involved in the political process.[1] By most any measure, such groups have had a significant impact on the political landscape, largely by focusing attention on important moral issues. Yet, one danger of that success could be the temptation to seek political solutions as the primary mode of influence in society. Even worse, churches may be attracted to the power and influence of political groups, and focus attention primarily on the political process.

Political organization on the part of Christians does not simply stem from a desire for political power. Rather, it is often driven by a sense of desperation over changes in the moral landscape of seismic proportion in contemporary culture, and thus by an attempt to prevent further moral decay and to recover moral

commitments that have been lost. Political organization and legislation is sometimes assumed to be the only—or at least the best—way to effect change and influence the surrounding culture. This article represents a challenge to that assumption, and a reminder that a variety of options and opportunities exist for Christians to engage with and influence society. While political influence is often important and effective, some alternatives are more significant than the political process for producing true change and, more importantly, they are more consistent with the mission of the church.

In his book, *Choosing the Good*, Dennis Hollinger outlines nine possible strategies for influencing culture, ranging from political solutions to personal influence.[2] He places these on two continuums, both of which may be relevant in a particular case. The first ranges from remedial actions, which seek to address existing evils, to preventative actions, which seek to avert future problems. The second continuum ranges from personal actions, which focus on bringing about change at the individual level, to structural actions, which work to change laws and institutional systems to effect transformation across society.[3] Often circumstances will determine which approach may be the most effective or appropriate, and in many cases several strategies may be employed at once. This paradigm will be used as a means of discussing which models are most significant for Christian influence on culture, particularly with respect to the problem of infertility and certain morally problematic forms of reproductive technology. The strategies or models of influence presented by Hollinger are briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.[4]

Christian Relief

This model seeks to meet needs as they arise, providing food, clothing, shelter, or medical help to those in need, for example, or to provide assistance in rebuilding after a natural disaster. It represents a consistent biblical exhortation to care for those in need, and it demonstrates Christian love as the practical application of the gospel. On the other hand, it often does not solve the problem that it addresses for the long term, and it may not have an impact on institutional dimensions of the problem.

Christian Alternative Institutions

This method of influence also seeks to address human need, but on a much larger scale. It is often used to provide an alternative, particularly when important ethical commitments are ignored or disavowed in comparable secular institutions, or when there are no good choices available. Examples include hospitals or medical clinics, educational institutions, rehabilitation centers, and crisis pregnancy centers. These may be seen as complementary to, and in some cases as more effective than, political strategies to effect change on a particular issue. Like Christian relief, various alternative institutions demonstrate Christian love in action, and they also offer substantial remedies to structural problems in a secular society. Yet at times they may offer alternatives without effecting change where problems exist, or, as sometimes happens with Christian schools, they may represent a withdrawal from the world that Christians intend to influence.

Evangelism

Hollinger acknowledges that some will find it strange to consider evangelism to

be a model for social change, yet he argues that its social effect is often powerful.[5] He notes that evangelism and social concern are interrelated.[6] In some cases, social action may open the door for evangelism, and often, social change is a result of evangelism, as those who have new life in Christ produce good works. These points serve as a reminder that Christians need not forsake evangelism to engage in social action, nor forsake social action to focus on evangelism. At the heart of the gospel, and of the church's ministry, is a concern for people's spiritual need. Yet the conversion of individuals by the gospel leads not only to individual change (e.g., Rom 12:1-2, Jas 2:14-26), but also at times to a transformation of a culture. Christians have consistently been among the most influential social activists in society, caring for people's physical needs.[7] Nevertheless, we may rightly be cautious about thinking of evangelism as a model for social change, for social change is not so much the aim as a consequence of evangelism, and to make it the aim would be to empty it of its meaning and thus to strip it of its power.

Prophetic Pronouncements

This model for promoting social change "involves the voice of the church or Christian groups speaking to the world to challenge existing values, policies, structural arrangements, and cultural practices and to commend new forms in their place."[8] It flows out of the prophetic tradition in the Old Testament, as well as in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. It is seen in the proclamation of the Word of God in preaching, and also in denominational statements that express Christian convictions on justice and particular moral issues. However, it faces significant challenges, including the difficulty of gaining a public hearing, and the confusion caused by sometimes conflicting calls that are issued in the name of the gospel, both by different individual preachers and denominations.

Lobbying

There is a long history of political lobbying in order to produce social change. It seeks to influence legislators in order to shape public policy, and to raise awareness among certain constituencies on issues in order to mobilize them to express their views through phone calls, letters, emails, and political gatherings and marches.[9] Lobbying can be effective in bringing about social change by voicing the concerns of many Christian citizens who otherwise might not be heard. However, there is a danger that a measure of success will persuade Christians that the political process is the primary way to influence society, and there may be a strong temptation to compromise to attain power.

Political Parties/Political Groups

Many Christians believe that the political process is a valid way to influence society. "Since the state is ordained by God, it is argued, the political process can be a legitimate means for carrying out God's purposes on earth, especially in relation to human behavior."[10] This model for social action has plenty of critics, however, both within and outside of the church, and it is surely the most controversial. Opponents see political action and influence by Christian groups as a violation of the separation of church and state, or at least an intrusion into the secular sphere of politics, and those groups are often treated with contempt by

secular thinkers. In addition, some inside the church see involvement in politics as corrupting and a diversion from the true mission of the church. Nevertheless, Christian groups can influence the electorate and the political process, bringing attention to issues from a Christian moral framework, and shaping to some extent the debate on those issues. In some cases, it is effective for restraining immoral behavior, and thus establishing a relative justice. On the other hand, it is not clear how significant or lasting an influence it is without a change in the heart and soul of the surrounding culture.

Nonviolent Resistance

Nonviolent resistance, which is sometimes considered a social ethic more than a method of influence, exerts pressure on society and often on public policy by peaceful means, frequently outside of any formal political process. It uses the power of love and peace, to highlight social injustice and to produce change where the law and moral persuasion have failed. Martin Luther King Jr. is a paradigmatic example of this approach. His commitment to peaceful marches and resistance to racial injustices set in motion lasting cultural change. This method can also be seen in examples such as strikes and boycotts against companies that are involved in unjust practices, and peaceful protests at abortion clinics. It has been effective at times, in terms of personal influence and even structural change, but is sometimes ineffective when large numbers of people do not get involved, or when it is used too frequently.

Christian Embodiment

This model emphasizes how the church is distinct from the surrounding culture, and that it is to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. The church stands as a witness to, and against, the world by being a counter-cultural community, both in what it believes and in how its people live. Most Christians will recognize the importance of setting an example for others by embodying moral ideals. Yet, as Hollinger says, "adherents emphasize that embodiment is the primary model through which God wants to work in culture."[11] This view does not advocate withdrawal from society. Rather, it challenges the church, though not necessarily individual Christians, to resist the desire to influence society by entering into the political process or identifying itself with any particular political party. Christians are to be salt and light (Matt 5:13-16), to offer a foretaste of the kingdom of God before the world. There is much to commend this approach, and the failure of the church to embody its own moral ideals is a cause of moral decay in society. Nevertheless, critics of this approach argue that it is a necessary but not sufficient model for Christian influence, in part because it inadequately addresses issues of social justice in society.

Individual Impact

This model shares much in common with that of embodiment, but its concern is particularly with the impact of individual Christians on the surrounding culture by their various spheres of influence through jobs, clubs, civic involvement, sports and entertainment, and other activities. Some within this model stress the concept of vocation, in which Christians are seen to have a calling from God to be His representatives in the particular spheres in which God has placed them, where He works in and through them to accomplish

His purposes in the world. This model finds a biblical anchor in Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 7 of the issue of marriage and singleness, in the middle of which he asserts the principle that Christians should remain in the situation in which and/or to which God has called them (1 Cor 7:17-24). It can serve as a powerful model of influence throughout society, and yet it may not adequately alleviate systemic injustices.

How Then *Shall* We Influence?

Having described these models or strategies for influencing culture, particularly in terms of moral issues and social action, the question remains, "Which model ought we to employ?" The easy answer, especially for an ethicist to offer, is "It depends." And so it does. The particular context, issue, and opportunities will often determine which model is most appropriate, and in many cases a combination of approaches will be used at the same time. However, while it is true that all of these methods may be appropriate in certain situations, it is not true that each of them is central to the mission and purpose of the church or even of individual Christians. In what follows, I will illustrate why I think that the most significant influence that Christians can have in culture, in terms of lasting moral or social change is to "live out the reality of the gospel." In Hollinger's terms, this is broad enough to cover relief work, prophetic pronouncements, evangelism, Christian embodiment, and individual impact. When we consider what Christians are called to be and to do, and how we might influence our culture, all of the models discussed above are *possible* actions that Christians can take. Yet these are *essential* for followers of Christ.

They are not even so much strategies or models of influence as a reality and a calling, and yet they carry culture-transforming possibilities that some strategies can only mimic. While Christians can and should be involved in the political process, there are problems with approaching political solutions as the best hope for personal or structural change. First, while it is good and necessary to seek to establish just laws and have unjust laws overturned, changing laws may restrain behavior without effecting personal or lasting change. Second, we may be tempted to blame the culture's moral failings on political opponents and their moral agenda. We may fail to recognize Christian responsibility in our culture's moral decline, by participating without discernment in culture, and by failing to seek after God in prayer, to hunger for the Word of God, and to model moral purity (2 Chron 7:14).[12] For example, Christians have rightly protested the attack on marriage brought on by those seeking to legitimate same-sex unions, and have responded with concerted efforts at legislation. At the same time, Christians have attacked marriage from within through rampant divorce rates that are equal to the surrounding culture. Political solutions are not the only or even primary model needed. Third, pursuing influence through the political process may easily lead to corruption by the love of power and influence as such, which will compromise the essential mission of the church. Fourth, there is little in Jesus' teaching, or in the rest of the New Testament, to indicate that political action is a primary means of engagement with culture, even in one that perpetuates injustice, as was the case for both the Jewish and Roman governments of Jesus' day. Yet the New

Testament is clear that those who follow Christ will embody the gospel, in contrast to those around them, and will influence the culture by doing so (e.g., Matt 5:16; Rom 12:1ff; Eph 4:1ff; 1 Peter).

The influence upon culture outside of the political process may not be easy to predict or even to discern, but that is partly because too often Christians simply do not present a manner of life that contrasts with culture or displays clearly a Christian worldview. Part of the task, then, is for Christians to think carefully together about the issues before us, to discern what appropriate responses will look like, and then to live them out in the midst of our culture. In other words, as we consider who God is and all that He has done for us in Christ, we should not conform to the patterns of the world, but be transformed in our minds in order to know—and do—the will of God (Rom 12:1-2). When Christians establish a pattern of doing this, it acts like salt and light in the world, and as others see Christians living out the reality of the gospel, some will glorify God as a result (Matt 5:-16). In other words, it has the effect of transforming culture.

How does all of this apply to particular moral issues? I will discuss the problem of infertility and the ethics of reproductive technology, and try to show the significance of living out the reality of the gospel, especially in terms of *Christian Embodiment* and *Individual Impact*, to use Hollinger's terms.

Strange ARTs and Christian Influence

The array of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) available today offer a challenging test for how Christians ought to seek to exert moral influence in society. On the one hand, they offer hope that an infertile couple may be able to have a child. On the other hand, they raise a complex set of medical, moral, and legal questions about personhood, rights, marriage and family, and a host of other issues.[13] In addition to "simple" cases such as reparative surgery or Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) using the husband's sperm, there are very complex and sometimes disturbing techniques used or proposed. The use of donor egg or sperm raises serious questions about the presence of a third party for procreation within the one-flesh union of marriage. Surrogacy, especially commercial surrogacy, provokes questions about the presence of a third party in procreation, as well as the significance of bonding between the gestational mother and child, the commercial use of the human body, and even the question of who the child belongs to. *In vitro* fertilization (IVF) raises serious issues of its own, especially when excess embryos are created and then discarded or frozen, when donor eggs and/or sperm are used, or when single women become pregnant with the help of donor sperm and IVF. Technology has enabled women to carry a child and give birth past sixty years of age. It has enabled "parents" to conceive even after their death by freezing gametes before they die, which a soldier might do before going off to war, for instance. Technology could allow a person who was never born to become a parent, if eggs are obtained from the ovaries of mature aborted fetuses.

In the face of such possibilities, it is reasonable to seek to prohibit some forms of reproductive technology through legislation. Yet, with few exceptions, it is difficult to gather political support to prohibit even the most morally suspect

technologies, because whether to use ARTs is considered a private decision and a matter of *procreative liberty*. No one has argued more forcefully for procreative liberty than John A. Robertson, for whom procreative liberty is the primary framework for evaluating ARTs. He defines procreative liberty as "the freedom either to have children or to avoid having them." While it is "often expressed or realized in the context of a couple," he claims that it is "first and foremost an individual interest."[14] Though an individual may *choose* not to have children, Robertson argues that "being *deprived* of the ability to reproduce prevents one from an experience that is central to individual identity and meaning in life."[15] Procreative liberty is so strong that Robertson believes the use of ARTs "should be accorded the same high protection granted to coital reproduction."[16] It may be limited where there is demonstrable harm. However, objections that there is harm (such as the destruction of embryos or the intrusion of a third party in collaborative techniques) grounded in "deontological" principles or based on religious or moral convictions "seldom meet the high standard necessary to limit procreative liberty."[17] As a result, a couple, or an individual, should be free to pursue virtually any means available.

How should Christians respond to the argument from procreative liberty and, more importantly, how should we seek to influence our culture with respect to the use of ARTs, and an understanding of marriage, procreation and parenthood? Several responses may be in order. First, it may be appropriate to press for legislation that will put certain moral guidelines in place for the use of ARTs, such as pressing for legislation that would protect human embryos, and setting policies that reinforce the importance of both father and mother in procreative decisions. However, as I have already indicated, legislation is often not the most effective or important way that Christians can exert influence.[18] This is particularly true when seeking to change existing understanding and behavior. Lisa Cahill makes this point, asserting that "outlawing and attempting to eradicate well-entrenched practices is not the only way to advance their moral reconsideration; nor is it usually the most prudent and effective way. Laws and policies usually do not command compliance unless they are met by at least an approximate social consensus in their favor."[19] Second, then, we ought to respond to the philosophical arguments that are purported to support procreative liberty, and present a compelling case for alternative views, seeking to gain greater social consensus. There are significant weaknesses in Robertson's case, and they need to be addressed. Though this article will not seek to do that, it can be said that Robertson presents an impoverished view of marriage, procreation and parenthood, and of liberty itself.[20]

Third, as indicated already, Christians may seek to influence our culture as it pertains to the use of ARTs through *Christian Embodiment* and *Individual Impact*, which is part of living out the reality of the gospel in the midst of the culture. It is difficult to make cogent and compelling arguments, and a case for legislation, when Christians themselves reflect the broader culture in the use of ARTs, as seems to be the case. Compelling arguments must be accompanied by a compelling demonstration of the gospel lived out in relation to problems such as infertility and the use of ARTs. It remains, then, to consider a Christian response to the problem of infertility and

the possibility of ARTs in light of the gospel, and its transforming effect on infertile couples, the church, and the culture.

Evangelical Reflection on the ART of Procreation[21]

The Pain and Suffering of Infertility

No reflection on the use of ARTs is adequate without taking into account the problem of infertility itself. Proverbs 30:15b-16 (ESV) reads, "Three things are never satisfied; four never say, 'Enough': Sheol, the barren womb, the land never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says, 'Enough'." This text is a reminder of unrealized hopes and ongoing suffering that makes infertility a devastating experience for as many as one out of six couples. The suffering of infertility is also attested in the biblical stories of barren women. Hannah "wept bitterly" because she had no child (1 Sam 1:10); Sarah felt wronged and despised (Gen 16:5); Elizabeth experienced disgrace (Luke 1:24). Their suffering because of barrenness is summed up in Rachel's exclamation to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" (Gen 30:1).[22] As one modern woman put it, "I was close to losing my faith. I felt God had abandoned and betrayed me. He didn't protect me from loss when I prayed and pleaded for him to do so."[23] An understanding of infertility, and a Christian response to it, must reckon with the painful experience of infertile couples.

How Should We Respond?

For many couples, ARTs offer the hope that they can have a child together, when previously they could only dream—and pray—for such a thing. Yet, as indicated above, the same techniques have also been put to uses that have raised serious moral questions. Further, they have led to a view that procreation may be considered not only a blessing, but a right. Indeed, as noted, Robertson sees procreation as fundamentally an "individual interest," and ARTs should be given the same protection as "coital reproduction." It is important to recognize that the use of such technologies arises from a particular vision—or perhaps no vision at all—of the family, parenthood, and liberty that is often at odds with the biblical worldview. Thus we are pressed to ask how followers of Christ might engage a culture and embody a different and compelling vision that is shaped by the gospel.

The Gospel and the Ethics of Assisted Reproduction

Children are a blessing from the Lord (Ps 127:3). Procreation is a great good and a central purpose of marriage. We rightly receive, celebrate, and even pursue this blessing. But is it something to be pursued by most any means? In the Old Testament, the good of procreation was pursued at times through the practice of polygamy or the use of a maidservant.[24] Such practices continue in some traditional societies. In the African context, for instance, marriage may be considered incomplete or even non-existent without children, and childless couples are often not fully accepted in society or even in the church.[25] With such intense social pressure, remedies such as polygamy, cohabitation, and divorce and remarriage, are practiced in order to have children.[26] In response, Protus Kemdirim argues that such measures are consistent with, or even an implication of, the gospel, for "salvation is clear and meaningful only when it is defined in line with African perspectives and aspirations, namely, the raising of children."[27]

The desperation to have a child, so forcefully demonstrated here, is felt not only by African couples, but by many Western couples as well. The African solution may not be adequate, in part because it flows from inadequate reflection on marriage and of the gospel itself. We should not be too quick, however, to dismiss their perspective as irrelevant to Western Christian reflection on ARTs. Instead, we ought to recognize that much of the deliberation on ARTs among Christians in the West also flows from inadequate reflection, perhaps simply revealing Western cultural values such as procreative liberty and privacy in moral decisions. The African solutions should cause us to consider seriously the same sense of desperation to have children that is demonstrated in the West by the use of questionable technological means to achieve the same goal.

The Case of Donor Gametes

One such questionable means is the use of donor gametes. It is worth reflecting on this practice in particular, because it is a fairly common technique, with an estimated 25,000 – 30,000 children born in the U.S. each year by this means, and many more worldwide, and because it draws out some critical moral issues and perspectives on marriage and procreation.[28] Is it possible that this practice is consistent with Christian reflection on marriage and procreation, or may it even be the case that the gospel encourages it? In his important and influential book, *Sexual Ethics*, Stanley Grenz answers in the affirmative.

Grenz considers and dismisses the charge that introducing a third party into the procreative process is adulterous, since "neither the intent to be unfaithful to one's marital vows nor the act of intercourse is present."[29] Such procedures cannot be considered adultery, he argues, unless adultery is defined as "the violation of the assumed right of each spouse to become [a] parent only through the other." This is not the case, Grenz suggests, since the New Testament encourages a believer not to claim rights, but rather "to give up one's rights for the sake of another." Further, based upon Jesus' sacrificial work on the cross, and thus the gospel itself, he argues that "a case [can] be made for practices involving donor sperm or egg within the context of marriage." He explains, "modern technological capabilities allow a married person, motivated by the desire to facilitate the wish of one's spouse to give birth to biological offspring, to choose willingly to set aside his or her 'right' to be the sole means whereby the spouse is able to become a parent." [30]

Grenz acknowledges certain potential problems with the use of third parties in procreation, such as difficulties for the child that is born, psychological problems that may affect the marriage, or possible legal issues that may be raised. Yet they are not "insurmountable" problems so much as issues that the parents would do well to consider in advance. It seems that the good of having a child that is biologically related to at least one parent overrides such concerns.

Reflection on Marriage, Procreation and Prenthood in Light of the Gospel[31]

How may we assess these views? First, the problem with Grenz's assessment of donor gametes is not unlike the ultimate problem with Kemdirim's conclusions on marriage in the African setting. The good of procreation within marriage is either overemphasized or privatized,

with the result that almost any solution to the problem of infertility is welcomed and given the benefit of the doubt, and even defended as an implication of the gospel.

Second, while Grenz properly questions the focus on rights, surely it would be more consistent with the gospel to conclude that the fertile spouse ought not to "demand" a right to have a child, especially apart from their one-flesh union, requiring the infertile spouse to consent to the use of a third party. In addition, Grenz's call to sacrifice is misdirected, for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is reflected by the strong on behalf of the weak. In the case of infertility, it is the infertile spouse who is in a more vulnerable and weak position. Not wanting to deprive his or her spouse of the opportunity to have their own child, an infertile spouse may consent (often with subtle spousal or cultural coercion) to the use of a third party, only to experience serious difficulties as a result—potential problems that Grenz himself notes.[32]

If the views offered by Kemdirim and Grenz are unsatisfactory, it is because they are incomplete. While they underscore the importance of procreation, they do not provide adequate theological reflection on the significance of the gospel for the experience of infertility and its possible remedies. In particular, they do not provide a sense of salvation history and an eschatological expectation, and, thus, some qualification on the good of procreation and the purposes of marriage. Indeed, without further reflection, such accounts may be reduced to an affirmation of "nature" and the goodness of procreation, or an account of procreative liberty and the right to bear children.

In order to broaden our reflection, and to offer some points of deliberation on infertility and ARTs, some comments about a few additional themes in relation to the gospel may be helpful. When considering the possibility of using ARTs, these themes may lead us to conclude either "do not use" or "use well."

Themes for Deliberation on ARTs

On Resisting the Technological Imperative

Faced with the painful reality of infertility, it is easy to treat reproductive technology as an almost unqualified good, and children may be seen as something other than the fruit of marital love that is received as a blessing from God. Oliver O'Donovan and Gilbert Meilaender are among those who express concern about the way in which the use of ARTs may subtly change our understanding of procreation from one in which children are received as a gift to one in which they become a project of our making.[33] O'Donovan, for instance, argues that "it is precisely the integration of fertilization into the general demands of an administrative system [i.e., the control and efficiency demanded in the laboratory] that more than anything else confirms its status as an act of 'making' rather than 'begetting'."[34]

Further, the very availability and offer of ARTs can exert coercion, causing infertile couples to feel pressured to make use of them in the pursuit of the good of children. It needs to be said that there is no necessity for a married couple to make use of even those ARTs that are morally acceptable, for marriage has an integrity of its own and may be fruitful even without the existence of children. The gospel can relieve couples of the burden of thinking that they must pursue procreation by virtually any means available. The

following themes encourage infertile couples to resist a technological imperative, and the church to walk with them in the struggle.

On Sacrifice

Returning to the issue of sacrifice, we ought to resist the notion that an infertile spouse should sacrifice so that the desire of the fertile spouse for a child can be fulfilled apart from their one-flesh union. A Christian understanding of sacrifice is better exemplified when a fertile spouse sets aside the "right" to have a child of his or her own, for the sake of the infertile spouse. By refusing to have children by some means other than through his or her spouse, the fertile spouse may express the depth of love represented in marriage, where in weakness and in strength they share together the difficulty of not realizing their dreams.[35] Indeed, even to speak of the "fertile" and "infertile" spouse in the way that we are led to do is problematic, for we ought to speak simply of an infertile couple.

On Marriage and Parenthood

There is a growing tendency to understand marriage to be primarily about self-fulfillment, and to fit spousal relationships and procreation into such a framework.[36] It is clearly inadequate. In Genesis 1 and 2, we see something of God's intention for the relationship of male and female in marriage. Procreation is a blessing and a central purpose of marriage, which highlights the void created by infertility. Yet marriage is also a partnership in a common purpose and calling that is to be marked by covenant faithfulness in a permanent and exclusive one-flesh union (cf. Matt 19:4-6; Eph 5:31). Attention to these aspects may at least put childlessness into proper perspective.

There is also a tendency to be consumed with having a child who is biologically related, at least to one parent, as Gilbert Meilaender has forcefully argued in his essay, "A Child of One's Own."[37] This desire ought not to be minimized, and certain techniques that allow a married couple to have a child that is biologically related to both of them may be welcomed. Nevertheless, left unchecked, the drive to have a biological child leads to morally dubious practices. The use of donor gametes highlights this problem, for the pursuit of a biological child transcends even the marriage union, which results in a child of "his own" or "her own" rather than "their own." As an alternative, Stanley Hauerwas reminds us that Christians have good reason to understand parenthood in more than biological terms.[38] He argues that Christians are guided by "a moral portrayal of parenting that cannot be biologically derived."[39] An understanding of parenting may begin with the biological. Yet it is expanded through adoption, and further through "parental" roles that can be assumed, for example, by teachers and others who provide a simple yet profound contribution of additional adult influence upon children, especially those whose own parents fail to provide the care that children need.[40]

On Childlessness

A childless marriage is missing something *significant*, for marriage is intended to be procreative. As such, it may be unfulfilled in some way, underscoring the void and pain left by childlessness. Yet it is not for that reason missing something *essential* to marriage. Nevertheless, for some couples, the option of appropriate medical treatment for infertility will be received

as a blessing, and such treatments may be consistent with the gospel, and especially with Jesus' ministry of physical healing. For others, childlessness itself may present possibilities that a couple would not have initially sought or embraced, which are derived from an understanding of the gospel. A childless couple, like the single person, may come to see their situation as an opportunity for "undivided devotion to the Lord" (1 Cor 7:35; cf. Matt 19:12). Since "the appointed time has grown very short" and "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:29, 31), childlessness may allow a couple to fill one of the parental roles described above, or to be detached from the usual patterns of life for a unique investment of service in the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul exemplifies these points, for while he did not have physical children, he nevertheless testifies that he begat many children in Christ, becoming their father through the gospel (1 Cor 4:15).

On Hope in God

It must be said that ultimate hope is not founded upon having children, but upon a relationship with God. The barren woman in Isaiah 54 is exhorted to shout for joy despite the fact that she has borne no child because (1) her fruitfulness will be greater than those who have had children (54:1-3); (2) her shame and humiliation will be forgotten (v. 4); (3) she has been redeemed and belongs to God, her Maker (v. 5); (4) the Lord has called her (v. 6); and (5) God has shown His compassion on her (vv. 7ff). Likewise, the eunuch in Isaiah 56 can rejoice because he need not be a "dry tree" (56:3), for if he is obedient to God he will have a name that is better than sons and daughters (v. 5). In the desire or quest for a child, Christians dare not lose sight of where true hope, peace, and joy are to be found.

On the Community of Believers

There may be an opportunity, even if unwelcome at first, to experience the grace of God and the community of believers that is not experienced as deeply by those who are invested in their own children (cf. Mark 10:29-30; Matt 12:46-50). Perhaps the childless couple will find a family—if the church is faithful to respond—that will share their burden, and discover a true fellowship of "brothers," "sisters," "mothers," "fathers," and "children" that compensates for—though it does not replace—a biological family. By the grace of God, the church is called to be a place of consolation and encouragement for the childless, so that infertility may turn out to be not meaningless suffering, but an opportunity to receive and to be an agent of God's grace (2 Cor 1:3ff).

On the Gift of Life

While this point requires additional reflection on the status of the embryo and what it means to be human than is possible here, it is important to say something, since it is central to the debate about ARTs. Children are a gift from God. The desire to experience the beauty of pregnancy and childbirth, and to welcome new life as an extension of the love of marriage, ought not to be pursued in the context of the destruction of human life. Thus, we ought to resist procedures that involve great risk to or destruction of human embryos, and instead affirm and protect the dignity of human life at its earliest stages.

Conclusion

It is important to recognize that the Bible does not minimize, but resonates

with the sorrow experienced by those who are unable to have children. Proverbs 30:15-16 declares that the barren womb is never satisfied. It is no wonder, then, that those who are infertile may seek to have children by virtually any means, some of which are morally objectionable and represent harm to marriage and family, human life, and even the common good.

In response, legislation may seem to be the most effective way to prevent such practices and to seek to influence culture with Christian moral values, on this as well as other issues. Yet, while an attempt to defend Christian moral convictions using the political process may be a possibility, and in some cases a necessity, it is often not the best way. The early church did not "turn the world upside down" (Act 17:6) through the political process, but through evangelism, preaching, and living out the reality of the gospel. Whether other means of influence may or may not be possible, these are essential for followers of Christ.

To live out the reality of the gospel, through *Christian Embodiment* and *Individual Impact,* is to present a compelling alternative vision of the meaning of marriage and procreation, and the significance of infertility, to the "vision" represented by some forms of reproductive technology. It means that Christian couples who are childless can demonstrate where true hope and peace is found, and resist the temptation to pursue procreation by any means. At the same time, those who do consider using reproductive technology may use it well by safeguarding marriage, honoring one another, and protecting human life at its earliest stages.

We also need to be reminded that the gospel involves a response not only from infertile couples, but from the church as well, as a place of comfort and encouragement, where those who are childless are reminded that they are nevertheless objects of God's love and grace. The fellowship of believers may present a powerful witness to the redeeming grace of God. Together we weep, but not as those who are without hope. Together we may model a different understanding of marriage, procreation, and the suffering of infertility from what our culture knows. Together it is possible to have a significant impact on the surrounding culture through an embodiment of Christian faith and hope in the midst of great personal difficulty. Therefore, not only infertile couples, but the church as a whole, is challenged to embody the reality of the gospel and to have an impact on the culture. Will the church take up the challenge?

ENDNOTES

[1]That is, political groups organized by Christians around principles grounded in a Christian worldview. While these groups have not been uniform in their theological commitments, there has been a notable presence of conservative Christians. Compare and contrast groups such as The Moral Majority, Christian Coalition, Family Research Council, The Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission, and Evangelicals for Social Action, among others.

[2]Dennis P. Hollinger, *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 256-72.

[3]Ibid., 257.

[4]See ibid., 258-68, for a fuller description. There are many ways that such models could be categorized and described. Hollinger will be used here because his paradigm arises clearly within a Christian moral framework.

[5]On evangelism and social change, see also Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University, 1982), 109ff.

[6]Summarizing points from A Joint Publication of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Fellowship, *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment* (Wheaton, IL: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1982), 21-23; cited in Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 260.

