

# POLITICAL POLYTHEISM

## THE MYTH OF PLURALISM

God	President	
Man	Vice President	

Man	President	
God	Vice President	

Man	President	
Satan	Vice President	

Satan	President	
Man	Vice President	

Vote For One

GARY NORTH

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# **POLITICAL POLYTHEISM**

The Myth of Pluralism

‘Not by might, not by power, but by  
my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.’  
Zechariah 4:6b

**Gary North**

Institute for Christian Economics  
Tyler, Texas

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This book is dedicated to the  
members, living and dead, of the

Reformed Presbyterian Church  
of North America (“Covenantors”)

who for 190 years have  
smelled a rat in Philadelphia

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## FOREWORD

*And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh (Eccl. 12:12).*

This book was never intended to stand alone. It grew out of a series of shorter appendixes that I had added to my book, *Tools of Dominion*.<sup>1</sup> For that matter, so did my two other books, *Dominion and Common Grace* (1987)<sup>2</sup> and *Is the World Running Down? (1988)*.<sup>3</sup> All this from an economic commentary on three chapters in Exodus.

These books should be taken as a unit. It would not be a bad idea to consider the other books in the series that I call *The Dominion Covenant: The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (1982), *Moses and Pharaoh* (1985), and *The Sinai Strategy* (1986).<sup>4</sup> They all constitute my attempt to offer a specifically Christian economics, and to a lesser extent, to offer preliminary outlines of a specifically Bible-based social theory.

The reader should understand that I really do my best to live up to the slogan that drives me onward: "You can't beat something with nothing." I am trying to lay the biblical foundations of an alternative society to humanism's present social order. No single book can possibly accomplish such a task. No set of books can. I am trying to set an example with my economic commentaries: verse-by-verse commentaries that are narrowly focused on one academic subject or one social topic. This has never been attempted in Church history, so I

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1. *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

2. *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

3. *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

4. *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987); *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985); and *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986).



know I will make mistakes. To show that such commentaries are at least possible is one of my major goals.

### What Is This Book All About?

This book must be seen for what it is: an attempt to clear the deck of an intellectual mistake that stretches back to the early Church's philosophical defenders of the faith. That disastrous mistake was to regard Stoic natural law theory as the equivalent of biblical law. I do not deal in detail with the early Church fathers in this book, however. I deal with more recent variations of this ancient error. Christians have made a similar compromise with Newtonian natural law for slightly over three centuries. Isaac Newton rather than Plato or Aristotle is the intellectual force to be reckoned with today, or at least he has been until quite recently. The rise of quantum physics in the 1920's and then, in the 1980's, chaos theory, in principle overthrew the Newtonian synthesis, but no clear alternative, socially or theoretically, has been put in its place. On this point, see *Is the World Running Down?*, mentioned previously.

This book should not be regarded as presenting the case for biblical theocracy, although I certainly believe in biblical theocracy. R. J. Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Craig Press, 1973) and Greg L. Bahnsen's *By This Standard* (Institute for Christian Economics, 1985) do that adequately. Nor does this book try to spell out the details of what such a biblical theocracy might look like. Many specifics are found in *Tools of Dominion*. What I do in this book is to present the case, as clearly as I can, yet with all the details necessary to prove my case, that the proposed *Christian* alternatives to biblical theocracy that have been suggested by major twentieth-century Christian commentators do not stand up to the rigorous test of Scripture. These schemes are faithful neither to the Bible nor to the ethical and legal standards of modern humanism. Thus, I classify them as way stations, either for converts to Christianity who are coming into the faith or for neo-evangelical liberals on their way out. These pluralist alternatives are halfway houses for the intellectually wounded. They are halfway covenant systems.

This book shows what in principle cannot work for Christianity, either philosophically and socially, and it shows what did not work in the American colonial period. Other Christian historians have blamed the excessive biblicism of our colonial forefathers for the failures of the early experiments in Christian political order (see Chapter 5). I,

on the other hand, blame their lack of development of the biblical knowledge that they possessed.

There is a predictable progression in the deterioration of an established biblical culture. It begins with the abandonment of the concept of revealed biblical law. The implications of this moral and judicial defection spread rapidly (perhaps even simultaneously) to biblical philosophy. Then these errors move outward from the individual moral will and mind to social institutions: ecclesiastical, familial, and political. In short, compromises are made in certain areas of thought and life at an earlier stage that steadily work their way into all the other areas. Christians negotiate away their inheritance on a piecemeal basis, generation by generation, always protesting that what they are doing is in fact a consistent outworking of "Christian principles."

This book is not an attempt to refute every modern Christian thinker who has compromised with the humanist enemy. If it were, I would face the writing problem described by the Apostle John: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen" (John 21:25). I refer in the text and footnotes to many authors, but only because I am targeting their ideas. Only in the chapters in Part 2 do I single out a few key thinkers as sufficiently important to warrant a whole chapter, and in Appendix B.

I begin with a pair of premises: 1) there is no religious neutrality; 2) there are no political vacuums. Everything else follows.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him (Ps. 2:9-12).

We cannot help but see, then, how far the infallible moral instruction of this psalm is removed from the pluralist political theories of our day. By contending that civil policy should not be based upon or favor any one distinctive religion or philosophy of life (but rather balance the alleged rights of all conflicting viewpoints), pluralism ultimately takes its political stand with secularism in refusing to “kiss the Son” and “serve Jehovah with fear.” The pluralist approach transgresses the first commandment by countenancing and deferring to different ultimate authorities (gods) in the area of public policy. Instead of exclusively submitting to Jehovah's law with fear and openly following God's enthroned Son, the pluralist attempts the impossible task of honoring more than one master in civil legislation (Matt. 6:24) – a kind of “political polytheism.”

Greg L. Bahnsen (1989)\*

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\*Bahnsen, “The Theonomic Position,” in Gary Scott Smith (ed.), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), p. 30.

## PREFACE

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship bath righteousness with unrighteousness.> and what communion bath light with darkness? (II Cor. 6:14).*

There is a perpetual conflict throughout history: the war between light and darkness. The story of man's history is the 'story of this conflict. The historical question is: Which side, if either, will progressively become victorious in world civilization? For almost eighteen centuries, Christians have disagreed on the answer to this crucial question.

There is a related question: What will be the visible marks of the victorious civilization's triumph over the loser's civilization? If Christianity wins, how will people know? If anti-Christianity wins, how will people know? One obvious answer is: *by the civil legal order governing the nations.*<sup>1</sup> This answer is deeply resisted by the vast majority of Christians today, but it was a major foundation of world evangelism in the Old Covenant — an evangelism program that the Israelites failed to pursue. The righteousness of biblical law was designed by God to put the pagan world under conviction.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the -LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who bath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that bath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:5-8).

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1. Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for Government* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

One reason why the Israelites failed to pursue a systematic program of world evangelism is because God's program required covenantal faithfulness, manifested in public justice and personal dealings — relationships governed by God's law and enforced covenantally: family, Church, and State. This program of world evangelism required the Israelites to obey God's civil laws both at home and abroad. Their failure to obey at home led to their failure to bring the message of spiritual deliverance to the world. Instead, they were repeatedly delivered by God into the world, as foreign invaders captured the reigns of power inside the nation, or else captured the people and sent them into slavery abroad.

It is my contention that the failure of worldwide Christian evangelism today is to a large degree the result of a similar failure of God's people to proclaim and pursue covenantal civil standards for their own societies. There are at least seven hundred different plans for converting the world to Christ now in operation.<sup>2</sup> Not one of them seems to be working well enough to offer much hope that the whole world will be converted in time to save the souls of some five billion non-Christian people who are already alive.

What is the problem? Here is one major problem: if the whole world were to convert tomorrow to faith in Jesus Christ, American Christians (where the major centers of evangelism are located in the twentieth century) would be unable to answer the inevitable question: What should we do, now that we believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?" Americans have offered no explicitly biblical covenantal civil model to the world. So, God withholds His Spirit. He has suffered enough embarrassment on this score already. He waits. He waits for American Christians to abandon their present mixed theology: the theology of religious pluralism.

### *Intellectual Schizophrenia*

It is clear to most people that in these final days of the twentieth century, anti-Christianity is triumphant institutionally and internationally. In the West and the Far East, humanism controls the media, the educational systems (especially higher education), civil

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2. David B. Barrett and James W. Reapsome, *Seven Hundred Plum to Evangelize the World: The rise of a global evangelization movement* (Birmingham, Alabama: New Hope, 1988). This is a publication of the Foreign Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

governments, and the economies of this world. It controls almost every visible institution.<sup>3</sup>

Wherever humanism's monopoly increases, it becomes ever-more vicious. The slaughter of a few thousand unarmed Chinese students by the military in June of 1989 was only a comparatively mild-mannered manifestation of Communism's long-term tactics of terrorizing civilian populations. What was different about this mass execution was the presence of satellite television, which made visible to hundreds of millions of Westerners something that had been going on quietly and systematically in Communist societies since 1917. What the world saw take place in Tiananmen square is humanism unchained from the restraint of Christianity.

Nevertheless, for about eighteen centuries, Christian philosophers and social theorists have tried to smooth over the inherent religious differences between covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers. Christian intellectual leaders have repeatedly adopted the philosophical systems of their mortal enemies in the name of a "higher synthesis," a supposedly creative common ground between light and darkness. Even those scholars who recognize clearly that Christianity and humanism are rival creeds based on radically different views of God, man, law, and time, still cling to the temporarily convenient fiction that there can be a permanent political cease-fire between the two systems. Following Rushdoony's lead, I call this "intellectual schizophrenia."

#### Gary Scott Smith

We can see this operational intellectual schizophrenia quite clearly in the writings of Christian historian Gary Scott Smith, who calls himself a principled pluralist. He has pointed to the earlier intellectual schizophrenia of American colonial social theorists. First, he admits that most of the colonists were Christians, and Reformed, Calvinistic Christians at that:

Reformed theology was carried to the shores of America by English Puritans in the 1620s. From the founding of Plymouth to the American Revolution, about 80 percent of the colonists were adherents of Reformed

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3. Only the Islamic Middle East is exempted. Here, a much older enemy of Christianity rules, and in much of the Middle East, humanism has made major inroads. The absence of veils on Muslim women is the most visible manifestation of this change. Not even the Ayatollah Khomeini could get young Iranian women to put on veils. There are limits to every tyranny. A change in women's fashions, once established, will always mark the limits of any tyranny.

theology who belonged to various denominations: Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, Dutch Reformed, German Reformed, and other smaller Calvinistic communions.<sup>4</sup>

Second, he correctly observes that ‘the new American nation, as it emerged in the late eighteenth century, was built upon an eclectic foundation.’<sup>5</sup> He identifies three cultural streams in this eclectic political river: radical Whiggism, Enlightenment thought (several European traditions), and “the Judeo-Christian tradition.” (His summary rests on the implied distinction between radical Whiggism and the Enlightenment — a false distinction — and the implied connection between the ethics of Judaism and Christianity — a false connection.)<sup>6</sup>

Third, he observes: “During the Revolutionary era Christians failed to develop a distinctly biblical understanding of political thought that differed sharply with Enlightenment rationalism.”<sup>8</sup> If he is speaking of Scottish Enlightenment thought — the right wing of the European Enlightenment — which I presume that he is, then he is correct.

Fourth, he acknowledges the inherent incompatibility of the two systems: “Christian and Enlightenment world views, though resting upon very different presuppositions, combined to furnish principles that guided the development of the American political system. . . . American society has continued to blend or amalgamate Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment principles to the present day, and this ideological synthesis still molds our political consciousness and concerns.”<sup>8</sup> Note his phrase, “ideological synthesis.”

What is remarkable — no, what is utterly astonishing — is his continuing commitment to the operational validity and moral integrity of this “ideological synthesis.” We have no choice in the matter, he

4. Gary Scott Smith, Introduction, Smith (ed.), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), p. 4.

5. *Idem.*

6. See Chapter 6, below.

7. That there has never been a Judeo-Christian tradition is one of those obstinate facts of history that do not faze Christian social commentators, as well as humanistic commentators. Jews know better. See Arthur Cohen, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition* (New York: Schocken, 1971). See also Gary North, *The Judeo-Christian Tradition: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

8. Smith, *God and Politics*, p. 5.

9. *Idem.*

believes, since there is no explicitly biblical covenant model for civil government.

Neither general principles nor specific New Testament laws teach that Christ expects nations to be formally committed to Him. The New Testament does not even imply that God will work in special ways through individual nations, as He did through Old Testament Israel. Instead, the gospels and the epistles emphasize that God's primary agent in the world is the church, which consists of individuals drawn from many nations. The limited New Testament statements about political life suggest that nations will not be distinctively Christian and that they will contain mixed populations of believers and unbelievers (see Matt. 13:24-30).<sup>10</sup>

He is a master of verbal legerdemain. "Keep your eye on the pea under the shell," he calls to his intended victims. "Neither general principles nor specific New Testament laws teach that Christ expects nations to be formally committed to Him." He is assuming what he first needs to prove. I challenge him to prove that the Old Testament civil requirements were necessarily overthrown by the New Testament. He should not simply *assume* that the God who wrote the Old Testament changed His mind when He wrote the New Testament. He needs to prove it first. He needs to show us why the Old Testament is little more than a discarded first draft when it comes to the stipulations of the civil covenant, yet still judicially binding on individuals, churches, and families. (Or does he think that bestiality — also not mentioned in the New Testament — is now judicially beyond biblically specified sanctions, since it is only Old Testament civil law that prohibited it?)

He says that "God's primary agent in the world is the church." Quite true. Now, what are God's secondary agencies? Dead silence. How about the civil government as an explicitly and uniquely Christian institution testifying to the unique nature of Jesus' kingdom? Never! "The Bible does not command governments forthrightly to express commitment to Christianity or to develop a covenantal relationship with Christ."<sup>11</sup> Really? This seems to be what he ought to prove, not assert. In any case, at least we may legitimately ask: "Does the Bible expressly *prohibit* an explicitly Christian covenantal relationship?" The political pluralists write as though it does; it clearly

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10. Smith, "The Principled Pluralist Response to National Confession," *ibid.*, p. 214.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 215.



does not. The fact is, *political Pluralists write as though they would rather live under Communist tyranny than under an explicitly biblical theocracy*. God may grant them their wish, and the rest of us, too.

Dr. Smith has a fixation on the word *primary*. “Christ’s authority and kingdom in this age, as described in the New Testament, are primarily spiritual, not physical or territorial.”<sup>12</sup> When he says “primarily,” he means *exclusively*. Here is the ethical and judicial dualism of both fundamentalism and traditional mysticism: the separation of whatever is spiritual from that which is historical. And the same impulse undergirds Dr. Smith’s position: *antinomianism*. He wants the State to be able to avoid the authority of God’s revealed law and especially its historical sanctions. This leaves the politicians and bureaucrats without the fear of God or specific guidance from Him in His law.

He says that “nations will not be distinctively Christian and that they will contain mixed populations of believers and unbelievers.” Israel also contained mixed populations of believers and unbelievers — strangers within the gate. The strangers did not serve as judges, but they enjoyed full civil liberties.<sup>13</sup> Why should any New Testament covenanted nation be different? Dead silence.

Why such continued dead silence? *Dead intellectual position, biblically speaking.*

#### *No Cultural Escalation of the Confrontation*

He implicitly assumes, as do all pluralists, that there is no historical progress in the war between Christ and anti-Christ in the New Covenant era, no cultural extension over time by both sides of their rival religious presuppositions. What political pluralists categorically deny in everything they write is the truth of the observation made by C. S. Lewis in 1946: “If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family — anything you like — at a given point in its history, you always find that there was a time before that point when there was more elbow room and contrasts weren’t quite so sharp; and that there’s going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision and choices are even more momentous. Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting

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12. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

13. Chapter 2, below.

sharper and harder.” 14

Pluralists want to defer until the final judgment the appearance of that dangerously sharp point of history. They want it to end history. They do not want to face the inescapable historical decision of all confrontational politics: *stick* or *be stuck*. It is God’s law or chaos, light or darkness, God or Satan – manifested progressively as time passes. They do whatever they can to deny this. Pluralists spend their lives trying to file down that inescapably sharp historical point. Their files are made of high quality stainless steel, but the point is made of diamond.