[7]Contrary to the accusation—sometimes deserved—that was common with the social gospel movement, and is often repeated today, that "conservative" Christians only address people's spiritual condition while its adherents care for people's physical needs, and thus the whole person. Among books that challenge this misapprehension of Christianity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with ongoing relevance, are Keith Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 1996); and Norris A. Magnuson, *Salvation in the Slums: Evangelical Social Work, 1865-1920* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1977). See also Timothy Lawrence Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1980).

[8]Hollinger, *Choosing the Good*, 261.

[9]Ibid., 264-65.

[10]Ibid., 264.

[11]Ibid., 267.

[12]On this point, see, for instance, a recent commentary by Chuck Colson, "The Drought: A Message From God?" BreakPoint Commentary, 12 December 2007 [cited 12 December 2007]. Online: http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=7307.

[13]For a discussion of some of the possibilities and a moral framework for evaluating those possibilities, see Oliver O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); John F. Kilner, Paige C. Cunningham, and W. David Hager, eds. *The Reproduction Revolution: A Christian Appraisal of Sexuality, Reproductive Technologies, and The Family* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Rae, Scott B. *Brave New Families: Biblical Ethics and Reproductive Technologies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996); Allen Verhey, *Reading the Bible in the Strange World of Medicine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 253-303.

[14]John A. Robertson, *Children of Choice: Freedom and the New Reproductive Technologies* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1994), 22.

[15]Ibid., 24 (emphasis mine). Given the focus on the individual's choice whether to have children or not, this "identity and meaning" for Robertson is not derived from procreation itself, but rather from the ability to choose whether or not to procreate. Procreation itself is secondary to individual goals and choices. Yet he does point to some kind of meaning, wherever it comes from.

[16]Ibid., 35.

[17]Ibid.

[18]For a sharp contrast in views concerning the need to promote legislation to guide the use of IVF, see the testimonies of Paul Ramsey and Stanley Hauerwas before the Ethics Advisory Board, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Ramsey's testimony, in which he argues that IVF should not be allowed by public policy in the United States, is reprinted as "On *In Vitro* Fertilization" in Stephen E. Lammers and Allen Verhey, *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 339-45; Hauerwas questions the wisdom of using IVF, but asserts that what he has to say from a Christian perspective on marriage and procreation should not be the basis for public policy. His testimony is reprinted as "Theological Reflection on *In Vitro* Fertilization" in Stanley Hauerwas, *Suffering Presence: Theological Reflections on Medicine, the Mentally Handicapped, and the Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1986), 142-156.

[19]Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University, 1996), 250.

[20]Many have undertaken to offer significant responses to Robertson's arguments. Helpful responses include Allen Verhey, *Reading the Bible*, 253-303; and Gilbert C. Meilaender, *Body, Soul, and Bioethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995), 62ff.

[21]Here "evangelical" is being used not so much to indicate a particular segment of Christianity, but to draw attention to moral reflection in light of the gospel.

[22]Other stories of barren women in Scripture include Rebekah (Gen

25:21), Rachel (Gen 29:31), Leah (Gen 29:35), and the wife of Manoah (Judg 13:2).

[23]Cited in Sandra L. Glahn and William R. Cutrer, *The Infertility Companion: Hope and Help for Couples Facing Infertility* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 50.

[24]Most notably with Abram, Sarai, and Hagar (Genesis 16); Jacob with Rachel and Bilhah (Genesis 30) and Jacob with Leah and Zilpah (Genesis 30); and Elkanah with Hannah and Pininnah (1 Samuel 1).

[25]Protus O. Kemdirim, "A Call to the Church in Africa to Address the Plight of Childless Couples," *African Ecclesial Review* 38, no. 4 (Aug 1996), 238.

[26]Michael Kpakula Francis, "Marriage Problems and the Local Churches," *African Ecclesial Review* 23, nos. 1/2 (Feb/Apr 1981), 96.

[27]Kemdirim, "A Call to the Church in Africa," 244. A different perspective within the African context is provided by Francis Cardinal Arinze, formerly the Archbishop in Nigeria. He recognizes the importance of procreation, yet argues that childlessness is not a valid cause for the dissolution of marriage. He writes, "A fact to be brought constantly to the attention of childless couples is that marriage is essentially a covenant of love which the contracting parties entered into under God." Francis A. Arinze, "Polygamy and Childlessness," *African Ecclesial Review* 23, nos. 1/2 (Feb/Apr 1981), 99.

[28]Teresa Iglesias, "Using Donor Eggs and Sperm," in *The Reproduction Revolution: A Christian Appraisal of Sexuality, Reproductive Technologies, and the Family* (ed. John F. Kilner, Paige C. Cunningham, and W. David Hager; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 98.

[29]Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 172.

[30]Ibid., 173.

[31]Among recent Christian ethicists, Stanley Hauerwas, as well as Gilbert Meilaender to some degree, have attempted to show the significance of the gospel for moral reflection on infertility and ARTs. Karl Barth is perhaps most explicit, in his *Church Dogmatics* (5 vols.; ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), III.4.265-68.

[32]For case studies and examples of some of the problems, from an author who ultimately supports procreative liberty, see Lynda Beck Fenwick, *Private Choices, Public Consequences: Reproductive Technology and the New Ethics of Conception, Pregnancy, and Family* (New York: Dutton, 1998), esp. 258, 260, 285. Fenwick also cites, among other sources, Annett Baran and Reuben Pannor, *Lethal Secrets: The Shocking Consequences and Unsolved Problems of Artificial Insemination* (New York: Warner, 1989); and William Tuohy, "Fertilization Method Controversial," *Charlotte Observer*, 3 January 1994, 2A.

[33]O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*, 12, 71, 73; Meilaender, "A Child of One's Own: At What Price?" in *The Reproduction Revolution: A Christian Appraisal of Sexuality, Reproductive Technologies, and the Family* (ed. John F. Kilner, Paige C. Cunningham and W. David Hager; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 36, 42.

[34]O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*, 73.

[35]Augustine, who saw the primary purpose of marriage and the only completely licit aim of intercourse within marriage to be procreation, argued as much when he marveled at the strength of the bond of even a childless marriage, which "although it be tied for the sake of begetting children, not even for the sake of begetting children is it loosed." Augustine, "On the Good of Marriage" in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (trans. C. Cornish; ed. P. Schaff; first series; vol. 3; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 402; cf. 400. Turning to a third party to procure a child may be considered one form of "loosing" the bond of marriage. Doesn't Grenz's view also reinforce the idea that a childless marriage is incomplete and that the good of procreation justifies desperate means to have children?

[36]For some development and a critique of this tendency, see Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2003).

[37]Meilaender, "A Child of One's Own", 36-45.

[38]Cf. Stanley Hauerwas, "Theological Reflection on *In Vitro* Fertilization," 145.

[39]Ibid., 152.

[40]Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.4.267-68.

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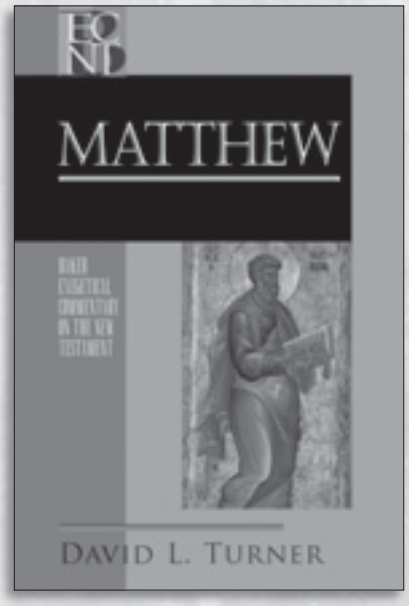

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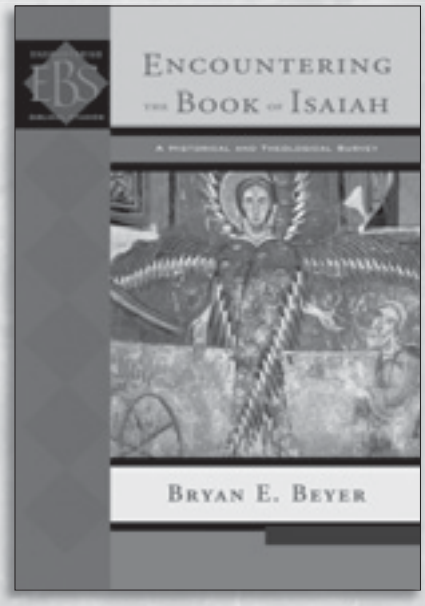

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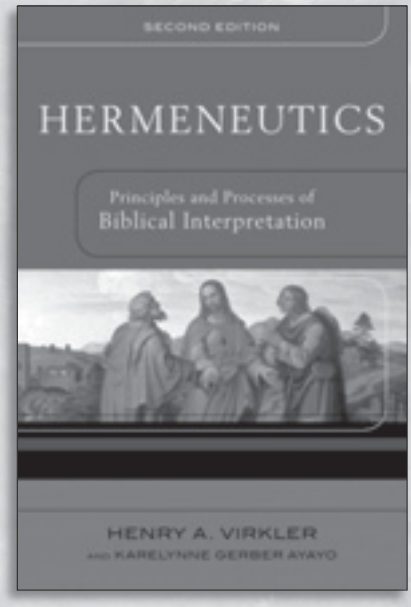

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Justice, Anselm, and the Western Tradition

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Peter Judson Richards is Associate Professor of Theology and Law, and serves as Director of the Center for Theology and Law at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has taught and conducted research in the areas of law, ethics, and political science at the United States Air Force Academy, Regent University, and Emory University. He also practiced law for seven years in the United States Air Force Judge Advocate General's Corps. Dr. Richards is the author of *Extraordinary Justice: Military Tribunals in Historical and International Context* (New York Press, 2007).

It has by now become something of a commonplace to note the reciprocal influences among the disciplines of politics and law on the one hand, and theology on the other. Even if, as we must admit, the influence has not always been wholesome for either, it is perhaps inevitable on some level, since the theological content of the gospel message as the proclamation of God's kingdom in Christ carries implications for the ordering and priority of this-worldly political concerns. The gospel infuses new content into, and delimits, political concepts such as judgment, justice, authority, and law. The contributions of theological reflection to the practices and institutions of the political order have sustained a long and fertile tradition in the dominions marked by the old boundaries of Western Christendom. Of great importance in this tradition is the figure of Anselm of Canterbury, whose teachings on the atonement have been identified as providing fuel to the "revolution" that generated a distinctive western legal tradition in late eleventh and early twelfth century Europe. Anselm's theory of the atonement in his most well-known work, the *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why God became Man") came to light against the backdrop of a virtually simultaneous jurisdictional dispute between pope and emperor, the so-called "Investiture Controversy." This dispute was conducted in a decidedly legalistic manner: through argumentation, through the filing of briefs, and ultimately through a kind of litigation. During the course of the controversy, the authority of the church increasingly came to be seen as juridical in nature. For better or worse, the church's spiritual power of "binding and loosing" amplified to include dimensions explicitly moral, legislative, and judicial.[1] Harold J. Berman's celebrated account of the revolutionary impact of the investiture controversy emphasizes the seismic effect of splitting the world into two competing jurisdictions. A "revolution in theology" accompanied the corresponding "revolution in legal science" in a process whereby the "rationalization and systematization of law and legality" linked to the greater emphasis on the incarnation as the defining event of human history and as "the central reality of the universe." Thus Anselm's powerful account of God's work of redemption as a legal transaction stood at the aperture of a torrent of unprecedented, energetic legal activity, attending the development of a sophisticated and systematic law of crimes, of marriage, property and inheritance, and of contract.

The sharp thrust of Anselm's treatment of the atonement in the *Cur Deus Homo* is frequently blunted through an emphasis on the social and political context of medieval feudalism, which characterized the social and political hierarchy of his day. While this interpretation may provide some assistance in unwinding Anselm's argument, it neglects what may actually be the more prominent theme of the work,

viewed in context, that is to say, the theme of justice, which surely was paramount for Anselm, but which suffers neglect when all the weight of the interpretive apparatus is placed on the side of the "honor" motif. The emphasis on "honor" distances the work in a long-vanished time, while "justice" brings to it a discomfiting immediacy.

Part of the reason for the neglect of the motif of "justice" in Anselm's account can be attributed to a lack of understanding of the biblical emphasis on justice that weaves the sinews of Anselm's argument. Part of it is traceable to a failure to see this theme resonating from within Anselm's discussion of honor itself. Further obscurity is generated through the isolation of the *Cur Deus Homo*, at the expense of viewing the work as forming only a portion of Anselm's overall project. In this article, I wish to trace these interpretive trajectories in order to show that an emphasis on the themes of justice and justification actually matters for our understanding of Anselm's project in general, and the *Cur Deus Homo* in particular. Given the significance of his moment for the future development of legal institutions in the west, it is important to get the right measure of Anselm's teaching.[2]

Three Biblical Texts on Justice

Anselm closely adheres to the classical formula *"suum cuique tribuere"* as it appears throughout the legal texts of antiquity as a first order principle of natural justice.[3] The same classical definition lies in the background of several prominent biblical texts on the relationship of the believer to the political "powers that be." I will briefly consider three such texts, in order to make the point.

The first text comes from the most extended New Testament teaching regarding the subject of civil government, that is, Paul's series of exhortations in Romans 13. Noteworthy for our purposes is the manner in which Paul summarizes that discussion with a restatement of the classical maxim in verse 7: "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." As Thomas Schreiner notes, the immediate textual connection may point to the confrontation recorded in all three synoptic gospels, in which Jesus declares, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God that which is God's"[4] (see below). Faithful adherence to the Pauline instruction requires an act of discernment as to who is to receive what, the implication being that while taxes are owed to some, fear is what is owed to others, etc. It may be that Paul's expression in verse 7 simply refracts the variety of responses owed to those in authority—perhaps taxes, revenue, respect, and honor are all to be rendered to the same person or persons.[5] But the larger point is that Paul calls his readers to acknowledge and account for the obligation to render "to *all* what is due them." This corroborates John Murray's insight, to see the passage in continuity with, not just as an abrupt transition to, the following section: i.e., Paul's summation of the entirety of the Old Testament Law (in vv. 8-10).[6] After all, this section, which concludes with the recognition that "love is the fulfillment of the law" (v. 10), opens with an exhortation to "owe no one anything," (v. 8), i.e., an inside-out version of the principle of justice articulated in verse 7, amplified outward to embrace the world of all human contacts. If all are given their due, there is no one left to whom a debt is still owed. The only

debt that remains, the debt that cannot be eradicated, is love. The point is that discernment of what love requires in any given circumstance will result in a proper assessment of the true requirements of the law, and thus, fulfillment of the demands of justice. By this I do not mean to suggest Paul is simply engaging in a kind of clever word game, in which all the Christian virtues collapse into one another, so that justice = love = every other Christian virtue. Rather, it is clear that Paul tethers together justice and love as a restatement of the Dominical summation of the law, as fulfilled in and through love of God and neighbor (Matt 22:37-40). Love is the means by which the just demands of the law are finally realized; at the same time, justice is fulfilled in love; love provides the completion, the final realization of justice. In the memorable expression of Jonathan Edwards, "heaven is a world of love."

Paul's re-articulation of the classical notion of justice in the light of the gospel finds an echo in 1 Peter. The Apostle Peter reiterates Paul's legitimation of earthly rulers, enjoining submission to "the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him [the Lord] for the punishment of evildoers" (1 Pet 2:13-14). Again, the emphasis is on a proper accounting of the various recipients of just action, in order to render unto each that which is his due: "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (v. 17). An implication is that the fear, reverence, and awe, which properly belongs to God alone, would be inappropriate when extended to human rulers. Distinctions are to be made: "all people" are to be given honor. Love is to be extended to the special community of brothers and sisters in Christ. The simple staccato sequence of imperatives in these passages indicates that both Paul and Peter work from the presupposition that the demands of justice are evident and direct—i.e., "natural," or "written on the heart," in the phrase of Rom 2:14-15— and need no extended argument. Note also that in both accounts, "honor" is one of the principal manifestations of fulfilling the requirements of justice. Moreover, context is critical for understanding the biblical relationships between love and justice. The *imperative* commands of Paul and Peter follow both authors' prior pronouncement of the *indicative* character of the believer's justified standing "in Christ." It is, thus, in Christ that loving-kindness and truth, righteousness and peace "kiss," in the words of the psalmist, and are reconciled (Ps 85:10). The paradoxical "equation" of love and justice only comes to be understood, and fulfilled at one point in time-space history, at the cross of Christ.

A similar presupposition seems to lie behind Jesus' own famous reply to the Pharisees' query as to the lawfulness of paying taxes to Caesar. In all three synoptic accounts of the dialogue, which occurs late in Jesus' earthly ministry, the simple command to "render … to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" amounts to a devastating rhetorical move that leaves Jesus' interlocutors in speechless wonder (Matt 22:15-22; cf. Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26). The crushing effectiveness of the response appears to hinge on the unstated supposition that all participants in the brief dialogue are immediately capable of making the distinctions necessary to carry out the Lord's straightforward instruction. Here again, no new, hitherto undisclosed moral duty is announced. Rather the universal requirement of justice—stated in

terms of rendering that which is due—is arrestingly recapitulated in such a way as to silence would-be equivocators. The unstated assumption is that that which is due is so immediately obvious as to require responsive moral action, not Pharisaical equivocation and clever casuistry. Moreover, the justice of God is juxtaposed to the justice of all subordinate, human authorities. The perfect and holy justice of God sets the standard for the justness of human moral action. The juxtaposition exposes the limits of the latter in a blinding light. As we shall now see, the biblical centrality of these themes of justice carries over to the work of Anselm.

Justice in the Works of Anselm

Proslogion

In the second half of the *Proslogion*, Anselm examines the attributes of God in terms of the finding of the first portion of the work, that God is, and is the being-than-which-no-greater-can-be-thought. Thus justice becomes one of the attributes manifesting God's ontological perfection. God is "perceptive, omnipotent, merciful, and impassible, just as [He] is living, wise, good, blessed, eternal, and whatever it is better to be rather than not to be."[7] The attribute of justice is noticeably absent from this list.[8] The explanation for this appears with the recognition that, in contrast to the preceding section on God's omnipotence, e.g., Anselm never considers justice in isolation, but rather, from within a matrix of other attributes, namely, God's impassibility, his goodness, his mercy, and his truth. The central discussion of the amalgam of justice-mercy-goodness covers the largest section of the second part of the book, §9, and carries over to the succeeding sections.

The emphasis on justice raises a question. Justice by definition requires the rendering unto each his due, as we have seen. Thus, without giving the definition, merely assuming it, Anselm asserts "that the very definition of justice" demands that God "reward the good with good and the bad with bad." It then becomes necessary to reconcile this with God's decision to "give good things to the wicked." The resolution to the dilemma comes with the consideration of God's justice in the light of his attributes of mercy and goodness.

Thus, after consideration of the manner in which God is both impassible and merciful, (in §8), Anselm goes on to consider the reconciliation of mercy and justice in §9, praying, "For even if it be difficult to understand how Your mercy is not apart from your justice, it is, however, necessary to believe that it is not in any way opposed to justice, for it derives from goodness which is naught apart from justice, which indeed really coincides with justice."[9] This is a striking, perhaps counter-intuitive claim for Anselm to make, yet the underlying classical conception of justice as the pinnacle and summation of the virtues assists in making sense of it: goodness derives from justice; it is justice that generates the very quality of goodness as such, and in a sense determines its limits.

The inter-relation of God's goodness, mercy and justice renders it necessary to speak of any one of these attributes in terms of the others: "Truly, if You are merciful because You are supremely good, and if You are supremely good only in so far as You are supremely just, truly then You are merciful precisely because You are supremely just." Thus, God's mercy, which is compatible with and must be understood in terms of God's impassibility, is seen to flow from God's goodness, the parameters of which itself are deter-

mined by the attribute of justice—for, as we have seen, God's goodness is "naught apart from justice." Similarly, Anselm asks rhetorically, bringing to a close the argument of §9, "Is Your mercy not then derived from Your justice?"[10] The answer to the dilemma comes with the realization that God's mercy and goodness emanate in some sense from his justice. While it might be said that God's mercy and goodness condition and give form to his justice—perhaps a more likely way of stating the relationship for moderns—Anselm chooses to put it the other way round, i.e., it is God's justice that determines and gives shape to his mercy and his goodness. In this sense, justice can be said to be a summation or a culmination of the other attributes. The point echoes Aristotle's emphasis on justice in Book V of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, in which justice is described as "the highest of all virtues," and as "the practice of complete virtue."[11]

Of course, for Aristotle, the discussion of justice as the summation of human virtues considers it in its quality as the completion of the harmonious, complementary ordering of human relationships among individuals and in the political community of men—its character as "a relation to our fellow men." Since justice is classically understood as the interrelational virtue par excellence, Anselm's own emphasis on the divine attribute of justice opens him to the charge of projecting immanent features of human relational justice onto the divine character. "For what is more just than that the good should receive good things and the bad receive bad things? How then is it just both that You punish the wicked and that You spare the wicked?" Anselm confronts the problem of anthropomorphism by considering divine justice through the prism of divine impassibility. In so doing, he finds the answer to the problem of reconciling humanly conceived attributes and the divine character by focusing on the relational aspect to which the divine exercise of character attaches. Thus, "[I]n sparing the wicked You are just in relation to Yourself and not in relation to us, even as You are merciful in relation to us and not in relation to Yourself."[12] As we have seen, in §9, Anselm had posed the question of the reconciliation of justice and mercy by means of logical inferences drawn from the classical definition of justice. In §10, the connection with divine impassibility is repeated, with the acknowledgment: "You are merciful (in saving us whom You might with justice lose) not because You experience any feeling, but because we experience the effect of Your mercy, so You are just not because You give us our due, but because You do what befits You as the supreme good."[13] Divine impassibility provides a key for accessing a proper understanding of the relational character of justice. Once again the discussion hinges upon a proper application of the definition of justice. (This time, Anselm gives the definition without acknowledging it as such. The interchangeability of justice with its agreed definition can be assumed without argument.)

Thus, the relational character of justice requires special application with regard to the Being-than-which-no-greater-can-be-thought. These features of the divine character are presented harmonious in scripture, as Anselm notes, with the juxtaposition of Ps 24:10 and Ps 144:17, in §11. Anselm understands the reconciliation of divine justice and mercy by identifying the quality of just order inhering in the dynamic relations within the Godhead

itself: "You are just not because You give us our due, but because You do what befits You as the supreme good."[14] The classically derived definition of justice as the dynamic inter-relational summation of virtues provides the assumed proposition, from which a fuller understanding of the things of God can be obtained, by a proper linkage of logical connections from the definitional point of departure. The picture is rendered more complex with the notion of justice, for this beginning point is itself, by definition, a complex synthesis of other related virtues and qualities—without understanding which, the definitional starting point itself cannot be properly understood.

Monologion

The brief discussion of justice in the *Monologion* sheds light on the fuller treatment given in Anselm's subsequent work. (It is for this reason that I take the two works out of their proper chronological order.) As we have already observed, justice appears in the list of attributes attaching to divine supremacy.[15] Interestingly, in Anselm's development of the nature of divine attributes and their relation to the being of God, it is justice that is taken as the paradigmatic example for development in the following section. Thus, Anselm argues, "The supreme nature is what it is—good, great, existing—precisely through itself and nothing else. So then, it is just through justice and it is just through itself. And if so, then what is more necessarily and clearly the case than that the supreme nature is justice itself? … And so if you ask 'what is this supreme nature we are talking about', you may answer 'justice'." So the supreme nature is "strictly said not to possess, but rather to be justice."[16]

It follows that "the same conclusion applies to everything else that can be said in the same way of the supreme nature. Reason compels understanding to see this. All of these terms, then, indicate not a quality or quantity, but what the supreme nature is." There follows a long list of divine attributes possessing the same relation to the Divine Being:

> It is, therefore, supreme essence, supreme life, supreme reason, supreme health, supreme justice, supreme wisdom, supreme truth, supreme goodness, supreme greatness, supreme beauty, supreme immortality, supreme incorruptibility, supreme immutability, supreme happiness, supreme eternity, supreme power, supreme unity.[17]

Anselm does not impose a particular order on this catalogue, which can be viewed as something of a prologue to the development of the second part of the *Proslogion*. It would be overstating the case to make too much of Anselm's selection of justice as the singular example for making his larger point in this section of the work, but given what we have seen in his later treatment of justice in the *Proslogion*, it is surely not mere arbitrariness that leads to the choice.

On Truth

Anselm's short treatise *On Truth* picks up on a question left dangling from the *Monologion*, the question, "What is truth?" In the course of the dialogue between Teacher and Student, the theme of justice comes to occupy a central place in the development of Anselm's argument on the nature of truth, in the manner of the earlier discussions we have traced thus far. Thus, in §8 of the work, Anselm develops the contention that "the same action both ought to be and ought not to be under different conditions." The

proposition amounts to a statement on the relational character of justice, elaborated by means of an exposition of the retributive principle of justice:

> [I]insofar as the agent and the thing acted upon are subject to the same or to contrary judgment, the action itself is judged to be the same or contrary. When therefore the one who strikes rightly strikes, and the one who is struck is rightly struck, as when a sinner is corrected by one who has the right to do so, there is right on both sides, because on both sides the blow ought to be struck. It is the opposite when the just man is struck by a bad man, since the one ought not to strike and the other ought not to be struck, so on both sides it is not right since on neither side ought the blow to be struck. But when the sinner is struck by someone who has not the right to do so, then the one ought to be struck but the other ought not to strike, and the blow both ought to be and ought not to be. Thus it cannot be denied that it is both right and not right. But if we think of the judgment of the supreme Wisdom and Goodness that the blow ought not to be struck, whether from one alone or from both sides, namely of the agent and of the one being acted upon, who would dare deny that what is permitted by such Wisdom and Goodness ought to be? [18]

The entire passage reads as a gloss on the definition of justice considered and developed earlier. The right ordering of justice requires the fitness of the action rendered with respect to the one being acted upon, and requires, too, the fitness of the actor to such action. As in the grammar of a Latin sentence, where properly inflected subject and predicate endings correspond to one another, inter-relational human actions, to be just and right, require agreement with respect to the agent and recipient of human action.

The discussion turns to reflect on the nature of the atonement in the following colloquy:

> T: What then, if you consider the nature of things, as when iron nails were driven into the body of the Lord, would you say that the fragile flesh ought not to be penetrated or that when penetrated by the sharp steel it ought not to feel pain?
>
> S: I would speak against nature.
>
> T: Therefore it can happen that an action or passion ought to be according to nature which ought not to be with respect to the agent or the one acted upon, since the former ought not to act and the latter ought not to suffer it.[19]

The principle explicates how it is that "the Lord Jesus, who alone was innocent, ought not to suffer death, nor ought anyone to have inflicted it on him, and yet he ought to have suffered it, because he wisely and benignly and usefully wished to suffer it."[20] Justice is reconciled with mercy at the cross. The relational character of justice demonstrates that this reconciliation is consonant with principles of reason and logic.

The argument continues with the assertion that "the highest truth is rectitude" (§10). While other "rectitudes are such because they are in things which are or do what they ought," it is different with the "highest truth," which "is not rectitude because it owes anything." Anselm is wrestling with the same question he had considered before in the *Proslogion*: given the relational character of the attribute of justice, its quality as a proper rendering of what is due, how can it be understood of God, who as First Cause of "all other truth and rectitude" owes nothing to anything or anyone in the entire created order? "All other things owe him but he owes nothing to another, nor is there any other reason why he is than that he is."[21]

In the succeeding section that picks up the thread of this examination into "the highest truth," (§12), the student, seconded by his teacher, acknowledges the identity of rectitude and justice:

> S: Since you have taught me that all truth is rectitude, and it seems to me that rectitude and justice are the same, teach me to understand about justice as well.
>
> T: If justice does not differ from rectitude you already have a definition of justice.[22]

The interrelational quality of the divine attributes we have observed implicit in the argument of the second part of the *Proslogion*, here made explicit, mirrors the relational quality of the definition of justice itself: "[T]ruth and rectitude and justice mutually define one another. He who knows one of them knows the others and can from the known go on to knowledge of the unknown."[23]

The argument proceeds to further refine the understanding of justice, first identifying it as "found only in the rational nature, which alone perceives the rectitude of which we speak." It is further articulated in terms of a rectitude "not … of knowledge or action, but of will."[24] The cases posited of the thief required to return stolen goods, or the almsgiver "who feeds the poor out of vainglory" produce still further refinement. What counts in the determination of rectitude is both a proper willing in terms of the objective of the will, *and* of its motive: "these two are necessary for justice in the will, namely, to will what it ought and for the reason it ought to"—and "for the sake of rectitude itself."[25]

The refined definition of justice or rectitude emerges in this exchange as, "rectitude of will preserved for its own sake," and not for some ulterior motive. "Therefore there is no justice that is not rectitude, nor is justice as such anything other than the rectitude of will. The rectitude of action is called justice, but only when action comes about with a just will. Rectitude of will, even if it is impossible that what we rightly will come about, does not lose the name of justice."[26] The exercise in clarification is further rounded out with the recognition that receiving, willing, having, and preserving rectitude of will is "that from which we receive justice," and that it is the simultaneous willing, acquiring, and having that constitutes justice.

The extended discussion in §12 then closes with the application previously developed in the *Proslogion*, acknowledging the adaptability of this definition of justice "to the highest justice." The relational quality of justice—relational both in consideration of its definition in terms of other attributes such as truth, and of its character as a right ordering of the will—solves the anthropomorphic problem mentioned in connection with the *Proslogion*. The dialogue finishes in §13 with a technical but important articulation of this relational principle, this time borrowing from another category of relation, the human experience of time:

> [W]e do not say the time of this or that thing because time is in those things but because they are in time. And just as time considered in itself is not the time of something, although when we consider the things that are in it we speak of the time of this thing or of that, so the highest truth subsists in itself and belongs to no thing. But when something is in accord with it, we then speak of its truth and rectitude.[27]

Thus the dialogue on truth comes to a finish with the word *rectitude*, defined in

the concluding sections of the colloquy as "the highest truth" and as identical with justice. Rectitude, justice, classically considered as the quality more or less inhering in human actions "in relation to our fellow men," becomes, for Anselm, the aspect of self-subsistent divine essence to which humans accord in their relations with one another, to greater or lesser degree, as such relations partake of its intrinsically relational character as truth and rectitude.