### A Parting of the Ways

What we find in the final decades of the second millennium after the birth of Jesus Christ is a growing realization on both sides of the political cease-fire line that the traditional ideological synthesis of political pluralism is collapsing. What we are witnessing is a slow but sure breakdown of the political cease-fire between humanism and Christianity. On each side, the defenders of the compromise system can no longer hold their own troops in line. Guerilla skirmishes are breaking out continually. The humanists are beginning to act like humanists, and a tiny handful of Christians are beginning to act like Christians.

The confrontation over the life-and-death issue of abortion is one obvious example of this irrepressible conflict. On the abortionist’s table, there is no neutral position between life and death. This is why the inescapably political debate over abortion is so frustrating for those who want to steer a middle course. There is no middle course, *There is no neutrality*. The politician’s left foot is being held to the fire by the pro-death forces, and his right foot is being shoved in the coals by the pro-life forces. He has only one choice: accept the political fact of either one burned foot or two. He, like the political pluralist, deeply resents being forced to make this choice. He wants no burned feet. He longs for the simpler, cooler world of yesterday, when the common morality was implicitly Christian and officially neutral. He is not going to get that world; it is gone forever. So are at least 25 million dead babies, all executed legally in the United States.

Another example is Christian education. The humanists on the United States Supreme Court in 1963 banished prayer in the tax-

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14. C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 283.

supported public schools. This aided the cause of the more consistent Christians, who could then plausibly begin to call for the banishment of all public schools. For those in the middle — defenders of public education and defenders of government subsidies to private education — the skies grew dark. With the government subsidy comes the iron fist. There are no free lunches, not even school lunches. *There is no neutrality.*

It is one of those historical ironies that Gary Scott Smith should be a professor at the most famous non-cooperating college in America, Grove City College, whose refusal to take federal money led to its resistance to the imposition of federal educational regulations. The government then sued the college. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that unless Congress passed a law that specifically brought Grove City College under its regulations, the school was free to resist such controls. Congress immediately passed such a law over the President's veto, announcing publicly that even the indirect acceptance of federal funds through loans granted to students constitutes the "open door policy" to all government regulations over education. Nevertheless, Professor Scott continues to defend the legitimacy of the eighteenth-century "ideological synthesis." So does his Grove City colleague, historian L. John Van Til.<sup>15</sup> So deeply entrenched is the ideology of political pluralism that most of its Christian victims cannot perceive what is happening to them. The brainwashing by the humanists of the intellectual leaders of conservative Protestantism has been remarkably successful.

### *A Warning Shot*

This book is a warning shot across the bow of the aging battleship, *Ideological Synthesis*. It argues that Christian defenders of political pluralism are now trapped by the necessary and inescapable implications of their own compromise. They have bet their futures (and yours) on the preservation of the political cease-fire between Christianity and anti-Christianity. But as Christians steadily retreated from this covenantal conflict, 1673 to 1973, turning in their weapons (e.g., Christian education) to a supposedly "neutral" police force, their covenant-breaking enemies have systematically taken over that police force. This cease-fire is beginning to resemble the cease-fire of the firing squad. It can end with one word: "Fire !"

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15. He is the great-nephew of Cornelius Van Til.

There are always firing squads in life, in peace and war. Hell itself is a kind of cosmic firing squad. The question is: Who will do the firing? More to the point: Whose law will govern the civil court that issues the sentence? Will the standard of justice be God's law or man's? <sup>16</sup> It is this question which the political pluralists dare not ask in public. To ask this question publicly is to encourage Christians to seek exclusively biblical answers. Pluralists do not want Christians to seek exclusively biblical answers. Biblical exclusiveness is a denial of the religion of pluralism.

### The Dilemma of Christian Pluralism

The synthesis of political pluralism is not breaking down only because of the inherent contradictions between the religion of man and the religion of the Bible. It is also breaking down because the religion of secular humanism is itself collapsing, not only theoretically but institutionally.

For about eighteen centuries, the foundation of the West's ideological synthesis was men's naive faith in the existence of natural rights and natural law principles, discoverable by unaided human reason, or at least by "right reason." This intellectual construct was the invention of later Hellenistic philosophers who were trapped by the collapse of the Greek *polis* and its religious and philosophical underpinnings. They saw that the collapse of the *polis* and the simultaneous rise of empire made necessary a new philosophical outlook. Natural rights theory was their suggested solution. <sup>17</sup>

This intellectual construct served Christian apologists as the epistemological foundation of a synthesis, a common-ground philosophy of justice. It was on the basis of supposedly shared philosophical first principles that the discovery of a shared moral universe was thought to be possible. From Justin Martyr to Gary Scott Smith, Christians have had faith in this shared universe of discourse. What we forget is that Justin was indeed a martyr, and a martyr under the rule of that most Stoicly philosophical of emperors, Marcus Aurelius. The hoped for common moral ground with Christianity did not exist in the eyes of the Emperors. This fact should have sent warnings to Justin's successors down through the centuries. Unfor-

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16. Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).

17. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), ch. 3.

tunately, political pluralists never take seriously such warnings, from ravenous lions to ravenous government bureaucrats with the Department of Education or the Department of Justice. They prefer to face the lions than to rethink their presuppositions regarding natural law philosophy. When it comes to political theory, their slogan is: "Better the lions of the Colosseum than the Lion of Judah."

*The Self-Destruction of Humanism*

Charles Darwin destroyed natural law theory in biological science. Evolution through natural selection replaced the older, Christianity-influenced humanist vision of fixed life forms moving steadily toward a harmonious ecosystem. His successors destroyed natural law theory in social science.<sup>18</sup> In the 1920's, quantum physics destroyed natural law theory in the subatomic world. This immediately began to undermine modern legal theory. As Harvard Law School's Dean Roscoe Pound said in 1940, "Nothing has been so upsetting to political and juristic thinking as the growth of the idea of contingency in physics. It has taken away the analogy from which philosophers had reached the very idea of law. It has deprived political and juristic thought of the pattern to which they had conceived of government and law as set up. Physics had been the rock on which they had built."<sup>19</sup>

The shattered foundation of natural law theory, like Humpty Dumpty, can never be put together again. Natural law theory is dead. Rigor mortis has set in. Like Lazarus after several days in the tomb, it stinketh. Unlike Lazarus, it cannot be resurrected. History does not move backward. But this means that a new theory of cosmic order must be found, if man's social and political order is to be preserved. This new discovery is needed immediately in order to prevent social collapse and war, yet it also is hoped by most social theorists that this radical ideological change will somehow not be revolutionary or violent. Only one event can meet these two requirements: a rapid, massive, international revival of a single religion, to which men will voluntarily give their allegiance, either Christianity or anti-

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18. Most notable was Lester Frank Ward, whose *Dynamic Sociology* (1883) set forth the political worldview of modern political humanism. All Christian political pluralists should be required to read this book.

19. Roscoe Pound, *Contemporary Juristic Theory* (Claremont, California: Claremont Colleges, 1940), p. 34. Cited by R. J. Rushdoony, "The United States Constitution," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, XII (1988), p. 35.

Christianity. Without this international revival, men and nations will go to war in the name of their respective creeds and non-negotiable judicial demands. In either case, pluralism will at last be given a public burial.

This book is a public autopsy of a dead system. Several optimistic physicians are still hovering over the body, trying to breathe new life into the corpse. They will not appreciate my report on their patient's condition, for it points to their own monumental failure in both diagnosis and treatment.

I do not believe in zombies, but whenever I examine the philosophy of political pluralism, I wonder if my prejudice can be supported. "It never sleeps, it walks, it crashes into things, yet it's brain-dead. Nothing has stopped it in eighteen hundred years. Unchained, it has now gone berserk!" There are only two ways to stop a zombie in the movies: smash its skull or decapitate it.

What Christian political pluralists steadfastly refuse to discuss is what the new foundation of political pluralism can possibly be, now that natural rights and natural law are intellectually dead concepts, and very nearly dead culturally. First, Christian scholars baptized Plato; then they baptized Aristotle; then they baptized Newton. Will they also baptize Heisenberg, Sartre, and Camus? If so, we can then expect the next public baptism: Nietzsche. What is the basis of the "grand ideological synthesis" between Christianity and anti-Christianity now that the very foundations of that ancient synthesis have collapsed from the erosion produced by the acids of modernity? They refuse to say, and their silence testifies to the intellectual bankruptcy of their position.

### Conclusion

In this book, I survey the writings of Christian scholars who have been unwilling to face the implications of the death of natural law theory. I use them as representative examples. What I argue is that they have been intellectually schizophrenic, a fact revealed by their own diagnosis of the modern religious crisis. They have remained unwilling to choose between their commitment to the Bible and their commitment to political pluralism. They refuse to cross over into biblical covenant theology because of that great, immovable barrier that separates the political religion of man from the civil covenantalism of the Bible: biblical law. They prefer to dwell in the theocracy of

self-proclaimed autonomous man rather than seek the sanctuary of biblical law.

Like the Hebrews who did not believe that God could deliver them from the Egyptian army because of the barrier of the Red Sea, so are Christian defenders of political pluralism today. Worse; they are like men who, seeing the waters parted by the power of God, are still afraid to cross. "The walls of water will fall on us, and we will perish!" The waters will indeed fall, but it will not be God's covenant people who drown in the Red Sea. It will be only the Egyptians, who will have already decapitated those Hebrews who sat at the shoreline, too fearful to march forward.

These things need to be pondered by Protestants to-day. With what right may we call ourselves children of the Reformation? Much modern Protestantism would be neither owned nor even recognised by the pioneer Reformers. *The Bondage of the Will* fairly sets before us what they believed about the salvation of lost mankind. In the light of it, we are forced to ask whether Protestant Christendom has not tragically sold its birthright between Luther's day and our own. Has not Protestantism to-day become more Erasmian than Lutheran? Do we not too often try to minimise and gloss over doctrinal differences for the sake of inter-party peace? Are we innocent of the doctrinal indifferentism with which Luther charged Erasmus? Do we still believe that doctrine matters? Or do we now, with Erasmus, rate a deceptive appearance of unity as of more importance than truth? Have we not grown used to an Erasmian brand of teaching from our pulpits – a message that rests on the same shallow synergistic conceptions which Luther refuted, picturing God and man approaching each other almost on equal terms, each having his own contribution to make to man's salvation and each depending on the dutiful cooperation of the other for the attainment of that end? — as if God exists for man's convenience, rather than man for God's glory?

J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnson (1957)\*

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\*Packer and Johnson, "Historical and Theological Introduction," Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will* (London: James Clarke, 1957), p. 59-60.



## INTRODUCTION

(to be read)

*For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken (Jer. 6:13-17).*

Men want peace. Peace is a gift from God. Political peace is also a promise of Satan, who cannot deliver on this promise, but it is believed by professionally naive Christians, generation after generation. Moses warned the Israelites against any attempt to gain peace apart from faithfulness to the stipulations of God's covenant (Deut. 29:18-28). Any other peace is a false peace. It cannot last. It does not last, as the bloody twentieth century reveals.<sup>1</sup> But humanism's false peace is supported politically by its targeted victims, the Christians.

### The Threat of God's Negative Sanctions

For a little over three centuries, Protestant Christians have not taken Moses' warning seriously. Throughout the Western world, men have substituted other gods and other explanations of the origin and destiny of man — not ancient gods of wood and stone, but modern gods of their own imagination. God's warning to His covenanted

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1. Gil Elliot, *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead* (New York: Scribners, 1972).

society is nevertheless the same: take care, “Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven” (Deut. 29:18-20).

The threat of God’s negative covenantal sanctions hangs over all Christians who are citizens of any nation that has ever been formally covenanted to the God of the Bible, but which has been captured from within by covenant-breakers. These sanctions are real. In order to remove the *perceived* threat of such sanctions, one of the most important doctrines of “the gods of these nations” today is the denial that a biblically covenanted society is possible – that no such society has legitimately existed since the demise of Old Covenant Israel in A. D. 70. Therefore, all societies that have ever claimed to be Christian have necessarily been fraudulent: examples to be shunned by Christians, not imitated. The priests of the religion of autonomous man cannot get all of God’s people to abandon their faith in the God of heaven, but they can and have succeeded in getting them to abandon the belief that this God makes national collective covenants in the New Covenant era.

The priests and academic Levites of God’s covenant people have also adopted this same covenant-denying doctrine in the name of biblical theology. <sup>2</sup>The humanists cry “peace, peace,” despite the biblical fact there is no possibility of permanent covenantal peace between covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers. The Christians cry “cease-fire, cease-fire,” despite the biblical fact there is a real possibility for progressive earthly victory on God’s judicial terms, however imperfect due to sin’s effects. The result of both views — “peace, peace (on autonomous man’s terms)” and “cease-fire, cease-fire (on autonomous man’s terms)” is the same: a refusal by Christians to call for national repentance, a repentance manifested by taking a formal

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2. Cf. Mark A. Nell, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1983). See Chapter 5, below.

oath re-confirming God's national covenant and its required civil laws and negative sanctions. Christians refuse to press for social peace on God's terms. They deny the need for *national covenant renewal*.

And so we face God's negative historical sanctions.

### Terms of Surrender

The Bible teaches that there can and will be a progressive manifestation of peace in history,<sup>3</sup> but only as a product of covenantal faithfulness in Church government, family government, and civil government. <sup>4</sup>God's people today have almost universally assumed that peace in the third covenantal institution — civil government — is possible only on the “neutral” legal terms set forth by God's enemies. Christians have surrendered conditionally to covenant-breakers nationally, on the promise that Christians will be left in peace in the first two covenantal categories, family and Church. <sup>5</sup>Covenant-breakers have in the past promised this conditional peace, but now they are making it increasingly clear that this was a lie, a politically necessary deception. They want unconditional surrender in all three areas. Thus, to defend God's covenantal standards in the first two realms, Christians must now seek long-term victory in the third: civil government. But they are then told by their own spiritual spokesmen that such a quest is either wrong in principle or at least impossible to achieve in history. *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* is a sustained attack on three representative variations of this familiar compromise.

The theological root of our present political crisis is this: God demands unconditional surrender of all His enemies at the final judgment, and also the progressive, conditional, external surrender of Satan's people to His people in history,<sup>6</sup> while Satan demands unconditional surrender of his enemies in history, for he cannot gain this in eternity. There is a war going on, and it will not end until judgment

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3. Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1954] 1981).

4. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

5. I capitalize “Church” when I refer to the general institution. I do not when I refer to a local church.

6. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* (3rd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

day. Each side is required by its respective covenantal head to seek a victory over the other side in every area of life. *There is no neutrality.*

Christians, however, for the most part no longer believe that continual conflict between mutually exclusive covenantal standards is in fact inevitable in the civil realm, so they have signed a temporary cease-fire which they hope will last until the final judgment. They hope and even occasionally pray that this will be a permanent cease-fire in history. They have voluntarily surrendered the fundamental principle of the sovereignty of God, as revealed by His covenantal law, as this law and its specified sanctions apply in the civil sphere. (Incredibly, this is frequently done in the name of the sovereignty of God. <sup>7</sup>These people are masters of deception.) Having surrendered the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in civil government, they are now in the process of surrendering it in the first two areas, family and Church, piece by piece. The rise of “Christian” counseling courses in our Bible-believing seminaries — courses based on pagan psychology texts and principles — is one example, and the practice of registering churches with the government in order to receive tax-subsidized mailing permits is another. “Peace, peace” in fact means ‘surrender, Christians, piece by piece.’”

### The Abandonment of Casuistry

*Political Polytheism* deals with the process of piecemeal intellectual surrender. It will not win me academic friends or influence tenured people. Books by watchmen never do. It presents a case-by-case study of what I regard as representative intellectual compromises with humanism by contemporary Christian scholars. These intellectual compromises within the English-speaking Calvinist community have been going on for over three centuries, and within the rest of Christendom for at least eighteen centuries. From time to time in recent years, it has looked as though this systematic program of intellectual compromise was about to cease in some key Christian commando units, but each time, senior officers have put down their battle flags and have signed cease-fire agreements with the enemy. This is discouraging for those of us who remain on the battlefield.

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7. Cf. Gary Scott Smith, Introduction, in Smith (ed.), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), pp. 2, 12.