On Free Will

Prior arguments as to rectitude as the right ordering of the will shape the discussion in Anselm's treatise *On Free Will*, where the "power of preserving rectitude of will" is recognized as always possessed by "a rational nature." The discussants of the dialogue adopt "this power of preserving rectitude of will" as a working definition of the "power of free will in the first man and the angel." The definition from the treatise *On Truth*, "the rectitude of will preserved for its own sake," must now be considered in terms of human agency: "nor could rectitude of will be taken away from them unless they willed it"—the historical circumstance of the fall.[28] Given what we have seen in the argument already developed within the prior works, "to will the preservation of rectitude for its own sake is for it to prevail" is another way of characterizing what Anselm describes as the human agent's participation in justice. By the same token, "to will what it ought not is for it to be conquered," that is to say, a turning toward injustice. Space does not permit us to trace the details of this argument in the treatise on free will, but it is surely more than coincidence that Anselm builds here upon a formulation developed in the earlier work *On Truth* when he defines freedom of will as "the power of preserving rectitude of will for the sake of rectitude itself" (§13). Given what he had said in *On Truth* as to the interchangeability of "truth and rectitude and justice," and the careful precision with which he develops his terminology in these works, it follows that freedom of will may be alternatively characterized as "the power of preserving justice," and injustice, as the willful failure of this exercise of preservative power.

On the Fall of the Devil

This intuition that freedom of will is characterized for Anselm by the quality of justice is borne out with the subsequent work *On the Fall of the Devil*, in which the suggestive connections of the treatise *On Free Will* tie back together with the assertion of the reality of justice in §15, where "that which when added to the will so moderates it that it can only will what it ought" is defined both as "something real" and as "nothing other than justice."[29]

With this definitional apparatus in place, Anselm proceeds to address the topic under consideration, the fall of the devil, as the paradigmatic act of injustice. In this central section of the work justice is considered in a different sense, as a quantitative attribute, to be "received" as a gift, or "added" in to the mix of personal characteristics of the rational being to whom it can be more or less ascribed. Receipt of the gift makes the recipient indebted, while "the same justice abandoned would leave in it beautiful traces of itself." As the discussion hones in to a direct consideration of the fall of the angelic being, Anselm's student remarks that "a nature that received justice, if only at one time, is shown to be more noble

and to bear the sign of always having a quasi absolute good than a nature that never had or ought to have had it." It is the possession of the gift of justice to greater or lesser degree that renders its recipient more or less deserving of moral approbation or blame: "[A]dd to this that the more a nature has this good, and ought to have it, it is praiseworthy, just as a person who ought to have it and does not is accounted more blameworthy." And it is the possession of justice that bestows dignity and honor upon the recipient: "to have and to ought to have justice [*sic*] shows the natural dignity of a nature, and not having it constitutes personal dishonour."[30]

Of course this statement is critical for our consideration of the *Cur Deus Homo*, for it is the first time in Anselm's varied treatments of the theme of justice in which he connects it to the concept of honor, which assumes an important position in the argument of the later work. Thus, bestowing the gift of justice is a grant of dignity, a vesting of worthiness, for which the recipient owes an obligation; the abandonment of the gift is the morally blameworthy act of will of the erstwhile recipient. "For it was made worthy by him [God] who gave it but it does not have it because it abandons it. The obligation came from him who gave justice, the not-having it from him who abandoned it. He is obliged because he received it, he does not have it because he abandoned it." Anselm does not here develop the notion of obligation; he leaves for later the discussion of the character of the debt that is owed in consideration of the gift of justice. The impersonal pronoun serving the place of "the gift" in these sentences, the direct object "it," refers of course, to justice. Its possession to greater or lesser degree constitutes the worth and dignity of the will of the recipient, the first "it" or indirect object of the same sentence.[31]

The grammar is important for Anselm, author of a treatise on grammar; indeed, what he is describing in these inter-locking statements may best be characterized as a kind of analytical grammar of justice. "The only thing I blame in it [i.e., the recipient] is the absence of justice, or not having justice." Moral blame can be alternatively summarized as the lack of justice. "For as I already said, the worthiness adorns it, not having it [justice] demeans it, and the more the having adorns it the more not having demeans. Thus not having justice because of its own fault demeans the will only because being fit to have it, thanks to the goodness of the giver, constitutes its dignity."[32] Moreover, as we previously noted in earlier contexts, the relational character of justice provides the framework within which the allocation of moral blame and praise occurs. Justice—moral rectitude—is the cumulative right ordering of Creator-creature relations. In the individual soul formed in God's image, it is both the receptacle and substance of human dignity.

Anselm develops the argument concerning the character of injustice, as defined against the context of this definitional matrix, by emphasizing, after Augustine, its privative sense: "just as the absence of justice and not having justice have no essence, so injustice and being unjust have no being, and so are nothing rather than something."[33] If it is the absence of justice that is the source of moral blameworthiness, Anselm addresses the question of how is it that "the same absence of justice is not called injustice before justice has been given"—before the grant of the gift. "The reason is that the absence of justice is not blamed

where justice is not meant to be." Certain orderings of the creator-creature relationship are not meant to receive the added gift of justice suitable for rational beings.[34] Once again, the point is illustrated in terms of disgrace and honor, an echo, perhaps, of Paul's statement in 1 Cor 11:2-16: "Just as not having a beard is no disgrace in a man who does not yet have one, but when he should have one it is disgraceful that he does not; so not having justice does not deform a nature that ought not to have it, but debases one meant to have it."

The donative relational character of justice is highlighted in the following section addressing the proposition: "Why the angel that abandons it cannot regain justice." For, "there is no way in which he could acquire justice when he does not have it, either before receiving it or after having abandoned it." It must come from an external source: "From him [God] they receive both the having and the capacity to keep or abandon it." These arguments are summarized in the transactional, relational terminology of the preceding discussion: "Before receiving justice, in fact, no one is just or unjust and, after having received it, no one becomes unjust unless he willingly abandons justice."[35]

Again, restrictions of space and time do not permit us to follow the succeeding argument in greater detail, though the notion of justice as the vital conceptual key for unlocking Anselm's moral theology becomes still more apparent in the subsequent explicit considerations on the fall of the devil. In §21, Anselm states, "Evil is injustice, which is only evil and evil is nothing. But the nature in which injustice is found is something evil, because it is something real and differs from injustice which is evil and is nothing. Therefore, what is real is made by God and comes from him; what is nothing, that is evil, is caused by the guilty and comes from him."[36] In this way, the privative sense of evil is made compatible with the recognition that created natures exist "in which injustice is found" and which therefore are "something evil." (See also, §§26 and 27, offering further explication on "the evil that is injustice.")

On the Incarnation of the Word

The same themes of injustice, the willful abandonment of rectitude—justice—and the absence of justice that informs the morally blameworthy will become a subject of discussion in the work on the incarnation, in §10. Characteristically, Anselm approaches the incarnation in terms of modality. The explication of the necessity of the incarnation of the Son, and not another person, gives rise to a description the human predicament in terms of injustice—the abandonment of rectitude in the will, both in the devil and in man. "A will subject to no one else's is one's own. But possessing a will as one's own (i.e., a will subject to no will) belongs to God alone." Injustice, the wrong ordering of the creator-creation relation, results, now described as a robbery of dignity and a deprivation of the excellence that is God's due as Supreme Authority:

> Therefore, all who exercise their will as their own strive to be like God by robbery and are guilty of depriving God of the dignity proper to him and of his unique excellence, insofar as it lies within their power to do so. For if there is any other will that be not subject to anyone, God's will will not be superior to all, nor will it be the only will with no other superior to it.[37]

These statements serve as a kind of prolegomenon to the following work, the *Cur Deus Homo*, where the relational dynam-

ics of justice in Anselm's grammar of the divine plan of redemption receive fuller treatment. Here, the fittingness of the incarnation of the Son is expressed in the familiar terminology of retribution:

> For no one more justly repels or punishes criminals, or more mercifully pardons or intercedes for them, than the one against whom injustice is more particularly demonstrated. Nor is anything more appropriately opposed to falsity in order to repel it, or more apposite for healing, than truth. For those presuming a false likeness to God seem to have sinned more particularly against him whom we profess to be the true likeness of the Father.[38]

The incarnation is a corrective measure for the restoration of justice and truth.

Cur Deus Homo

Over the course of the foregoing survey, it has become apparent that none of Anselm's works are self-contained. Many times themes merely introduced in one work are taken up in a subsequent endeavor; a loose end never satisfactorily addressed at one stage is tied up at another. It should come as no surprise then that the themes of justice and injustice, of rectitude and abandonment return to the place of central focus in the *Cur Deus Homo*. Anselm's modal way of thinking causes him to take up the question of the necessity of the means of divine redemption— given the plan to redeem lost sinners, introduced, as we have seen in the work on the *Incarnation*.[39] It is also understandable, given what we have seen thus far, that Anselm should state the human predicament for which Christ's atonement provides the remedy in explicitly jurisdictional terms.[40]

The argument for God's jurisdiction rather than the devil's, proceeds to develop the argument along modal lines. It may be just for man to be tormented, but "the devil himself [does not act] justly in tormenting him," being impelled by "malice" rather than "out of love of justice," the devil acts in accord with "God's incomprehensible wisdom, by which he orders even bad things in a way that is good." Anselm repeats an earlier observation we noted in connection with the discourse *On Truth*, that "it can happen that one and the same thing is, from different points of view, both just and unjust, and for this reason, is judged by people who are not considering the matter with care, to be entirely just or entirely unjust." The illustration that follows, involving the just and unjust striking of a person—"it is just where the person receiving the blow is concerned," but not just from the standpoint of the agent who is striking the blow—similarly mirrors that earlier discussion. [41]

The argument continues with a series of questions that serve to hone in on the justness of the transaction of the atonement:

> But how will it possibly be proved a just and rational thing that God treated, and allowed to be treated, in this way, the man whom he called his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased? … For what justice is it for the man who was of all the most just to be put to death for a sinner? … If God could not save sinners except by condemning a just man, where is his omnipotence? If on the other hand he was capable of doing so, but did not will it, how shall we defend his wisdom and justice?[42]

There follows a careful exegesis of Scriptural passages addressing these questions, upon which, the participants to the dialogue agree on a quest to ground the work of atonement related in the Scriptures on the footing of what is fit-

ting, proper, and appropriate for God to do, given the original creation of man for blessedness, the real, universal, abiding presence of sin, and the need for expiation of sin.[43] The conversation then turns in the following direction:

> A. If an angel or a man were always to render to God what he owes, he would never sin.
> B. I cannot contradict this.
> A. Then, to sin is nothing other than not to give God what is owed to him.
> B. What is the debt which we owe to God?
> A. All the will of a rational creature ought to be subject to the will of God.
> B. Perfectly true.
> A. This is the debt which an angel, and likewise a man, owes to God. No one sins through paying it, and everyone who does not pay it, sins. This is righteousness or uprightness of will. It makes individuals righteous or upright in their heart, that is, their will. This is the sole honour, the complete honour, which we owe to God and which God demands from us … Someone who does not render to God this honour due to him is taking away from God what is his, and dishonouring God, and this is what it is to sin.

Illustrations follow in the familiar language of retributive justice, including an extended discussion of the case of restitution of stolen property.[44] It should be apparent by now that the entire grounding for the ensuing discussion of the atonement is being put forward here in the language and terms provided by the classical definition of justice. Sin is defined in terms of a failure of rendering what is due. The debt of honor owed by the sinner is defined in terms of rectitude of will. The restoration of this debt of honor is defined in terms of the retributive principle of restitution. All is stated in terms of the forensic grammar of justice that has informed much of Anselm's work to this point—a grammar which modifies the classical emphasis on the horizontal character of justice as the virtue of men among their fellows, to adjust for the vertical dimension introduced in acknowledging the creator-creature distinction. Thus, it follows that "if it is not fitting for God to do anything in an unjust and unregulated manner, it does not belong to his freedom or benevolence or will to release unpunished a sinner who has not repaid to God what he has taken away from him." Moreover, "if there is nothing greater and nothing better than God, then there is nothing, in the government of the universe, which the supreme justice, which is none other than God himself, preserves more justly than God's honour."[45]

The necessity of God's existence, argued in the *Proslogion*, determines the character of his government over the universe, described here as the just preservation of the honor of "the supreme justice." In § 14, the vindication of God's honor is described as a juridical action of replevin, a repossession action.[46] This manner of stating the transaction of divine judgment of the sinner naturally raises the question, how can the sinner take away God's honor? The answer, again, is stated in relational terms, as we have seen in prior works, terms by which God's honor is, "in relation to him, incorruptible." When the rational created being does what is right, i.e., acts with rectitude of will, he honors God, "not because he is bestowing anything upon God, but because he is voluntarily subordinating himself to his will and governance, maintaining his own proper station in life within the natural universe, and, to the best of his ability, maintaining the beauty of the universe itself." This is the fulfillment of justice, a

right ordering of the rational soul within the order of the universe itself, which attains to a kind of aesthetic excellence. The failure of moral rectitude, on the other hand, works dishonor, and disorder—that is to say, injustice.[47]

Setting Anselm's terminology in the context provided by the bourgeoning crescendo on justice in the works leading up to the *Cur Deus Homo* thus assists in making sense of the central place of honor in this account. What appears as a curious appeal to aesthetics, resorted to as a means of squaring the circle and, thus, explaining how rational creatures can somehow stain the honor of an almighty Creator—attains coherence when viewed as an acknowledgment of the just maintenance of order in a universe governed by "the supreme justice": "If the divine Wisdom did not impose these forms of recompense in cases where wrongdoing is endeavoring to upset the right order of things, there would be in the universe, which God ought to be regulating, a certain ugliness, resulting from the violation of the beauty of order, and God would appear to be failing in his governance."[48] Rather than functioning as an exercise of pure, arbitrary will, God's justice fuses in inseparable harmony with the other attributes of his character. Thus, as Jaroslav Pelikan explains, rather than emphasize God's wrath, which might lead to confusion in the placement of divine impassibility, "Anselm spoke of his justice: the justice of God had been violated by the failure of man to render to God what he owed him; the justice of God also made it impossible for God to forgive this sin by mere fiat, for this would have been a violation of the very order in the universe that God had to uphold to be consistent with himself and with his justice. Any scheme of human salvation, therefore, had to be one that would render 'satisfaction' to divine justice and leave the 'rightness' and moral order intact."[49]

Space and time, again, do not permit a fuller treatment of the manner of Anselm's development of these arguments. But the trajectory of the reasoning has become abundantly clear by now. Anselm's continued appeals to the theme of justice keep with his overall strategy for the use of what Paul Helm identifies as "procedural reason." That is, the universally recognized principle of justice and its definition as an inter-relational quality is taken as a given, from which succeeding propositions naturally and logically follow. "The prime function of procedural reason is to discriminate the fact of logical connectedness, either inductive or deductive."[50] As faith seeks understanding, reason acts as a tool or set of procedures operating upon propositions known or reasonably believed.

As we have seen, for Anselm, the given propositions of the classical account of justice provide the starting point for an analysis that develops over succeeding works, and culminates in the *Cur Deus Homo*. The modal argument for the necessity of the atonement is grounded in an account of justice that penetrates to the limits of all human attempts at "rendering to each his due." The method is different, but the trajectory and terminus of the argument aligns very closely to the tradition of Augustine, who famously argued in Book XIX of the *City of God*, that in the revealing light of God's truth, no true justice is to be found in the this-worldly Cities of Men. This relativizes human contrivances of law and politics, to be sure; though it does not render void such efforts. For "a people estranged from God … must be wretched; yet even such

a people as this loves a peace of its own, which is not to be despised."[51] In a world reeling from the fumes of a toxic political theology, it is a salutary exercise to consider the theological sources of a Western tradition of law and justice that now faces severe threats from within and without. Pundits who would lump together Christian and Islamic traditions of thought on justice, law, and politics as variant forms of the same noxious "fundamentalism" fail to make critical distinctions. For the tradition represented by Augustine and Anselm, the reality of the incarnation of God in Christ exposed the radical inadequacy of all human political endeavors for the attainment of justice. At the same time, the added vertical dimension introduced by biblical faith gave a fuller, richer account of justice than the classical pagan (and modern!) formulations, for it gave scope to the relational quality of justice as a principle of order in the universe, as partaking of the very nature of the Godhead, and as the element of God's glorious redeeming work in Christ.

ENDNOTES

[1]If you are going to fight to acquire jurisdiction, you must be able to back up your claims by constructive use of the power once obtained. Thus, law moved from being an unconscious and unproblematic reflection of tribal culture, to become: (1) a self-conscious means of exercising and consolidating political control, i.e., power. In this way the new modern canon law system became the first modern legal system, developed in competition with the law of the imperial courts. (2) Law served to sustain the corporate identity of the clergy and gave it legal status. (3) Law came to regulate relations between the jurisdictions. (4) It became the means of imposing peace and justice on part of authorities of the respective jurisdictions. (5) Perhaps most significantly, it became the means by which the church sought to carry out its reformative mission. Historically, this change occurred alongside a theological shift of focus away from the church's eschatological vision, prominent since the apostolic era, that says, "We are in the final days"; and toward a this-worldly focus on reform. Law could be said to be the efficient cause of this transformation. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1985), *passim*.

[2]For the sake of simplicity, all page references to Anselm's works in the text of this article refer to the English one-volume edition of his most important writings, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1998).

[3]Cf. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 5.5; Justinian, *Digest* I.1.10; *Institutes*, 1.1.1; Augustine, *On the Free Will*, 1.27.13; Aquinas ST II-II, 58.1. Of course, Aristotle, and the Christian tradition which followed, articulated several different forms or modes of justice, among which the reciprocal principle of *suum cuique* featured. For a helpful delineation of these varying forms, see, Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 31-40.

[4]Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 685.

[5]Ibid., 687.

[6]John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 2:158.

[7]Anselm, *Works*, 94.

[8]Note the difference with a similar list

Anselm provides in the *Monologion*, §§ 15 and 16, in which Anselm asserts as a "necessary conclusion" emanating from the proposition of the supremacy of the Divine Essence, that "the supreme essence is alive, wise, powerful, all-powerful, true, just, happy, eternal … and what ever is likewise better without qualification than not-whatever." Ibid, 28. See the discussion of these texts infra.

[9]Anselm, *Works*, 92.

[10]Ibid.

[11]*Nicomachean Ethics*, 5.1129b-1130a. "Thus, this kind of justice is complete virtue or excellence, not in an unqualified sense, but in relation to our fellow men. And for that reason justice is regarded as the highest of all virtues, more admirable than morning star and evening star, and as the proverb has it, 'In justice every virtue is summed up.' It is complete virtue and excellence in the fullest sense, because it is the practice of complete virtue. It is complete because he who possesses it can make use of his virtue not only by himself but also in his relations with his fellow men; for there are many people who can make use of their virtue in their own affairs, but who are incapable of using it in their relation with others." Book V on justice, of course, follows Aristotle's cataloguing of other virtues such as courage, self-control, generosity, etc., in Books III-IV.

[12]Anselm, *Works*, 93.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 94.

[15]*Monologion*, §15, Ibid., 28.

[16]Ibid., 29.

[17]Ibid., 29-30.

[18]Ibid., 162.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., 161.

[21]Ibid., 164.

[22]Ibid., 166.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., 167.

[25]Ibid., 168-9.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., 173-4.

[28]Ibid., 181.

[29]Ibid., 217.

[30]Ibid., 218.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., 219.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., 220.

[36]Ibid., 223.

[37]Ibid., 251-2.

[38]Ibid., 252.

[39]Ibid., §5, 270.

[40]Ibid., §7, 272.

[41]Ibid., 272-3.

[42]Ibid., §8, 275.

[43]Ibid., §10, 282.

[44]Ibid., 282-3.

[45]Ibid., 286.

[46]Ibid., 287-8.

[47]Ibid., 288.

[48]Ibid., §15, 289.

[49]Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition, A History of the Development of Doctrine: The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978), 3:141.

[50]Paul Helm, *Faith and Understanding*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 6.

[51]Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), XIX.26, 962.

A Free Church in a Free State

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"A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal."[1] So says the *Baptist Faith and Message*, and demonstrably so it is the case. Concerning this basic statement of religious liberty, the *BF&M* speaks of the separation of church and state, the ordination of civil government, the use of spiritual means alone to advance the gospel, and of God's unique role as "Lord of the conscience."

In support of this position, the *BF&M* cites a range of texts: the creation of man (Gen 1:27; 2:7); private prayer (Matt 6:6-7); a conflict of masters (Matt 6:24); gaining the world at the loss of one's soul (Matt 16:26); God's and Caesar's prerogatives (Matt 22:21); soul liberty in Christ (John 8:36); Peter and John's "civil disobedience" in preaching (Acts 4:19-20); death to sinning (Rom 6:1-2); submission to the government (Rom 13:1-7); responsible freedom in Christ (Gal 5:1, 13); citizenship in heaven (Phil 3:20); prayer for rulers and civil concord (1 Tim 2:1-2); a single universal Lawgiver and Judge (Jas 4:12); exemplary submission to authorities (1 Pet 2:12-17); the right thing, whatever the cost (1 Pet 3:11-17); suffering for Christ (1 Pet 4:12-19).

The following article is meant to complement the *BF&M's* statement on religious liberty, noting other verses and non-scriptural rationales for appreciating a "free church in a free state." We begin by underscoring the distinction between church and state, and then we look more closely at reasons for granting each its own room to work.

Ekklesia, not *Panklesia*

The *ekklesia* is not a *panklesia*. One is called out of society into the church. The body of Christ in a nation is not coextensive with the populace, a fact that has escaped, oddly enough and from time to time, Greek authorities. Though *ekklesia* is their word, their practice has often been to require baptism for citizenship, to stamp "Orthodox" on the passports of infants, and to require those not wishing this designation to declare and argue their dissent at a government office before they are granted separate status.[2]

No Church Prisons, No State Ordinations

Though the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution allows Americans to bear arms, it does not allow them to carry just any arms they please. Private citizens, including parishioners, may not own anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, and crew-served weapons. Neither may they tax or imprison their fellow Americans, even those preaching false doctrine.

Military operations, penitentiaries, and tariffs are matters of state. As 2 Cor 10:4-5 teaches (and the *BF&M* might well have noted), the church advances through persuasion, not coercion.

On the other hand, the notion of state ordination of ministers and state administration of the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper) is bizarre, even oxymoronic ("state baptism" making as much sense as "2% tithe").

Limits of State Competency

Facing massive unemployment and rising inflation, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was besieged by many in the church, demanding that the government correct things. In a speech entitled, "The Spirit of a Nation," she insisted that the government could not do everything:

> The state cannot create wealth. That depends on the exertions of countless people motivated not only by the wholesome desire to provide for themselves and their families, but also by a passion for excellence and a genuine spirit of public service. The state cannot generate compassion; it can and must provide a "safety net" for those who, through no fault of their own, are unable to cope on their own. There is need for far more generosity in our national life, but generosity is born in the hearts of men and women; it cannot be manufactured by politicians, and assuredly it will not flourish if politicians foster the illusion that the exercise of compassion can be left to officials. And so, I repeat, it is on the individual that the health of both church and state depends.[3]

In America, the special abilities of the church have also been recognized, at least in the early days of the Republic, when the government partnered with churches to improve the lot of Indians.

> In his February 8, 1822, report to the House of Representatives on "Condition of the Several Indian Tribes," President James Monroe listed the government's agents for helping the Indians, including the Missionary Society of New York (to the Seneca); the Hamilton Baptist Missionary Society of New York (to the Oneida); the Moravians (to the Cherokee); the Cumberland Missionary Society (to the Chickasaw); the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (to the Miami); the United Foreign Missionary Society of New York (to the Osages). Regarding the Chickasaw, the report said "that the children have been orderly and attentive to their studies, and particularly so to moral and religious instruction."[4]

Of course, one could count such close government cooperation with missionary agencies unwise, and those saturated in the rhetoric of absolute church-state separation might find such language in a "state of the union address" unthinkable. Many would object to the nation's paternalistic treatment of Indian people. But we must not lose sight of Monroe's and Congress's deeper wisdom, that faith in the living God is the deepest wellspring of civilization.

Now, having rehearsed some distinctions between church and state, let us turn to reasons for bolstering the vitality of each of these two God-ordained institutions. They are neither equal in weight nor exhaustive of the case that can be made, but they do suggest the rich wisdom in the Baptist, biblical, stance.

A Free Church

A Free Church is Typically a More Vital Church

In the 1930s, German Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer spent the better part of a year at Union Theological Seminary in New York. When he returned to Germany (where he was martyred by Hitler), he wrote an essay on the American church, observing,

> Nowhere has the principle of the separation of church and state become a matter of such general, almost dogmatic significance as in American Christianity, and nowhere, on the other hand, is the participation of the churches in the political, social, economic, and cultural events of public life so active and so influential as in the country where there is no state church.[5]

In contrast to the free American church, the European state church has been languishing. Recently *The Economist* spoke of this malaise in marketing terms, and then turned its eyes on the budding charismatic and Pentecostal churches, which operate without state subsidy or control:

> Grace Davie of the University of Exeter argues that there are really two religious economies in Europe. In the old one, religion is "a public utility": there is one state-backed supplier, and most Christians follow their religion vicariously (in the sense that somebody else does your church going for you). For instance, around 75% of Swedes are baptised as Lutherans, but only 5% regularly go to church. The church pockets a staggering $1.6 billion in membership fees, collected by the state through the tax system. It has been rare for Swedes to opt out, though that seems to be changing.
>
> Alongside this old religious economy, a smaller one, based on person choice, is growing. Together evangelicals, charismatics and Pentecostals accounted for 8.2% of Europe's population in 2000, nearly double the rate in 1970, according to the World Christian Encyclopedia.[6]

Derek Davis, dean of humanities at Mary Hardin-Baylor, finds this disparity perfectly understandable:

> Many Europeans today unfortunately look upon religion as just another government program. Attendance in most European churches is abysmal. The people have lost, to a very large degree, the will to support their own religious institutions because government does it for them.[7]

The Iron of State Needs the Iron of the Church to Sharpen It

As Margaret Thatcher explained above, the church stirs, directs, and fortifies the souls of its members, making them better citizens. They are more reliable employees, more thoughtful managers, and less selfish colleagues and neighbors. The regenerate are good people, and goodness is essential to the welfare of society. In his farewell address, George Washington underscored this truth:

> Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connection with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles. 'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government.[8]

Reading this, one might get the impression that the essential gift the church gives the state is the personal morality of its members, their respect for the rule of law, their fellow man, and their familial duties. Thus, winsome public policy would spring from the hearts of wholesomely domesticated men. But, consistent with Washington's statement, the church also has an edgier role to play, that of tireless critic.

When the state suppresses the prophetic role of the church, allowing its

members to meet only for mutual edification, then the nation is robbed of a corrective—a form of discipline if you will. America's second president, John Adams, said as much on the eve of the American Revolution:

> It is the duty of the clergy to accommodate their discourses to the times, to preach against such sins as are most prevalent, and recommend such virtues as are most wanted. For example,—if exorbitant ambition and venality are predominant, ought they not to warn their hearers against those vices? If public spirit is much wanted, should they not inculcate this great virtue? If the rights and duties of Christian magistrates and subjects are disputed, should they not explain them, show their nature, ends, limitations, and restrictions, how much soever it may move the gall of Massachusetts? [9]

In this connection, the *BF&M* could well have cited the examples of Amos, Jonah, and Jeremiah to support their liberty section. A nation needs its prophets.

This goes down badly in many minds today, and not only with the targets of rebuke. Secularists and other radical separationists insist that the church remain silent and insular, a place for devotional life and deeds of charity. When it presumes to bring its perspectives to bear in the public square, the state is compromised, or so think men like University of South Alabama political science professor, Ethan Fishman, who writes this in *The American Scholar*:

> [Roger] Williams and [Thomas] Jefferson sought to prohibit government from directly translating church doctrine into law and policy. The Bush administration, on the other hand, has fought embryonic stem cell research, abortion, contraception, sex education, and the teaching of evolution, all apparently in deference to evangelical Protestant theology.[10]

Never mind that Orthodox Jews, Roman Catholics, Muslims, and even atheists often agree on these things and that President Bush has selected a Jew, Leon Kass, to head his Council on Bioethics. Never mind that a state position has to rest on *something*, and it is not at all clear why that something must always be scrubbed clean of theological conviction? For Fishman the slightest hint of such conviction at play in the halls of government is toxic. And thus he and his fellow alarmists would insulate or pad the state from the sharpening perspective of religious conviction, binding the church in irrelevance.

Of course, even believers can be reluctant to bring the iron of biblical teaching to bear on the iron of pubic policy. As Darryl Hart argues in *A Secular Faith*, "[T]he basic teachings of Christianity are virtually useless for resolving America's political disputes."[11] That is why he dedicated his book to "the memory and legacy of J. Gresham Machen," who, in Hart's estimation, was

> a twentieth-century Presbyterian who opposed any church pronouncements on the social or political questions of the day because in so doing, he believed, churches were turning aside from their proper mission: "to bring to bear upon human hearts the solemn and imperious, yet also sweet and gracious, appeal of the gospel of Christ."[12]

(So much the worse, then, for the great Christian tradition of effectively opposing the gladiatorial games, infanticide, child labor, cruelty to animals, slavery, racial segregation, etc.)

Hart assures the reader,

> [T]he problem I raise goes deeper than the tendency to reduce Christianity to bumper-sticker propositions on the campaign trail. The more profound issue is that Christianity

> is essentially a spiritual and eternal faith, one occupied with a world to come rather than the passing and temporal affairs of this world.[13]

Of course, no one is trying to "reduce Christianity to bumper sticker propositions." Clearly, it is more than this. But what would have been the problem with bumper stickers (had they had cars) in Wilberforce's day, one reading, "Blacks and Whites are Equals" or "God Hates Slavery"?

And it is difficult to gainsay all Christian activism, such as that stirring up of 19th-century British opposition to Turkish atrocities in the Balkans:

> In certain circumstances the combined moral indignation of external pressure groups and parliamentarians could create a political explosion of extraordinary power. Such was the case in 1876 following the Turkish suppression of an attempted insurrection by Bulgarian nationalists. The news that 15,000 men, women, and children had been massacred by the Turks produced repugnance and fury against both the Islamic power and Disraeli's Eastern policy. In less than six weeks some 500 public demonstrations had provided a forum for all who felt moral revulsion at the Turks or guilt at British policy. The agitation drew on the moral energy of those touched by the mid-century religious revivals and the Oxford Movement, including those who otherwise lacked political power, and who had learned lessons from earlier quasi-religious campaigns for anti-slavery, suffragette reform, and the repeal of the Corn Laws. Nonconformists and Anglo-Catholics, especially ministers and clergy, were prominent at every level. They included that loyal son of the Congregational manse, the crusading young Darlington editor W. T. Stead; Bishop Fraser of Manchester; Canon Liddon of St. Paul's; and Samuel Smith, Liverpool Presbyterian cotton merchant, one of those who had invited Moody and Sankey to Liverpool in the previous year, and now politically active for the first time in his career. By early September more than half of the towns in England had held protest meetings. It was then that Gladstone, excited by this mass display of moral passion, lent his weight to the agitation, publishing his *Bulgarian Horrors* and addressing the great "atrocities" meeting at Blackheath on September 9. Richard Shannon characterized that gathering as "a great revivalist rally"; certainly Stead continued to regard it as one of the most memorable scenes of his life. But there is little sign of the manipulation of public sentiment by politicians; rather, their role was reactive, one of response more than initiation. In the view of George Kitson Clark, the agitation was "by far the greatest . . . revelation of the moral susceptibility of the High Victorian public conscience."[14]

A silent, lapdog church is the dream of many, but it is a sub-Christian notion. Alas, two politicos, Thomas Jefferson and Lyndon Johnson,[15] both stinging from the rebuke of clergy, have succeeded in diminishing the voice of the American church. In a letter to Danbury pastors after a narrow victory over John Adams in the presidential race of 1800, Jefferson introduced the extra-constitutional, "wall of separation" language so favored by the Supreme Court, ACLU, and Americans United in recent decades. And as a U.S. senator, Johnson introduced pulpit strictures into the tax code in 1954, whereby, after 150 years of national practice to the contrary, it became illegal for preachers to take sides in political races. (Of course, it may be impious and imprudent to address such contests in the course of a sermon, but it is quite another thing to declare it illegal.)

Where the Church Is Quashed, the State Is Eager to Fill the Vacuum

Nature hates a vacuum, and state idolatry is ready to fill the one left by erasure or suppression of the church. Reporting on his visit to the international Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 1932, G. K. Chesterton wrote,

> [I]t is only by believing in God that we can ever criticise the Government. Once abolish God, and the Government becomes God. . . . Wherever the people do not believe in something beyond the world, they will worship the world. But, above all, they will worship the strongest thing in the world."[16]

Certainly, the twentieth century supplied two stunning examples of the secular state becoming the heart of a new religion. Having driven the church into submission, Adolph Hitler founded a cult of his own, centered around Nuremberg. There, annually, he gathered a hundred thousand Nazi soldiers, bearing thirty thousand banners, as a hundred thousand spectators watched in awe. As Hitler entered through a spotlighted gate, a line of 150 searchlights popped on, casting a wall of light 25,000 feet straight up into the night air. A British ambassador said it was "solemn and beautiful . . . like being inside a cathedral of ice."[17] William Shirer, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich,* observed that one meeting at Nuremberg "had something of the mysticism and religious fervour of an Easter or Christmas Mass in a great Gothic cathedral."[18]

Besides a "cathedral," Hitler's religion had a prophet (himself), a sermon (captured in Leni Riefenstahl's documentary, *The Triumph of the Will*), a pilgrimage (a 1,000-mile youth march to the rally), a relic (a blood-stained flag), a ritual (homage to the dead), a litany (chants and responses), a confession (50,000 voices shouting fealty to the Fuhrer), hymns, an altar (a martyrs' memorial modeled on the ancient pagan altar at Pergamum), and a congregation (assembled in Nuremberg by 500 special trains).[19]

Mao Tse-Tung provides another dramatic example. The "Cultural Revolution" of the 1980s ushered in "the exaltation of Mao and his ideas to the exclusion of everything else. He was no longer venerated; he was worshipped."[20] The result was a reverse of the Ten Commandments, including the employment of image veneration ("At workplaces each morning, people stood in formation and bowed three times before Mao's portrait. . . . They repeated the same ritual each evening.")[21] and the leader's unbridled practice of adultery,[22] theft,[23] and slander.[24] Before this mass murderer was done, seventy million lives were sacrificed on the altar of his false, state religion.[25]

Religious Oppression Means Economic Peril

Through common grace, God has equipped "pagans" of every stripe with gifts, and the flowering of their talents means economic gain. Quash religious liberty, including the liberty to be irreligious, and you drive away business. As Russell Shorto argues effectively in his book, *The Island at the Center of the World*,[26] New York City's (and America's) prosperity is indebted to the Dutch tradition of religious freedom (largely a reaction to years of Spanish tyranny),[27] not the oppressive atmosphere of Massachusetts Bay Colony, from which Roger Williams fled for the sake of liberty of conscience.

Though "New York" is an English name, the city is replete with signs of her Dutch past: Brooklyn (*Brueckelen*),

Bronx, Staten Island, Flatbush (*Vlackebos*), Flushing (*Vlissingen*), Stuyvesant Street, Coney Island, and the Bowery. Dutch built Wall Street's wall, and Vanderbilts and Roosevelts were pillars of New York culture.[28] And, by the time the British took over, New Amsterdam was a Dutch religious "zoo." As the first English governor observed, the place was rife with "Singing Quakers; Ranting Quakers, Sabbatarians; Antisabbatarians; Some Anabaptists some Independants; some Jews."[29] It was reminiscent of Amsterdam, where Swiss Anabaptists had fled murderous magisterial Reformers, where English Separatist refugees became re-baptizers themselves, where the Pilgrims sojourned before heading out for Plymouth Rock, and where Jews, such as the ancestors of philosopher Baruch Spinoza, had found refuge from the Spanish Inquisition.

Of course, freedom of religion—including freedom from religion—can be very messy. In the early days, New York, "was little more than a place of chaos and slop, of barroom knife fights, soldiers fornicating with Indian women while on guard duty, and a steady stream of wayward newcomers . . . ready to smuggle, drink, trade, whore, and be gone."[30] But there was trade aplenty, and both regenerate and unregenerate genius flooded the city.

When the Dutch drafted the Union of Utrecht in 1579, they gained a "de facto constitution." Written in response to long-standing Spanish tyranny, it specified that "each person shall remain free, especially in his religion."[31] Little did they know that this document would set the tone for their colonial efforts in the New World and pave the way for unsurpassed financial vitality on "the island at the center of the world."

Indeed, the striking Dutch example did not escape observers of that day:

> Pundits wrestled with the problem, especially in the 1660s and 1670, and reached a consensus that religious liberty was responsible for their little neighbor's [Holland's] surprising ascendancy. In his widely read *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (1673), Sir William Temple concluded that the "vast growth of their trade and riches, and consequently the strength and greatness of their state" could be attributed to the wisdom of the Dutch in granting "impartial protection" to all religions in their country. William Penn was among those who agreed. Why, he asked, was the Netherlands, "that bog of the world, neither sea nor dry land, now the rival of the tallest monarchs." Because, Penn answered, the Dutch "cherish [their] people, whatsoever were their opinions, as the reasonable stock of the country, the heads and hands of her trade and wealth; and making them easy in the main point, their conscience, she became great by them; this made her fill with people, and they filled her with riches and strength."[32]

The Arab world today provides a starkly contrasting example. By suppressing religious dissent, they have strangled research and development, alienated investors and entrepreneurs, censored stimulating ideas, and primitivized the populace. In an interview with *Congress Monthly*, former CIA director, James Woolsey, summed up the situation:

> Twenty-one Arab nations, plus Iran, have about the same population as the United States and Canada. Other than fossil fuels—mainly oil, of course—they export to the world less than Finland, a country of only 5 million people. If the world moves away from oil, these countries will have to learn from countries like Finland that have no oil but that produce decent lives for their people by educating their women, teaching engineering, math, and science in the schools and colleges—not

> just rote memorization of religious texts—and otherwise move out of the 7th century. Indeed there is a fine role model quite near them, a nation that operates in this fashion, practices freedom of speech, press, and religion, and has a GDP per capita of over $18,000 per year (as contrasted to Saudi Arabia's of some $13,000 per year). This country—Israel—has virtually no natural resources except for farmland it has reclaimed from the desert. Tours should perhaps be organized for those who want to learn how to start with little more than sand and resolve, and from those create a prosperous democracy in the Middle East.[33]

Of course, economic health is not the touchstone of spiritual vitality, but it seems to be a by-product of religious freedom. And though one would not want to build an apologetic for the faith on the basis of GNPs and GDPs, one would be foolish to ignore the correlation between liberty and prosperity.

A Free State

The Fall and Babel Teach the Necessity of Checks and Balances

The *Baptist Faith and Message* might well have listed the Fall (Genesis 3) and the confusion of languages at Babel (Genesis 11) among its scriptural citations in support of religious liberty. For the grasp of these phenomena is foundational to sane government, including matters of church and state. Because humankind is corrupt, its creatures cannot be trusted. Working both from scripture and evidences of the Fall in recent European history, the American Fathers wrote limits and reversals into the Constitution: all public servants may be impeached; it takes two houses to approve a bill, and even then the president may veto it; Congress may override his veto; the Supreme Court justices may declare bills unconstitutional; subsequent presidents and congresses may replace them with new justices. And so it goes. No one can really be trusted.

It is simply the case that mankind cannot handle overarching power. The state must curb the church; indeed, the church must curb the church. While multi-ethnic congregations are admirable, it is probably good that there are distinctively-ethnic, unamalgamated (though cooperating) churches as well, for homogenized worship can rob the church universal of strong gospel music, meticulous theology, ethical zeal, and prophetic utterance. That is to say, some division keeps the church honest and vital.

The separation of church and state is essentially a conservative, even a pessimistic, position. Unlike the utopian, who dreams of a worldwide Muslim caliphate, a United Nations authority to which all nations must bow, or a post-millennial Reconstruction, the conservative sets his sights lower. Writing in *The New York Times Magazine* back in 1973, Andrew Hacker connected the theological and political dots:

> Conservatism has always had a straightforward theory of human nature. "History," wrote Edmund Burke, "consists for the greater part of the miseries brought upon the world by pride, ambition, avarice, revenge, lust, sedition, hypocrisy and all the trains of disorderly appetites which shake the public." A short way to say this asserts that man is infected by the virus of Original Sin, a position that James Burnham and other conservative scholars are prepared to argue. Burnham, a one-time Trotskyite and a philosophy professor at New York University until the mid-nineteen-fifties, holds to "the traditional belief, expressed in the theological doctrine of Original Sin . . . that man is partly corrupt as well as limited in his potential."

> Adam's fall, whether an article of faith or a figurative metaphor, underlies every conservative conclusion. It implies that man is prone to perversity; that the best-intentioned plans will have self-defeating consequences; that no society can ever attain consensus. The conservative case for capitalism, capital punishment, for believing that people prefer loafing on welfare to working for a living, all arise from this view of human nature.
>
> One problem in that the left is unwilling to come to grips with this conception. In earlier centuries the debate among radicals, liberals and conservatives was clearly delineated: those on the left were prepared to assert that man was essentially good (Rousseau), inherently rational (John Stuart Mill) and capable of ordering his own and society's destiny (Thomas Jefferson). In fact, the left still hold to this outlook – why else do they continually come forward with plans and proposals to remedy the maladies of our time? – but its adherents have become too sophisticated for so simple an affirmation. Nevertheless the assumption of altruism slips through. Hence the surprise in liberal quarters when account books of ghetto programs fail to balance. (They would be on safer ground, intellectually as well as financially, in providing beforehand for a little pilferage.) [34]

Now it may seem that this is a forlorn position, robbing mankind of its best achievements and highest spiritual exhilaration, but Sir Karl Popper argues quite to the contrary. In his *Open Society and its Enemies*, he demonstrates that there is nothing so lethal as a utopian, whether Plato or Marx. Once a party or people become convinced that earthly paradise is within reach, tyranny and ruin are just around the corner. Of course, the ideologue's plans will fail, and many innocent people will be crushed in the process. Unfortunately, even the church can be the culprit.

Left to Itself, the Church Can Turn Tyrannical, Even Lethal

Though history is full of examples of religious violence and tyranny, the stunning cases at hand today are Muslim. Where Sharia law reigns, no non-Muslim (or dissident Muslim) is safe. A quick trip around the world provides a sampler, all these from 2006: the new democratic government in Afghanistan threatened Christian convert, Abdul Rahman, with the death penalty; Saudi police arrested four African Christians meeting for home prayer; a Malaysian authority forbade Catholics to build a new church with steeple and cross, claiming it would be too provocative; Pakistani Christian Mobeen Boota was imprisoned for his faith and otherwise persecuted in an attempt to drive him to Islam; in Dubai, a Filipino pastor was convicted of "abusing Islam" and deported, all for giving Christian literature to an Egyptian man. Earlier, in 2005, police, looking for Christian material, raided the home of Iranian Pastor Ghorban Tori just hours after he was kidnapped and stabbed to death. And currently, in Egypt, churches, unlike mosques, must clear with provincial governors if they are to repair their buildings.[35]

Of course, this sort of thing has been going on for years in Muslim quarters. For example, in 1989, Iran hanged Assemblies of God pastor and evangelist Hossein Soodman for his faith.[36] And though the U.S. State Department has noted no executions for "apostasy" (specifically, conversion to Christianity) since the late 1990s, the legal structure for such state-sponsored murder is still in place in some countries: "Freedom of religion does not exist. Islam is the official religion, and all citizens must be Muslims. . . . Conver-

sion by a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy. Public apostasy is a crime under Sharia and punishable by death."[37] This was the policy by which Saudi Arabia, in 1992, beheaded Sadiq 'Abd al-Karim Mal Allah for Bible smuggling.[38]

One does not need Muslims to teach us the lethality of religion. The Supreme Court of Georgia intervened when Jessie Mae Jefferson refused a Caesarian section to save the life of her unborn child. A devout Jehovah's Witness, Mrs. Jefferson was fundamentally opposed to blood transfusions, an essential part of the Caesarian. (For them, it is tantamount to eating blood, forbidden by the Old Testament.) While the justices sympathized with her religious scruples, they could not let her deny the baby a life-saving operation.[39] In the words of the court,

> [T]he state has an interest in the life of this unborn, living human being. . . . [T]he intrusion involved into the life of Jessie Mae Jefferson and her husband, John W. Jefferson, is outweighed by the duty of the State to protect a living, unborn human being from meeting his or her death before being given the opportunity to live.[40]

Of course, the problem is not limited to false religions. Even the Christian Church can turn on the Christian Church. Consider, for instance, the family of Balthasaar Hubmaier, the Anabaptist whose chief sin was declaring infant baptism a nullity. "Along with his wife, Elizabeth, who was thrown in the Danube River with a rock around her neck, Hubmaier was condemned to death and burned at the stake in Vienna by the Catholic King Ferdinand in March 1528."[41] Ferdinand was suffering from what Southeastern Baptist Seminary professor Daniel Heimbach calls "religious idealism," which he describes as "an approach associated with pre-Vatican II Catholicism, various parts of the Orthodox Church, Saudi Arabia, Islamic terrorist groups linked to Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda, Japan prior to WWII, and ideological communism." It "is characterized by a single overarching principle, that only truth has rights, and error has no rights."[42]

Of course, abuse in the name of God does not require acts of state, as in Hubmaier's case. Indeed, so widespread is vigilantism in church history that it has spawned the special study of the "religious riot," which Princeton's Natalie Davis defined as "any violent action, with words or weapons, undertaken against religious targets by people who were not acting *officially and formally* as agents of political ecclesiastical authority" (the targets could be objects, such as icons, as well as people).[43] So either through channels or outside them, self-proclaimed Christians can be quite thuggish.

Left to Itself, the Church Can Render the State Excessively Tender

While tyranny can result from overreaching church power, the opposite is also possible. A feminized church can rob the state of its proper role. In this therapeutic age when the church is obsessed with victimhood, feelings, and such, clergy are often heard to counsel weakness in government. One could easily argue that if the National Council of Churches or the Episcopal Church (USA) took over the reins of power, they would cast aside the state's prerogative to execute murderers, wage war, and draw natural distinctions, such as that between real marriage and "gay" unions.

Of course, there will always be a constituency for such tenderizing, as Darryl

Hart notes, citing a movie scene:

> Even run of the mill ex-cons, like Ulysses Everett McGill, the scheming ringleader of the three escaped prisoners in the movie O Brother, Where Art Thou?, could see that his colleagues' conversion would have no effect on their legal predicament as fugitives. When Pete and Delmar both appealed to their recent baptism in a muddy river as the basis for a general absolution of forgiveness for past and present violations of the law, Everett responded, "That's not the issue. . . . Even if it did put you square with the Lord, the State of Mississippi is more hardnosed."[44]

Actually, Mississippi is not more hardnosed than God, who ordains the tough work of state justice in Romans 13. But it is quite possible that if clerics ran the state of Mississippi, all sorts of pastorally-minded compromise would be in the footing.

Even so stalwart an institution as the Roman Catholic Church has urged that the state pull its punches. Reversing centuries of commitment to retributive justice, Cardinal Bernardin and even Pope John Paul II pressed for the abolition of the death penalty—and commended now-jailed Illinois governor George Ryan for emptying death row. Appealing to a "consistent life ethic," whereby the killing of an unborn baby is curiously equated with the execution of an adult murderer, the Vatican and the United States Council of Catholic Bishops were heartened as Governor Ryan gave reprieves to all of the state's 156 death row inmates (to the consternation of the victim's relatives). Abandoning the moral teaching of Augustine and Aquinas on this matter, Catholics now claim that the state is incompetent to administer the death penalty even if capital punishment is, in principle, just. But the outcome is just the same, as if the death penalty were immoral *per se*.[45]

Of course, the state can use some use some tender council from time to time, just as it can benefit from the stern word of prophets. Indeed, such was the basis for the English office of Chancellor, with its modern application to chancery courts and courts of equity. This "court of conscience" originated in the practice of sending clerical intermediaries from the king to the plaintiffs gathered *ad cancellos*, at the lattice which held them at a distance. The office evolved under Charlemagne, came to England under Edward the Confessor, and was occupied by such luminaries as Cardinal Woolsey and Thomas More. Theirs was the task of assuring that widows, orphans, the poor, and the insane were not abused in their dealings with the powerful.[46]

This is a wonderful tradition, but the Chancellor is not the king. Otherwise, the rule of law could give way to the rule of feelings. Unfortunately, there are many in the church who would be inclined to cheer this development.

The Church Cannot Even Manage Its Own Affairs, Much Less Those of State

To theocrats of every stamp, one might ask, "How can you presume to run the nation when you cannot even manage your own affairs?" For, at every turn, the writers of the epistles expressed alarm at a wayward church: Paul rebuked Peter for his Judaizing (Gal 2:11-21), fought the divisive example of Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 2:5-11; 4:2-3), scolded the Corinthians for harboring a sexually immoral member (1 Cor 5:1-2) and for bringing lawsuits against one another (1 Cor 6:1-8), and bemoaned party spirit in the congregation (1 Cor 10:1-17). James expressed dismay at quarrels and slanders (James 4:1-12) and

the tendency to favor the rich and powerful (Jas 2:1-13). Peter alerted the saints to false teachers in their midst (2 Pet 2). Jude reported that godless, heretical men had slipped in to the church (Jude 3-4). John attacked a wickedly powerful church member named Diotrephes (3 John 9-10) and recited a litany of disappointments in Asian churches (Rev 2-3).

The list goes on an on, and provides scriptural base for the church to be checked-and-balanced itself. But one needs only look to the contemporary church for examples of moral weakness, misdirection, and perfidy—priestly pedophiles, fraudulent ministries, hedonistic televangelists, pastoral prima donnas, treacherous laymen, pharisaical watchdogs, and antinomian bishops. Thank God the church is not in charge.

State Support Breeds Pointless Resentment

When the Southern Baptist Convention took a stand against homosexuality back in 1993, some sensitive souls called it a "public relations disaster," much as they had when the conservative resurgence reinstituted respect for biblical inerrancy in the seminaries. They were appalled that we would appear so negative and combative, and they feared that the denomination would "turn off" the watching world and undermine evangelism. What they missed was the fact that the gospel itself is a public relations disaster, alternatively "foolishness" and "a stumbling block" to various sectors of society.

Yes, there is room for biblical public relations, if only to set the record straight. The early church had to correct a variety of misconstruals, including the claims that the believers practiced cannibalism ("eating" the blood and body of Christ) and incest (whereby *Brother* Aquila went home to bed with *Sister* Priscilla). The believers simply needed to be sure that they were despised for the right reasons.

When the state adopts the church, providing it sustenance, then critics of the church can question this support—and rightfully so. The situation is reminiscent of the furor over "welfare queens" and "welfare Cadillacs," of which politicians spoke and lyricists wrote back in the 1970s. When others are pulling their own weight, how is it that able-bodied characters were sent checks to keep them afloat and to even luxuriate a bit?

Today, one hears the same sort of complaint regarding the National Endowment for the Arts. Society resents the fact that insufficiently popular artists must turn to the public coffers to keep themselves going—and often going in the wrong direction. And while morally acute people may express disgust at some of what the private artists do, at least they do not have to pay for it. When, though, they are drafted to fund perversity, the complaints are loud and justified.

The fact of the matter is that in the aggregate, church members have a sorry record of giving. Simple mathematics reveals that if the membership even tithed, most churches could double, triple, or even quadruple their budgets. This would provide plenty of support for the maintenance of vital congregations, the multiplication of mission works, and the support of charities of every sort. Indeed, it is an embarrassment that charities bearing Christian names would feel free to approach the taxpayers for help. There is scandal enough in the cross. Why add the scandal of panhandling to the church's record?

The Church Needs State Iron to Keep It Sharp

One has only to look to the Middle East for examples of an unsharpened "church," where irrationality reigns because it has not been exposed to the full range of challenges. Canada's *Globe and Mail* reports the following:

> It's been 375 years since Galileo published his earth-shaking *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems,* 336 since John Milton wrote *Paradise Regained* and nearly 40 since James D. Watson had an apparent international bestseller with *The Double Helix,* about the discovery of the structure of DNA. Amazingly, however, none of these books, and thousands of classics like them, has ever been translated into Arabic, the first tongue of more than 300 hundred million persons worldwide. Indeed, according to a 2003 United Nations report into human development in the Arab world, more books are translated into Spanish each year—10,000—than have been translated into Arabic in the previous 10 centuries.
>
> Now this situation is being rectified by the sheikhdom of Abu Dhabi, one of the seven Muslim United Arab Emirates, which last month officially revealed its plans to translate 100 epochal foreign-language texts into Arabic by the end of next year.[47]

Yes, this is Islam, with its own peculiar pathologies, but Christians are not immune to damaging insularity. While it is true that the public schools often cheat their students by failing to mention such nation-transforming phenomena as the First and Second Great Awakenings and the Prayer Revival of 1857-1858, Christian schools, left to themselves, might fail to do justice to the (albeit specious) charms of evolution, communism, and existentialism. And a home-schooled child might, after a few short lessons, become convinced that J. S. Bach and Isaac Watts said it all in music and that seventeenth century Dutch painting was the only thing worth collecting. Of course, one can arrive at sweeping judgments on such matters, but it is better if the journey traverses the land of alternatives. And here, the state can help. Take postage stamps for instance.

There are many spiritually-defective people who make a contribution to a nation's institutions, and there is a place to acknowledge their genius and industry. Consider, for instance, U.S. commemorative stamps for such non-Christian luminaries as atheist philosopher Ayn Rand (1999),[48] racist baseball star Ty Cobb (2000),[49]actor-singer and Communist sympathizer Paul Robeson (2004),[50] and drug-plagued singer Judy Garland (2006).[51] Were the Church to run the national stamp program, it is highly unlikely that such people would be mentioned, much less honored, but there is a place for the achievements of the lost to be celebrated, if only for the standards of excellence they attained in their fields of endeavor, the courage they showed as pioneers, and the way in which they advanced the national conversation. Common grace has its due. (Now if the secularists and separationists would give Christian giants their due. Witness Yale's continuing campaign for a Jonathan Edwards stamp.)[52]

Two Wings

The ideal of a free church in a free state tracks well with Michael Novak's account of the genius of American statecraft: "The United States took flight on two wings, and could not have taken flight on one of them alone. The two wings were (and are) humble faith and common sense."[53] In saying this, he intends to honor Tocqueville, who wrote,

> Anglo-American civilization . . . is the product of two perfectly distinct elements which elsewhere have often been at war with one another but which in America it was somehow possible to incorporate into each other, forming a marvelous combination. I mean the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom . . . Far from harming each other, these two apparently opposed tendencies work in harmony and seem to lend to each other mutual support.

Both men speak not only of cooperation but also of healthy tension,

> reminding religious people of the importance of the wing of reason and common sense, and secular people of the importance of the wing of biblical religion, the primary origin and nourishing mother even of such "Enlightenment ideals" as fraternity, liberty of conscience, and equality. Missing either of these wings, the American eagle cannot fly.

One might say that God uses a free church in a free state to keep everybody honest—and in so doing, he stimulates prosperity, produces magnet cultures, and glorifies himself. Religious liberty and governmental liberty are matters of principle and duty, but also engines of well-being.

It is said that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," and there are outstanding, historical illustrations of this claim. But facilitating the martyrdom or victimization of others, whether for their religion or irreligion, is both iniquity and folly. And against such ruin, both a free church and a free state stand watch.

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The Church Militant and Her Warfare: We Are Not Another Interest Group

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Introduction

Near the end of *No Place for Truth*, David Wells describes a striking anomaly:

> The vast growth in evangelically minded people in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s should by now have revolutionized American culture. With a third of American adults now claiming to have experienced spiritual rebirth, a powerful countercurrent of morality growing out of a powerful and alternative worldview should have been unleashed in factories, offices, and board rooms, in the media, universities, and professions, from one end of the country to the other. The results should by now be unmistakable. Secular values should be reeling, and those who are their proponents should be very troubled. But as it turns out, all of this swelling of the evangelical ranks has passed unnoticed in the culture.[1]

I will contend in this article that part of the remedy to this problem is to be found in a shift in focus. The need for this shift in focus is attested to by a comment Amy Black makes in a review of David Kuo's *Tempting Faith*. Black writes,

> [Kuo's] call for a "fast" from politics (except for voting) has caused a bit of a stir, but perhaps that partially proves his point even if he presses too far toward an either-or dilemma. If we can't fathom taking even a short break from political activity, perhaps we have too much faith in politics. Despite and even through its shortcomings, perchance Kuo's book and the controversy it stirs will help turn Christians away from the temptation to place their primary confidence in politics as God's path to cultural restoration.[2]

My contention is that in seeking a *Christian America* we have hazarded our identity as *Christian churches*. David Wells has shown that success and influence have accomplished what liberalism failed to do to evangelical Christianity.[3] The distinctive doctrines of Christianity and the hard edges of the faith are now hard to find in many evangelical churches, having been replaced by the guarantors of influence and success: self-help, moralism, psychology, therapy, and programs, programs, programs. Most sermons are more like pep-talks from motivational speakers than they are proclamations of the living word of God. We evangelicals are waging war according to the flesh (cf. 2 Cor 10:3).

We must shift our focus away from worldly measures of influence and success and return to what makes us Christian. This brief essay comes in three parts. First, a look at the problem. From there we will consider two related antidotes to the problem: a clear understanding of regeneration and a commitment to church discipline. We must re-arm ourselves with weapons of warfare that are mighty through God (2 Cor 10:4).

If we are Christians, we believe that influence in America does not come from gaining the ear of the White House but through the transforming power of the one who will sit on the White Throne. The legislation of our worldview must not be our ultimate goal. We need a demonstration of the Spirit and power; we need to

return to God's wisdom, which is the world's folly, God's power, which the world counts as weakness; and we look for the Lord to grant that the faith of astonishing numbers of people will not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God. We need a great awakening. Our field of labor is neither the public policies being debated on the Senate floor nor the legal matters before the Supreme Court. Our field of labor is the place we have been assigned to plough, sow, and reap with a local body of believers with whom we have entered into solemn covenant before the Lord of heaven and earth.

The Problem

Many people in America believe in something, but much of our spirituality has little connection to the contours of the historic Christian faith. Barna claims that 36% of the population in the United States of America is born again, and he claims that only 10% of the population is atheistic or agnostic, which means that 90% of the population claims to believe in God.[4] But only 9% of the population can be called "evangelical," and between 1991 and 2004 there was a 92% increase in the number of unchurched Americans.[5]

Many people in America believe in something, but all this believing is an anemic, unspecific kind of "faith" that amounts to a vague interest in spiritual things but has little influence on the way people live. William J. Bennett claims that between 1960 and 1993 "violent crime has increased 560%, the number of single-parent households has increased 300%, the number of births to unmarried women has increased 400% (68% of black children now fall in this category), and teenage suicide has increased 200%."[6]

Many people in America believe in something, but that does not mean churches are healthy. Every week in America, fifty to seventy-five churches close their doors.[7] It is often claimed that 3,000 churches in America close every year.[8]

Why do we see such massive decline in church health and in societal morality when all these people claim to believe in God? Why do so many churches close, and why is the society not more widely affected by the fact that one third of its population claims to be born again? The answer to these questions is as complex as God's hidden providence, but David Wells argues that one factor in the situation is clear: the church has become so worldly that it has lost its power.[9]

We have drifted from what Mark Noll has referred to as a "defining principle of Protestant evangelicalism," namely, an "unswerving belief in the need for conversion (the new birth) and the necessity of a life of active holiness (the power of godliness)."[10] Does this vast bloc of people that claims to be born again know what the new birth is? If not, who failed to tell them? Do they know the privileges and responsibilities of church membership? If not, who failed to tell them? Noll refers to conversion and godliness as the "defining principle of Protestant evangelicalism." Without the new birth, conversion has not taken place, and the practice of church discipline is the pursuit of godliness in the church.