I have taken Calvinist scholars as the representative cases. Why? For one thing, I am more familiar with modern Calvinist philosophy and social theory. For another, those closest to you are always the greatest threat. You have to answer their criticisms and expose their deviations before you get on with the war for civilization.<sup>8</sup> Far more important, however, is the fact that the other Protestant traditions have been generally less devoted to the academic areas of philosophy, social theory, and historical studies. Calvinists believe in the absolute sovereignty of the Creator God over every aspect of the universe, and they are therefore the only biblical theological movement that can sustain serious scholarship, generation after generation. What the Calvinists have written (and I include here Augustine)<sup>9</sup> has established both the intellectual standards and the targets. When the Calvinists get philosophically “squishy,” we can be reasonably confident that their imitators and critics in the other Protestant traditions are even more squishy, and surely no tougher.

### *Casuistry, 1673-1973*

The problem facing the West today is that for three centuries, 1673 to 1973, Protestant Christians abandoned the intellectual discipline of *casuistry* – applied biblical morality – and thereby abandoned the crucial task of developing an explicitly and exclusively biblical social theory.<sup>10</sup> In the seventeenth century, English casuists had written their works in English, aiming their message at the general population.<sup>11</sup> They provided elaborate discussions of the general biblical

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8. This is why cults, revolutionary organizations, and other hard-core ideological groups tend to excommunicate or purge heretics and apostates more readily than attack ‘the “heathen” outside the camp. One must consolidate the center before spiraling outward. The same screening strategy is used in Christian academia to remove all those who are not committed to the program of epistemological compromise. For instance, why are there so few six-day creationists teaching in the science departments of places like Wheaton College and Calvin College, not to mention in 90 percent of the Bible-believing seminaries?

9. Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1956). This is a collection of his journal articles published between 1905 and 1909.

10. Some might date the end of casuistry with Samuel Willard’s massive commentary on the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith, *A Compleat Body of Divinity* (1726).

11. Thomas Wood, *English Casuistical Divinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: S. P. C. K., 1952), p. 47.

and moral principles of action, using particulars as illustrations .<sup>12</sup> Their publicly announced goal was *self-government* underlap: "Unlike the Jesuits, they were not concerned primarily to provide an ever more efficient confessional technique by which judgement might be passed upon the consciences of men. Their ideal was not to remove from men the exacting duty of probing and resolving their own moral difficulties, but rather to train them in self-reliance as the responsible and consecrated servants of God in Christ ." <sup>13</sup>

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, ethical dualism raised its Janus-faced head. <sup>14</sup> Christian moralists defaulted enthusiastically to the covenant-breaking enemy in the name of philosophical rigor and a universally valid methodology: *Newtonian natural law*. Charles Darwin and Thomas Huxley destroyed whatever remained of that intellectual pipedream over a century ago with their doctrine of evolution through impersonal natural selection,<sup>15</sup> but most Christians have spent the last hundred-plus years trying to devise ways to accommodate this self-confident (but now rapidly shifting) Darwinism to the orthodox faith. The result, predictably, has been an increase of heterodox Christians. <sup>16</sup>

Without biblical guidance from God's covenant people, the whole world is now adrift in the rapids with a shattered rudder and a conked-out engine. That growing roar we now hear is ominous. Thus, a handful of Calvinist scholars and activists are today trying to make up for lost time and to recover lost intellectual territory before the turn of the millennium. <sup>17</sup> We perceive that the whole world is in the throes of a massive religious, social, and philosophical upheaval, and the dominant ideologies of the last two or three cen-

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12. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

14. Luther had succumbed to dualism a century and a half earlier. See Charles Trinkaus, "The Religious Foundations of Luther's Social Views," in John H. Mundy (ed.), *Essays in Medieval Life* (New York: Biblio & Tannen, 1955), pp. 71-87. Cf. Gary North, "The Economics of Luther and Calvin," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, II (Summer 1975), pp. 76-89.

15. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), Appendix A: "From Cosmic Purposelessness to Humanistic Sovereignty."

16. The archetype example is Bernard Ramm, today a semi-Barthian, but in 1954 the author of *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans), which did justice to neither science nor Scripture.

17. Gary DeMar and Peter J. Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1988).

turies are no longer able to hold together the fragmenting center. What will be the new center? We know what it had better be: Jesus Christ. It does no *permanent* good to swing back from left-wing Enlightenment thought (socialism and social revolution)<sup>18</sup> to right wing Enlightenment thought (capitalism and social evolution).<sup>19</sup> (It will, however, increase per capita economic productivity and therefore per capita income.) We do not need a perpetual humanistic pendulum; we need a progressive manifestation of the kingdom of God in history.<sup>20</sup>

### *Paradigm Shifts*

In the midst of social and intellectual revolutions come major paradigm shifts.<sup>21</sup> Entire worldviews change, and they can do so within a single generation.<sup>22</sup> Judging from the extent of the visible turmoil today, as well as the intellectual turmoil, the next paradigm shift ought to be a whopper. We know that whatever philosophies today undergird world civilization are slipping rapidly. In fact, we are seeing serious attempts by scientists and social theorists to make *slipping* the basis of the next dominant worldview.<sup>23</sup> The question is: What will be next? When the shift begins in earnest, Christians had better be in the paradigm marketplace with a table full of books and strategies containing principles for solutions to every major problem. A few manuals on direct action wouldn't hurt, either.<sup>24</sup>

Before this task can be accomplished, however, Christians must jettison the last three centuries of philosophical compromise. Baptized humanism has produced muddled thinking and worn-out, discarded humanist solutions to major social problems. It is time for a change. Let us pray that this change will be in time.

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18. F. A. Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, [1952] 1979); Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

19. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973-79).

20. Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant*.

21. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

22. See, for example, Paul Hazard's book, *The European Mind, 1680-1715* (New York: Meridian, [1935] 1963).

23. Cf. James Gleik, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987).

24. Cf. Gary North, *Backward, Christian Soldiers? A Manual for Christian Reconstruction* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984).

## Cornelius Van Til

The major break with this long-term epistemological compromise came with the writings of Cornelius Van Til (see Chapter 3). Yet even Van Til was unwilling to “go the distance” in this race. He demonstrated what is wrong and has been wrong with Christian philosophy for almost two millennia – the compromise with Greece’s philosophy of autonomous man – but he did not offer a workable positive alternative.

*Analogical Reasoning*

Van Til’s analogies are marvelous. He convinced me that analogies can be very helpful in communicating difficult concepts. So let me use four of them to describe what he did, and what he failed to do.

First, it is not sufficient to blow up humanism’s dikes when you live in epistemological Holland, for these are the only dikes in place today. You need a new structure in place to keep out the North Sea *before* the explosives are detonated. Van Til, however, went ahead and lit the fuses anyway. The best you can say for his plan is that he used slow-burning fuses. Most of the dikes are still intact.

Second, Van Til showed that the humanist Emperor and his subjects have always worn clothes stolen from Christians, and only the existence of these clothes has kept everyone even tolerably warm in the freezing winters. Furthermore, the Emperor is now requiring Christians to produce only Emperor-designed clothing, a sure sign of looming frostbite. But Van Til then steadfastly refused to recommend an appropriate Christian clothier for Christians whose wardrobes have been depleted.

Third, Van Til created an ethical and epistemological vacuum by his successful extrusion of the Greeks from Christian philosophy, but then he insisted privately that nothing specific should be allowed to rush in to fill it. Creating a physical vacuum takes special instruments and a lot of energy. So, too, with epistemological vacuums. To create such a vacuum, you must first force out bad ideas with good ideas. When you then withdraw the plunger of good ideas from the intellectual flask, but without allowing bad ideas to return, you create a vacuum. Vacuums are, artificial creations; they cannot be sustained, long term. They are not very useful outside the laboratory, either. Scholars resent an epistemological vacuum in the same way that nature abhors a physical one on earth. The valves cannot hold tight forever; something will inevitably fill it: if not biblical law,



then something else. As I show in Chapter 4, one of Van Til's early students rushed in to fill it. What he filled it with was a variation of the same old impure mixture that Van Til had expelled in the first place: one-third Bible, one-third natural law philosophy, and one-third verbal gymnastics to explain why there really is no underlying conflict between the two except, of course, in those cases where there is. This is the problem. This has always been the problem.

Fourth, Van Til forgot rule number-one in all warfare: "You can't beat something with nothing." Adopting military metaphors, we can say that Van Til wrote a multi-volume theory of war. It took him all his life to write it. He never really finished it. It just got longer and longer. Unfortunately, he never offered an overall strategy showing how his general theory of war could be applied to a strategy of conquest in history. His theory showed only that all past Christian strategies have failed because of improper military alliances and disastrous treaties. Problem: knowing what failed to work before is not the same as knowing what strategy will lead to victory in the future. Van Til did not believe in the possibility of a visible victory by Christians in history. He therefore never wrote a grand strategy or even any tactical manuals, which is what new recruits and newly commissioned second lieutenants need.

### *Now What Should We Do?*

Van Til steadfastly refused to tell anyone what to do with his philosophical discoveries. He did not encourage his disciples, such as R. J. Rushdoony, who were attempting to apply his discoveries to other fields of thought, including social theory. Privately, he actually discouraged such attempts; they made him nervous. He carefully avoided venturing outside of the academic specialization of apologetics — a narrowly philosophical defense of the faith — and even when he did (e. g., *The Psychology of Religion*), he concealed the fact by writing as if he were dealing strictly with apologetics. The result of his reticence has been confusion: hardly anyone claims to be his disciple today — he actually discouraged disciples<sup>25</sup> — and those who do claim to be his disciples are scattered all over the philosophical and

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<sup>25</sup> For example, he would not assign his own books in his apologetics classes. It was as if John Calvin or Luther had remained content to assign *Summa Theologica* to his students, hoping to clear up their confusion with rambling, disjointed lectures. Let me assure you, Van Til specialized in rambling, disjointed lectures.

political landscape. <sup>26</sup>

So here I come, trying to rally the troops, scattered though they may be. I think Christianity's biggest battles are still to be fought in the future; what we have seen so far is simply a series of "boot camps" for God's people, a long period of wandering in the wilderness. I think we are at last being called to invade Canaan. But I may be like Joshua and Caleb when they returned from their reconnaissance assignment; I may be premature in my recommendation. Judging from the number of stones that I see people in the camp collecting (Num.14:10), I am beginning to suspect that my timing is off by a generation.

What, then, is the proper tactic today for calling God's people to begin making preparations for a gigantic offensive operation? My solution: to risk being regarded as offensive.

#### Tactics in a Time of Reformation

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue. In 1493, he and his crew returned, bringing tales of a new world. Some of them also brought back something else: syphilis. By 1497, it had spread throughout Western Europe. By 1507, it had reached China. <sup>27</sup> An invisible army of tiny creatures began to undermine the foundations of European civilization. Physicians soon realized how this army was being transmitted, but biological education alone was not sufficient to stop it. It never is. This mortal disease contributed to a widespread loss of confidence within the Renaissance world, just as the bubonic plague had undermined the self-confidence of the late-medieval world. <sup>28</sup> Then came the Protestant Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation was launched by a doctor of theology in 1517. He was a university man (Martin Luther). His major public opponent was also a doctor of theology (John Eck), but in this case, the gentleman was also in the pay of Europe's leading family of

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<sup>26</sup> For example, I am his disciple, and so is economist and would-be philosopher Douglas Vickers. For my opinion of Vickers' work, see my Foreword to Ian Hedge, *Baptized Inflation: A Critique of "Christian" Keynesianism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, [1979] 1981), I, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>28</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Knopf, 1978), ch. 5.

international bankers (the Fuggers).<sup>29</sup> To Luther's cause came another academic man, one almost literally dragged out of academia into the pulpit (John Calvin). And organizing the shock troops of the academic opposition was a former classmate of Calvin's at the University of Paris (Ignatius of Loyola).

### *Erasmus and Luther*

Sitting on the sidelines of this historic battlefield with a pile of ancient manuscripts on his desk was Erasmus of Rotterdam, another University of Paris product.<sup>30</sup> Erasmus knew that Luther was correct in many of his criticisms of the Roman Church, but Erasmus regarded himself as a man of peace, a man of the Roman Church. Erasmus did not want to make a frontal assault against the Roman Church's concepts of justification, the sacraments, and hierarchy. "His spirituality inclined him to agree with the more radical reformers," writes historian Roland Bainton. "Nevertheless Erasmus refused to join the radicals because of his regard for *concordia* and consensus. He would not have these disrupted by constraint from either side."<sup>31</sup>

At first, he avoided going into print against Luther. After all, his goal was "peace, peace." Luther finally forced Erasmus out of his academic complacency when he publicly defended the doctrine of predestination. Erasmus was aghast. Predestination? In this day and age? And so the two doctors of theology fought it out: free will vs. God's absolute sovereignty.<sup>32</sup> Luther's classic reply to Erasmus, *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), stands as one of the most important defenses of predestination ever written. He was true to his Augustinian heritage. (He regarded this work and his catechism for children as his only works worth preserving; only they were "right.")<sup>33</sup>

### *Melanchthon*

But then, as also happened to Augustine's predestinarian legacy

29. Benjamin Nelson, *The Idea of Usury: From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 25.

30. The *College de Montaigu*.

31. Roland H. Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 220.

32. *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, edited by E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969).

33. Letter to Capito (9 July 1537); cited by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnson, "Historical and Theological Introduction," *The Bondage of the Will* (London: James Clarke, 1957), p. 40.

after he died, the academic dog returned to its epistemological vomit. Augustine had battled against Pelagius, for the latter had dropped the doctrine of innate human depravity. Pelagius had adopted free will doctrines as a direct result. Augustine won the intellectual battle, but his heirs surrendered anyway. So it was to be with Luther's heirs. Luther's close associate Philip Melanchthon never adopted Luther's view of predestination, calling it "Stoic fatalism."<sup>34</sup> Melanchthon was a classicist at heart, and he wanted peace with Greece. Writes C. L. Manschreck:

At first Melanchthon joined Luther in heaping invectives on Aristotle and philosophy in general, for both recognized that certain modes and principles of reasoning were injurious to the evangelical religious insights, but Philip soon came to feel that philosophy might be a valuable auxiliary in the propagation of truth. Melanchthon's changed view toward Aristotle, especially after 1525, did not represent a desire to give up the fruits of the Reformation but a more mature understanding of philosophy and its usefulness in education and the Christian community. Luther went along. %

And so Melanchthon called a mighty ecclesiastical army away from a direct frontal assault against Greece and Rome — not the Roman Church, but the far more ancient enemy, classical Rome. That army has never returned to the front. Lutheran apologetics to this day is basically the Thomistic apologetics of the Roman Church, which is also true of Protestantism in general. <sup>36</sup>

#### *A Study in Irrelevance*

Through all this turmoil, Erasmus stayed calm, cool, and collected. He did not break with Rome. He did not leave his study except to lecture at a university or return a book to the library. He read his Greek manuscripts, wrote his prevaricating but clever academic essays, and kept his wits about him. No fiery pamphlets in the vernacular from his pen! Also, no fiery stakes for his sensitive flesh. He was, after all, a cultivated man. <sup>37</sup> A fully accredited man. A tenured man. A man for mild seasons.

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<sup>34</sup> Clyde Leonard Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (New York: Abingdon, 1958), p. 293. See Chapter 22 of Manschreck's book for a detailed treatment: "The Word, the Holy Spirit, and the Will."

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>36</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, vol. 2 of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed; den Dulk Foundation, 1969), chaps. 6, 7. This series is also called *In Defense of the Faith*.

<sup>37</sup> Bainton, *Erasmus of Christendom*, ch. 10: "A Cultivated Man."

What was Erasmus' position? "He had merely asserted the right of men to be uncommitted, where doctrine had not been thoroughly and formally defined by the Church."<sup>38</sup> That was surely good enough to satisfy the Church! It kept him out of serious trouble. It brought him external peace. It also made him irrelevant to the titanic religious struggles of his age. Luther's response describes him to a T: "Erasmus is an eel. Only Christ can get him."<sup>39</sup> The sad fact is that most of those in the pulpit today take Erasmus as their model. The result is slippery sermons.