Some seek to address the problems in our society by leaving the church and seeking to engage the culture on key social issues such as abortion, evolution, and gay marriage.[11] God calls people to many vocations, but the church is the manifestation of his kingdom in our day. As Russell D. Moore writes, "If the

Kingdom is to be understood as having a present reality, and that reality is essentially soteriological, then the Kingdom agenda of evangelical theology must focus on the biblical fulcrum of these eschatological, salvific blessings: the church."[12] The church is God's appointed means of transforming human society at this point in salvation history. The great commission does not send us out to legislate morality but to make disciples. In order to understand what it means to be the church, we must be clear on how people become part of the church, and we must devote ourselves to preserving the purity of the church. In other words, we must understand the nature of the new birth, and we must practice church discipline.

What seems to have happened in Baptist churches in the southern United States after the American Civil War sheds light on both the failure to understand the new birth and the decline in church discipline. Gregory A. Wills has shown that as church discipline declined attempts to improve the morality of the wider culture rose.[13] Churches moved away from seeking to preserve a clear line between the church and the world by maintaining regenerate church membership through rigorous church discipline. Instead of maintaining their own purity, churches and pastors sought to purify the culture. Instead of Christian *churches*, ministers set their sights on a Christian *civilization*. Along these lines, Ted Ownby writes that "[a]s churches were losing interest in disciplining the behavior of their members, they were trying to reform the behavior of all Southerners."[14] This altered goal reveals that the pure church was no longer seen as God's tool for reforming people. Emphasis on the purity of the church naturally declined, and the new goals needed new methods. In the process concern for the new birth and church discipline were eclipsed by the most significant sign of success in North American evangelicalism: the big crowd. If the goal is influencing society and numbers of people are the gauge of success, emphasizing the miracle of regeneration and the practice of church discipline hinders more than it helps. Once the church lost its own purity, it began to look more and more like the world it sought to transform.

It is not that pre-Civil War generations were not interested in changing society; it is that they saw changed society as resulting from pure churches. Previous generations had sought the purity of the church first, believing that this was the best path to revival.[15] Since the Civil War, civil religion's focus on purifying society rather than maintaining the purity of the church has made the very concept of a "pure church" foreign. Now, the broader society is no longer civil to religion, and the practice of church discipline is not on the radar of most churches. As a result, the church's morality has been conformed to the spirit of the age. Many evangelical churches are now in danger of being so palatable to unbelieving Americans that the Lord Christ might find them banal and insipid and spew them right out of his mouth (Rev 3:16).

The history of the evangelical revival in the days of George Whitefield would indicate that if the church wants to influence culture, it should make plain what it means to be born again. Having described the dissolute condition of English culture just prior to the first Great Awakening, Arnold Dallimore quotes a description of the affects of the revival on society at large:

> [A] religious revival burst forth . . . which changed in a few years the whole temper of English society. The Church was restored to life and activity. Religion carried into the hearts of the people a fresh spirit of moral zeal, while it purified our literature and our manners. A new philanthropy reformed our prisons, infused clemency and wisdom into our penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and gave the first impulse to popular education.[16]

Whitefield "summarized his early ministry and its effect, saying, 'The doctrine of the New Birth and Justification by Faith (though I was not so clear in it as afterwards) made its way like lightning into the hearers' consciences.'"[17] We turn to a consideration of one thing needful in the pursuit of the remedy to the church's illnesses: a clear understanding of the new birth.

The New Birth[18]

I am contending that the mission of the church is not to function as a political action committee but to proclaim the gospel and pray for God to regenerate people. We should follow the apostles and "devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). These are not weapons the world will see as effective, but they are mighty through God (cf. 2 Cor 10:3–4). The great commission is to make disciples (Matt 28:19). Disciples cannot be legislated, and better laws do not bring about regeneration. It is important for us to understand what the New Testament tells us about regeneration.

John introduces the theme of the new birth in the prologue to the Gospel, stating that those who received Jesus did so because they "were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). These people were born of God "not of blood." This points away from ancestry and parentage. The children of God were born of God not "of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man." The double statement that those who receive Jesus are not born by human desire indicates that the new birth comes from God rather than from what people want or choose. John 1:13 clearly indicates that being born of God does not originate "from the will of man."

John tells us more about the new birth in John 3, where Jesus tells Nicodemus that he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again (3:3, 5). The statements in John 3:3 and 3:5 overlap, but the slight difference between them describes two different things. In John 3:3, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This literally reads, "he is not able to see the kingdom of God." This is a statement about human ability. Apart from the new birth, humans are not able to experience the reality of the kingdom. Following the statement that humans are not able to perceive the kingdom unless they are born again, John 3:5 states that the new birth is a requirement for entering the kingdom: "unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This is a statement about the entrance requirement for the kingdom of God. Those who have not been born again are not able to see the kingdom, and they are not permitted to enter it.

Then Jesus says in John 3:7–8, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Those who are born again are born of the Spirit (cf. 3:6), and just as the wind blows where it pleases, so the

Spirit gives new birth to whom he pleases. Humans do not control the wind, nor do they control the new birth.

John 6:63 provides yet more insight into the Spirit's role in regeneration. We read, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail" (John 6:63). Not only does the Spirit blow where he pleases without regard to what humans know of him (3:8), the flesh cannot bring about the life that the Spirit gives (6:63). The final phrase of John 6:63 adds an important element regarding the new birth. Jesus says, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." This text seems to mean that the Spirit gives life to people through the word of Jesus. I take this to mean that when the Spirit gives life to those who hear the words of Jesus, they experience the new birth, gain the ability to see the kingdom (3:3), believe what they have heard Jesus say (cf. 6:40), and are thereby qualified to enter the kingdom (3:5).

John's account of Jesus' teaching on the new birth may very well undergird what Paul writes to the Ephesians on the same subject in Eph 2:1–5. In Eph 2:1 Paul writes that the Ephesian Christians were formerly dead in their trespasses and sins, and then he explains what that means in the next two verses. They followed the course of this world, they followed Satan, they lived in the passions of their flesh, and they did what their bodies and their minds wanted to do (2:2–3). By switching from the second person plural in verse 1 to the first person plural in verse 3, Paul shows that this is not a condition limited to the recipients of his letter but one that he too experienced prior to conversion. All humans born outside Eden are born dead in trespasses and sins.

It is important to observe that being dead in one's trespasses and sins means that one lives in one's own free will: "carrying out the desires of the body and the mind" (Eph 2:3). Prior to conversion, humans do exactly what they want to do, and what they want to do is follow the world and the devil, with the result that they are "children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (2:1–3). No one is forced to live this way. We are very happy making our free choice to be miserable rebels. Nor is this something from which a human can deliver himself by his free will precisely because it is what his free will has chosen.[19] He does not want to be delivered. "There is no one who seeks God" (Rom 3:11). He wants what he has chosen. He chose it freely.

Humans freely choose to be children of wrath, but, Paul explains, God intervenes. Ephesians 2:4 reads, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved" (Eph 2:4–5; cf. Rom 5:6–8). When Paul opens this statement with the words "But God," he makes it plain that while the human is responsible for what is described in 2:1–3, God is responsible for what is described beginning in 2:4. The next two phrases in verse 4 explain why God saves people. Paul does not say that God is obligated to save people since they responded to him in a certain way, he says that God is "rich in mercy" (2:4). Lest it be thought that the richness of God's mercy is due to some condition which the human has fulfilled, Paul explains that this mercy is based on the love of God—it arises from within him. God is rich in mercy "because of the great love with which he loved us" (2:4).

The first phrase of verse 5 excludes any possibility of synergism between God and

man. Having explained in verse 4 that God saves because of his own free mercy and love, Paul reiterates the fact that God does not save humans because they are improving themselves. Rather, resuming the thought of verse 1, Paul prefaces the statement about what God did with the words "even when we were dead in our trespasses" (2:5). Then the next phrase explains what God did to save these people who were dead in sin: he "made us alive together with Christ" (2:5).

This is regeneration. Dead people get made alive by God. These dead people were not taking steps toward God. They were dead in sin when they were made alive. These dead people did not do anything to prompt God to make them alive. These dead people in Ephesians 2 were exercising their free will to fulfill the desires of their sinful flesh and fallen minds when God made them alive. God did not make them alive because he owed them anything but because of his own free mercy and love. For this reason Paul adds the final phrase of verse 5, "by grace you have been saved." These dead people did not choose salvation, they did not earn it, and they deserved God's wrath. They were dead and God mercifully, lovingly, graciously made them alive. Thus, in my judgment, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000* has it right: "Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."[20]

This is the liberating good news that we must proclaim. In this supernatural regeneration, no one is forced to do anything against his will. Rather, people are enabled to do what anyone with the ability to perceive God as he is in Christ would do, namely, trust him. Regeneration frees people from bondage to sin and enables them to behold Christ and believe in him (cf. John 6:40; Rom 6:17–18). The regeneration of people depends upon the proclamation of the word and the movement of the Spirit. If the Spirit does not give life, the flesh will profit nothing (John 6:63). And the Spirit does not give life to those who do not hear the word, for "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).[21] Those who understand the power of God's word and Spirit agree with Walter Schultz, who writes, "It is, by definition, impossible for a human to generate such knowledge, holiness, and joy by any effort of will."[22]

If we do not believe in the power of the Spirit, and if we do not understand regeneration, we will continue to employ manipulative, coercive methods that result in so-called conversions which do not bear the fruits of regeneration. These methods reflect an implicit rejection of the sufficiency of Scripture and the power of the Spirit. If we do not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, we will preach our own ideas rather than the Bible, and we will "do what works" even if it goes against what the Bible says.

Emphasizing the supernatural work of God in regeneration is tantamount to emphasizing the power of God in salvation, and of this we must not be ashamed (cf. Rom 1:16). We do not cause ourselves to be born into this world, and we do not cause ourselves to be born again. We do not choose to be born of our mothers, and we do not choose to be born again. The Spirit blows wherever he pleases. Once regenerated, we have eyes to see Jesus, and in seeing him we see the most trust-

worthy person in existence. No one who sees him as he is would refuse to trust him. Regenerated people trust Christ.

We must preach the Word, and we must pray for God to give life by the Spirit. The good news is that God does save, even when people, like Paul, have no desire to be saved (cf. Acts 9; 1 Tim 1:12–17). If by a great movement of God many people get regenerated through our preaching of the word, the benefits for society will go far beyond what any conservative political machinations might hope to accomplish.

Church Discipline

Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan so they would learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim 1:19–20). He commanded the Thessalonians to avoid anyone who would not work and anyone who would not obey his instructions, warning the idle not as an enemy but as a brother (2 Thess 3:6–15). He instructed the Corinthians to deliver an immoral man in their midst over to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor 5:5, cf. 1–5). These texts tell us that Paul saw church discipline as an evangelistic tool. Those who act like non-Christians are put outside the church, God's realm, into the world, Satan's realm, in the hope that they will repent. Those who do not act like Christians should not be treated like Christians, lest they be surprised on the last day (cf. Matt 7:21–23). Paul's instructions about restoration show that he intends for the repentant to be restored to the church (2 Cor 2:5–11; Gal 6:1). These texts also tell us that Paul expects individual churches to uphold the standard of Christian ethical conduct.

By contrast, Paul explains to the Corinthians that he does not expect them to "judge outsiders." He wants nothing to do with regulating the behavior of unbelievers (1 Cor 5:12, cf. vv. 9–13). The Kingdom of God is advanced through the influence of the gospel proclaimed and publicly portrayed by the pure church. The New Testament knows no directives for Christians to seek to influence imperial policy through political means. Christians are to submit to their rulers, pray for them, and proclaim the gospel. Our task in the great commission is to make disciples, not laws. I am not suggesting that no Christians are called to pursue political vocations. I am saying that if the church is to be and do what she was commissioned to be and do, her warfare will be spiritual not political. Spiritual warfare will bear fruit in the political realm, but it seems that some have forsaken spiritual warfare for the political kind.

How do we discern whether those of us in vocational ministry are waging war according to the flesh or according to the Spirit?[23] I would humbly suggest that two simple questions can help us gauge the weapons of which we are most confident: (1) Do we spend more time reading the Bible than, for instance, political commentary? And (2) Do we spend more time in prayer than we spend networking with influential people? Our answers to such questions reveal where we think the power is.

Just as Paul's teaching on regeneration probably grows out of statements Jesus made about the new birth, Paul's teaching on church discipline can also be seen to be based on what Jesus said. Jesus gave his followers a process whereby they were to confront sinners and exclude the unrepentant in Matthew 18:15–20. The instructions Jesus gave in Matthew 18 probably provide the background for Paul's comments

on church discipline, particularly in Titus 3:10–11, where Paul alludes to several warnings that culminate in the exclusion of the divisive person.

In *God's Indwelling Presence*, I argued that when Jesus imparted the Spirit to his disciples in John 20:20–22 he made them the new temple.[24] Under the old covenant, the temple was the place of God's dwelling and the place where sin was dealt with so that God could dwell among his people. When Jesus breathed upon his disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22), the gift of the Spirit anticipated by earlier texts in John's Gospel was realized (cf. esp. John 7:39; 14:17). In John 14:16–17 Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit, which the world can not receive, would remain in them forever. No longer would worship be in Jerusalem (cf. John 4:21–24). After Jesus imparted the Spirit to his disciples, they would worship him in spirit and truth wherever they gathered in his name. After Jesus imparted the Spirit to his disciples in John 20:22, he immediately restated concepts he had communicated earlier both to Peter (Matt 16:19) and his followers in general (Matt 18:18), saying, "If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld" (John 20:23).

As the new temple, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the followers of Jesus are the place where God dwells, and they have authority to grant and withhold forgiveness. This matches what Jesus said to Peter about "the keys of the kingdom" and "binding" and "loosing" on earth and in heaven (Matt 16:19). This is also similar to what Jesus said to his disciples as he taught on church discipline in Matthew 18, "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 18:18).

The understanding of the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit informs Paul's warning about how ministers build on the foundation he laid in 1 Cor 3:10–17 as well as his call to the Corinthians to separate from unbelievers in 2 Cor 6:14–7:1. Paul quotes Lev 26:11–12 in 2 Cor 6:16–18 to make the point that just as the old covenant people of God had to keep the dwelling of God pure, so the new covenant people of God must keep the church pure.

The church is the bride of Christ. He "gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25–27). If we care about what Christ clearly cares about—the purity of the church—we will join Paul in working with him, urging professing believers not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor 6:1).

Our task in church discipline is not only corrective, it is also formative. Formative church discipline fulfills the great commission as we carry out the task of teaching believers to observe everything Jesus commanded (Matt 28:20). This will intersect with the moral, political, and social issues of the day, but we should be careful to derive our positions from Scripture. We must show the connection between what we believe and what the Bible says, and we must not go beyond the Bible. Requiring a stricter ethical code than the one given in the Bible denies the sufficiency of Scripture and calls God's wisdom into question.

Moreover, some contexts will require

us to distinguish between what we say to believers and what we say to unbelievers. Our task is to teach believers the commands of Jesus and proclaim the gospel to the unbelieving world. If we moralize the unbelieving world, we run risks in at least two directions. On the one hand, we could create a class of legalists who are convinced of our arguments. These people will inevitably be proud of their morality, and they might not feel their need to believe in Jesus because they do not perceive their own sinfulness. After all, they live as we would have them live. On the other hand, those who reject our moralism might close their ears to the gospel.

I am not saying that we should not engage unbelievers regarding what is best for society as a whole. Some Christians are no doubt called to reason with people on what is most rational, most secure, most healthy, etc. But we should be careful to preserve the distinction between reasoning with people for their temporal benefit and explaining Christianity to them. If they are going to close their ears to us, we should do everything we can to make sure that what they heard from us when they decided to stop listening was the message of the gospel rather than some other message. Let us do everything we can to make sure that they are rejecting us because they are rejecting Jesus, not because they are rejecting a particular party or candidate.

Formative church discipline has an important role to play in the wider society. Jesus prayed that God would sanctify his people through his word (John 17:17). In teaching Christians the Bible, we equip Christians to live radical lives of self-sacrificial neighbor love (John 13:34–35). As this self-inconveniencing love compounds in the virtue of many lives in the church, the church really will be a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden. Christians living as Christians because they are being taught the truths of the faith at church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15), will affect society. Not because they set out to change the world, but because they will be the fragrance of Christ (2 Cor 2:14–16).

Formative church discipline simply means that we will teach people the Bible. In teaching them the Bible, their minds will be sharpened and they will become more able to think biblically about the social and political issues of the day. Some of these sharpened Christians will no doubt be called into political vocations, and their convictions will, by the power of the Spirit, rise above the crass utilitarianism that causes politicians to co-opt religious language for votes.

Corrective church discipline also has its part to play in affecting society at large. Politicians who are members of Christian churches should be made aware of the reality that if they are sinful and unrepentant, the local church of which they are a part will indeed discipline them. This is how the church can influence politicians, but this fearful power is only rightly exercised if we are seeking to preserve regenerate church membership, which results from a proper understanding of what it means to be born again, if we are seeking to preach the word, which results in those who have been properly trained by the church's formative discipline, and if we are seeking what is spiritually best for the soul of the brother or sister facing corrective discipline.

If the church truly wants to influence the society, the best course of action is not for the church to seek to be something

it is not—a kingdom of this world. The best course of action for the church is for her to be what she is. She is a group of regenerated believers in Jesus who have entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord and one another to pursue holiness of life and proclaim the gospel. If evangelical churches in America want to influence the public square, they should make clear what the new birth is, why it is needed (spiritual death and human inability), how it comes about (the Spirit making the human able to understand the gospel), and what its fruits are (obedience to Jesus). Building on that, churches must maintain their purity through formative and corrective church discipline.

Is This a Return to Fundamentalism?

Fundamentalism was not wrong to "contend earnestly for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). Nor was fundamentalism wrong to "hold firmly to the trustworthy word as taught" (Tit 1:9). It seems that the error of some fundamentalists was that they contended for non-essential doctrines with the same tenacity that they contended for essential ones. This calls for wisdom.

In our pursuit of humble, generous orthodoxy, we cannot become so humble that the word of the sovereign King revealed in the Bible is not allowed to mean what it says. Such "humility" is really pride. God has spoken in his word. And we cannot become so generous that we give away the faith. This course of action would not be orthodox. The challenge before us is to rightly discern what is essential and what is not. We cannot let go of the essential things, and while we may retain our preferred non-essentials, we need not evangelize for them as we do for the essentials. People must trust Jesus to be Christians, but they need not be pre-millennial.

Conclusion

People who measure power by worldly standards will not be impressed with what I have suggested in this essay. Lobbying Washington, cultivating voters, and political activity generally seems much more relevant, visible, and effective. People who measure wisdom by worldly standards will, of course, agree with this assessment.

But those who walk by the Spirit not the flesh, those who know that Jesus will build his church, that God has exalted above all things his name and his word, that morality saves no one, that God shames the strong with the weak and the wise with the foolish will know that though the world count the church as weak scum, those who are with us are more than those who are with them. God's purposes will not fail. We walk by faith, not sight. The church has been called to proclaim the gospel, to make disciples, and to pray. These are the weapons of our warfare. Let us be those who, because we know the Lord and know he reigns, are about our Father's business.[25]

ENDNOTES

[1]David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 293.

[2]Amy E. Black, "Faith in Politics: What can we learn from David Kuo's memoir of a Christian in the corridors of power?" *Books and Culture* [cited 4 November 2006]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/books/features/bookwk/061030.html.

[3]For this phenomenon, see the argument made by David Wells in *No Place for Truth, Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?*

[4]The Barna Group, "Beliefs: General Religious" [cited 4 September 2006]. Online: http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=2.

[5]The Barna Group, "Barna Update for May 4, 2004" [cited 4 September 2006]. Online: http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=163.

[6]David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 155.

[7]The Barna Group, statistic cited in description of "How to Turn Around Your Church" video [cited 4 September 2006]. Online: http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Resource&resourceID=15.

[8]Rebecca Barnes and Linda Lowry, "Special Report: The American Church in Crisis," from *Outreach* magazine, May/June 2006 [cited 4 September 2006]. Online: http://www.christianitytoday.com/outreach/articles/americanchurchcrisis.html.

[9]Again, see the argument in Wells, *No Place for Truth, Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?*

[10]Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 15.

[11]Michael Foust, "Fox Resigns from Kan. Church with Goal of Engaging Culture," Baptist Press, 7 August 2006 [cited 4 September 2006]. Online: http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=23748.

[12]Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 129.

[13]Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South 1785–1900* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 133.

[14]Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1990), 207. Cited in Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 182 n. 67.

[15]See Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 27, 33, 35

[16]Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth-Century Revival* (2 vols.; Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1970), 1:32.

[17]Ibid., 128.

[18]For further discussion of the new birth, see James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 58–59, 127–143.

[19]This statement entails a rejection of libertarian freedom. Libertarian freedom may be philosophically defensible, but I do not believe the notion can be reconciled with what the Bible says (cf. e.g., Gen 6:5; 8:21; Jer 13:23; 17:9; Rom 3:9–18; 8:7–8; 1 Cor 2:14, etc.). My colleague Ben Phillips has pointed out to me that if a philosophical position cannot be reconciled with Scripture, it will ultimately prove philosophically indefensible as well.

[20]Article IV.A., *The Baptist Faith and Message (2000)* [cited 22 December 2007]. Online: http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp.

[21]For further interaction with inclusivism and "accessibilism," see my review-essay of Terrance Tiessen's *Who Can Be Saved?* in *Trinity Journal* 28 (2007), 89-112.

[22]Walter Schultz, "Jonathan Edwards's End of Creation: An Exposition and Defense," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006): 271.

[23]I phrase the statement this way to allow for the reality that Christians called to political vocations will probably spend more time in their vocational pursuits than in their personal devotions. The challenge for them will be to live the faith in their vocation.

[24]See James Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence*, 143–60.

[25]I wish to thank my colleagues Miles Mullin and Ben Phillips, who read this essay and offered many helpful suggestions. This essay was presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Washington, D. C., in November 2006.

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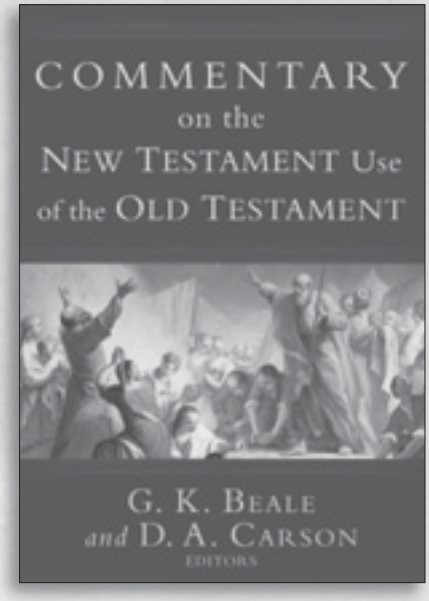

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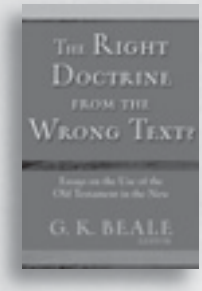

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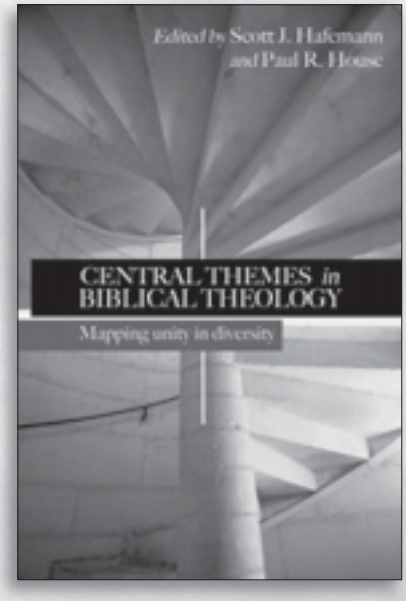

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Being Salt and Light in an Unsavory and Dark Age: The Christian and Politics

Richard Land and Barrett Duke

Richard Land is President of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Prior to this he served as The Criswell College's Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Land is the author of several books, including *The Divided States of America? What Liberals and Conservatives are Missing in the God-and-Country Shouting Match!* (Thomas Nelson, 2007).

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The great revival preacher Charles Finney declared, "Politics are a part of religion in such a country as this, and Christians must do their duty to the country as part of their duty to God."[1] Considering that Charles Finney is renowned as a revival preacher, not a political activist, his assertion may surprise those who consider it inappropriate to mix religion and politics, but Finney was also a strong proponent of Christian cultural engagement. It was during Finney's time that God stirred in the Northern states once again with such power that hundreds of thousands of conversions were recorded in the churches. The entire Northern United States was changed. Out of this great spiritual awakening a potent political movement emerged which greatly aided the anti-slavery cause and ultimately changed the course of our nation through the election of Abraham Lincoln as President. Had that spiritual awakening not occurred, and had leaders like Charles Finney not encouraged those converted to turn their attention to the culture, it is very possible that Lincoln would not have been elected. Because he was elected, our nation finally settled the greatest moral issue of the day—slavery.

Once again, our nation finds itself at a pivotal moment. It will either continue its downward slide or some great movement will come along and sweep it up to new heights. It is likely that the direction our nation takes in the first part of this century will set the country's course for at least a generation to come. As He did in the early nineteenth century, so today God can use Christians to make a real difference in our nation's moral direction. We say it will require Christian involvement because the source of our nation's decline is not political or economic. It is moral relativism. Moral relativism reigns supreme in most of the culture-molding sectors of our nation. In much of academia the very concept of absolute truth is held in derision. Even the general populace speaks of individual truth and individual values rather than universal norms. Our nation is quickly losing the ability to espouse universal moral values or to insist that such standards define socially acceptable and affirmed behavior. The result is a vapid culture in rapid decay, where behavior that was considered reprehensible just a couple of decades ago is now allowed, and even applauded, in many culture-defining venues.

Many of those involved in the decline of our culture state that they are personally opposed to much of what is happening, but they do not believe they have the right to tell others how they should conduct their personal lives. So, for example, politicians are declaring their personal abhorrence of abortion, but they do not believe it is right for them to "impose" their moral values on others. This mindset

has also infiltrated the judicial branch. The same-sex marriage debate is exhibit A. The pioneering same-sex marriage ground was actually plowed by the U.S. Supreme Court. In its disastrous decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) the court decided that moral grounds alone are not adequate justification to criminalize behavior, overturning a Texas law against homosexual sex.[2] This decision created the constitutional grounds to challenge laws prohibiting same-sex marriage. The first state judiciary to take this to its logical conclusion was Massachusetts. In November 2003, four and half months after the *Lawrence* decision, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ordered the Massachusetts legislature to extend marriage to homosexual couples.[3] The attempt to rein in the spread of same-sex marriage through passage of a federal amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman cannot even garner enough votes in the United States Congress to allow the states to vote on the question. Where this loss of universal absolutes will lead is anyone's guess, but it is likely that we are witnessing only the first wave of damaging impacts on our culture.

The problem of moral decline is exacerbated in those cultures where the citizenry has the opportunity to choose its leadership, as in the United States. When the people who choose the nation's lawmakers and judges have lost their moral compass, the result is culturally catastrophic. Our founding fathers were acutely aware of this danger. Reflecting on the unprecedented freedoms granted the citizenry by the new Constitution, John Adams insightfully commented, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."[4] Adams understood that this noble American experiment in unprecedented liberty would not work unless most of the populace acknowledged a higher power than the state to whom they were responsible and accountable. Otherwise, the unprecedented freedoms granted in the new governmental system by the United States Constitution would gradually decline from liberty to license.

We are experiencing the tragic moral trajectory Adams feared. The populace is rapidly losing its moral bearings and it has either rejected Christianity and its moral norms outright, denied its relevance, or relegated it to the level of a self-help regimen. The religion which dominated in President Adams' time has for too many been replaced by a faith in which man is the chief beneficiary. God is invoked for the benefit of the religious. What He desires of people is secondary at best. For many other Americans, yet further adrift on the seas of moral relativism, a Holy Trinity of narcissism has emerged: "I, Myself, and Me."

For the sake of the nation and its future, Christians must become much more involved in its public life. Those who still believe in the existence of moral absolutes and who recognize their accountability to God must bring God's truth and morality back into the public square. Jesus made this clear when He called His disciples the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). Jesus used two simple metaphors to help His disciples understand their purpose in the world.

Christians as the Salt of the Earth

Let us look at each of these metaphors in turn as we reflect more specifically upon our responsibility as Christians

living in the world. Jesus' statement that Christians are the salt of the earth is declarative. He was not suggesting that His disciples could be salt, as though they had the option. He was stating a fact. Christians are salt.[5] Frederick Bruner finds significant meaning in the declarative force of Jesus' statement. He notes, "Christians are, by the simple fact that they are with *Jesus,* the salt of the earth. The Christian ethic is an ethic of 'become what you *are*' rather than the Greek or Confucian ethic of 'become what you *should be*.'"[6]

Jesus reinforced the significance of His declaration with a negative illustration. Salt is supposed to be salty. If it loses its saltiness, it is contaminated in such a way that it can no longer fulfill its purpose, it is useless.[7] Jesus said that salt that is useless is thrown out. We must be careful not to stretch this analogy too far. Jesus did not mean that Christians who lose their saltiness, (i.e., are corrupted), are literally thrown out of the Kingdom, (i.e., lose their salvation). He was just making the point that people do this with salt, and disciples who do not fulfill their function as salt are about as useless to the Kingdom as contaminated salt is to people who cannot use it as salt any longer. While we should not read anything salvific into this statement, we should recognize that Jesus was issuing a warning to His disciples—If they failed to fulfill their function as salt, they ran the risk of being set aside by God in terms of His purposes for their earthly sojourn.

Christians as the Light of the World

Jesus also said His disciples are the light of the world. As before, He did not suggest that they can be light. He declared that they are the light of the world (*kosmos*). Not surprisingly, Jesus' choice of words is significant. I. Howard Marshall notes that "the nearest thing that the NT has for a word for 'culture' is 'world' (*kosmos*) which expresses the organized life of mankind in the created world. *Kosmos* is not simply the created universe inhabited by man; it is much more human society itself as it inhabits the universe and stands over against God."[8] Jesus has declared that His disciples are the light of culture, of human society. They are not a candle waiting to be lit; they are the light itself. This time, he used an absurd example to help make His point. No one would light a candle and put it under a bushel. Instead, a person maximizes the ability of a candle to fulfill its purpose. For Jesus, the disciples are already shining. The only question is whether or not they will perform their function and shine their light far and wide.

Political Implications of Christians as Salt and Light

Now that we know that Christians are salt and light, we must understand what that means spiritually and in application in the world. Salt performs many functions. Two principal ones are its flavor-enhancing abilities and its preservative quality. Anyone who has ever been on a bland diet knows what it is like to eat food without salt. Salt helps to bring out the zestful flavor of other foods. No doubt, Jesus had this enhancement aspect in mind. He was helping His disciples understand that they were life enhancers. Their lives introduced a quality of life to the world that the world did not possess on its own. In the Gospel of John He spoke of it as abundant life (John 10:10). By this He meant a quality of life that the world could not acquire on its own. The primary

application of Jesus' promise was salvific. In Him man could be saved from sin's condemnation and experience new birth, a life in harmony with God, enjoying all the spiritual fulfillment that new relationship afforded. However, salvation is not the end but the beginning of the Christian life, a life more abundant here and now as well as in the hereafter.

It is easy to see the importance of this life-enhancing role of Christians in the world. Man, left to his own devices, spirals downward emotionally, morally, and culturally. The lost human condition is a condition of despair. No one should be surprised about this dark descent. Separated from God, man lives without hope in this world and the world to come. One cannot help but despair when he hears continually about war, famine, death, destruction, and misery.

The Christian brings a much-needed positive message into these dark surroundings. Christianity does not ignore the world's present realities, but it is keenly aware of a God who can help humans rise above life's despair and infuse hope. Christians have been bringing this positive attitude into the culture since the first century, improving every area of life they touched and improving the conditions of millions of people. Often, they have been at the cutting edge of humanitarian efforts, rescuing children from Rome's dumps, starting hospitals to care for the sick, building orphanages, ending the slave trade. Today, one can find Christians actively engaged in a wide range of issues to improve the quality of people's lives. They work to resist the pornographers' efforts to spread their "entertainment" to every home, defend the definition of marriage, and engage on a host of other issues. They encourage sound ethical practices by businesses. They call for selfless virtue in the home, office, and public square.

Engaging at the public policy level of a nation's life enables the Christian to maximize these life-enhancing practices for the benefit of all. Through public policy, Christians can mitigate or even prevent some of the worst moral problems a nation might face. In *Twilight of a Great Civilization* Carl Henry reflected on his earlier work *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.[9] While he was pleased with much of what he said in that earlier work, and saw the amazing strides Evangelicals had made since its writing, he also regretted some aspects of that work. He described one feature that he considered to be "a notable weakness" this way: "For *Uneasy Conscience* failed to focus sharply on the indispensable role of government in preserving justice in a fallen society. Essential as regenerative forces are to transform the human will, civil government remains nonetheless a necessary instrument to constrain human beings—whatever their religious predilections—to act justly, whether they desire to do so or not."[10]

Henry is simply acknowledging the Apostle Paul's explanation that God ordained government "the civil magistrate" for the exact purpose of punishing those who do evil and rewarding those who do good (Rom 13:1-7). The evangelistic mission of the church is its most important function. Winning hearts *and* minds is crucial. However, both the Bible and history teach us that all men will not be converted, all the converted will not live as they ought to, and even faithful Christians find themselves in need of civil guidance at times. Civil authority is designed by God to meet these needs. In

order to fulfill God's intention for government Christians must be engaged. For example, our nation is currently engaged in a debate about the definition of marriage. We will soon be deciding, or having a judge decide for us, whether or not marriage should be redefined to include homosexual couples. This decision has far-reaching implications.

If marriage is thus redefined, that already damaged institution will be further weakened, perhaps fatally. Studies of the Scandinavian countries that have broadened the definition of marriage illustrate this truth. Stanley Kurtz has documented the significant change in attitudes toward marriage that is accompanying those national redefinitions.[11] As the meaning and value of marriage deteriorates, people see less need for marriage. After all, if marriage means anything, then it means nothing. In Norway, for example, where marriage is increasingly rare, couples are choosing simply to cohabitate rather than marry, even persisting in this attitude when children enter the relationship. Thus illegitimacy, with all its concomitant demonstrated disadvantages to children, is soaring.

In addition, if our nation were to allow homosexual marriage, the nation's children would be overwhelmed with messages attempting to indoctrinate them about the legitimacy of same-sex marriage and affirming the normality of homosexuality. Their textbooks would be changed to show homosexual couples living "normal" lifestyles in the same way that heterosexual couples do. The very language used to refer to marriage would be changed. One could no longer refer to husbands and wives; children would be taught to think in sexless terms, like "significant other" or "life partner."

Marriage is God's idea, not man's invention. He instituted it in the garden of Eden. He knew that man was not complete without woman, and woman was not complete without man. Each needed the other to be complete and fulfilled. God knew that children needed the environment of home and marriage to prepare them for the demands of responsible adulthood. Within the loving relationship between a husband and wife, children learn such crucial characteristics as sacrifice, compassion, service, sharing, and commitment. These are all essential traits that enable communities to function. Any weakening of these will weaken the community.

In addition to its life-enhancing qualities, salt prevents decay. Salted meat, for example, lasts for long periods of time because destructive bacteria cannot survive in that salted medium. Christians act as social preservatives. Christianity brings a set of values into culture that arrest the worst effects of human depravity. Christians living out their values do not eliminate human depravity or the desire of humans to exercise that depravity, but they do help to define and denounce it. Consequently, by their efforts, public policy is more life-affirming. We can see the value of this is in the area of the sanctity of human life. Today, more than one million unborn babies are aborted in this country every year. The vast majority of these children are aborted merely because their mothers, often with their father's consent, either by direct involvement or indifference, considered them to be too inconvenient or too embarrassing to bring into the world. These aborted children are people created in God's image whose lives are being snuffed out because government has told women that this is an acceptable

choice. Christians have an opportunity to bring a better understanding of the value of human life into the debate and change attitudes about these so-called "inconvenient" humans. Part of this educational process can be public policy that tells people it is not acceptable to kill unborn children. It can back this up with laws that criminalize abortion and those who perform abortions. Christians can help people understand that in a truly civilized society no one should be permitted to have an absolute right of life and death over another human being—be it a slaveholder or a baby's mother.

The issue of abortion is just one in a growing number of attacks on the sanctity of human life. Today, people are debating whether or not to derive stem cells from human embryos, destroying the embryos, i.e., nascent human life, in the process. Others are talking about the need to clone human embryos in order to obtain stem cells. Once again, the fact that these embryos are destroyed in the process is considered to be of no significant consequence. Christians who understand that every human life, regardless of age, health, or condition, is created in the image of God and therefore deserves respect and protection, can protect these tiniest humans by outlawing embryo-destructive research and promoting life-affirming practices in its place. For example, they can help gain more funding for adult stem cell research. They can adopt so-called "left-over" embryos that are sitting in in-vitro fertilization clinics.[12]

Metaphorically, Christians are also light. No doubt, Jesus was aware of many ways this metaphor applied to Christians. He certainly intended to emphasize the ability of light to expose what is in the darkness and its ability to dispel that darkness. As an illuminating agent Christians are seldom surpassed. Lived in obedience to God, the Christian life reveals man's lost condition and the moral decay of lost human culture. It is easy to identify a Christian who is living faithfully before God in contrast to those around him who are living according to the moral standards of a culture in decline. Take for example, the difference in marital satisfaction between Christian couples who enjoy the interpersonal communication involved in praying together on a regular basis and those who do not share this experience. According to Dennis Rainey, President of the family-oriented Christian ministry FamilyLife, a survey conducted by that organization in 1995 revealed that "couples who pray together frequently (at least three times per week) have higher levels of marital satisfaction than those who don't."[13] Rainey linked this practice directly to a lower divorce rate among those couples in comparison to the rest of the country. This contrast reveals what is possible when a husband and wife are committed to one another at the deepest possible level. This is the result of lives lived in conformity with God's standards. The obedient Christian life reveals that God's ways produce happier, healthier, more fulfilled people. Darkness finds no resting place when light enters.

Sound public policy can help illuminate and promote the values that can help people live more rewarding lives. J. Budziszewski has argued effectively that people change their laws in order to help them salve their consciences. He makes the argument that natural moral law is hardwired in the human conscience. When people violate the natural law, their consciences demand satisfaction

for the violation, i.e., guilty knowledge. These include confession, atonement, reconciliation, and justification. At this point, humans have two choices. They can repent and find peace or they can attempt to suppress their knowledge of guilt so they can persist in their activity. Those who attempt to suppress their consciences find it an impossible task, and so must evolve ever more elaborate schemes in their attempt to quiet their offended consciences. Part of this effort includes transforming society "so that it no longer stands in awful judgment. So it is that they change the laws, infiltrate the schools, and create intrusive social-welfare bureaucracies."[14] One can see how private behavior precedes public policy. Nations seldom change their laws to accommodate conditions that do not exist. They change their laws to accommodate current moral conditions. As light, Christians can prevent this by refusing to allow public policy to be used as a means to silence guilty consciences. This kind of engagement will help to restrain the downward spiral of the culture. It will also put public policy in a didactic mode. Rather than reflecting the moral standards of an ever-coarsening culture, public policy can help remind people of right and wrong.

Light also reveals what is in the dark. In spiritual terms this means that the Christian life exposes man's sinful behavior. In comparison to a pure life man's true sinful failings become obvious. So, for example, depraved human reasoning concludes that destroying human embryos in order to search for cures for other humans is morally preferable to doing nothing to attempt to alleviate human suffering. But in comparison to the biblical teaching that all human life is sacred, including the human embryo, embryo-destructive research is revealed for what it really is—the deliberate destruction of one human being for the benefit of another.

When Jesus called His disciples salt and light, He was not just speaking of those gathered few, but of all His disciples throughout the ages to come. The Apostle Paul's ministry demonstrates this. Paul was not even present when Jesus told His disciples they were salt and light. Nevertheless, on the road to Damascus, the risen and ascended Jesus encountered Paul and called him to the mission of bringing His gospel to the Gentile world (Acts 9:1-18, see especially vv. 15-16). Paul went on from that encounter as salt and light in the Lord.

Luke tells us that he even spoke to government officials. He spoke to Felix, the Roman governor of Judea, about "righteousness, self control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). This conversation covered more than the basic message of salvation. It included a call to live rightly, according to God's moral standards. It was not unusual for Paul to speak to moral issues. In his letters, we find him speaking on the biblical teaching about marriage, slaves and slave owners, work, family, and a myriad other issues pertinent to the culture of his day. He also instructed his fellow believers to emulate the example of his life (1 Cor 4:16).[15] This certainly sounds like a man who was living out what it means to be salt and light.[16]

As those who have inherited the spiritual responsibilities and obligations of our Christian forebears, today's Christians must fulfill their responsibilities to act as salt and light in the nation's political life. Responsible stewardship and responsible citizenship allow no other response. As was pointed out in *The Divided States of America?*, Francis Schaeffer,

> helped Evangelicals jettison a deep strain of pietism that had misled them to believe they shouldn't be involved in politics and other "worldly" activities. He helped an entire generation of Christians to understand their biblical responsibility to be salt and light in society—and, of course, salt has to touch what it preserves; light has to be close enough to the darkness that it can de seen. Among the questions that Schaeffer repeatedly posed (usually in the context of the abortion issue) in his books such as *How Shall We Then Live?*, *The God Who Is There,* and *A Christian Manifesto,* were these: If not you, who? If not now, when? If not this, what?[17]

Schaeffer believed in "truth with a capital T—'true truth,' he called it. That meant it was true not just on Sunday, but also on Monday. It was true not just at home, but also at school and at work and in the public arena. Christians had an obligation to be 'salt' and 'light' as the Bible says (Matthew 5:13-16)."[18] This is admirably reflected in Article XV of *The Baptist Faith and Message*, "The Christian and the Social Order":

> All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society…In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.[19]

Christians must enter the public square and bring their biblically-based morality with them. They have the right, and the obligation, to share their faith-informed moral values with the nation and to advocate the adoption of those values through the democratic process. Government is a divinely ordained human institution. Paul made this case effectively in Rom 13:1-7. The governing authorities are ministers of God for good (vv. 3-4). God holds governments accountable for how they govern and the cultures they produce. They are intended by God to punish evil and reward good. When a culture has sunk too far into moral decay, God has been known to bring swift and severe judgment on the people (Gen 18:1-19:29). But God does not take pleasure in judgment. He prefers for people to turn from sinful behavior (Ezekiel 18:23). It is reasonable to assume that God wants those who know His truth to engage in the process that can help restrain man's immoral inclinations and avoid God's judgment. He did this Himself when He issued the Law to His people Israel. He did not leave the people to try to discern for themselves how they ought to live. He expected the nation's kings and judges to affirm these standards among the people, and He called His prophets to interact with government leaders and the people in order to remind them of their moral obligations.

We are not proposing that the church employ the power of the government to promote or enforce its beliefs. Besides, the Constitution's First Amendment rightly prevents the government from favoring any particular religion. The organized church and the organized state have separate responsibilities, and they should function separately in their efforts to fulfill those responsibilities. This said, however, it is inconceivable that separation of church and state also means that

Christians, and organized churches, should not engage in the nation's political life in an effort to influence its policies through the democratic process.

Our Christian Responsibility towards the State

In addition to the demands of responsible stewardship, responsible citizenship also requires that Christians engage in the nation's political life. Christians are citizens of two worlds, the heavenly kingdom (Eph 5:24; Phil 3:20; Col 1:13) and an earthly one (Rom 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13-17). Responsible citizenship in both requires adherence to their respective duties. As a member of the heavenly kingdom, Christians are to apply the spiritual teachings of the Bible to their lives and live according to the expectations of their heavenly king, Jesus. But these same Christians are commanded to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in their earthly kingdom as well. Jesus taught this principle when He told the people that they should render to God what is God's and to the ruling authority that which pertains to it (Matt 22:21). He said this in response to the query about whether or not the people should pay taxes. The payment of taxes was an expectation placed on the citizenry by the government. Jesus instructed the people to fulfill their civic obligations. In the same way, political engagement is an expectation placed on the citizens. This is true in varying degrees, of course, depending on the form of government, but it reaches its highest level of responsibility in democratically constituted government. In a democratically chosen government, it is the duty of the citizens to engage in the nation's political life. To fail to do so is a failure to fulfill the duties and obligations of citizenship. It is a failure to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. E. Y. Mullins, former president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and chairman of the committee that produced the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*, commented, "The Christian citizen is commanded to render to the state its just dues. He is to perform faithfully his duty to the state (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7)."[20]

Some argue that the effort to change the culture is waged best in the battle to change the way people think. These people focus principally on apologetics to achieve their goal. We agree that it is better to get a person to change his behavior because he chooses to do so, but we do not believe it is a question of either/or. It must be a both/and approach. While we are busy engaging the mind of man, the culture continues its downward spiral, and millions are being caught in its vortex. We can slow down the decline with public policy that upholds, commends, and rewards moral behavior. To do this, we must become involved in the political life of the nation. The political arena is part of the overall effort of cultural engagement. Lawmakers elected by the people determine the laws that will either permit immoral behavior to flourish or restrain it. Legalized abortion is just one of many examples of this truth. The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is heavily engaged in efforts to convince women not to abort their babies, but in the meantime, an entire government-authorized industry is at work convincing them that it is not only acceptable but legal to abort their unborn children. The culture must be engaged both privately and publicly.

Many have argued that political activism distracts the church from its primary

mission of evangelism and disciple-making. We agree that the church's first task is to win lost souls. Individual Christians should make evangelism their highest priority, and churches need to as well (Matt 28:18-20). However, neither individual Christians nor churches can ignore what Jesus said about the need for the church to engage the culture. The Lord's "Great Commission" to His followers was not only to evangelize, but to "make disciples" and to teach those converts "to observe everything I have commanded you," which would include His expectation for them to act as salt and light (Matt 5:13-16; 28:16-20). Cultural engagement is part of Christian discipleship.[21]

Some argue that Jesus was talking about how His disciples should live, not that they should impose their values on others. Richard Mouw partially reflects this attitude. In speaking of the role Christians should play in regulating sexual behavior in culture, he declares that "Christians ought not to act in such a way that the sole purpose of their action is to prohibit non-Christians from behaving in a promiscuous manner." He says that Christians should only get involved in regulating the sexual behavior of non-Christians when they have a "legitimate conviction that sexual patterns have important connections to other serious dimensions of human existence." Incredibly, his philosophy for Christian public policy engagement leads him to state that "opportunities for sexual promiscuity must be restricted when it infringes seriously on the genuine rights of others—for example, on the rights of children. But the Christian's 'right' to rest in the knowledge that no one is enjoying pornography is *not* one such genuine right."[22] In principle Mouw may be correct. It is crucial that Christians do not seek to impose personal preferences on society. However, he uses a horrific example to make his point. It is difficult to imagine any situation in which Christians would not be justified in their insistence that pornography is dangerous and hurtful to others, especially, but not only, in the way that it dehumanizes women and leads to horrific crimes of sex and violence against women and children.[23]

To assure they are not attempting to interject personal preferences into public policy, Christians must be fully aware of God's moral standards. These standards are communicated either by way of direct propositional directives or principles contained in biblical texts.[24] If God prefers a particular moral commitment, it is preferable for all people, not only Christians, and Christians should strive to help bring their culture into conformity with that standard.[25]

Others object to Christian political involvement by claiming that it uses the power of the government to force religious beliefs on people. Those who make this argument are making a serious error in judgment. They suppose that morality and religious belief are the same thing.[26] In reality, they are not. Religious belief pertains to the theological beliefs a person holds. These beliefs inform a person's conscience, thus shaping his or her morality. The religious beliefs are the foundational truths that order the Christian's world. They are the truth claims to which he adheres and through which he thinks about life. They inform his worldview. Out of his worldview he develops his system of ethical thinking and from there he shares his insight on the great moral questions of his day. For example, the Bible teaches that God is the author of life.

Those who embrace this theological truth develop an ethic about the sanctity of human life. From this ethical perspective, the Christian answers such questions as appropriate responses to violence, abortion, and stem cell research. While it is true that the Christian's answers to these questions were informed by his religious beliefs, it is obvious that they are not his beliefs. His religious beliefs informed his decision-making process.

This is an important distinction. Without it, it would not be possible for people of faith to engage in influencing public policy. In truth, however, without this distinction, no one could engage in public policy. People of faith work from a set of foundational truths that enable them to form a worldview, but everyone has a set of beliefs that serve the same purpose. The atheist, for example, may develop a worldview in which he declares that humans have relative value, based not in anything intrinsic to his nature, but rather in his ability to contribute to human society. Where might this worldview and ethic come from? It would come from his foundational belief that humans are merely an interesting product of the forces of nature. Both the atheist and the Bible-believing Christian have a foundational belief that leads to the creation of his worldview, which leads to the development of his ethic of the value of human life.[27] These ethical positions provide the moral framework for making decisions in life. The application of the ethic is not the foundational belief. It is informed by it.

Keeping one's religiously informed beliefs out of the role of public policy development was not what our founding fathers had in mind when they wrote the Constitution or the First Amendment. Many of these men professed a deep personal faith and a significant majority of them adhered to a Judeo-Christian worldview. If they believed that their foundational beliefs disqualified them to govern, they could never have written a single word or passed a single law. Given the fact that they recognized their religious roots, and even codified their religiously informed ethic about the value of human life in the Constitution, makes it obvious that they did not believe that they were imposing their religion on others when they made value judgments about what would, and would not, be acceptable practice in this new republic. Yale Law School professor Stephen Carter comments, "In a nation that prides itself on cherishing religious freedom, it would be something of a puzzle to conclude that the Establishment Clause means that a Communist or a Republican may try to have his or her world view reflected in the nation's law, but a religionist can not."[28]

The following excerpt from *The Divided States of America?* makes an important distinction between religious faith, the moral values individuals deduce from that faith, and the necessary commitment to democratic processes:

> People of faith *share* their faith. They don't assume that it should be accepted just because it is religious. They have the right to bring to the public arena the values that are informed by their faith, and to share with the public the insights they have gained through their faith. If the public agrees, then that becomes the public policy of the nation by consent of the people. We must always agree to government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' and by consent of the governed. Even if the people make the wrong decision, we must abide by the will of the people and seek to change the will of the people in future elections.… Otherwise, there is a terrible tendency for it to become

> coercive, as vitiating of human freedom as a naked, purely secular public square devoid of religiously informed moral values is of the same freedom of conscience and belief. In either extreme, the rights of the minority and of the weak are not protected.[29]

Having accepted their status as salt and light, Christians must ask God to give them a desire to engage in the nation's political life. Many Christians are doing all they can to escape from the world in order to shield themselves and their children from its secular influences. What they are discovering, however, is that they cannot completely escape. The culture gets in one way or another. Paul warned the Christians in Corinth that they would have to leave the planet to achieve their goal of separation from the world (1 Cor 5:11). This is not the answer.

The only truly effective response to the coarsening of the culture is to engage it on every level, including the political. At this point, motivation is extremely important. Some get involved because they see it as their duty to fulfill God's expectation. Some get involved out of desperation or anger, to protect their families and to fight back against the growing tide of immorality. Others get involved out of love for the millions, or billions, whose lives are being devastated by a declining culture and the bad public policy that feeds and reinforces the decline.

This last motivation seems to be the most Christ-like motivation.[30] It is also the most likely to compel Christians to make the kinds of sacrifices necessary to make a difference. It was God's love that led Him to choose to sacrifice "His only begotten Son" for the world's sinners. It was love that drove Christ to the cross. Love is the strongest motivating force that can cause someone to willingly sacrifice for others. Love for their fellow man is what can impel Christians from their places of comfort and retreat into the bruising, resistant, often hate-filled world that they desire to change. Only God can instill this love through His Holy Spirit in Christian hearts for lost mankind and an immoral culture (Gal 5:22-23).

Overcoming Barriers to Christians Political Involvement

With God's love motivating them to act, Christians must overcome several potential barriers to their involvement. First, they must overcome their fear of the government. While their concern over their tax exempt status is understandable, too many churches live in such inordinate fear of losing that status that they have circumscribed all political engagement in order to make sure they are untouchable. While this may keep the government inquisitors off their backs, it puts them in a position where they may find themselves giving more serious account to God. After all, it is unlikely that Jesus will ever say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, you protected your tax exempt status." However, He may very well say, "I sacrificed My life for you, why didn't you at least do what the laws of your country allowed to protect people from the ravages of moral decline and immoral public policy?"

The truth of the matter is that churches can do a lot before they come close to violating the restrictions placed on them to retain their tax exempt status. Every church can still speak to the great moral issues of the day, including abortion, pornography, and homosexuality. They can distribute voter guides that help their members and their communities

understand the positions of the various candidates. They can hold voter registration drives. They can invite candidates to speak as long as they invite *all* the candidates in a particular race.

Furthermore, as individual citizens, Christians can engage in any level of public life they choose. A growing cacophony is attempting to convince Christians that they violate the First Amendment if they engage in efforts to influence public policy. These voices are attempting to convince Christians that because they are religious people their moral convictions are constitutionally barred from the debate. We have already described the distinction between morality and religious belief. The Christian has as much right to attempt to have his moral convictions codified into law as anyone else.

The clauses of the First Amendment that address church/state relations apply to religion, not morality. In addition, the First Amendment is designed to keep government out of the church business, not to keep Christians out of government. The amendment consists of two clauses. The first clause, known as the "Establishment Clause" prohibits Congress from establishing a national religion and giving it favored status. This is the clause most often emphasized by liberals. They are fearful that government will be used by some religious group to promote a particular set of religious beliefs. While we support efforts to prevent government from promoting religious belief, we disagree strongly that morality born out of one's religious beliefs is inherently religious. The second clause, known as the "Free Exercise Clause," is also focused on the government. It prohibits Congress from passing laws that would restrict the exercise of religious belief. This clause is most often the clause that evangelical Christians emphasize. They are concerned that the government may introduce polices that intrude on the life and work of religious organizations or impede the consciences of individual citizens. Obviously, neither of the clauses prevents Christian engagement in the nation's public life.

Second, Christians must stop worrying about public perception when it comes to engaging the culture. Many pastors and church members fear that their involvement in public policy issues and elections will sour people on their church or their denomination, making it more difficult for the church to reach them with the gospel of salvation. It is more likely that those who reject a church's message because that church or its members have become politically engaged are using that as an excuse to reject the church and its message rather than for the stated reason. It is like the old "the church is full of hypocrites" argument that people have used for centuries as their excuse for rejecting the church and its message. The truth of the matter is that the message of the Bible includes very clear teachings on the moral issues of every age and of God's expectations for a nation's leaders. God has moral standards, and He expects all people, in and outside the church, to live by them. To remain silent on these standards is a disservice to a community and a nation. The people need to know what God has to say. Christians have the responsibility as salt and light to make known God's perspective.

Third, Christians must themselves begin to live more faithfully. Too much of the church has become captive to the culture. The result is that the church has lost its moral high ground. When divorce

occurs within the church almost as regularly as it occurs outside the church, it should not surprise anyone that the world is not listening to us when we speak on moral issues. When Christians begin to live according to the moral guidance of the Bible, and their families and relationships are healthy, the world will take notice. They may choose not to accept our answers, but they will not be able to deny the effectiveness of our morality.

Engaging the Political Process

Having overcome the obstacles to public engagement, Christians must engage the political process. They can do this at a number of important levels. First, they should register to vote and then vote in every election. Of course, it is not enough to just show up to vote. Christians need to make sure they are well-informed and that they are voting about issues, not personalities. An informed voter is an intelligent voter. Christians must take the time to become acquainted with the issues involved in the election, not just the partisan politics or personalities. These issues will vary depending on the level of office, but the more information the Christian has, the more likely he will be to select someone who will help resolve problems in the most biblically responsible way.

Christians must also vote from the foundation of their values. In order to do this, they must make sure they are thinking about things from a Christian worldview. A Christian worldview is a biblically faithful belief system that answers the fundamental questions of life, such as, is there a God? Where did humans come from? Why is there evil? What is humanity's purpose? What lies in the future? The answers to such foundational questions provide the starting point for addressing the issues of life. From such an informed perspective, Christians can better discern the best answers to the problems of the day and vote for people and policies that are most likely going to achieve those goals. This is much more effective than simply voting for the most likable candidate, or for one's particular party.

Second, every Christian should find ways to get involved nationally and internationally. There are great pressing needs on both of these levels. The pro-life struggle is far from settled. It is difficult to imagine an issue more in need of Christian involvement. New fronts in this "culture war," like embryonic stem cell research and euthanasia, are opening up regularly. The needs are also great internationally. The world is in desperate need of greater Christian involvement to address poverty, human trafficking, tyranny, and a host of other needs.

Third, Christians should become involved with national organizations to help them stay aware of developments in the issues they are concerned about. These organizations can help keep them informed about developments and also alert them when they need to act. The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has a series of web sites and radio programs designed to help Christians stay abreast of events and become involved. The Commission also regularly sends out action alerts that can help Christians know where their voice is needed most to make progress on issues of concern to them.

John Adams, our nation's second president, furnished some timeless words of caution to our country as he considered the future of the new nation. He wrote,

> While our country remains untainted with the principles and manners

> which are now producing desolation in so many parts of the world; while she continues sincere, and incapable of insidious and impious policy, we shall have the strongest reason to rejoice in the local destination assigned us by Providence. But should the people of America once become capable of that deep simulation towards one another, and towards foreign nations, which assumes the language of justice and moderation while it is practicing iniquity and extravagance, and displays in the most captivating manner the charming pictures of candor, frankness, and sincerity, while it is rioting in rapine and insolence, this country will be the most miserable habitation in the world; because we have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion.[31]

It would appear that John Adams had a heart-wrenching premonition of the future of the nation he loved so dearly. The challenge set before us is to do all we can to prevent this chilling image from coming to fruition. Christians must rise to the challenge and engage in our nation's life with the same fervor that drove our forefathers to risk life and liberty to bring it forth. May God help us all to leave our nation a more moral and God-honoring land than we found it.

ENDNOTES

[1]Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (ed. William G. McLoughlin; Cambridge: The Balknap Press, 1960), 297.

[2]*Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

[3]*Goodridge v. Department of Health*, 798 N.E. 2d 941 (Mass. 2003).

[4]Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States* (vol. 9; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1854), 229.

[5]Robert Gundry's attempt to explain Matthew's manipulation of Jesus' statements about salt and light in Mark 9:49-50 and Luke 14:34-35 to produce this passage seem totally unwarranted (*Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 75-76). The contexts all refer to the demands of discipleship, but they are all very diverse. The reference in Mark speaks to the need for disciples to be encouraging and affirming of others who profess Christ. The key verse appears to be v. 39, where Jesus begins His response to those who asked about hindering others who appear to be following Him. In v. 50 He tells His disciples to "be at peace with one another." The reference in Luke speaks to the importance of counting the cost of discipleship and making certain that one is totally committed to its demands. The illustrations in Luke 14:25-33 all point to this meaning. If one has not adequately counted the cost, the demands of discipleship will reveal the lack of commitment, i.e., tastelessness, and render the disciple useless. In the current passage the reference is to the faithful application of the principles in the Beatitudes to one's life, cf. vv. 1-12. Gundry supposes that Matthew cobbled together the passages from Mark and Luke to create the saying as it occurs in his Gospel. This proposal calls into question Matthew's veracity and Jesus' creativity. It declares that Matthew put words in Jesus' mouth to suit his purpose and it supposes that Jesus could not use the same metaphor in more than one context to make different points. There is no adequate reason to doubt the authenticity of Matt 5:13 as a saying of Jesus in connection with His teaching the Beatitudes.