The typical Christian liberal arts college is even worse. There the eels have tenure. The ideal American academic is also modeled on the career of Erasmus. So is the Christian academic, to the extent that he has a separate existence. (Not British academia, however, by the grace of God and the example of A. J. P. Taylor). One is expected to conduct oneself as a cultivated man. No pamphlets, please. No use of incendiary language. No departing from the accepted etiquette of professional academic discourse. Above all, there must be no calling to the attention of uncertified laymen (who pay all the bills with their donations) the unpleasant fact that there has been a systematic sell-out of Christian civilization by its officially accredited intellectual and political defenders. This is Erasmus' legacy, and it is staunchly defended today by those inside the halls of ivy. They much prefer *In Praise of Folly* to *The Bondage of the Will*. Anyone seeking acceptance within these halls of ivy must either conform or be thrown out, thereafter to spend his days wandering in the wastelands of the business world or high school teaching.

Erasmus was illegitimate by birth, but his heirs are self-made men.

### *Fighting to Win*

I prefer Luther's model. Luther was courageous enough not only to break ranks with the Church of Rome, but also with the etiquette of Erasmus. He took his criticisms of the Roman Church to unordained people in their own language, both linguistically and stylistically, and he thereby broke the Church's sacramental monopoly. He was hated for this. He changed the face of Europe, and he was hated for this, too. He conducted himself not as a gentleman and a scholar, but as a man of war who understood that eternal souls were hanging

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38. E. Gordon Rupp, 'Introduction: The Erasmus Enigma,' *Luther and Erasmus*, p. 2.

39. Cited by Rupp, *ibid.*, p. 2.

in the balance, not to mention Western civilization. He was hated for this, perhaps most of all. His contemporaries wanted peace.

This gave Luther an enormous advantage. He wanted victory, and he developed his tactics accordingly. Luther was the pioneer of the pugnacious pamphlet, as well as the vicar of vitriol and the rector of ridicule. He adopted Augustine's rule: anything that is ridiculous deserves to be ridiculed.<sup>40</sup> His spiritual heirs have conveniently forgotten about the scatological cartoons of the Pope that Luther put in his pamphlets. Had he restricted his expressions of theological opposition to the Roman Church by the accepted rules of discourse within the academic community, there would probably have been no Reformation in his day. He would have been burned at the stake. Instead, the authorities had to content themselves with burning his pamphlets.

Luther's academic peers wanted peace. So do most of his spiritual and institutional heirs today. Well, they won't all be able to get it . . . at least not while I'm alive and have a word processor in front of me. And not while AIDS is spreading, either. C. Everett Koop's solution to AIDS is condoms. This will not work. My critics' solution to me is public silence and private murmuring. This will not work, either. There is only one strategy that can possibly shut me up, or at least remove me as a serious combatant: prove in print, point by point and verse by verse, that my theology is dead wrong and so is my analysis of the long-term compromise with humanism; communicate this in language that literate Christians can understand; and then spend as much time and money as I spend in getting this message to the as yet undecided troops. My prediction: not very likely;

Erasmus lost the polemical battle – though not the academic etiquette battle – because he viewed the battlefield of the Reformation in terms of the scholar's study. He decided to avoid engaging in protracted conflict. He refused to face the fact that protracted conflict is all that the followers of Jesus Christ have ever been promised on earth, even during the millennium. Christians are told to find internal peace in the midst of a raging battle. This is no doubt difficult, but however it is to be accomplished, surrendering the battalion's battle flag is not the proper way.

Luther won at least the preliminary phase of the theological and institutional battle because his opponents could not match his theol-

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40. See *The City of God*, XVIII: 40, on those who oppose the six-day creation,

ogy, his pamphlets, his vitriol, and his incendiary language. He humiliated his opponents in public and in print. He ridiculed the ridiculous. I am at best a pale imitation of Luther. But at least I know this much: I cannot hope to lead anyone to victory in my assigned sector of this battle for civilization by imitating Erasmus' reputed strengths. I have at least a possibility of contributing to the victory of Christ's kingdom in history by adopting what many of his heirs regard as Luther's embarrassing weaknesses.

There is, however, one important difference between my style and Luther's. The confrontation between Erasmus and Luther has been described as "a duel in which the two participants got up at the crack of dawn, one armed with a rapier, the other with a blunderbuss. . . ."41 Erasmus wielded the rapier, Luther the blunderbuss. I do much better with a rapier.

### Creationism, Neo-Evangelical Style

This book is designed to clear the deck ideologically. I show what cannot work biblically and has not worked for over three centuries, By attacking Christian political pluralism, I am attacking a sacred cow which is in fact a long-dead mule. It is an intellectual system which cannot be successfully defended by an appeal to the Bible, and which is regarded by humanists as intellectually peripheral to the concerns of the non-Christian world. Christian political pluralism is to modern political theory what theistic evolution is to modern biological science: a sell-out of Christianity to the humanists who run the academic world. The irony is that the humanists regard the whole charade of theistic evolution as either a crude intellectual joke or else a self-serving fraud deserving of contempt.<sup>42</sup> Christian political pluralism is not much better respected in the world of humanist scholarship. We should not be surprised to learn that the same undergraduate Christian academic institutions and publishing houses support both forms of this ideological sell-out. I call this the Wheaton-Westchester-Downers Grove-Grand Rapids-Wenham-Toronto complex. Wheaton College is the model.<sup>43</sup>

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41. Rupp, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

42. See, for example, George Gaylord Simpson, *This View of Life: The World of an Evolutionist* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), ch. 11: "Evolutionary Theology: The New Mysticism."

43. If you can locate a copy, I encourage you to read Wilhelm E. Schmitt's self-published book, *Steps Toward Apostasy at Wheaton College (1966)*. Schmitt was a Wheaton student, class of 1954.

There is a reason for their opposition to both six-day creationism and political pluralism: *liberalism*, both theological and political. These people want the fruits of Christianity without its Bible-revealed limits and responsibilities. They proclaim God's creation in general, hoping thereby 1) to retain donors' support and a stream of young Christian students to capture; 44 and 2) to avoid the radical despair of modern humanist science.<sup>45</sup> By refusing to affirm six-day creationism, they hope to accomplish at least three things: 1) retain their accreditation from humanist accrediting agencies; 2) retain the approval of other neo-evangelical academicians, who have long since abandoned orthodoxy for Barthianism or liberation theology; and 3) leave the door open to just about any kind of theoretical compromise with the "latest finding of modern science," meaning the scientific views of a decade ago that are now working their way into the textbooks. They want the benefits of orthodoxy with none of the liabilities.

Similarly, they affirm something called God's "creation ordinances."<sup>46</sup> Sometimes, they call this a "creation ethic."<sup>47</sup> This sounds so very biblical. But they simultaneously deny that Old Testament law in any way provides the definitions, specific content, and intellectual limits of these ordinances. Their goals here are much the same as with their affirmation of creationism, but not six-day creationism. First, they can still sound as though they affirm the Bible,

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44. North, Foreword; Hedge, *Baptized Inflation*, pp. xx-xxii: "The Academic Seduction of the Innocent."

45. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), ch. 2: "The Pessimism of the Scientists."

46. "Natural law theories are essentially secularized versions of the idea of creation ordinances." Gordon Spykman, "The Principled Pluralist Position," in *God and Politics*, p. 91. Ironically, Spykman rejects natural law, yet he also denies that Old Testament laws provide the required content of these definitionless "creation ordinances." This leaves everything conveniently open-ended. That is the heart and soul of neo-evangelicalism: intellectually and morally open-ended. T. M. Moore is correct: "Ultimately, Spykman exalts God's revelation in nature above the Bible. He insists that the meaning of Scripture can only be unlocked by first understanding the meaning of God's word inherent in the creational norms around us." Moore, "The Christian America Response to Principled Pluralism," *ibid.*, p. 110.

47. See A. Troost's response to my criticism of his antinomian call to medieval guild socialism in the name of the Bible. Troost titled his essay, "A Plea for a Creation Ethic," *International Reformed Bulletin* (Oct. 1967). This journal was edited at the time by Paul Schrottenboer, who also has an essay in *God and Politics*, pp. 54-60. For my response to Troost, see North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), Appendix C: "Social Antinomianism."



keeping suspicious donors and parents perpetually confused. Second, they can then read the latest (i. e., decade-old) fads of political liberalism into these “creation ordinances.” They get the benefits of God’s doctrine of creation without any of the restraints of God’s Bible-revealed law.

These scholars are like unmarried couples who live together under the protection of common law marriage precedents. If these unions can survive for five consecutive years, they become technically legal marriages for purposes of ownership and inheritance. Until then, however, the door remains open for leaving and switching partners. During the first five years, they can reassure themselves and their potential in-laws with the convenient excuse, “We’re still moving toward common-law status.” In fact, they are fornicators. This is modern neo-evangelicalism in a nutshell: at best a movement of theological common-law marriages; at worst, a movement of theological fornicators.

### White Uniforms and Sinking Ships

The doctrine of Christian political pluralism rested from the beginning on the doctrine of natural rights and natural law. That comforting faith is now forever dead, buried by the spiritual heirs of the pagan Greeks who invented it in the first place. This loss of faith in natural law is admitted even by defenders of Christian political pluralism.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, they stubbornly refuse to admit publicly that without this key epistemological<sup>49</sup> assumption, political pluralism becomes a visibly drifting ship with a hole in its side.

#### *The Leaking Ship*

This ship is taking on water fast. It is already 2,000 miles out to sea, with no radio on board and very little dehydrated food remaining. A huge storm is on the horizon. There is only one hope available: a motorized lifeboat with a good set of maps, a compass, and enough fuel to get a few hundred miles. It even has an emergency sail. But there is one catch: its name. The former owner of the shipping line — who still holds a second mortgage on the company, and the present owners are several payments behind — named it the

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Gordon J. Spykman, “The Principled Pluralist Position,” *God and Politics*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>49</sup> Epistemology: “What men can know, and how they can know it.”

*Covenant Theocracy*. Because of this, **no ship's officer is willing** to get into it; they are all graduates of the *Erasmus Naval Institute*. Furthermore, they are all doing whatever they can to keep the growing number of alarmed passengers from launching it on their own. They keep announcing the following message over the ship's intercom: "The ship is fine. No problem. Don't worry; be happy! Be calm, be cool, and be collected." Meanwhile, the storm clouds keep getting closer, and the ship is listing to port.

Question: Should the passengers rearrange the deck chairs one more time or head for the lifeboat? I have made my decision; what about you?

There are a lot of passengers who still take the ship's officers seriously. They still have faith in what they are being told rather than what they can clearly see. After all, these officers are so . . . so *official*! They are all dressed in clean, white uniforms. Could they really be wrong? Could a man in a white uniform be unreliable? (See Chapter 4.) They were certified by the authorities back on shore. Could the authorities have been wrong? The thought never crosses the passengers' minds that the authorities back on shore had cut a deal with the ship's owners: We will certify your ship and your crew if you continue publicly to support our right to certify everyone. And we promise to prohibit any uncertified rival entrepreneur from starting a rival cruise ship line."

In the world of business this is called licensing. In the academic world, it is called regional accreditation and classroom tenure. What this system of certification invariably produces in the long run is a fleet of high-priced leaking ships and a new generation of white uniformed officers who don't know how to navigate. But they *do* look impressive.

The purpose of this book is to show what does not work, and then to offer an alternative. Like an informed passenger on that leaking ship, I need to alert my fellow passengers to the problem before I can expect them to head for the lifeboat. I have confidence that the lifeboat is sea-worthy. 50 I also' have confidence that the ship is sinking. The time has come for me to call, "Abandon ship!" The problem is, not many people will believe me initially. My diagnosis sounds so

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50. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973); Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (2nd ed.; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984).

grim, and my prescription sounds so unpalatable. After all, the ship has done so well in the past, and nobody likes to eat dehydrated food.

### The Risk of Being Premature

The Puritan Revolution of 1638-60 was premature. The people of England were not ready for a world without king or bishops, and Calvinist intellectual and military leaders soon found that they could not control the social forces that their pamphlets and their cavalry had unleashed. The growing reaction against "the rule of the saints" during the 1650's, and especially after the restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660, devastated English and Scottish Calvinism. The y never recovered. English and American colonial Calvinism became pietistic and antinomian within a generation.<sup>51</sup> So did Holland's Calvinism during this same period. Few traces of postmillennialism can be found in Dutch Calvinism after 1700. Radical Enlightenment ideas and clandestine political organizations had been released as a side-effect of the Puritan Revolution in England; they spread rapidly to Holland in the 1690's, and from there to the whole of Europe.<sup>52</sup> So did the Christian-Newtonian synthesis and its accompanying Arminianism and Socinianism.<sup>53</sup> It does not pay to be premature.

It is not my intention to encourage the repetition of that seventeenth-century mistake. Productive social transformation takes time and lots of it. Great religious and social discontinuities are inevitable in human history, but in order to produce beneficial results, they must be preceded by and followed by long periods of patient and disciplined thought, investment, and work.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, I am a conservative social theorist. I see an enormous discontinuity looming, and

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51. The testament of this morbid introspective pietism is William Gurnall's two-volume treatise, *The Christian In Complete Armour: A Treatise Of the Saints' War against the Devil* (London: Banner of Truth, [1655-62] 1964). A study of the American Puritans is Gary North, "From Medieval Economics to Indecisive Pietism in New England, 1661-1690," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, VI (Summer 1979), pp. 136-74.

52. The writings of historian Margaret C. Jacob are important studies of how this took place. See the detailed annotated bibliography in Jacob's book, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 1-19.

53. Margaret C. Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

54. Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), ch. 12.

I want to encourage Christians to begin their patient labors. It is easy to tear down a society; it is not easy to rehabilitate one.

*Free Grace and Good Works*

The road to the comprehensive peace of God begins with the transformation of the covenant-breaking heart. Personal regeneration must precede comprehensive social reconstruction. This has always been the position of Christian Reconstruction. “The key to social regeneration is individual renewal,” wrote Rushdoony in 1973.<sup>55</sup> But we must begin this process of reconstruction with confident faith in the gospel; we must be confident that God’s salvation is as comprehensive as sin is.<sup>56</sup> Rushdoony is correct: “To limit salvation to man’s soul and not to his body, his society, and his every aspect and relationship, is to deny its Biblical meaning.”<sup>57</sup>

The process of spiritual renewal should be the Christians’ model for institutional renewal: a realization of sin and its disastrous consequences, a definitive judicial break with the power of sin, a lifetime of progressive subduing of the sinful tendencies of the heart, and a steady maturing in the faith over time. It is a matter of faith and its inevitable product, good works. Our faith, Paul writes, is not *of* good works but *to* good works.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph.2:8-10).

It is true, no doubt, that criticism of the existing social system will tend to undermine it. But criticism is not the primary cause of the destruction of any social system; God’s historical sanctions against it — internal and external<sup>58</sup> — are the cause. To return to the analogy of the ship: there is a hole in its side and a storm on the horizon. We should not quibble over the negative effect on the passengers of a private call to abandon ship; the real question is whether the ship’s crew will do anything constructive in time, either

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55. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 122.

56. North, *Is the World Running Down?*, Appendix C: “Comprehensive Redemption: A Theology for Social Action.”

57. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 48.

58. The economist would say *endogenous* and *exogenous*. Economists talk funny.

to repair the ship or at least to get the passengers into the lifeboat. But the ship's officers will blame all their troubles on those who shout, "Abandon ship!" To do otherwise would be to blame the leaking ship and their own incompetence. Better to blame the alarmists on board.

What I am proposing is a social transformation that will take centuries to develop. The problem is, the storm clouds are looming now. We may not have much time to begin the process. By "we," I mean Christians in general. What we need to do is get experience in the little things of social life: establishing private Christian schools; beginning local social welfare programs, funded by voluntary donations; launching local political campaigns; starting Bible studies. We must prove that the gospel works before we can expect non-Christians or pietistic Christians to trust the Bible for the larger things.

The problem is, we – a minority, Christian activist "we" – may find ourselves under the spotlight before we are ready. The international financial system could collapse overnight, and the response of frightened politicians could create an international economic collapse to match the financial collapse. In such a scenario, will churches be ready to exercise leadership locally? If not, they will get a lot of "on the job training" in the middle of a massive international crisis. (If this crisis does turn out to be a debt-created crisis, it will be fitting and proper. The rise of the Enlightenment was closely connected to the rise of central banking, with the Bank of England as the model. 59 That experiment in private inflation, bureaucratic expansion, and political control — so popular with economists and historians — began in 1694 and remains with us today.)