[6]Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Com-*

mentary (vol. 1; *The Christbook, Matthew 1-12*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 188.

[7]Some have questioned what Jesus could have meant here because salt is a very stable compound. It doesn't stop being salty. However, A. B. Bruce (*The Expositor's Greek Testament* [vol. 1; *The Synoptic Gospels*; ed. W. Robertson Nicoll ; 1903; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 101-02) cites a number of sources that explain the actual occurrence of salt losing its "sharpness" through contamination by other substances. It is easily conceivable that Jesus was speaking of this kind of process, which would render salt unusable.

[8]I. Howard Marshall, "Culture and the New Testament," in *Gospel and Culture* (ed. John Stott and Robert Coote; Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1979), 39.

[9]Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1947).

[10]Carl F. H. Henry, *Twilight of a Great Civilization: The Drift Toward Neopaganism* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 167.

[11]Stanley Kurtz, "The End of Marriage in Scandinavia," *The Weekly Standard*, 2 February 2004, 26-33.

[12]Very recently amazing discoveries in the laboratory appear to make it possible to use skin tissue to create stem cells with all the pluripotent capabilities of embryonic stem cells, without causing the destruction of any embryonic life. The entire nation owes an incalculable debt of gratitude to the courage and moral vision of President George W. Bush for resisting the incredible pressures brought to bear on him by the secular media and powerful high-tech business interests to approve federal funding for embryo-destructive stem cell research. Without his willingness to hold the moral line, we would have been confronted with the specter of millions of human embryos being created through cloning which would have been killed within fourteen days of gestation to harvest their stem cells for research purposes. A righteous God would not have allowed such barbarically immoral behavior and the society that condoned and subsidized it to go unjudged. Without President Bush's courageous stand these researchers would never have had the motivation to go into the laboratory and spend the time and resources to come up with a morally-neutral alternative to the embryonic stem cell research which sacrificed unborn human embryos.

[13]Dennis Rainey, *One Home at a Time* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1997), 86.

[14]J. Budziszewski, *The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man* (Dallas: Spence, 1999), 30.

[15]Paul also recognized the need to include others in the task. He instructed Titus to appoint elders in the cities of Crete to lead the work of the churches in those places (Titus 1:5). It is impossible to imagine that the church today is not related directly to Paul's work and those early churches. Every generation of Christians has had handed to it the mantle that Jesus laid on the shoulders of His first disciples and on Paul. We are called by the same God and equipped by the same Holy Spirit to continue what they began.

[16]Of course, we have only presented a small part of the biblical evidence. One can find numerous examples in the Old Testament, for example, of prophets confronting kings and cultures with God's demands for holy living, and not only within the believing community. Jonah preached to the inhabitants of Nineveh to repent of their immoral lifestyle (Jonah 1:1-2; 3:4). The king of Nineveh and his people understood that God's coming judgment was not related so much to their unbelief as their immoral lives. They sought to escape God's judgment by turning from the "wicked way and from the violence" that characterized their lives (Jonah 3:8). God withheld His judgment when He saw that "they turned from their wicked way" (Jonah 3:10).

[17]Richard Land, *The Divided States of America? What Liberals and Conservatives are Missing in the God-and-Country Shouting Match* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 8.

[18]Ibid., 9.

[19]*The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2000), 19.

[20]Edgar Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1974), 426.

[21]William Hendriksen (*The Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], 284-85) attempts to reconcile the biblical priority of evangelism with its attendant call to engage the culture in an unusual way. He

conceded that there may be occasions when the church must speak out on some non-theological issue, but he argued that the salt and light metaphors apply principally to the church's responsibility for "spreading forth the message of salvation, that the lost may be found … those found may be strengthened in the faith … and God may be glorified." Then, strangely, he declared that "those who, through the example, message, and prayers of believers, have been converted will show the genuine character of their faith and love by exerting their influence for good *in every sphere*." It's as though Hendriksen divided the church into two groups, those who preach the gospel and their converts who will engage the world more generally. Jesus did not make any such distinction among His disciples. He called all of them salt and light. The gospel preacher and his converts are all under the same obligations. Whatever the salt and light metaphors mean, they mean for all Christians.

[22]Richard Mouw, *Politics and the Biblical Drama* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 78-79.

[23]Mouw's principle is important, however. It is important for Christians to make sure that they are not imposing their personal preferences on others just because they are able to do so. For example, some Christians do not believe males and females should swim together in the same swimming pool. The attempt to maintain moral purity may be commendable, but this is a private interpretation of biblical teaching. Since it does not appear to be required by Scripture, it would certainly be inappropriate to impose this standard on others by law.

[24]Discerning what God requires of a particular people is complicated at times by the nature of the biblical material. We offer here a couple of starting points. First, Christian ethics distinguishes three types of law in the Old Testament—the ceremonial, the civil, and the moral. These are important distinctions for those who are attempting to understand what requirements in the Bible are applicable today. The ceremonial law of the Old Testament is not applicable because it pertained to Israel's worship system. The civil law also is not applicable because it governed life in the nation of Israel. The moral law, however, still applies because it governs man's relationship to other people and to God. Moral principles that are still relevant today can be garnered from the other two types of law, but one must be careful that he is not reading his own preferences into these principles. Second, one must also distinguish between teachings or situations that reflect a particular cultural situation from teachings that communicate universal norms.

[25]One must also always keep in mind the critically important distinction between private behavior between consensual adults, (which should not be made illegal and in most cases should be tolerated but not affirmed by society), and coercive victimization of others, which should be illegal.

[26]Interestingly, even Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), xviii, confuses this point. He says that during the 2004 presidential election he and others with him "insisted that poverty is a religious issue." Poverty is a moral issue. Concern for it is part of what it means to be a faithful religious person, but the issue of poverty is not religious in nature.

[27]In deciding whether or not a man could be denied employment by the state of Maryland because of his particular faith, the Supreme Court ruled that a religion does not have to include belief in the existence of God to be considered a religion. It can be "founded on different beliefs" and still be considered a religion. In his footnote to the decision, Justice Hugo Black said that secular humanism was one such religion, *Torcaso v. Watkins*, 367 U.S. 488 n. 11 (1961). Because Black made this comment within the footnotes, it is part of the *dicta* of the decision, which means that it is the judge's personal opinion, not part of the legal opinion setting legal precedent. However, it is significant in that the court has ruled that belief in the existence of God is not required as part of the definition of what qualifies as a religion, and at least one Supreme Court justice believed that secular humanism qualified as a religion.

[28]Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*

(New York: Anchor, 1993), 113.

[29]Richard D. Land, *The Divided States of America?*, 130.

[30]While we disagree with Philip Yancey's extremely skeptical view of Christian political engagement, we share his concern that Christians must engage from the grace-filled attitude of love. He counsels, "Politics draws lines between people; in contrast, Jesus' love cuts across those lines and dispenses grace. That does not mean, of course, that Christians should not involve themselves in politics. It simply means that as we do so we must not let the rules of power displace the command to love." Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 264.

[31]Adams, *The Works of John Adams,* 228-29.

The *SBJT* Forum: Christian Responsibility in the Public Square

Editor's Note: Readers should be aware of the forum's format. D. A. Carson, Thomas R. Schreiner, Michael A. G. Haykin, and Jonathan Leeman have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. The journal's goal for the Forum is to provide significant thinkers' views on topics of interest without requiring lengthy articles from these heavily-committed individuals. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

SBJT: Is there anything distinctive about a Christian—and specifically biblical—understanding of the relationship between church and state?

D. A. Carson: Quite a lot of answers might be given to this question. For example, one of the remarkable features of the Bible is the sheer wealth of the perspectives it brings to bear on this subject. It does not content itself to offer nothing more than a reductionistic monochrome ideal, but faces up to the exigencies of a broken world. Consider the following list of portrayals of the relationship between church and state—by no means an exhaustive list: (a) In passages ranging from the beatitudes to the teaching of Jesus before his passion to the instruction of the apostle, the Bible not infrequently speaks in terms of opposition and persecution. Where the persecuting power is not personal or local, but the state, then clearly one kind of church/state relationship is being recognized as the sort of thing with which many Christian have to come to terms. (b) On the other hand, a passage like Romans 13:1–7 tells us, within certain parameters, to respect the state and be obedient to it. Inevitably some have attempted to reinterpret this passage in various creative ways (I have briefly addressed these alternatives in the fifth chapter of my book *Christ and Culture Revisited* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008]). On the face of it, however, the straightforward meaning of the text should not be avoided: Christians are duty-bound to obey the state as they obey the Lord, for the Lord himself has ordained the authority of the state. Set within the witness of the New Testament, of course, such an injunction has necessary limits. When the state tells us to defy or disown God, we must reject the authority of the state: we then adopt the stance of the first apostles, who insisted they were obliged, if push comes to shove, to obey God rather than human beings (Acts 4:19–20). In that case, of course, Christians must be willing to absorb the persecution that might then ensue—which of course brings us back to the first form of the possible relationships between church and state, already described. (c) Sometimes the confrontation is more restricted, of course. Opposition may spring not from state opposition—in the first century, Rome itself—but from local authority. In other words, official persecution is not necessarily state persecution. That was obvious in the Québec of my youth. Between 1950 and 1952, Baptist ministers spent a total of about eight years in jail. None of this was

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sponsored by the Dominion of Canada; none of it sprang from judicial decisions in the highest provincial courts. All of it, so far as I am aware, was municipal. Similarly in the first century: persecution could break out in Philippi and be threatened in Thessalonica, while just down the road Berea might be wonderfully peaceful. At very least, however, that means the state is adopting a kind of "hands off" self-distancing from the problem. If the state is not the active agent of persecution, neither is it the bulwark of religious freedom. (d) From a biblical perspective, an eschatological dimension is inescapable. Even while the New Testament writers want Christians to be good citizens, they also insist that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20–21); we belong to the "Jerusalem that is above" (Gal 4:26). That means that thoughtful Christians can never afford to give ultimate allegiance to any state. However much his reign is currently contested, Jesus is reigning now with all authority—and ultimately Jesus wins, his last enemies crushed under his feet. The Christian's allegiance to the state, then, is always and necessarily contingent, conditional, partial. (e) Whether the state is supportive or confrontive of Christians as individuals or of the church as a community, we must recognize that the essential dynamics of its authority are thoroughly *un*like the operation of authority as it ought to be manifested among believers (Matt 20:20–28).

This is far from an exhaustive list of biblically-grounded stances on the relationship between church and state. The entries on this list are enough to remind us, however, that any analysis of the relationship that depends too narrowly on *one* of these perspectives, claiming this one perspective to be the biblical control, is *necessarily* wrong because it is reductionistic. What must be found is a biblical-theological framework that is comprehensive enough to embrace *all* that the Bible says on these matters, recognizing that the Bible does not offer us mutually exclusive case studies from which we may pick and choose, but a "thick" description that turns on such immense themes as the sweep of the Bible's story-line, the matchless sovereignty of God, an account of rebellion and redemption, and much more. In short, *one* of the things that is unique about the biblical revelation of the relationships between church and state is its extraordinary depth, penetration, subtlety, flexibility, and "thickness."

One other distinctive element should command our attention here, viz. Jesus' remarkable utterance, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Mark 12:13–17). Some have attempted to domesticate the passage by asserting that since nothing ultimately belongs to Caesar, nothing should be paid to him. That interpretation does not listen very attentively to the context of Jesus' utterance. Others argue that Caesar and God operate in mutually exclusive domains, and just as Caesar must not intrude onto God's domain so God must not intrude onto Caesar's. That interpretation ignores the repeated insistence that God alone is God: if Caesar has authority in certain domains, it is because Caesar has received this right from God himself. From a Christian perspective, all legitimate authority ultimately derives from the God of all authority. Paul, clearly, understood the point (Rom 13:1–7): the powers that be are ordained by God, and therefore they cannot possibly be thought of as independent of God or, still less, properly competing with God.

So what, then, is the force of this passage, and why do we judge it to make a unique contribution to Christian understanding of the relationship between church and state? Living in the West, as we do, two thousand years after the empty tomb, we find it easy to forget that, before the coming of Christ, religion and state were tightly bound together. Transparently this was true in ancient Israel, but it was no less true of the surrounding nations and of the great pagan empires. Of course, a really large and diverse empire like the Roman Empire might allow many religions within its borders—religions that were often tied to particular geographical or ethnic regions. It was not long, however, before Rome insisted that, apart from the exception of Jews, *all* living within the boundaries of the Empire must acknowledge the deity of the Emperor himself and offer a little incense to him from time to time: religion needed to be in the service of the Empire. For Jew and Gentile alike, then, Jesus' words "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" were staggeringly original, evocative, even mysterious.

Two thousand years of subsequent history bear witness that, however poorly Christ's words have at times been thought through and applied, the distinction has never entirely been lost. Sometimes the distinction worked its way out in terms of tussles between the authority of the Pope and the authority of monarchs; sometimes it worked its way out in terms of brutal anti-clericalism; sometimes it worked its way out in terms of various theories of the separation of church and state (the American model is not the only one, of course). But even where people spoke of themselves, rather optimistically, as belonging to "a Christian nation," the vast majority meant by this and similar expressions that Christian ideals were encoded in much of the nation's laws, or that a majority of its citizens belonged to the Christian heritage, or the like. They did *not* mean that the nation was Christian in the same way that, say, the ancient Israelite nation was constituted the covenant people of God, even though from time to time rather risky analogies were drawn.

I shall end with three brief reflections that flow from this biblical element in the theological relationship between church and state:

(1) And as far as I can see, Christianity's contribution in this respect is unique. Where other religions have tried to adopt something like it, it has in part been under Western influence. For instance, Shintoism and Buddhism may recede somewhat in Japan owing to pressures from consumerism, democratic forms of government, and even philosophical materialism. Thus one might be a pretty consistent secularist in Japan, provided one continues to conform to the dictates of expected and approved conduct imposed by a shame culture. But no major religious figure has attempted to introduce into Japan the kind of distinction between church and state that Jesus introduces.

(2) In this respect, Christianity is thoroughly unlike Islam. Its founder never said anything remotely similar to "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." There is no "church" that is somehow distinct from the "state": the *ummah*, the people of Allah, are all those who submit to the will of Allah, and one of the state's functions is to enforce the law of Allah. It has no quasi-independent function. The fond hope of many Western liberals that Islam will eventually develop

in the direction of some sort of similar tension is probably unrealistic: for Islam to develop in this direction, it would have to cease being Islam in the various configurations in which it is known. One of the reasons why it is difficult to imagine exactly how Islam might evolve in this direction springs from the fact that Islam's appeal is not to a God who reaches into a lost world and saves by calling to himself men and women whom he redeems, thus constituting them a separate community *distinct from the state*. Rather, in Islam people are simply expected to submit to Allah. People do not become Muslims by a kind of Islamic form of regeneration, but by willingness to submit to Allah. Muslims do not typically speak of knowing God, or being loved by God, but of submitting to Allah. One could, I suppose, imagine an evolution in Islamic thought that begins to think of the *ummah* as a special community distinguishable from the state by its willed submission to Allah, but in the absence of historical rootage for the distinction introduced by Christ, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's," it is difficult to discern from what corner of its intellectual history this distinction might spring.

Of course, it is unrealistic to think that the various forms of Western democracy, including democracy's characteristic embrace of freedom of religion, owe their existence to nothing other than Christianity: they owe much to the Enlightenment, the peculiar rise in the eighteenth century of the European nation-state, and to several other influences. Yet one of the foundational influences was certainly Christianity, and that includes simultaneous beliefs in a sovereign God who holds us accountable (shared with Islam), and a fundamental distinction (however worked out) between church and state—a distinction that traces back to the Lord Jesus himself.

(3) It cannot be too strongly emphasized that even after Christians have recognized the uniqueness of Jesus' words, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's," much more study and theological synthesis are needed to work out what the relationship between church and state should look like in practical terms. It is one thing to recognize that Jesus mandates some sort of distinction; it is another to spell out the concrete parameters of the distinction. Thus there are Christians today who follow Stanley Hauerwas, for example, who thinks, in effect, that we should not bother trying to reform the state with Christian ideals, but devote our energy to establishing an alternative community. On the other hand, there are theonomists whose placement of law in their theological synthesis demands that they work toward a renewal of the nation such that biblical law will become the law of the land in every domain save where Jesus has specifically abrogated it. Inevitably there is a spectrum of positions between these two poles—and still more variations along quite different axes, too. This is not the place to begin to test representative positions by Scripture. I am merely specifying that all of these theories and their outworkings share something fundamental at the core, something unique to Christianity, something that is traceable back to Jesus Christ.

SBJT: Why is it helpful to compare and contrast Romans 13 and Revelation in considering the role of governing authorities?

Thomas R. Schreiner: First, we shall consider Rom 13:1-7. Believers are com-

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manded to submit to governing authorities. Against some scholars, there is no reference to angelic powers here; the authorities mentioned are secular rulers. We can be confident that human rulers are in view, for taxes are obviously paid to civil authorities, not angels. Paul emphasizes that rulers have been appointed and instituted by God. Seeing God as the one who ordains rulers was not a Pauline innovation but harkens back here to the OT where God's sovereignty over rulers is affirmed regularly (2 Sam 12:8; Prov 8:15-16; Isa 45:1; Jer 27:5-6; Dan 2:21, 37; 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21). Civil authorities are not the ultimate authority. God establishes rulers, and he removes them from power as well. Their authority is delegated and provisional, and, hence, they must not succumb to arrogance.

Since rulers are ordained by God, believers are called upon to submit to authorities (cf. also Titus 3:1). Governing authorities maintain order in society by punishing evil and extolling what is good. Rulers have the right and duty to use the sword to enforce justice against those who practice evil (Rom 13:4). It is likely that the reference to the sword refers to capital punishment, which is enacted upon those who kill with malice aforethought. Again Paul draws upon OT tradition, especially Gen 9:6.

Occasionally Rom 13:1-7 has been interpreted as a treatise, as if Paul comprehensively speaks of the relationship between believers and ruling authorities. We must recall that the admonition is exceedingly brief and was originally written to the Roman churches. Paul did not intend to examine in any detail the role of government. Hence, the exhortations in Romans 13 cannot be used to say that in every possible situation the government must be obeyed. The call to submit represents the normal way that believers should respond to civil rulers. Paul was quite aware from his own experience as a missionary that those in power could act unjustly and thereby promote evil rather than good. Furthermore, the text is forced to say more than it intends if carte blanche authority is assigned to governments. It was simply not Paul's purpose to specify the cases in which faithfulness to God would demand contravention of what the government ordained.

John in Revelation, however, looks at government from another perspective, and we must put together what John says in Revelation 13 with what Paul says in Romans 13 for a more comprehensive view of secular rule. The city of Rome in Revelation represents Babylon with its greed, love of luxury, and immorality (Rev 17:1-19:10). Most significantly, Babylon spills the blood of the saints (Rev 17:6; 18:24; 19:2). Believers lived in a context in which the governing authority oppressed them and even put them to death (Rev 2:12; 6:9-11; 20:4; cf. Rev 3:10). Satan likely finds a home in Pergamum because the emperor cult was practiced there (Rev 2:13). The Roman empire is not presented as a model of justice and righteousness but as a rapacious and inhuman beast that tramples upon and mistreats God's people (Rev 13:1-18). The image of the beast stems from Daniel 7 where the kingdoms of the world are portrayed as inhuman beasts that unleash evil upon their subjects. The beast of Revelation combines the evil characteristics of all the beasts of Daniel 7, so that the Roman empire is viewed as the culmination and climax of the evil rule of human beings. What stands out particularly is that the beast of Revelation

demands supremacy and worship, so that it stands as a rival to Almighty God and the Lamb. The beast has its own prophet speaking on its behalf (Rev 13:11-18), and it lays claim to its own resurrection (Rev 13:3). The beast wields its power over believers, so that it persecutes and slays those who oppose it (Rev 13:7). Whereas Paul focuses on government as an entity that restrains evil, John emphasizes the satanic and demonic character of government. The problem with Rome and every government is the desire for totalitarian rule. Lurking behind the government's demand for absolute commitment and submission is Satan himself, who uses government to advance his own ends so as to procure worship of himself.

It might appear that Revelation represents government run riot as it exercises its insatiable appetite over the lives of others. Indeed, Rome's power comes from Satan himself (Rev 13:4). Nevertheless, God still reigns sovereignly over all the beast does, so that the beast accomplishes nothing apart from God's will. Revelation often refers to God's throne, highlighting the truth that he rules over all (Rev 1:4; 3:21, etc.). The entirety of chapter 4 focuses on God as creator and hence as the sovereign one. So too, Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:5). Even in chapter thirteen which features the beast's rule on earth, John repeatedly remarks that the authority that belongs to the beast "was given" (*edothē*) to him. Most likely, this form is a divine passive, emphasizing that authority was granted to him by God himself. Hence, God allowed him to blaspheme (Rev 13:5), to rule for forty-two months over the entire world (Rev 13:5, 7), and to conquer the saints and put them to death (Rev 13:7). Even the abilities and miracles of the false prophet were given to him (Rev 13:14, 15). Even though God rules over all, evil cannot be ascribed to him. The intentions and motives of Satan and the beast are malicious, but God's intentions and motives are perfect, even though he ultimately reigns and rules over all that happens. John does not attempt to provide any philosophical defense of how God can rule over all things without himself being stained by evil. He simply assumes that God rules over all, and yet at the same time affirms that the evil inflicted by Satan and the beast is horrific and deserving of judgment by God.

Believers await the day when God's reign over the world will be consummated. In the meantime God has ordained governing authorities to prevent anarchy and to regulate lawlessness, so that a measure of peace and order exists in the world. Believers are called upon to submit to these authorities, unless the authorities mandate something that God forbids. NT writers are not naïve about the venality and evil of governing powers. In Revelation the profound evil and even demonic character of the state is unmasked. The *pax Romana* was certainly not the whole story behind Roman rule! Nevertheless, believers are not encouraged to adopt a revolutionary mindset, as if they could bring in the kingdom of God through political change. They are to pay taxes and ordinarily subordinate themselves to authority. Still, their ultimate devotion is to God himself and Jesus as Lord, and hence when government demands totalitarian worship it must be resisted. [Note: The wording here is adapted slightly from the forthcoming book, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Baker, 2008).]

SBJT: One of the most formative books in the history of the West has been Augustine's *The City of God*. What was the context in which it was written, and what was Augustine's main point in the book? Furthermore, what lessons about history and the Christian life can we continue to draw from this seminal work by Augustine?

Michael A. G. Haykin: Augustine wrote this work over the course of fifteen years (412-427) and in the light of the impending fall of the Western Roman Empire. There were a number of key events in the late fourth century that led to this climactic event. But what some have identified as the "true moment of collapse, the moment of irreversible disaster"[1] for Roman imperial power in the West was the crossing by huge numbers of barbarian warriors—Vandals, Suevi, and the (non-Germanic) Alans—over the frozen surface of the Rhine River, Rome's natural frontier in that part of the Empire, during the winter of 406-407.[2] They poured into the western provinces of the Empire, wresting forever those areas of the imperium from Roman rule.

But the event truly emblematic of the passing of Roman might was the three-day sack of Rome in August of 410. Alaric (d. 410), more of a profiteer than determined enemy of Rome, and his Visigoths, who were largely Arian by theological conviction, entered the city on August 24. Over the course of the next three days the symbolic heart of the Empire went through what Augustine would later describe as "devastation, butchery, [and] plundering."[3] A number of leading senators were slain, women were raped, even some who had devoted themselves to celibacy for Christ's sake, and others taken hostage.

Although Rome had long ceased to be the real political heart of the Empire, her status in the early fifth century was iconic, the symbol of an entire way of life, and her sack by a foreign invader—the first since the Celts had taken the city in 390 BC—spoke volumes, however, to a world accustomed to finding meaning below the surface of a text through allegorization.

Pagans, Augustine tells us, were sure that the disaster was attributable to the abandonment of the worship of the old gods, which had taken place during the fourth century when the Roman Emperors declared themselves to be "Christians."[4] Augustine quoted pagans as saying to believers, "Look at all the terrible things happening in Christian times [*tempora Christiana*], the world is being laid waste … and Rome destroyed."[5] This pagan conviction was rooted in the long-held belief that it was Roman *pietas*—namely, Rome's submission to the gods and her fulfillment of her duty towards them—that had guaranteed her earthly triumphs and stability.

Many Christians were equally stunned and shocked by the horrors that had overtaken the city of Rome. Jerome, the translator of the Bible into the Latin Vulgate, for instance, was absolutely overwhelmed by reports that he heard and for a while could do little else but weep.[6] When he did write down his thoughts he did so through the medium of apocalyptic language. "The whole world is sinking into ruin," he told one correspondent.[7] Jerome, like so many other Christians of his day, seems to have been utterly unable to conceive of a Rome-less world.

By Augustine's own admission, *The City of God* was "a long and arduous" task, a "huge work" as he says at its close.[8] The Latin text runs to about a quarter of a mil-

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lion words. Not surprisingly, at times it is repetitious and rambling, replete with diversions and sidebars, as it were. Some of the latter—dealing with subjects like the relationship of true philosophy to skepticism, the meaning of the miraculous, and the Incarnation as an expression of divine humility—are extremely interesting windows into Augustine's thinking.

All of this means that it is not easy to produce a comprehensive summary of the book. But at the book's heart was Augustine's mature reflection on God's purposes in the realm of history, a reflection that sought to be rigorously biblical and that represented a well-thought-out rejection of any vision of history that equated the Kingdom of God with earthly realms. Although the taking of Rome by the Visigoths provided the immediate reason for beginning the work, there is every indication that even if this event had not happened Augustine would have written this massive tome. As Johannes van Oort puts it, "The *City of God* is not an occasional pamphlet that developed into a comprehensive work, but one of Augustine's principal works, written after a long process of maturation."[9]

What abiding lesson may we learn from this seminal work? Obviously, there are many, but one lesson in particular is that Augustine reminds us that the Christian life is a life of pilgrimage. The eternal world to come is the believer's true home. Those who are journeying towards this goal are part of a holy community that lives by faith, hope, and self-denying love, and that is thus marked by humility and obedience to God.[10] Nor can this community be fully identified with any earthly kingdom, for none of these kingdoms are eternal.

In this age, the City of God often goes through tribulation and hardship. Augustine refuses to countenance the fundamentally pagan idea that religious commitment automatically issues in health, wealth, and prosperity. Christians do go through suffering. But, Augustine skillfully argues, suffering is never simply that and nothing else. Rather, it is how suffering is borne. It can be either a curse or a blessing, since it hardens and degrades the godless, but purifies the devout and frees them to seek God and find in him their true wealth and joy.

There is thus an ambiguity about history when it is viewed solely in the light of this age. Both good and bad befall both those in the pilgrim City of God and those inhabitants of the earthly city. No clear distinction can be made between the two communities if one simply looks at the circumstances affecting them. This obviously demands that we view history from its eschatological end-point.

But this also means that Christians cannot stand aloof from the needs of their fellow-citizens for when afflictions come they affect all in an earthly community. Christians therefore can and should be good citizens and involved in the life of the earthly communities surrounding them.[11] As Augustine said in a sermon preached at the time he began work on this massive work:

> I beg you, I beseech you, I exhort you all to be meek, to show compassion on those who are suffering, to take care of the weak; and at this time of many refgees from abroad, to be generous in your hospitality, generous in your good works. Let Christians do what Christ commands, and the blasphemies of the pagans can hurt none but them selves.[12]

ENDNOTES

[1]R. P. C. Hanson, "The Reaction of the Church to the Collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the Fifth Century," *Vigiliae Christianae* 26 (1972): 273.

[2]Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 510-11.

[3]*City of God* 1.7 (*St. Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans* [trans. Henry Bettenson; London: Penguin, 2003], 12).

[4]*City of God* 1.1; *Retractions* 2.69.

[5]*Sermon* 81.7, 9 (*Sermons III (51-94) on the New Testament* (*The Works of Saint Augustine. A translation for the 21st Century*, III/3 [trans. Edmund Hill; Brooklyn, NY: New City, 1991], 364, 365). This sermon was preached in either 410 or 411 and represents one of Augustine's earliest responses to the sack of Rome.

[6]*Letters* 126.2; 127.12.

[7]*Letter* 128.5.

[8]*City of God* 1.Preface; 22.30.

[9]Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: Study into Augustine's "City of God" and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 87.

[10]*City of God* 19.23.

[11]*City of God* 19.26.

[12]*Sermon* 81.9 (*Sermons III*, 366).

SBJT: What should the Christian's posture toward the state be?

Jonathan Leeman: Most people, whether Christian or not, assume a posture toward the state somewhere on a spectrum between an old man's cynicism and a young man's optimism (picture Jimmy Stewart in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington").

Thoughtful Christians commonly warn fellow believers against the latter end of this spectrum—against over realizing their eschatologies and over equating the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. Salvation will not come from the state, and a pastor's job is to preach the gospel. Period. Whatever opinions he harbors over health care, minimum wage, or immigration, he has the authority to preach the Word and not one word more (2 Tim 4:2; also, John 7:18).

So cautionary tales are told about the leftward and rightward ventures of mainline Protestantism and the Moral Majority, respectively. (Of course, Emergent and New Perspective stump speeches make one think this tale should be rehearsed more often!)

Postmodern Cynicism

But in our postmodern and media-saturated era, I wonder if the more common sin among the saints is cynicism and apathy. Those are the sins of my post-Vietnam generation, anyhow. Where the modern man had ideological delusions of political grandeur, whether of the Marxist or liberal variety, his postmodern progeny is (ironically) the older cynical man on the spectrum (See Timothy Bewes, *Cynicism and Postmodernism* [London: Verso, 1997]). The Enlightenment ideologies that formerly claimed the faith of the nations were blown to smithereens when the real story was leaked: "It's All About Power Says Postmodernism."

For once, the Christian with his doctrine of original sin can embrace this bit of wisdom from the world. We know that every ideology, whether the West's or the East's, is a form of idolatry (See David T. Koyzis, *Political Visions & Illusions* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003], 15, 22-34). We know that every political hero is deeply fallen.

In the late nineties, the window of

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my office in Washington overlooked the entrance to Monica Lewinsky's lawyers' building. My colleagues and I probably lost several hours of work watching the DC paparazzi swarm as she came and went. In retrospect, what's more remarkable to me than anything Clinton did through the entire affair was the fact that the Republican speaker of the house leading the impeachment charge against Clinton was simultaneously having an affair of his own, as he recently acknowledged.

Sure enough, patriotism is harder to find today than it was in my grandfather's day. It feels clichéd to list off Watergate, Iran-Contra, "Read My Lips," Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, and Abu Ghraib, but these clichés have transformed America's political culture. Cynicism and apathy are in. Why waste your time with politics?

Biblical Response to Cynicism

In jarring contradistinction to such cynicism comes Paul's admonition: "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:1-2). His words strike our condescending ears for several reasons. First, praying typically involves a commitment of the heart that is anything but natural toward those in authority over us. Second, Paul urges Christians to pray with expectation: "*that* we may live peaceful and quiet lives." In other words, pray to the end of effecting change in the political mechanisms responsible for yielding peaceful and quite lives. Prayerfully involve yourself, Christian, in the affairs of the state. Third, Paul surely had more reason to be cynical about government living under Caesar than anyone in the democratic West.

And Paul's example is not the only one which commends a supportive posture toward the state. Joseph's posture was loyal, diligent, and hard-working as he prepared Egypt for famine. Daniel's posture before Darius the Mede was downright reverential, as evident in his exclamation, "O king, live forever!" (Dan 6:21), even if that was a common salute for a king (see Dan 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:6). Even Jesus' command to render to Caesar whatever belongs to him exemplified a certain kind of deference.

In short, Christians should not regard the state with disdain, contempt, or apathy, but with prayer, honor, and reverence. As Paul said speaking of the governing authority, "he is God's servant for your good" (Rom 13:4).

Both the young man's tour-bus naivety and the old man's back-room cynicism result from the same failure to trust Christ. What is cynicism, after all, but the fruit of placing one's hope in the wrong place to begin with.

Like Non-Christian Family Members

The appropriate posture of a Christian toward the state can be analogized, I believe, to a Christian's posture toward non-Christian family members. We Christians desire for our family members to know Christ. But even if they never do, we still hope they will live morally, act justly, work legally, and show compassion. And we act in their lives toward this end, as when we teach our children to be law-abiding citizens, whether they embrace the gospel or not.

We may not be called to love and care

for the nation to the same extent we are called to care for our family members, but the command to love our neighbors as ourselves obligates us to seek the nation's good, including, as occasion permits, through the mechanisms of the state.

I'd even propose that this analogy can be rooted in the structures of redemptive history. In ancient Israel, the mechanisms of the state and of the family were subsumed within covenantal structures. One might say that the Abrahamic and Sinai covenants assigned jobs to the nation-state and to the family. A Jew's religion operated *through* the state and *through* the family. The three spheres overlapped. The IRS and the church offering plate worked together.

Not so under the new covenant. The people of God are no longer defined by political and familial-ethnic boundaries. Jesus' distinction between what's rendered to Caesar and what's rendered to God presumed that the nation state of Israel was no longer sovereign, and the context of Jesus' remarks in all three Synoptic Gospels demonstrates the divine intentionality behind this dramatic shift. Before and after the passage containing Caesar's coin are parables and inquisitions indicating that the Jews' time was up. God was bringing in a new administration. The old office holders were only tenants (e.g., Mark 12:1-12).

Paul's willingness to appeal to Caesar over and against the Jews on a capital matter indicates this same bifurcation of political and spiritual authority (Acts 25:11ff). Indeed, it's at first odd that the latter chapters of Acts would be so consumed with this appeal to Caesar and the movement toward Rome. Yet Luke's movement from Jerusalem in the early chapters of Acts to Rome in the latter chapters clearly has not just missiological implications, but covenantal and political ones (See David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000]). From the Israelite's perspective, church and state were now divided.

Henceforth, no earthly emperor could legitimately claim the name "holy" or the ability to rule by "divine right." Instead, God's people would live in permanent geographic exile, even as they dwell permanently with God. (How deeply ironic and tragic that one significant segment of the church would identify its authority and name with Rome and, for many centuries, alternatively collaborate and compete with the emperor for secular rule.)

Did that mean Paul could blow off the old political, familial, and religious alliances with the wave of a cynical hand? Hardly. Instead, he said, "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel" (Rom 9:3-4). His heart yearned for them.

Are a Christian's family obligations moot? Hardly. "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8).

Just as a Christian should continue to care for his family's welfare, even though the economy of redemption has now placed church and family in different spheres, so a Christian should pray for the nation and seek its good through the mechanisms of the state, even through church and state belong in different spheres.

Render to Democracy

What specifically are we obligated to

render to Caesar in a democratic nation? Pay our taxes, stop at red lights, and generally stay out of trouble?

In fact, I believe we are obligated to render to a democratic Caesar everything the command to love our neighbors requires us to render. You might say we're to render to democracy what belongs to democracy.

Like love's requirements generally, different opportunities and resources will require different levels of engagement from individual to individual, whether voting, lobbying, nominating, candidating, adjudicating, or even participating in civil disobedience. A failure to vote, if one is capable, is arguably a failure to love one's neighbor and, therefore, God. Quite simply, God has placed this and other institutional mechanisms into the Western Christian's hands for securing peace, justice, and mercy.

This means there's no room for cynicism or apathy in a Christian's posture toward the state. As the general public becomes more apathetic, Christians should remain civically informed and engaged. Yet we do so remembering the lines between church and state and between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world.

In the final analysis, it's a deepening understanding of this new covenant gospel that simultaneously compels and constrains the Christian's regard for the state, keeping us from veering toward either cynical indifference or false messianic hopes.

Book Reviews

Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education. By David S. Dockery. B&H Academic, 2007, 288 pp., $19.99 paper.

Martin Luther once warned Christians with these words: "I greatly fear that schools for higher learning are wide gates to hell if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scripture and impress them on the young folk." The great Reformer knew of the importance of Christian education and the development of Christian thinkers, but his great fear of schools as potential "wide gates to hell" is all too justified.

In his new book, *Renewing Minds: Serving Church and Society through Christian Higher Education*, David Dockery proposes that the Christian college or university should not be merely an academic institution with Christian teachers and Christian students, but instead it should be "the academic division of the kingdom enterprise."

Dockery serves as president of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, and that school serves, in substance, as evidence of his vision for Christian higher education. Dockery's central model is the Christian university, combining several disciplines of learning and professional study within its institutional reach. He proposes his own vision for making all of these areas of study accountable to Christian truth.

He also calls for the recovery of the Christian mind and the development of Christian thinkers:

> Our task will be intellectually challenging. The work is not easy, but it is faithful to the calling upon Christ-followers. There is no room for anti-intellectualism in Christian higher education. We are to have the mind of Christ, a concept that certainly requires us to think and wrestle with the challenging ideas of history and the issues of our day. To do otherwise would result in another generation of God's people becoming ill-equipped for faithful thinking and service in this still-new century. A Christian worldview is needed to help interpret an ever-changing culture. Instead of allowing our thoughts to be captivated by culture, we must take every thought captive to Jesus Christ.

To their shame, many Christian institutions of learning fall short of a model of responsible Christian scholarship. Dockery calls for a reversal of this trend and a reassertion of the scholarly vocation and responsibility.

> In his words:
> Serious scholarship is often described as "a search for knowledge or a quest for truth," phrases so familiar as to be clichés in higher education. Our task must not be described carelessly or flippantly. When we speak of scholarship from a Christian perspective, we speak of more than scholarship done by Christians. Rather, we speak of a passion for learning based on the supposition that all truth is God's truth. Thus, as Christian scholars related together in a learning community, we are to seek to take every thought captive to Christ.

But the recovery of Christian scholarship and the development of young Christian minds also requires the recovery of the vocation of the teacher. Even as many of the most prestigious academic institutions in the land elevate research above teaching, the Christian school can never forget the central role of the teacher in the educational process. At the same time, those teachers must be practicing scholars who model the academic vocation and the life of the mind.

> Dockery explains,
>
> In the large majority of Christian universities, it is teaching that is rightly prized and prioritized, but we also need a complementary place for Christian scholarship. Rightly understood, Christian scholarship is not contrary to either faithful teaching or Christian piety. Christian scholarship provides a foundation for new discovery and creative teaching as well as the framework for passing on the unified truth essential to the advancement of Christianity.
> This revealed truth is the foundation of all we believe, teach, and do. We believe that this God-revealed truth is the framework in which we understand and interpret our world, the events of human history as well as our responsibilities toward God and one another in this world. This is what it means for us to advance the Christian intellectual tradition and to love God with our hearts, our strength, and our minds.

Renewing Minds is a genuine and helpful contribution to evangelical scholarship. Furthermore, it comes from one who leads a major Christian university and has earned the credibility to set forth his vision. This book should be read by pastors, parents, educators—and all who share a passion to see the renewal of Christian minds in this generation.

R. Albert Mohler Jr.

Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize? By Robert L. Plummer. Paternoster Biblical Monographs. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006, 190 pp., $25.00 paper

When Christians want to motivate each other to spread the gospel, passages like Matt 28:19f or 1 Pet 3:15 quickly come to mind. But it is not all that obvious which passage from Paul's letters should be used. This is all the more surprising as Paul is the missionary *par excellence* in the New Testament and as all of his letters were written in the context of the early Christian mission. Robert Plummer, Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, addresses this observation head on and asks in the present volume: "Did the apostle Paul expect the early Christian communities to evangelize?"

Plummer sets out with a detailed survey of research on approaches to the continuity between the mission of Paul and the mission activity of the churches that he founded (1-42). Plummer rightly observes a dichotomy in scholarship: "Some scholars argue that Paul's writings reflect only a passive or supportive missionary vision for his churches in distinct discontinuity with his own centrifugal mission. Others see evidence for greater continuity between the apostle's own outward-directed missionary labors and his evangelistic expectations of his churches" (41f). In chapter two, "The Church's Mission in the Pauline Letters: A Theological Basis for Apostolic Continuity" (43-70), Plummer argues that the nature of the gospel is powerful and dynamic: it is God's effective, self-diffusing word, spread by the apostle(s) and all other Christians. "Paul speaks of the gospel as a dynamic entity that propelled both him (as an apostle) and the churches (as gospel-created and gospel empowered entities) into the further spread of God's word" (67). He further sets Paul's theology of mission within the broader New Testament understanding of the church's mission. The chapter closes with all too brief observations on the discontinuity of missionary activity between the Old Testament and the New Testament (which in view of Plummer's emphasis on the effective word of God would have deserved more attention!) and a mere two pages on the co-workers of Paul who form a close link between the mission of Paul and the mission of the Pauline communities. In view of its importance for Plummer's case, the effective and dynamic nature of God's word in the Old Testament as a backdrop for the proclamation of the gospel deserves more than a few lines. This lack of detail is the one weakness in Plummer's otherwise persuasive treatment of a question crucial for our understanding of Paul as well as the nature of the missionary task in the early church and today.

Chapter three examines the instructions to spread the gospel in Paul's letters (71-105). Plummer finds the following Pauline exhortations to witness actively: Phil 1:12-18; 2:14-16; Eph 6:15, 17, 18-20 and 1 Cor 4:16; 7:12-16; 11:1; 14:23-25. He concludes,

> There can be no doubt that Paul instructs and approves of his churches actively proclaiming the gospel. In Philippians, Ephesians, and 1 Corinthians … Paul commands the churches to declare the gospel, to be prepared to do so, or to imitate him in the way that he strives for the salvation of non-Christians. Also, in Philippians, we saw that Paul approvingly mentions that ordinary Christians in his current setting have been emboldened to preach the gospel because of his example (96).

Plummer also discusses reasons why Paul has not addressed the missionary task of the communities more often (96). In addition, there is an expectation to witness passively in 2 Cor 6:3-7, 1 Thess 2:5-12, and Titus 2:1-10 (slaves are charged to adorn the gospel, i.e., to make it attractive through their behaviour).

Chapter four gathers "Incidental Evidence that Paul Expected the Churches to Spread the Gospel in the Apostolic Pattern" (107-39). Paul expected that the gospel would pro-

pel the church in missionary activity that paralleled his own apostolic mission. He also expected that other facets of his apostolic mission would be replicated in the life of the church, namely signs, wonders, and miracles in confirmation of the proclamation of the gospel, prayer for missions: "Paul prayed for the churches' relationship with outsiders, for the churches' internal spiritual health, and (in all likelihood) for his own mission. Paul expected the churches to also pray for the same things. The apostolic ministry of prayer is replicated in the churches" (116). The teaching and "building up" of the church was also part of Paul's expansive missionary vision which he expected to be replicated in his congregations (107-21), together with the apostolic pattern of suffering (121-38). The pattern of suffering in the early church is a powerful argument for the church's missionary nature as it demonstrates that the dynamic and offensive gospel was progressing effectively through its adherents. Plummer concludes that

> Paul thought of all but the non-repeatable functions of his apostleship as devolving upon the churches. The cumulative witness … gives us grounds for concluding that Paul viewed the church as continuing his apostolic mission (minus non-repeatable functions). We would expect nothing less than such missionary activity from an entity defined by the same self-diffusing gospel as its apostolic founder (138).

Plummer concludes by offering a summary of his study and drawing implications (141-45): "Just like the ancient churches that Paul addressed, modern churches should be active in proclaiming the gospel, suffering for the gospel, authenticating the gospel by their behaviour, confirming the gospel through miracles, building-up the church, and praying for missions and the church" (144). A full bibliography (147-75) and an index of scripture and authors round off the volume.

Plummer offers a short, but succinct study of a significant aspect of early Christian mission. Despite the limited textual evidence that is available, he demonstrates that beyond the apostles and the band of their co-workers, all Christians were called and expected to spread the gospel. This is also to be expected in view of the rapid spread of Christianity from the very beginning. Plummer's study raises a number of important implications for the mission of the church today. Monastic orders, missionary societies, para-church organisations, evangelists, or other certain gifted individuals cannot fulfil the missionary task for the church, nor should they attempt to do so. Close relationships and cooperation with churches will grant them validity and legitimacy. The most effective way of returning the missionary task to the church "is to teach and preach the gospel accurately. Because the gospel is self-diffusive, when it truly dwells in a congregation, that congregation will experience 'spontaneous expansion', empowered by God's word and presence" (144f). Plummer's stress on the effective, self-diffusing nature of the gospel carries missiological implications but also implications for the nature of the church. If this word of God is no longer sufficiently or correctly proclaimed, the church divests itself of its dynamism and vitality. No programmes whatsoever will be able to replace this force on the long run. The last words belong to Plummer: "While Paul does speak of the missionary task entrusted to him as an *obligation*, it is more comprehensively described as a natural overflow of the dynamic gospel's presence in his life. The church also, because it is created and characterized by the same gospel, must be an active missionary community" (145).

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Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation. By Graeme Goldsworthy. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006, 341 pp., $29.00.

Graeme Goldsworthy, a retired lecturer from Moore Theological College, Sydney, carries his passion for biblical theology and applies it to the discipline of hermeneutics. As the title of this work suggests, Goldsworthy unashamedly seeks to develop a thorough-going evangelical hermeneutic. The book is divided into three parts. Part one, "Evangelical Prolegomena to Hermeneutics," considers the foundations and presuppositions of evangelical exegesis, interpretation, and theology. Goldsworthy strongly affirms that the Bible has a single, coherent

message—a message that centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ: "At the heart of evangelicalism is the belief that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation to mankind of God's mind, and the defining fact of human history. The person and work of Jesus provide us with a single focal point for understanding reality" (21). Because neutrality and complete objectivity are presuppositional myths, it is better to declare our assumptions up front. Thus, he explains that his evangelical presuppositions (e.g., grace alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, faith alone), as well as his gospel-centered hermeneutics are Christocentric. He states, "For hermeneutics to be gospel-centered, it must be based on the person of Jesus Christ" (58). He then gives the reader a sampling of his biblical theology by examining (1) Creation and Fall, (2) Torah, (3) Wisdom, (4) Prophets, (5) the Gospels, (6) Acts, (7) the Epistles, and (8) Revelation. Only when the progression of biblical revelation is understood can we accurately interpret the Bible.

Part two, entitled "Challenges to Evangelical Hermeneutics," is a survey and critique of the history of hermeneutics. Goldsworthy addresses several influences that have caused the gospel to be minimized or ignored throughout the history of the church. He traces how the intrusion of inconsistent presuppositions and unbiblical philosophies resulted in the true gospel message being eclipsed in (1) the early church, (2) the medieval church, (3) Roman Catholicism, (4) liberalism, (5) philosophical hermeneutics, (6) historical criticism, (7) literary criticism, and (8) evangelicalism.

Perhaps the most interesting and relevant chapter in this section is the final one, which evaluates the eclipse of the gospel in evangelicalism. He first mentions the danger of Quietism (or evangelical Docetism), which relates to those who claim they do not make decisions because the Holy Spirit makes them for us. In this case, the "human characteristics of the biblical documents are ignored" and "historical and biblical theological context are regarded as irrelevant" (168). Literalism (or evangelical Zionism) fails to correctly understand both the progressive nature of biblical revelation and the use of figurative language in the Bible. Thus, some (wrongly) insist that certain prophecies in the OT must be interpreted literally—especially those prophecies related to the restoration of the nation of Israel. One problem with a literalistic approach is that the NT authors do not interpret OT prophecies literally. A third danger, legalism (or evangelical Judaism) highlights humanity's desire to merit salvation. Decisionism (or evangelical Bultmannism) involves the calling for decisions to follow Jesus without telling people *why* they should make such a decision. Goldsworthy comments, "The problem is not in the call for decision. The error of decisionism is to dehistoricize the gospel and to make the decision the saving event" (174). Subjectivism (or evangelical Schleiermacherism) is the trend to elevate feelings over thinking. It is the idea that if something *feels* right, then it must *be* right. The problem is that such a focus on emotions "is in fact a form of reader-response hermeneutics in which the reader, often under the guise of being led by the Spirit, determines the meaning of the text" (176). A sixth danger, Jesus-in-my-heart-ism (or evangelical Catholicism), puts too much emphasis on God's grace as a kind or spiritual infusion into the life of the Christian and tends to minimize the focus of God's grace in the historic gospel event of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. As Goldsworthy says, "The gospel is seen more as what God is doing *in* me now, rather than what God did *for* me then" (176). Further, the NT does not speak in terms of asking Jesus into one's heart, nor does it ever teach us to pray to Jesus. Finally, Goldsworthy discusses the dangers of evangelical pluralism and evangelical pragmatism.

The third part of the book, "Reconstructing Evangelical Hermeneutics," considers the role of critical evangelical approaches to the literature, history, and theology of the Bible. After highlighting some pre- and post-Enlightenment evangelical interpretation, Goldsworthy offers three key principles: (1) the sole content of Scripture is Christ (unity), (2) Scripture is self-authenticating (authority), and (3) Scripture is self-interpreting (meaning). The literary dimension of Scripture is then examined. This chapter includes a brief section on linguistics, speech-act theory, and double-agency discourse. The historical dimension examines the importance of history in evangelical hermeneutics. The section on theology is divided into two chapters: (1)

the two testaments and typology and (2) biblical and systematic theology. Next, Goldsworthy discusses the role of contextualization in the hermeneutical process, including a helpful section on contextualization and the translation of the Bible. The final chapter offers a summary of how Christ must be the ultimate aim and interpretive center of evangelical hermeneutics. This chapter ends with some practical suggestions for reading and studying the Bible.

Overall I found this book helpful in painting the big picture of hermeneutics. We are reminded that the science (and art) of hermeneutics does not merely involve a step-by-step method of interpreting the Bible or certain principles for interpreting the various genres of Scripture. Goldsworthy's aim is to stress the importance of biblical theology in the interpretation process. As he states in his book, "I want to commend the much neglected role of biblical theology in hermeneutical practice" (15). Before we seek to interpret an individual text we must first of all understand the flow of redemptive history. The stress on Christ as the focus of hermeneutics is also a good reminder. Goldsworthy reminds us that "the prime question to put to every text is about how it testifies to Jesus" (252). This Christ-centered approach also applies to the OT because God has given us a unified message.

I was not, however, completely satisfied with the book. At times (especially in part two) I felt that it was so philosophical and academic that the average pastor or Bible interpreter would quickly lose interest. Goldsworthy provides a solid foundation for biblical hermeneutics but rarely carries these principles through to provide concrete examples. His discussion of hermeneutics remains somewhat abstract. As such, I would not recommend this book as a main textbook for a college or seminary course on hermeneutics. It may, however, serve as a secondary text to highlight evangelical presuppositions and the need for biblical theology. Another shortcoming of the book is Goldsworthy's dependence on secondary literature. Although he readily admits this in his book (87, 107), it seems that in the end it would have paid off to examine and quote from original sources.

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Theology: The Basic Readings. By Alister McGrath. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008, xxi + 210 pp., $24.95 paper.

The prolific Oxford professor Alister McGrath has added a new item to his bibliographical tapestry—another volume of readings in theology. This volume is much smaller than his earlier work, *The Christian Theology Reader*, and has a less ambitious goal. The book is a companion to McGrath's other new work, *Theology: The Basics*, and, like that book it is intended for an audience that knows little or nothing about theology. As McGrath notes, "It *assumes* that you know virtually nothing about the subject" (xi, italics his). The volume contains some good selections from historical sources, mostly orthodox, but his selection of more contemporary authors leaves something to be desired. Various liberals, feminists, and neoorthodox theologians are cited, but little from modern evangelical writers. Still, the book is a good resource and can be used effectively in an introductory course on theology. The price is somewhat prohibitive at $75.00 for the cloth edition and $25.00 for the paperback in such a slim volume. Perhaps Blackwell might consider a more "Basic" price for the volume.

Chad Owen Brand

Passionate Conviction: Contemporary Discourses on Christian Apologetics. Edited by Paul Copan and William Lane Craig. Nashville: B & H, 2007, viii + 280 pp., $19.99 paper.

Here is another fine work in apologetics published by B & H Publishers in Nashville. Copan and Craig assembled a very fine team of writers to deal with a set of specific contemporary issues in apologetic discourse. Especially helpful are the chapters by Jay Richards on contemporary issues in design argument and Francis Beckwith's chapter on moral relativism. The essay by N. T. Wright on the resurrection of Jesus is a very fine piece of historical work done in a short essay. His discussions of the rise of resurrection belief in Judaism is very helpful, as is his defense of the bodily nature of Jesus' resurrection over against those theologians who want instead to argue for some form of spiritual exaltation of the Savior

after his death.

Craig Hazen of Biola University has also contributed a helpful essay on Christianity in the world of religions. Among other points, he notes that the very fact that nearly all world religions co-opt Jesus for their own purposes ought to make us pay attention to Christianity as the central religious tradition which ought to be examined and evaluated by everyone. R. Scott Smith's essay on MacLaren and the Emergent tradition is also incisive. He notes that the emergent people are asking important questions, but coming up for the most part with the wrong answers. Gary Habermas also wrote a very fine piece on emotional doubt, an article that can be helpful for pastors to use with their church members.

In all, this is a very good book. I was a bit disappointed in a book on "Contemporary Discourses" that there was no substantive discussion of Presuppositionalism. Also, it is obvious that the contributors are all (or nearly all) out of the libertarian tradition.

Chad Owen Brand

Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study. By Markus Bockmuehl. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006, 297 pp., $21.99.

Markus Bockmuehl has contributed a thought-provoking book that illuminates the way for future productive New Testament study. The work is the first in the Studies in Theological Interpretation series and reads like a conglomeration of essays with an intended order and shape, beginning with the problem, moving toward a proposed solution, and concluding with illustrative case studies. Bockmuehl—professor of biblical and early Christian studies at the University of St. Andrews—argues that in order to survive as an intellectual discipline, New Testament studies must focus more carefully upon effective history (i.e., the history of the text's effect upon the church) and upon the text's implied readings and readers.

Bockmuehl begins with a discussion of Simon Marmion's miniature, *St. Luke Painting the Virgin and Child*, in which Luke is depicted painting a portrait of the virgin and child that is "deliberately and strikingly different" from the reality sitting before him (16). In Luke's version, the pair appears less messy and more heavenly. Bockmuehl argues that the scholar is similar to Marmion—"painting the biblical author painting Christ" (19). The scholar must reckon with the "real" empirical image *and* the one viewed through the lens of the biblical author. Biblical exegesis "fails to do justice to both if it denies either their difference or their sameness" (20). Bockmuehl contends that all interpreters can benefit from the rediscovery that adequate interpretation will ultimately resemble Marmion's task.

The book proceeds in three stages: (1) taking stock of the problem, (2) exploring implied readers and readings, and (3) "remembering the Christ" (24). Chapter 1 examines current predicaments in New Testament studies, as well as past "rescue attempts," offering two suggestions for ways forward: (1) effective history and (2) implied readings and readers. Chapter 2 describes the "implied exegete" whom the biblical texts themselves envision—namely, a believing disciple. Chapter 3 turns to implied readings, arguing that the text ultimately "intends believers' instruction, encouragement, and hope" (119). Chapter 4 considers the relationship between Peter and Paul with regard to the reception history of the post-apostolic period. Chapter 5 provides an illustration of the organic link between text and church through the work of British scholar E. C. Hoskyns.

In the final two chapters, Bockmuehl moves to the third stage of the book, "remembering the Christ." Chapter 6 argues for the importance of living memory in the apostolic period. Chapter 7 considers the implications of the gradual rediscovery of Jesus' Jewish identity in New Testament scholarship. Lastly, a summary epilogue closes the book.

Bockmuehl has clearly demonstrated that there is a problem in New Testament studies. He argues persuasively that the discipline fails to manifest "anything approaching a consensus about even its purpose and object" (39) and that the future of New Testament studies as a publicly accepted academic discipline is questionable at best. While Bockmuehl's remedy will likely not convince everyone, he succeeds in posing the problem in such a way as to elicit a sense of urgency for seeking some kind of solution.

His critique of traditional "rescue attempts" also appears accurate. On the one hand, modern historical-

criticism has been short-sighted, tending to neglect that, given the theological nature of the New Testament, there can be "no objective history—and certainly no neutral historian" (45). On the other hand, postmodern ideological criticism has not fared any better, curiously combining suspicion of the motives of the biblical authors with a naïve credulity toward its own agenda (51). Both routes suffer from the same weakness: failure to be self-critical. At this point the reader is set up nicely for Bockmuehl's solution.

Indeed, his solution—effective history and implied readings and readers—appears promising. Viewing the New Testament as the Scripture of the church, even if merely from a phenomenological vantage point, is a fruitful endeavor "for any approach that aims to do justice to the texts themselves, let alone to their historic footprint" (64). For those of us who hold the Bible as the rule of faith, it is especially beneficial to view the text as whole, given by God to shape his people. But even if one were not to share this presupposition, there are conceivable benefits to studying it the way Bockmuehl describes, since this is the way the text appears to present itself, and this is the way that the majority of the church has received it.

Moreover, Bockmuehl's emphasis upon implied readings and readers is also to be welcomed. For a work of the magnitude of the Bible, a reading *with* the grain of the text, rather than against it, seems only fair. Of course, this kind of approach will inevitably create a sharp division between "interpretations that seek to hear and expound the text and those that intend primarily to subvert it" (74). In this case, Bockmuehl's proposal will no doubt hold out more promise for those of the former persuasion than those of the latter. Yet, one wonders if this is such a bad prospect; any great piece of literature deserves at least a mildly sympathetic reading.

Therefore, Bockmuehl provides good stimulus for rethinking New Testament interpretation. At the same time, the book suffers from two weaknesses. First, despite its witty and thought-provoking individual chapters, it is not particularly well-constructed as a whole. To be sure, a general shape is present. But the chapters and their arguments are not put together in a fashion that convincingly establishes a thesis. The book begins strongly enough, with a statement of the problem and two suggestions for ways forward. But soon enough Bockmuehl's forest often cannot be seen for the trees. For example, his chapter on Peter and Paul feels unexpected and awkwardly placed, and even more so does the chapter on E. C. Hoskyns. To a slightly lesser degree, the same could be said of the following two chapters. In themselves, the chapters are interesting and suitably-crafted, but as a whole they have the appearance of a disparate collection of essays that have a common theme but do not flow together to make a tightly-woven argument.

Second, with all the discussion of implied readers, one cannot help but wonder who Bockmuehl's own implied reader may be. On the one hand, his argument for canonical, theological interpretation of the Bible will find a ready-made audience with those of us who already take the Bible as an inspired whole. Yet Bockmuehl will no doubt have a much tougher time convincing those who do not share his assumptions. This would be fine if it did not seem as though he were sometimes appealing to these very people. He writes that "students of Christian faith, of other faiths, or of no faith can find their own understanding of the New Testament honed and interrogated by a plural but common conversation about the object of these writings" (231-32). While on some level a "common conversation" may be a possibility, one wonders what the incentive to join the conversation would be for someone with a radically different approach (e.g., a postmodern deconstructionist). Bockmuehl would need to provide much more evidence to convince someone like this that his ways forward are truly viable for interpreters of all stripes.

In the end, Bockmuehl has succeeded in highlighting a serious difficulty in New Testament studies. He has also provided two important avenues for resolving this difficulty. The book is an interesting and stimulating read for the sympathetic reader. That it will convince the unsympathetic reader is unlikely. However, Bockmuehl's proposals for future New Testament study appear to be headed in the right direction and should provide good impetus for further work on the subject.

Andy Hassler

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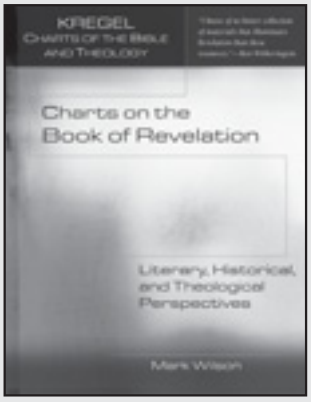

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