### *Case Laws and Communion*

If society in general can begin to see, case by case, that the case laws of the Old Testament really do bring positive visible results, people will be far more ready to replace a dying pagan civilization with a comprehensively, covenantally Christian civilization. Unfortunately, very few Christians have ever heard of the case laws of Exodus and Deuteronomy. 60 Thus, a great educational program must

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59. P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1668-1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

60. James B. Jordan, *The Law of the Covenant: An Exposition of Exodus 21-23* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984); Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

begin. Christians must regain faith in the Bible as a guide to social transformation. They must regain confidence in the Holy Spirit as the agency of social change in New Covenant history. They must also regain confidence in weekly communion, the place where God meets with His people judicially. All of this may seem unlikely today. What is likely, however, is that the ship really is sinking. We have to do something.

Christians must regain confidence that God exercises power in history, and that our Bible has the answers. Our God is not a loser, in time or eternity, nor are His representatives, regenerate Christians. Triumphalism is a legitimate biblical attitude, but it must first be tested in the trenches of life. Christians must adopt what I call the toilet bowl strategy. Until we are willing to scrub toilets, and do it better than the competition, we are not fit to be civil engineers.<sup>61</sup> We must build high quality, cost-effective tree houses before launching skyscrapers. We must do a lot of good before we can legitimately expect to do very well.<sup>62</sup>

### Conclusion

This book presents the case against any compromise with political pluralism. With respect to *Christian* political pluralism itself, there is no Bible-based case. From Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644) to Richard John Neuhaus' *The Naked Public Square* (1984), there has been no case. There has not been a single, well-developed, self-consciously biblical exposition of the case. We have waited patiently for well over three centuries. Christian political pluralists still have yet to produce the equivalent of Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law*. Yet they write as though the dogma of democratic pluralism had been etched on the back side of the original tablets of the law, as though Moses presided over an incipient Rhode Island. They write as though they were sitting upon a mountain of supporting literature. This reminds me of the gambler's wad: a roll of thirty one-dollar bills with a fifty dollar bill at each end. It looks impressive when you first see it, but watch carefully when he peels off that \$50.

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61. According to European scholar and former U.N. official Ernst Winter, Christian women in the Soviet Union for many decades have been assigned this unpleasant but necessary task. They are the toilet bowl ladies of Russia.

62. Colonel V. Doner, *The Samaritan Strategy: A New Agenda for Christian Activism* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988).

The heart of the question of politics, Lenin said, is the question of “Who, Whom?” Writes Neuhaus: “Every system of government, no matter what it is called, is a system by which some people rule over other people. In every political system, political legerdemain, which is to say political success, requires that people be kept from recognizing the elementary fact that in any society there are the rulers and there are the ruled.”<sup>63</sup> The question is: Who rules, and who is ruled? The question of legitimate rule also is: In whose name, by whose authority, by what standard, with what sanctions, and for how long?

Christian political pluralists have promised that they can supply us with the answers, if only we remain patient. I am hereby calling their bluff. It is time for Bible-believing Christians to stop compromising with the humanists who are the beneficiaries of the system, and stop listening to their paid agents in the Christian college classroom. We need to make a clean break ideologically, and then patiently work out the practical implications of this break over many, many years.

What we have seen for over three centuries is a stream of compromises: in late seventeenth-century England, late eighteenth-century America, and late nineteenth-century Holland. Let us end it in late twentieth-century America. We are asked generation after generation to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage. Each generation complies. We keep selling it cheaper. Let us reclaim our birthright from those who have bought it with counterfeit money. This is the visible legacy of humanism: counterfeit money from privately owned fractional reserve banks.<sup>64</sup> It is time for a change — theologically, politically, and monetarily.<sup>65</sup>

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63. Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 30.

64. Elgin Groseclose, *Money and Man: A Survey of Monetary Experience* (Norman Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

65. Gary North, *Honest Money: The Biblical Blueprint for Money and Banking* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1986).

**Part 1**  
**BIBLICAL**  
**COVENANTALISM**



And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard, Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day. And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants (I Kings 10:1-13).

## INTRODUCTION, PART 1

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing (I Pet. 3:15-17).*

When I first wrote Chapter 3 on the Christian philosophy of Cornelius Van Til, I sent a copy to John Frame of Westminster Theological Seminary. He was gracious enough to evaluate it. He complained about one aspect of my critique, my accusation that Van Til was an antinomian. By any standard definition in the history of the Church, Frame said, Van Til was not an antinomian. He asked: Why did I insist on using a word that has a very different meaning for most Christian readers?

Good question. I hope I can supply a good answer. My view of law – biblical law – is now governed by the five-point biblical covenant.<sup>1</sup> This five-point model defines the nature of biblical law as point three in a covenant structure. It is not enough, biblically speaking, to insist on belief in biblical law as the sole criterion for establishing a Christian's commitment to, or opposition to, the "nomian" position. It is necessary that a person affirm all five points. As surely as Calvinist Van Til and Calvinist Frame would insist that a definition of "Calvinist" include all five points of Calvinism – total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement (i.e., particular redemption), irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints — so do I demand that "antinomianism" be defined in terms of the five points of the biblical covenant model. (I would also suggest that the

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1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

five points of Calvinism have a suspicious resemblance to the five points of the biblical covenant model.)

In Chapter 1, I define *antinomianism* and *pro-nomianism* in terms of the covenant's five points. I realize that I am departing from the accepted definitions offered by the historical Church. This is necessary; I am also departing from the Church's long-term reluctance to define and apply the covenant.

Once we see what this covenant model is, we can then pursue its proper application in the area of civil government. What is a citizen in a biblical commonwealth? What is a stranger? What is the legal authority of each? Why was Old Testament Israel's system of sanctuary closely connected to its system of political exclusion of strangers? Only when we see what the Old Testament model of the citizen is can we begin to discuss the question of the restoration of the holy commonwealth in New Testament times.

It is the unwillingness of Christian commentators and social theorists to return to the biblical record of Old Covenant that is the heart of the problem. Because they will not look at biblical law as the model, Christians are left without specifics for organizing society. This leaves them in the difficult position of denying the continuing validity of judicial standards set forth in the Old Testament, yet simultaneously claiming that "the Bible has answers for all of life," a claim which disintegrates on contact as soon as someone asks a specific political or judicial question regarding civil government.

Christian social theorists have recognized their vulnerability in this regard for many centuries. Their solution is always about the same: find some prevailing humanist program or worldview in contemporary society which has been "proven" to be valid by someone who claims he is using natural law, and then baptize it with a few Bible verses. This is "we, too" Christianity. This approach does not change covenant-breaking culture; it sinks or swims with it. Usually the former.

In modern times, even this natural law approach has failed. With the collapse of natural law theory under the onslaught of Darwinism, existentialism, and modern quantum physics, the anti-nomian Christian social theorist is left utterly defenseless. He has nothing specific to say, at least not with any authority. He is just one more timid voice in a cacophony of recommendations. He just makes things up as he goes along. He rejects "proof-texting," he rejects natural law, he rejects the Old Testament, and he proclaims

democratic pluralism. Democratic pluralism becomes a convenient excuse for not being able to recommend anything in particular, since democratic pluralism is the ultimate “pay as you go” social theory. It is devoid of moral content; it is all procedure. But it is acceptable to humanists, who much prefer to see Christians clinging either to some discarded ten-year-old liberal fad or to some hopeless program to “make the public schools moral again .“ It keeps Christians quiet, and it keeps them harmless.

This book is a refutation of “we, too” Christian social thought. Such thought inevitably plays into the hands of covenant-breakers. Before we proceed, however, we need to know what the biblical alternative is. The alternative is the biblical covenant.

The covenant theology was governed by this insight and by this conception. It was in the Reformed theology that the covenant theology developed, and the greatest contribution of covenant theology was its covenant soteriology and eschatology.

It would not be, however, in the interests of theological conservation or theological progress for us to think that the covenant theology is in all respects definitive and that there is no further need for correction, modification, and expansion. Theology must always be undergoing reformation. The human understanding is imperfect. However architectonic may be the systematic constructions of any one generation or group of generations, there always remains the need for correction and reconstruction so that the structure may be brought into closer approximation to Scripture and the reproduction be a more faithful transcript or reflection of the heavenly exemplar. It appears to me that the covenant theology, notwithstanding the finesse of analysis with which it was worked out and the grandeur of its articulated systematization, needs recasting. We would not presume to claim that we shall be so successful in this task that the reconstruction will displace and supersede the work of the classic covenant theologians. But with their help we may be able to contribute a little towards a more biblically articulated and formulated construction of the covenant concept and of its application to our faith, love, and hope.

John Murray (1953)"

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\*Murray, *The Covenant of Grace* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1953] 1988), pp. 4-5.

## WHAT IS COVENANT LAW?

*Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who bath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that bath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:5-8).*

These verses teach clearly the law of God is a tool of worldwide evangelism. The nations of the earth will recognize the justice that is provided by God's revealed law, as well as see the external blessings that inevitably come to any society that covenants itself to God, and subsequently adheres to the ethical terms of God's covenant. It is crucially important to maintain that these blessings will be visible (Deut. 28:1-14). The Bible is insistent: *there is an inescapable cause-and-effect relationship between national covenantal faithfulness and national prosperity*. Adherence to biblical law *inevitably* produces visible results that are universally regarded as beneficial. Why do covenant-breakers recognize this? Because all men have the work of God's law written on their hearts (Rem. 2:14-15), so they can and do perceive the blessings of God. This, God promised, would be the visible sign of Israel's wisdom, visible to the ends of the earth.

It is not remarkable that humanists deny the existence of this covenantal and historical cause-and-effect relationship, for such a relationship points beyond history to the existence of a sovereign Creator and Judge who will hold them eternally responsible on judgment day. They hold back the truth in unrighteousness (Rem. 1:18). What is remarkable, however, is that this view of revealed biblical

law as presently applicable to society is not widely believed by Christians. They believe that the cause-and-effect relationship between obedience to God's law and His positive blessings in history is just barely true within the socially and culturally narrow confines of the local church congregation and the Christian family. With respect to the authority of God's law in society, fundamentalist Christians deny it, neo-evangelical scholars deny it, and even traditional Reformed theologians deny it, and for a similar reason: such a view of God's law makes Christians personally and corporately responsible for obeying God, receiving the promised external blessings, and using this real-world capital for the fulfillment God's dominion covenant<sup>1</sup> — extending his kingdom (civilization) across the face of the earth.

In contrast, Christian Reconstructionists loudly affirm biblical law as a means of both evangelism and dominion. Indeed, *the affirmation of a long-term relationship between covenant-keeping and external blessings in history, as well as covenant-breaking and external cursings in history, is the heart and soul of the Christian Reconstructionist position on social theory, its theological identifying mark.*<sup>2</sup> This overwhelming confidence in the long-term historical efficacy of the biblical covenant is the reason why Christian Reconstructionists self-consciously claim to be the most consistent of all covenant theologians in history. It is also why we are confident that our view of the biblical covenant will eventually be triumphant in history. After all, God blesses covenant-keeping in history, and covenant-believing is surely an integral aspect of covenant-keeping. No doubt our confidence makes us insufferable in other theological circles, but such is always the effect of faith in God's covenant. Pharaoh found Moses insufferable, and he banished Moses from his presence (Ex. 10:28). The Hebrew leaders had earlier tried to do the same thing (Ex. 5:19-21). Bear in mind that Moses refused to leave Egypt until he took the people with him. Christian Reconstructionists have the same attitude.

### God's Sanctions and Positive Feedback in History

God's visible, external covenantal blessings serve as a means of confirming His people's confidence in the reliability of His covenant.

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1. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

2. There are other marks, of course, but this is its unique mark. No other theological movement proclaims this ethical cause-and-effect relationship in society. Indeed, all other Christian positions explicitly deny *it*.

Christians are required to affirm the existence of a normative, covenantal relationship of *positive feedback in history*. God intends His covenant to work this way: “But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, *that he may establish his covenant* which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (Deut. 8:18). In short: more obedience, more blessings; more blessings, more confirmation; more confirmation, greater obedience. This is covenantal positive feedback in history. This is Christianity’s standard of ethical performance, both personally and corporately. <sup>3</sup> God brings His sanctions in history, positive and negative, in terms of men’s public conformity to His revealed law.

We have read that the power to get wealth is one of God’s positive covenant sanctions in history. <sup>4</sup> This is a New Testament teaching, too: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). How is this steadfastness of God revealed in history? By the predictability of His historical sanctions in response to men’s responses to the unchanging principles of His covenant law. Conversely – much to the outrage of political liberals and most academic neo-evangelicals – long-run poverty is one of God’s negative sanctions in history. <sup>5</sup> Such a view of history is unacceptable to the Christian world generally, and especially to university-trained Christian intellectuals. Why? Because such a view is utterly hostile to the God-denying worldview of Darwinism, which contemporary Christians have adopted far more than they are aware of. Darwinism teaches that there is no supernatural force in history. Until the advent of man, there was no direction to history, no morality, and no purpose. Only with the appearance of man in history does cosmic personalism appear. Man proposes, and man disposes. Man extends dominion in the name of the human species. Man, and only man, brings meaningful sanctions in history. Autonomous man

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3. These sanctions apply more clearly to corporate bodies than to individuals, rather than the other way around, contrary to what pietism teaches. We know that righteous individual covenant-keepers can suffer cursings in history, as the Book of Job teaches. What the Bible teaches is that in *the aggregate* (corporately), and *in the long run*, God’s covenant sanctions are reliable and predictable.

4. Gary North, “Free Market Capitalism,” in Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *Wealth and Poverty: Four Christian Views on Economics* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984), pp. 27-65.

5. Gary North, *Unholy Spirits: Occultism and New Age Humanism* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1986), ch. 8: “Magic, Envy, and Foreign Aid.”



is the sovereign judge in history, not God. This man-centered theology is the heart of Darwinism, not its technical discussions about genetic or environmental changes.<sup>6</sup>

This view of history is basic to all of modern scholarship, and the vast majority of those teaching social theory and social ethics in Christian colleges have adopted the basic anti-covenantal perspective of this worldview, at least with respect to New Testament era history. The assertion that nations remain poor because they are breaking the external terms of God's covenant outrages the modern Christian intellectual. It was not random that in its hatchet job on the Christian Reconstructionists, *Christianity Today* ran a clever pen drawing caricature of me close by my statement: "The so-called underdeveloped societies are underdeveloped because they are socialist, demonist, and cursed."<sup>7</sup> I said it, I have defended it intellectually,<sup>8</sup> and author Rodney Clapp cited it because he apparently regarded it as the most offensive statement that he could locate in his rather cursory examination of my writings. He recognized that the neo-evangelical audience of *Christianity Today* would take great offense at such a statement.<sup>9</sup>

What I am arguing is simple: those people who truly believe that God's multi-institutional covenant is binding must of necessity also believe that it is *historically and judicially* binding with respect to all three covenant (oath-bound)<sup>10</sup> institutions: family, Church, and State. Conversely, if people do not believe that God's covenant is historically and judicially binding with respect to nations and local civil governments, then they have denied the relevance of Deuteronomy 4:5-6. They implicitly believe that the biblical doctrine of God's national covenant is some kind of New Testament theological "limiting con-

6. North, *Dominion Covenant: Genesis*, Appendix A: "From Cosmic Purposelessness to Humanistic Sovereignty."

7. Rodney Clapp, "Democracy as Heresy," *Christianity Today* (Feb. 20, 1987), p. 23.

8. North, *Unholy Spirits*, ch. 8. This also appeared in the original version of this book, *None Dare Call It Witchcraft* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1976).

9. Keynesian William Diehl took offense at this cause-and-effect explanation of culture-wide poverty, citing in response Jesus' denial of this relationship in the case on an individual blind man (John 9:1-3): "A Guided-Market Response," in Clouse (ed.), *Wealth and Poverty*, pp. 71-72. Art Gish was also upset: *ibid.*, p. 78.

10. Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), ch. 3: "Oaths, Covenants, and Contracts."

cept, “a kind of theoretical backdrop to history that no longer has any point of contact with the realm of historical cause and effect. Such a view of God’s covenant I call *antinomian*: a denial of the law’s effects in history. It reflects what I call halfway covenant thinking.

### “Pro-nomianism” Defined ,

What do I mean by the term “antinomian”? To answer this, I need to offer a description of “pro-nomianism,” meaning a defense of what God’s law is and what it accomplishes, especially in history. I begin with a survey of Ray Sutton’s discovery of the five-point biblical covenant model.<sup>11</sup> Sutton argues that the biblical covenant model has five parts:

Transcendence (sovereignty), yet immanence (presence)  
 Hierarchy/authority/representation  
 Ethics/Law/dominion  
 Oath/judgment/sanctions (blessings, cursings)  
 Succession/continuity/inheritance

While this terminology is slightly different from that which he adopted in his book, it is an accurate representation.<sup>12</sup> This model has become an integrating framework for the entire *Dominion Covenant* economic commentary.

I use this model to develop the “pro-nomianism” of Christian Reconstruction. It is the basis of my definition of anti-nomianism. I use the biblical covenant model as the source of definition because I have long maintained that language as well as everything else must be governed by the Bible. As I wrote in 1973, “Neutrality does not exist. Everything must be interpreted in terms of what God has revealed. The humanistic goal of neutral language (and therefore neutral law) was overturned at the Tower of Babel. Our *definitions* must be in terms of *biblical revelation*.”<sup>13</sup>

As a representative example of the structure of the biblical covenant, I have selected Isaiah 45. From it we can get some sense of how the covenant works in history. We can also discuss the covenant’s relation to biblical law.

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11. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

12. A correspondent to Sutton sent in the new version because it can be used to create an acronym: THEOS.

13. Gary North, “In Defense of Biblical Bribery,” in R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), p. 843.

### 1. *Transcendence/Immanence*

We must begin where the Bible does: the creation of all things by God (Gen. 1:1). We must maintain an absolute distinction between the Creator and the creature. God is the absolutely sovereign Master of all that comes to pass in history. Nothing takes place outside His sovereign decree. “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things” (Isa. 45:7).<sup>14</sup> “I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded” (Isa. 45:12). “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he bath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else” (Isa. 45:18).

Isaiah uses the familiar (but extremely unpopular) biblical imagery of the potter and his clay: “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd [strive] with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou? Or thy work, He bath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? Or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?” (Isa. 45:9-10).<sup>15</sup> These words became the basis of Paul’s argument regarding the absolute sovereignty of God in choosing to save one person and not another. It is the classic argument in the Bible for the doctrine of *election*. Paul says of Pharaoh: “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth” (Rem. 9:17). This explains the words in Exodus: “And he hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said” (Ex. 7:13). But this means that God keeps some men from responding positively to the universal offer of salvation. This keeps them from obeying His word.

The believer in free will (a degree of human autonomy outside of God’s eternal decree) then asks: “How can any sinner therefore be personally responsible for his sin?” Paul well understood this line of reasoning, to which he replied:

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14. This does not mean that God is the author of sin. This verse speaks covenantally: God brings evil times to those who defy Him.

15. I have used brackets to indicate the italicized inserted word of the King James translators. Normally, I do not do this, preferring instead not to disrupt the flow of biblical language. But my arguments here are sufficiently controversial that I do not want critics saying that I relied on the translators to make my points.

Therefore bath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why cloth he yet find fault? For who bath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Rem. 9:19-21),

Paul appealed directly to the biblical doctrine of creation – the imagery of the potter and the clay – in order to cut short every version of the free will (man’s autonomy) argument. There is no area of chance or contingency in history. None. It is unlawful even to appeal to this line of reasoning, Paul said: Who art thou that thou repliest against God?” The doctrine of the moral and legal responsibility of man before God must always be understood in terms of the absolute decree of God; it must never be defended in terms of the idea that man has a zone of uncontrolled decision-making at his disposal. Man’s responsibility must be understood therefore in terms of the biblical doctrine of creation. God decrees, yet men are responsible.

The biblical doctrine of creation teaches the sovereignty of God in electing some people to salvation. This is why so few Christians accept the biblical doctrine of the six-day creation, and why they are ready to compromise with this or that version of evolution. They want to affirm the partial sovereignty (partial autonomy) of man. They do so in terms of the pagan idea of chance: a realm of decision-making, of cause and effect, outside of God’s absolute providential control and absolute predestination. They refuse to accept the words of Paul in Ephesians: “According as he bath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph.1:4-5).

The biblical doctrine of creation leads directly and inescapably to the biblical doctrine of the absolute providence of God. God creates and sustains all things in history. Speaking of Christ, Paul writes: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col.1:16-17). Nothing lies outside the sovereign providence of God. There is no area of contingency. There is no area of neutrality. There is no area that is outside the eternal decree of God or the law

of God. This is the biblical doctrine of creation. Humanists hate it, and so do the vast majority of Christians today.

God as Creator brings all things to pass. When He says, "It shall come to pass," it comes to pass. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). God does not simply know the future that He predicts; He causes the future to take place. There is no element of chance anywhere in the universe.

Consider the greatest crime in history: the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The act of betrayal by Judas was predetermined by God; nevertheless, Judas was still held fully responsible for this act. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22). And what of those who unlawfully, defiantly condemned Jesus Christ to death? They were all predestined by God to do it.

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:26-28).

So, the Bible teaches man's personal responsibility and God's absolute predestination. If God was willing to predestinate the greatest crime in history, holding the criminals fully responsible, then surely He is willing to bring to pass all the other relatively minor crimes in history, also holding each criminal responsible. God's law touches everything, and each man is fully responsible for his thoughts and actions; he must obey the whole of God's law.

God did not create the world and then depart, leaving it to run by itself until the final judgment (textbook Deism's god). He is present everywhere, but specially present with His people. He delivers them. But He also gives His law to them. He runs everything, yet men are made in His image, and they have the ability to understand the external world. They are responsible to God because God is totally sovereign. He has laid down the law, both moral and physical. His Word governs all things. No appeal to the logic of autonomous man (free will) can change this.

## 2. *Hierarchy/Authority/Representation*

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isa. 45:22-23). In these verses we find four points of the covenant: sovereignty (point one), oath (point four), righteousness (point three), and hierarchy. Every knee shall bow. There is hierarchy in this world.

But knees shall also bow to Israel, if Israel remains faithful to God. “Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God” [“no other God”: New King James Version] (Isa. 45:14). Israel represents God in history, and the nations will, *if Israel remains covenantally faithful*, become Israel’s bondservants.

This means that men who disobey God’s law are required to do what they are told by those officers who declare God’s law as His lawful covenantal representatives. These representatives speak in God’s name through *covenantal institutions*. There is inescapable corporate responsibility in history. Nations will obey God and His representatives, said Isaiah, even if their citizens must be brought to judgment in chains.

In Israel, civil law was enforced hierarchically: a bottom-up appeals court system (Ex. 18). This is also true of church courts (Matt. 18:15-18). Thus, officers speak *representatively*: God’s representatives before men, and men’s representatives before God. This doctrine of representation is the basis of mankind’s corporate dominion over nature (Gen. 1:26-28). Men are under God and God’s law corporately; they are to exercise dominion corporately by bringing the whole earth under God’s law. Thus, biblical law is a tool of dominion.

Hierarchical representation is also the basis of covenantal governments’ *corporate* responsibility before God: Church, State, and family. Collective units are given laws to enforce; God holds them responsible to Him through representatives. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed; Egypt and Babylon were destroyed. Israel and Judah were scattered. Classical Greece and Rome fell. There is both personal and corporate responsibility before God.

### 3. *Ethics/Law/Dominion*

“Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it” (Isa. 45:8). The whole cosmos is described here as being filled with righteousness. Righteousness is the basis of man’s dominion over the earth.

But righteousness must be defined. This is what God’s law does. It establishes *boundaries* to our lawful actions. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was “hedged in” by God’s law. Adam and Eve were not to eat from it, or as Eve properly interpreted, even touch it (Gen. 3:3).

These ethical boundaries are not exclusively personal; they are also corporate. There are biblical laws given by God that are to govern the actions of families, churches, and civil governments. Autonomous man would like to think that God’s law has nothing to do with his institutions, especially civil government, but autonomous man is in rebellion. God’s law is not restrained by autonomous man’s preferred boundaries. It is not man who lawfully declares: “Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest” (Jer. 5:22-24).

Notice the development of God’s argument, which is in fact a *covenant lawsuit* brought against Judah by His prophet, Jeremiah. God sets boundaries to the sea, the seasons, and the harvest. The implication is that He also sets *legal and moral boundaries* around people, both as individuals and nationally. Men are to fear this God who sets cosmic boundaries. How is this required fear to be acknowledged? The prophets answered this question over and over, generation after generation: *by obeying God’s law*.

### 4. *Oath/Judgment/Sanctions*

“I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall

bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isa. 45: 23). His Word is sufficient. He will not go back on His Word. He has sworn by His own name. God has therefore taken a covenantal oath that in the future, every human knee shall bow, and every human tongue shall swear. There is no escape from God’s authority; and therefore all mouths shall swear — they shall acknowledge His sovereignty, either on earth or in the afterlife. Even in the lake of fire, they must eternally swear that God is who He says He is.

God’s law is our standard, both individually and corporately. There are covenantal institutions that are bound by the revealed law of God: Church, State, and family. These are the three covenantal institutions that God has established to declare and enforce His law. All institutions must obey, but these are those that are exclusively governed by formal oaths before God.

What is an oath? It is the calling down on one’s head the negative sanctions of God. If a person *or* covenanted institution disobeys the law of God, then God comes in wrath to punish the rebels. He comes in history. This was the warning of the Old Testament prophets. On the other hand, if men repent and obey, God is merciful and will bless them. “Your iniquities have turned away these things,” Jeremiah warned Judah regarding the rain and the harvest, ‘and your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer. 5:25). The prophets came in the name of God as covenantal representatives, calling individuals, as well as representative kings and priests, to repent, to turn back to God’s law and thereby avoid God’s negative sanctions in history.

The passage above all others in the Bible that describes the historical sanctions of God is Deuteronomy 28. Verses 1-14 describe the blessings (positive sanctions), and verses 15-68 describe the cursings (negative sanctions). Understand, these are *historical* sanctions. They are not appropriate sanctions for the final judgment. In this sense, they are *representative sanctions* of eternity’s sanctions, what Paul called the “earnest” or *down payment* of God in history on what must inevitably come in eternity (Eph.1:14).

##### 5. *Succession/Continuity/Inheritance*

“In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory” (Isa. 45: 25). Because God is the Creator, His people will inherit the earth: “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Ps. 24:1). (This is point one of the covenant.) Psalm 25:12-13 provides the covenantal promise:



What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose (v. 12).

His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth (v. 13).

God is to be feared (point one). God teaches man (subordination: point two) the required way (point three). The man's soul shall dwell in ease (point four), and his heirs shall inherit (point five). These two brief verses set forth God's covenant model, and in these verses we can see the outline of God's plan of history for covenant-keepers. This is so simple that a child can grasp it. Unfortunately, as we shall see, very few theologians have.

My point is that these verses refer to history. The fear of God is historical. God's instruction to man is historical. The law applies in history. The man is spiritually blessed in history: his soul is at ease. His heirs shall inherit.

Some commentators might agree regarding the historical reference of points one through three, but object to my view of point four. Perhaps the focus of the verse is exclusively internal. After all, the covenant-keeper's soul is what is spoken of. Perhaps the blessings are not visible in history. My response is to ask a question: Why should point four — spiritual ease — be confined to only the inner person? If the inheritance is historical, then the spirit's ease must refer to contentment regarding the past, present, and future. Only if the inheritance will be post-historical could the ease of the soul be legitimately confined to the internal realm. The covenant-keeper is at ease in history because he is confident about the future success of those who share his faith. It is his *seed* that will inherit.

If the inheritance of the whole earth is merely symbolic of the inheritance of God's resurrected people, then why refer to the inheritance delivered to a man's seed? In eternity, this inheritance will be his, too. In short, the primary focus of the passage is on *history*, not eternity. Fear God *now*. Learn from God *now*. Obey God's law *now*. Experience spiritual contentment *now*. Why? Because your spiritual heirs will inherit in the *future*: in time and on earth.

Yet there are theologians, especially Calvinists in the Continental (Dutch) tradition and all Lutherans, who insist that this promised inheritance is strictly limited to the post-final judgment world of eternity. The first point — the fear of God — is historical, but personal rather than corporate. The second — being taught by God — is historical, but personal rather than corporate. The third — obeying the law of God — applies in history, but is exclusive y personal, familial, and

ecclesiastical — never civil. The fourth — spiritual ease — is historical but exclusively internal. Why these restrictions on the first four points? Because the fifth — inheriting the earth — is seen as exclusively post-historical.

### *Summary*

The definition of pro-nomianism must begin and end with the biblical concept of the covenant. All five points of the biblical covenant must be included in any valid definition of biblical law. We should not expect to be able to define biblical law without first considering the Bible's primary revelation of God's law: the structure of the various covenants God has made with men.

Thus, I define "pro-nomianism" in terms of God's covenant model:

The belief that God, the sovereign, predestinating Creator, has delegated to mankind the responsibility of obeying His Bible-revealed law-order, Old and New Testaments, and promises to bless or curse men in history, both individually and corporately, in terms of this law-order. This law-order and its historically applied sanctions are the basis of the progressive sanctification of covenant-keeping individuals and covenantal institutions — family, Church, and State — over time, and they are also the basis of the progressive disinheritance of covenant-breakers.

This leads us to the question of the biblical definition of antinomianism, the antithesis of this definition.

### "Antinomianism" Defined

We have seen that the biblical definition of God's law is governed by the structure of God's covenant. Thus, the biblical definition of antinomianism must also be governed by the structure of God's covenant. If being an antinomian means that you are against the law, then it must also mean that it is *God's* law that you are against, and God's law is always covenantal.

To understand what antinomianism is, we can do no better than to consider the first revelation in the Bible of the original antinomian: Satan. Satan came to Eve with a proposition: eat of the forbidden fruit, and you will become as God (Gen. 3:5). "Run an experiment, and see if this isn't the case," he tempted Eve. "See whose word is authoritative, mine or God's ." He offered her a covenantal argument, a perverse imitation of the biblical covenant:

1. God is not sovereign.
2. You need not obey Him.
3. His law is not authoritative.
4. The promised negative sanction will not come.
5. [implied:] You will keep the inheritance.

I choose to analyze the biblical definition of antinomianism in terms of Satan's temptation of Eve. This line of satanic reasoning is the heart of all antinomianism.

### 1. *Transcendence/Immanence*

Who is God? Satan was asking Eve to decide. Who lays down the law? Whose word is authoritative?

Obviously, the Creator is God. Then who is the true creator, man or God? This is what Satan was asking mankind, God's chronological and judicial *representative*. If man answered anything but "God is the Creator, and His Word alone is authoritative," then Satan would inherit the earth. Man would die unless, of course, God should later send His Son, the second Adam, to inherit it, but Satan chose either to ignore this possibility or to act against what he knew would happen in the future.

The first step in becoming an antinomianism is to deny the absolute sovereignty of God. It usually begins with a denial, implicit or explicit, that God created the world. This usually begins with a softening of the doctrine of the six, literal, 24-hour-day creation. This is how the seeds of Darwinism were sown: denying the literal character of God's chronology in Genesis 1.16

The next step is to deny the obvious implication of the doctrine of creation: since God created the world, He also controls the world. In other words, men deny the absolute sovereignty of God and the providence of God. They deny the doctrine of predestination.<sup>17</sup>

Why is a denial of predestination inherently antinomian? Because it means that events in history come to pass outside of God's decree. They are therefore *random* events in terms of His decree, what philosophers call contingent events. An element of contingency is thereby brought into the universe. If A takes place, B may not take

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16. North, *Dominion Covenant: Genesis*, Appendix C: "Cosmologies in Conflict: Creation vs. Evolution."

17. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1932] 1965).

place. It may or may not. It depends. On what? On something other than what God has decreed.

This means that there must be *gaps in historical causation*. These gaps are inherently contingent with respect to the decree of God. A providential cause is separated from its eternally decreed effect. God therefore does not bring all things to pass; man brings some things to pass. The more element of contingency there is in history, the greater man's autonomy from God's providential control of the universe. That modern science has steadily adopted chance events as the basis of modern quantum physics is not itself a random historical event.<sup>18</sup> This conclusion of quantum physics is the product of a humanistic worldview that denies any decree of God and His creation of the universe. That chaos has become the "hot new topic" of modern physical science is also not random.<sup>19</sup> The ethical rebellion of humanist man is increasing.

If God does not control everything that comes to pass, *then His Word is not authoritative over everything that comes to pass*. This was the logic of Satan's temptation: to believe that a specific cause (eating the forbidden fruit) would not *inevitably* lead to a specific event (death). Somehow, Satan was arguing, there is contingency in this world. This is also the argument of all those who would use the concept of contingency to defend the idea of the free (semi-autonomous) will of man. This is why we are morally required to abandon any trace of the free will argument. Nevertheless, most Christians today hold to some version of the free will argument. Hence, *most Christians today are in principle antinomians*.

## 2. *Hierarchy/Authority/Representation*

Satan went to Eve first. He was implying that she, not her husband, was sovereign. God had spoken to her husband regarding the forbidden fruit. Presumably, he had told her, as God's representative. "Obey me, not your husband," Satan said. And by disobeying her husband, she disobeyed God. She ignored the hierarchy of authority over her. She ignored her representative before God: Adam. She acted autonomously.

Who must man obey, God or his own autonomous mind? This was Satan's implicit question. He asked Eve to disobey God, all in

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18. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), ch. 1.

19. James Gleik, *Chaos: The Making of a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987).

the name of a cosmic experiment. What would happen if she disobeyed? Good things, he promised.

“Trust me,” Satan said. “Take my word for it.” In other words, “I lay down the true law.” Man thinks that he is disobeying God on his own account, in his own authority, but in fact, man must serve only one master. Ethically, he subordinates himself to Satan when he refuses to obey God. He comes under the hierarchical rule of another master. Man may think he is acting autonomously, but he in fact is simply shifting masters. God or Baal? This was Elijah’s question (I Ki. 18:21). God or mammon? This was Jesus’ question (Matt. 6:24).

But neither God nor Satan normally appears to an individual. Each sends human representatives. Men represent God in positions of corporate responsibility. God has established three monopolistic institutions: Church, State, and family. The head of each can serve God or Satan, and those under him are sanctified (set apart) institutionally.

Soldiers live or die in terms of decisions made by their superiors. Nations rise and fall in terms of the decisions of their national leaders. An individual’s success or failure in history cannot be discussed without reference to the institutional hierarchies above and below him, and their success or failure. Thus, to deny that God’s law applies to your covenantal superior is another way of saying that it really does not apply to you. “I was just following orders!” says the subordinate who has sinned. In other words, “I was under someone else’s authority — someone other than God.”

Uriah the Hittite was a righteous man. He died because he was so righteous. Unrighteous King David told unrighteous General Joab to be sure that Uriah died in battle, and Joab carried out the order (11 Sam. 12). In short, *covenantal hierarchy* is important.

David later decided to number the people. This was against God’s law. Joab warned him about this, but David insisted, so Joab carried out the order. God’s prophet then came to David and announced one of three judgments: seven years of famine, three months of David’s fleeing before his enemies, or a three-day pestilence. Take your pick, the prophet said. David was too proud to accept the mild but personally humiliating second sanction, so he gave God the choice. God sent the worst one, nationally speaking: a plague that killed 70,000 people (11 Sam. 24), (Anyone who teaches that God does not send sickness to His people has a real problem in explaining this passage. ) In short, *covenantal representation* is important.

There are theologians today who say that God's law applies only to individuals, that nations are not under God's law. They deny the very possibility of a national covenant in New Testament times. Such a covenant was only for ancient Israel. National leaders are not representatives of their subordinates before God, theologians insist, and national leaders are surely not God's representatives before their subordinates. God's law has nothing to do with politics, they insist. There is no hierarchy of appeal based on God's law. *There is no national covenant*: this is a basic philosophy of all modern secular political theory, and few Christian scholars disagree. And those few who are willing to affirm the legitimacy of a national covenant gag on the idea of a future international covenant. International covenants are unthinkable for them. Not so for Isaiah (19:18-25).<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Ethics/Law/Dominion

"Forget about the law against eating this fruit," Satan told Eve. "Go ahead and eat."

"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law," announced the self-proclaimed early twentieth-century magician, Aleister Crowley, who also called himself the Beast and 666.<sup>21</sup> The ethical positions are the same. The results are also the same.

"We're under grace, not law." This is the fundamentalist Christians' version of the same ethical position. So is, "No creed but Christ, no law but love!" They do not mean what Paul meant: that Christians are no longer under the threat of the negative *eternal* sanctions of the law. They mean rather that God's law no longer applies in any of the five aspects of the covenant, eternally or historically.

Christian social thinkers, especially neo-evangelicals in the Wheaton College-InterVarsity Press-*Christianity Today* orbit, prefer to muddy the ethical waters by using fancier language than the fundamentalists use. Examples:

The fact that our Scriptures can be used to support or condemn any economic philosophy suggests that the Bible is not intended to lay out an economic plan which will apply for all times and places. If we are to examine

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20. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

21. Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice* (New York: Castle, n.d.), p. 193. A short biography of Crowley is Daniel P. Mannix, *The Beast* (New York: Ballantine, 1959).

economic structures in the light of Christian teachings, we will have to do it in another way. 22

Since *koinonia* includes the participation of everyone involved, there is no blueprint for what this would look like on a global scale. . . . We are talking about a process, not final answers. 23

There is in Scripture no blueprint of the ideal state or the ideal economy. We cannot turn to chapters of the Bible and find in them a model to copy or a plan for building the ideal biblical state and national economy.<sup>24</sup>

“Blueprint” is the code word for biblical law for those who do not want to obey biblical law. Second, “God’s principles” is the code phrase for fundamentalists who are nervous about appearing totally antinomian, but who are equally nervous about breaking openly with the teachings and language of dispensationalism, i.e., “we’re under grace, not law.” Finally, “God’s moral law” is the code phrase for the evangelical and Reformed man who does not want to be branded an antinomian, but who also does not want to be bound by the case laws of the Old Testament. In all these cases, the speaker rejects the idea of the continuing authority of the case laws.

It all boils down to this: Satan’s rhetorical question, “Hath God said?” (Gen. 3:1). The proper response is, “Yes, God bath said!” He is the sovereign Creator. He has laid down the law.

#### 4. Oath/Judgment/Sanctions

There are two kinds of sanctions: blessings and cursings. God told Adam that in the very *day* he ate of the tree, he would surely die. (“Dying, you shall die”: the familiar biblical pleonasm. )<sup>25</sup> This means a negative sanction in *history*. Satan told Eve that she would not surely die. Instead, she would know good and evil, as God does: a positive sanction. Which would it be? “To die or not to die, that is the question.”

Satan was a liar, but not so great a liar as to deny the idea of predictable sanctions in history. He simply denied God’s negative sanc-

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22. William Diehl, “The Guided-Market System,” in Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *Wealth and Poverty*, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

, 23. Art Gish, “Decentralist Economics,” *ibid.*, p. 154.

24. John Gladwin, “Centralist Economics,” *ibid.*, p. 183.

25. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 7: “Victim’s Rights vs. the Messianic State.”

tion and promised Eve a positive one. Would that modern Christian theologians were as honest as Satan! Instead, they deny the very existence of predictable covenantal sanctions in New Testament times. They write such things as: “And meanwhile it [the common grace order] must run its course within the uncertainties of the mutually conditioning principles of common grace and common curse, prosperity and adversity being experienced in a manner largely unpredictable because of the inscrutable sovereignty of the divine will that dispenses them in mysterious ways.”<sup>26</sup> This muddled prose matches an equally muddled concept of ethics and history. In English, this statement means simply that *there is no ethical cause-and-effect relationship in post-crucifixion history.*

Biblical case laws are still morally and judicially binding today. This is the thesis of *Tools of Dominion*. Kline’s theology explicitly denies this. Second, Kline’s argument also means the denial of God’s sanctions — blessing and cursing — in New Testament history. It is the denial of any long-term cause-and-effect relationship between covenantal faithfulness and external blessings — positive feedback between covenant-keeping and *visible* blessings. It is also the denial of any long-term cause-and-effect relationship between covenantal unfaithfulness and external cursings. Thus, when I refer to “antinomianism,” I have in mind the hostile attitude regarding ethical cause and effect in society — *social antinomianism*<sup>27</sup> — but also a deeper and more fundamental hostility: a denial, implicit or explicit, of the reliability of the covenantal promises (sanctions) of God in history.

##### 5. *Succession/Continuity/Inheritance*

If you die, you do not inherit. If you die without children, someone else inherits. Who would inherit in history if Eve listened to the serpent and did what he recommended?

If Satan was successful, he would inherit in history. Adam and Eve would die, as he well knew. He was a liar. He knew who is sovereign, whose Word is law, and who will bring negative sanctions in history: God. Satan knew that he might inherit as a subordinate

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26. Meredith G. Kline, “Comments on an Old-New Error,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, XLI (Fall 1978), p. 184.

27. North, *The Sinai Strategy*, Appendix C: “Social Antinomianism.”



steward if Adam and Eve disobeyed God, or at the very least, this would keep Adam and his heirs from inheriting. He would thwart God's plan. This prospect was enough to please Satan.

But Satan's hopes were shattered by the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who bore the law's negative sanctions so that God's adopted children (John 1:12) might inherit the earth and gain eternal life as well. Rather than seeing Satan inherit the earth through his earthly representatives, God has created an inheritance system *governing history*: positive feedback for covenant-keepers and negative feedback for covenant-breakers. Notice that the question of the inheritance was clearly historical: Satan never had any possibility of inheriting heaven.

Antinomians deny the existence of this inheritance system in history. This antinomian viewpoint regarding the systematic long-term outworking of God's visible covenantal judgments in the Christian era leads directly to what F. N. Lee has termed *pessimillennialism*, referring to both premillennialism and amillennialism. Covenant-keeping people will not progressively inherit the earth before Christ comes again physically, we are told. In contrast, Christian Reconstructionists affirm God's visible sanctions in history. If there is predictable long-term positive feedback (external blessings) in history for covenant-keeping, which Deuteronomy 28:1-14 insists that there is, and if there is long-term negative feedback (external cursings) in history for covenant-breaking, which Deuteronomy 28:15-68 insists that there is, then those who obey God must *inevitably* extend their external dominion over time, while those who disobey God must *inevitably* have external dominion removed from them.

God's sanctions in history still exist. This was John Calvin's view,<sup>28</sup> but modern Calvinists have abandoned it. God's covenantal law-order *inevitably* leads to the *external cultural triumph* of God's covenantally faithful people. This, of course, is postmillennialism.<sup>29</sup> This combination of covenant sanctions in history and postmillennial

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28. John Calvin, *The Covenant Enforced: Sermons on Deuteronomy 27 and 28*, edited by James B. Jordan (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

29. While Calvin did not see this as clearly as modern Reconstructionists do, there were still elements of postmillennialism in his theology. On this point, see Greg L. Bahnsen, "The *Prima Facie* Acceptance of Postmillennialism?" *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Winter 1976-77), pp. 69-76. I argue that there were both amillennial and postmillennial arguments in Calvin's writings: "The Economic Thought of Luther and Calvin," *ibid.*, II (Summer 1975), pp. 102-6.

eschatology is what distinguishes the Christian Reconstructionist worldview from all others today. 30

Those who deny postmillennialism usually also deny the New Testament reality of God's law-governed historical sanctions. To this extent, premillennialists and amillennialists have generally been social antinomians. They have erred in the development of their view of God's law and its sanctions in history. They have allowed their eschatologies of historical defeat to shape their doctrine of law, i.e., making it impotent in its historical effects. This triumph of pessimistic eschatological views over biblical ethics is one of the most devastating theological problems that the modern Church faces.

Thus, antinomianism is defined as that view of life which rejects one or more of the five points of the biblical covenant as they apply to God's revealed law in history. They deny that God, the sovereign, predestinating Creator, has delegated to mankind the responsibility of obeying His Bible-revealed law-order, Old and New Testaments, and promises to bless or curse men in history, both individually and corporately, in terms of this law-order. This law-order and its historically applied sanctions are the basis of the progressive sanctification of covenant-keeping individuals and covenantal institutions — family, Church, and State — over time, and they are also the basis of the progressive disinheritance of covenant-breakers.

### Definitions and Paradigms

Some readers may not accept my definition of *antinomian*, but every reader should at least understand how and why I am using the term. The biblical definition of God's law must include all five of the points of the biblical covenant model. Deny any one of these five doctrines, and you have thereby adopted an antinomian theology. Deny them, and you necessarily must also deny the continuing authority of Deuteronomy 28 in the New Testament era. Yet an implicit and even explicit denial of these doctrines (and the relevance of Deuteronomy 28) has been a basic tactic of the vast majority of Christian theologians for over a millennium.<sup>31</sup> Thus, they have attempted to define away the case laws and historical sanctions. What I am saying is that it is theologically invalid to attempt to define

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30. Postmillennial Puritans generally shared this view, which is why Reconstructionists regard themselves as neo-Puritans.

31. The major exceptions were the Puritans: *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, V (Winter 1978-79): "Symposium on Puritanism and Law."

away the continuing authority of Deuteronomy 28. I therefore see the inescapable theological necessity of restoring the biblical definition of biblical law and therefore anti-law.

I fully realize that my definition of *antinomian* is not the accepted usage. This common usage exists primarily because theological antinomians who have rejected one or more of the covenant model's five points have previously defined the word so that it conforms to their pessimistic historical outlook: the long-term cultural impotence of God's redeemed people in history. They argue that antinomianism is merely the denial of one's Personal responsibility to obey God's moral law (undefined).<sup>32</sup> This deliberately restricted definition implicitly surrenders history to the devil. What I am saying is this: anyone who denies that there are cause-and-effect relationships *in history* between the application of biblical case laws and the success or failure of social institutions has also inevitably and in Principle adopted the idea that the devil controls and will continue to control this world. Why? Because the devil's *representatives* are said to be able to maintain control over the social institutions of this world throughout history (point two of the covenant: representation). It does no good for a person to answer that he is not an antinomian just because he respects God's law in his personal life, family life, and church life. He is still saying that God's law is historically impotent in social affairs, that covenant-keeping or covenant-breaking offers rewards or curses only to individuals and only after the final judgment.

Yes, I am offering a more comprehensive definition of "antinomian." My major goal in life is to lay additional foundations for a theological paradigm shift that has already begun. I am quite self-conscious about this task. Readers deserve to know this. One inescapable aspect of a new movement or new way of viewing the world is the creation of new terms (e.g., "theonomy"), and the redefining of old terms. Einstein, for example, redefined several of the terms used by Newton.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, this is what the Barthians did with the

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32. "It refers to the doctrine that the moral law is not binding upon Christians as a way of life." Alexander M. Renwick, "Antinomianism," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1960), p. 48.

33. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd ed.; University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 101-2, 149. Kuhn writes: "Since new paradigms are born of old ones, they ordinarily incorporate much of the vocabulary and apparatus, both conceptual and manipulative, that the traditional paradigm had previously employed. But they seldom employ these borrowed elements in quite the traditional way." *Ibid.*, p. 149.

vocabulary of Trinitarian orthodoxy, or as Van Til remarked, they did it “under cover of an orthodox-sounding theology.”<sup>34</sup> (Rushdoony has correctly identified Barth as an implicit polytheist .)<sup>35</sup> It is not wrong to redefine terms; it *is* wrong to define words or use them in any way other than the Bible defines and uses them.

Those who pioneer a new worldview must break the near-monopoly stranglehold over useful terms that existing intellectual guilds have gained for themselves. An objection to my definition of the word “antinomian” simply because it does not conform precisely to past usage is also to a large extent also an objection to the alternative worldview that I am proposing.<sup>36</sup> This implicit theological hostility is masked by an explicit appeal to supposedly neutral grammar. But Van Til has taught us well: nothing *is neutral*. “Every bit of supposedly impersonal and neutral investigation, even in the-field of science, is the product of an attitude of spiritual hostility to the Christ through whom alone there is truth in any dimension.”<sup>37</sup> This surely includes language. As I wrote in 1973, “Neutrality does not exist. Everything must be interpreted in terms of what God has revealed. The humanistic goal of neutral language (and therefore neutral law) was overturned at the Tower of Babel. Our *definitions* must be in terms of *biblical revelation*.”<sup>38</sup>

I am doing my best to help establish effective theological terminology for future use by those who have adopted a theonomic worldview. We Christian Reconstructionists need not be limited in our critical analysis by the inherited vocabulary of our theological opponents. Besides, the winners in history get to write the dictionaries as well as the textbooks. More to the point, dictionaries always re-

34. Van Til, *The New Modernism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1947), p. 27. He later wrote: “It is at this point that the question of ‘traditional phraseology’ has *its* significance. The ‘simple believer’ is all too often given new wine in old bottles. It is our solemn duty to point out this fact to him. The matter is of basic importance and of the utmost urgency.” Van Til, *Christianity and Barthianism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962), p. 2.

35. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 20.

36. By a new worldview, I mean a new packaging of theological doctrines that have always been accepted by representative segments of the orthodox Church. But by adopting the five-point biblical covenant model to present these doctrines, I have been forced to reject existing theological systems which unsystematically and unself-consciously reject this model by substituting other interpretations of one or more of the five points.

37. Van Til, *The Care for Calvinism* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1964), p. 145.

38. North, “In Defense of Biblical Bribery,” in Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 843.

fleet common usage after the paradigm shift. We are preparing for this shift well in advance.

### Theonomy as Utopian

Calvinist Ken Myers, a defender of Christian political pluralism, has taken a forthright stand against utopianism, as in utopian *blueprints for society*. He stands foresquare for realism. (Or is it *Realpolitik* ?) He adopts a line of reasoning used by antinomians everywhere. He contrasts the idea of perfect standards with the reality of this sin-filled world. He does not do this in order to spur men on to greater perfection. He does not call on them to invoke this vision of a perfect blueprint as a means of reconstructing society. On the contrary, he says that the very perfection of the blueprint may condemn it as a tool of dominion in history. "It is never enough for us to concoct notions of perfect government ."<sup>39</sup>

But what if God Himself has "concocted" such notions?

It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect (Ps. 18:32).

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (Ps. 19:7).

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace (Ps. 37:37).

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart (Ps. 101:2).

Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me (Ps. 101:6).

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:25).

This line of reasoning does not impress Mr. Myers greatly. What he seems to have in mind is a specific kind of utopianism: Christian Reconstruction. Perhaps not. He maybe thinking of something that just sounds a lot like Christian Reconstruction. But note carefully

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39. Myers, "Biblical Obedience and Political Thought," *Bible, Politics and Democracy*, p. 28.

the thrust of his argument: that without assurance that the program of Christian Reconstruction (or whatever) is possible in the future, it can become self-defeating to attempt a significant break with the status quo. If you think I regard the following paragraph as a practical reason for linking theonomy with postmillennialism, you are correct:

The other variety of utopianism we must avoid might be called the lure of the “third way.” By this I mean to challenge not the motives but the conclusions of all those who set out determined not to embrace any existing solution but to invent an entirely distinct “biblical” option. Such an exercise may be useful for academic purposes, and it is possible that it may sometimes be fruitful to develop a vanguard with an entirely new vision. Further, it may be the case that all existing parties or programs are so tainted with evil that they must be rejected. But sometimes we must take sides with the lesser of two evils, especially if we have reason to believe that our tenaciously holding out for the *tertium quid* will ensure that the greater of two evils will carry the day and do much greater damage. Political realism requires the recognition that human sin may rule out any hope that our ideal program can ever be enacted or may ensure that if it is enacted, it will have no chance of achieving the desired ends. If the best is impossible to achieve, we should know how we can promote the better.<sup>40</sup>

In short, theonomy is utopian unless postmillennialism is true. This observation leads me to Mr. Barrington’s lament.

#### Barrington’s Lament

H. B. Barrington, a supporter of a Constitutional amendment to name Jesus Christ as the sovereign Lord of the United States, has protested against the “Tyler Reconstructionist” fusion of theonomy and postmillennialism. He calls it “frustrating” and a “constant irritant.” What he means is that it is frustrating and irritating to those, like himself, who have a slightly different agenda for Church reform and national reform, and who have a more traditional constituency. The question is: Why should someone who does not share our theological agenda complain if our eschatology interferes with his agenda, especially since he is using our materials and arguments to promote his agenda? Why not just rest content with the fact that each side can pursue its separate though closely related agendas, cooperating on an ad hoc basis whenever possible? Christians already do this in the battle against abortion. Why not also in the battle to impose a na-

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40. *Idem.*

tional covenant, which I favor as much as Mr. Barrington does? But he is not content. He insists, regarding postmillennialism, that “This doctrine is unnecessary for theonomic thinking, and yet it is tenaciously held by the theonomists whom I know as though their position would collapse if they did not strongly espouse this eschatological position.”<sup>41</sup>

For some very logical theonomists, this link is not logically necessary — and therefore not theologically necessary; Greg Bahnsen is one example. He, too, finds that any assertion of an inescapable covenantal link between biblical law and postmillennial eschatology an irritant.<sup>42</sup> But for those of us who have adopted the five-point covenant model presented by Sutton — which Dr. Bahnsen goes out of his way to repudiate — the link is fundamental, for we proclaim the continuing validity of the Deuteronomic sanctions in New Covenant history. Those who are faithful will be blessed; eventually (i.e., inevitably) they gain institutional power, even if this takes many generations. Those who are rebellious will eventually lose power. Blessing and cursing in history: this two-fold aspect of point four of the covenant forces us to become postmillennialists.

Why should men believe that there can be eschatological neutrality? *There is no neutrality.* I keep writing this italicized sentence throughout this book. Some people will get tired of it, but it needs constant repetition. Christians keep saying that they agree with this principle, yet when they get to one or another issue, they abandon it. Whenever they do, Christianity loses ground. For us “Tyler Reconstructionists” to adopt eschatological neutrality would be the equivalent of our adopting neutrality on the question of predestination vs. free will, or God’s law vs. natural law. *We are selling a covenantal package deal.* It comes as a unit; you can toss out any part that you do not like, but you must pay for the whole package.

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41. H. B. Barrington, “The National Confessional Response to Theonomy,” in *God and Politics*, p. 70.

42. Bahnsen, “The Theonomic Major Response,” *ibid.*, p. 247.

43. He refers to it as “the artificial imposition of an imagined blanket outline (with imprecise, pre-established categories).” *Ibid.*, p. 247n. I suspect that Dr. Bahnsen is reacting against this five-point outline because an early version of it was first promoted in Calvinist circles by Dr. Meredith Kline, whose approach to hermeneutics, not to mention biblical law, is not on Dr. Bahnsen’s list of recommended strategies. His instinctive reaction is that if Kline promotes it, it, has to be wrong. (With respect to Kline’s handling of questions of biblical law, I have the same inclination, but I do make occasional exceptions.)

The problem which Mr. Barrington faces is the same problem facing many other Christians who are beginning to agree with what we Reconstructionists are saying with respect to biblical law in society, but who do not like this or that aspect of theonomy. There are also those who love what we are saying about eschatology, but who are very upset about “all this legalistic business about Old Testament law.” People want to only buy part of our theological package, and they are offended or at least greatly disturbed by one or another feature that they regard as excess baggage. Each group pleads: “Drop the part which offends us, and all will be well with the program.” They mean, “All will be well with *our* program.” Mr. Barrington literally says that this is the tactical problem he faces in recruiting to theonomy people who remain committed to other eschatological views (amillennialism, I am willing to bet).<sup>44</sup> But what if I dropped predestination to satisfy the charismatic “buyers”? Mr. Barrington would regard this as a disastrous sell-out, as indeed it would be. If I refuse to capitulate to the theological suggestions of Arminians, whose number is legion, I am also unlikely to capitulate for the sake of all those amillennialist Calvinists who are presently committed to amending the Constitution to include a Christian statement of faith, whose number is considerably less than legion.

So, in order to alienate everyone equally, I now respond: “No, gentlemen, it is your responsibility before God to teach what the Bible teaches, and the Bible teaches covenantal postmillennialism. It is not our responsibility to change our confession in order to meet the silent standards of institutionally convenient neutrality; it is your responsibility to change your various confessions.”

You know all about Christian Reconstructionists: a highly confident bunch. Being postmillennialists, we expect everyone else to adopt our view; even more than this, we predict that as time passes, just about all Christians will! <sup>45</sup> We believe in continuity. We believe

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44. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

45. The historic Christian creeds either do not discuss eschatology, or else establish eschatological tolerance within the Church. The historic creeds are wrong on this point. They have not been based on the biblical doctrine of the covenant. They do not take seriously the covenant sanctions in history. While we five-point covenantalists can maintain peaceful relations with those fellow churchmen who do not share our eschatology, we are confident that over time, biblical preaching will change men’s minds on eschatology. If nothing else, when Christianity is triumphant over all the earth, Christians will then hasten to rewrite the creeds to reflect this fact. My view is simple: creeds can be changed as surely as constitutions can be. We need national covenants; we also need an international covenant. North, *Healer of the Nations*. We need revised creeds, too. Over time, creeds should be made more precise. They are not outside of history,



that those who hold our theology will inherit the earth. The closer they are to us, the larger their share will be. So we tell everyone: "Take whatever you want of our package, and put it to God-honoring uses. But the price of drinking at our well is listening first to a five-point sermon. Like the beneficiaries of the local rescue mission, you need to sit through the sermon before you get your free meal. So sit down and be quiet for a few minutes, while I get you a nice, cool drink. Or else go dig your own well."

A national oath is not enough. God's covenant is a package deal. It is not sufficient to restructure only one part of the U.S. Constitution and leave the rest of it in its present form. It is not enough to make Jesus Christ its Lord without making the Bible the final standard of all court appeals. God is not impressed with a formal commitment to Him without public obedience to His revealed civil law and the enforcement of His required civil sanctions.

This book is a lengthy refutation of those covenant theologians and scholars who have failed to preach all five points. This halfway house covenant theology is guaranteed to fail. It is also not enough to preach obedience without also preaching victory. The sanctions of God – inheritance and disinheritance – are part of His covenant. This is what Jeremiah fully understood and what the modern Church has not understood. This is what Jerusalem also forgot. Lamenting over the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah said: "Her uncleanness is in her skirts; She did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome; she had no comforter" (Lam. 1:9b; New King James). (The American Standard Version reads: "she did not consider her future .") In short, Jerusalem forgot about God's covenant sanctions. She forgot about *biblical eschatology*. So do most theologians and churches today. They think they are defending biblical eschatology; they are not. This will change over time; a mark of eschatological and ethical progress over time will be this shift in eschatology toward an acceptance of God's covenant sanctions in history. Those who are faithful to God's external laws will prosper externally in the long run; those who are disobedient will not. The extension of civic righteousness over time is inevitable. Until that **final** day of rebellion, even unbelievers will be sufficiently pragmatic to obey God's civil laws. <sup>46</sup>

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46. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

The United States is still under the dual sanctions of God, just as Jerusalem was. This is an application of part four of the five-point covenant model which “Tyler Reconstructionism” preaches.<sup>47</sup> The law of God and the cultural victory of God’s people in history are linked. If Calvinistic amillennialists refuse to go along with God’s five-point covenant model, we in Tyler are not responsible. We preach the whole covenant, not just one or two parts of it.

It is as mistaken to preach the covenantal obedience of God’s people without any eschatological necessity of their cultural victory in history (Bahnsen) as it is to preach the inevitability of cultural defeat of God’s people in history despite their covenantal faithfulness (amillennialism). These two positions are linked by their rejection of the doctrine of God’s dual sanctions in history. That Dr. Bahnsen and Mr. Barrington commiserate together regarding the “irritant” of Tyler’s linking together of ethics and eschatology through the doctrine of God’s dual sanctions should therefore not be surprising to anyone. The concept of the inevitability of God’s dual sanctions in cultural history was rejected by Van Til, too, and also by Meredith Kline, as well as by dispensationalism, Dutch Calvinism, Lutheranism, and the whole of modern evangelicalism. The fact that very few theologians today are willing to break with what has been the deeply rooted belief of the mainstream of Protestant Christianity for over three centuries is to be taken for granted. Paradigm shifts always start outside the mainstream.

### Conclusion

I have offered a comprehensive view of what the pro-nomian position teaches that biblical law is. We see biblical law as an integrated, unbreakable whole, an explicitly *covenantal* system of biblically revealed law. Antinomianism is a denial of this integrated system, yet in

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47. For reasons of one sort or other, a few of the pioneering Reconstructionist authors refuse to go along with the five-point covenant model, but the power of a thoroughly biblical model will eventually overcome opposition from younger scholars who do not have personal or intellectual stakes in the six loci of Protestant scholasticism. Covenant theology has faced a shrinking market for over three centuries, in part because of its commitment to a structure imposed on it by the logical categories of Protestant scholasticism. This shrinking process is unlikely to be reversed soon if covenant theologians persist in structuring their theological discussions in terms of these earlier loci which, while not individually unbiblical, are not derived as a unit from any biblical text, unlike the five-point covenant model, which is found throughout the Bible.

many cases, it offers as an alternative a perverse mirror image of this system. Satan had to use the biblical covenant model in order to refute it. He thereby honored the old political principle: “You can’t beat something with nothing.”

The older definitions of “antinomian” were devised by those who, if my version of God’s law is correct, were themselves antinomians. They did not adhere to all five points of the biblical covenant model. They may or may not have denied all five points, but they refused to **affirm** all five points, and then derived their definition of law and anti-law in terms of all five points.

So, for the sake of clarity, let me repeat my compact definition of pro-nomianism:

The belief that God, the sovereign, predestinating Creator, has delegated to mankind the responsibility of obeying His Bible-revealed law-order, Old and New Testaments, and promises to bless or curse men in history, both individually and corporately, in terms of this law-order. This law-order and its historically applied sanctions are the basis of the progressive sanctification of covenant-keeping individuals and covenantal institutions — family, Church, and State — over time, and they are also the basis of the progressive disinheritance of covenant-breakers.

Deny this, and you are an antinomian. This is the fundamental problem with the apologetic system developed by Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987), as we shall see in Chapter 3.

No one could become a citizen at Athens if he was a citizen in another city; for it was a religious impossibility to be at the same time a member of two cities, as it also was to be a member of two families. One could not have two religions at the same time.

The participation in the worship carried with it the possession of rights. As the citizen might assist in the sacrifice which preceded the assembly, he could also vote at the assembly. As he could perform the sacrifices in the name of the city, he might be a prytane and an archon. Having the religion of the city, he might claim rights under its laws, and perform all the ceremonies of legal procedure.

The stranger, on the contrary, having no part in the religion, had none in the law. If he entered the sacred enclosure which the priests had traced for the assembly, he was punished with death. The laws of the city did not exist for him. If he had committed a crime, he was treated as a slave, and punished without process of law, the city owing him no legal protection. When men arrived at that stage that they felt the need of having laws for the stranger, it was necessary to establish an exceptional tribunal. . . .

Neither at Rome nor at Athens could a foreigner be a proprietor. He could not marry; or, if he married, his marriage was not recognized, and his children were reputed illegitimate. He could not make a contract with a citizen; at any rate, the law did not recognize such a contract as valid. At first he could take no part in commerce. The Roman law forbade him to inherit from a citizen, and even forbade a citizen to inherit from him. They pushed this principle so far, that if a foreigner obtained the rights of a citizen without his son, born before this event, obtaining the same favor, the son became a foreigner in regard to his father, and could not inherit from him. The distinction between citizen and foreigner was stronger than the natural tie between father and son.

Fustel de Coulanges (1864)\*

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\*Fustel, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor [1864] 1955), pp. 196-97.

## SANCTUARY AND SUFFRAGE

*One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you (Ex. 12:49).*

*Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt (Ex. 22:1).*

*The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee (Deut. 28:43-45).*

Three simple passages. There is nothing complicated about them. They are easily understood, but they are no longer believed. And because the modern Church <sup>1</sup> pays no attention to them, Christians are in political bondage today — a bondage which is escalating all over the world. That they do not generally perceive themselves to be in bondage, let alone recognize the nature of their chains, is the most important aspect of this bondage. Their political oppressors have blinded them to their true condition. They live in a world in which it is either illegal or politically impossible to proclaim officially in the civil law or the covenant document of the nation that the God of the Bible alone is the sovereign Lord of civil government, and that His laws must be enforced.

This is not the first time that God's people have been in this position. We have seen all this before.

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1. I capitalize "Church" when I refer to the general institution. I do not when I refer to a local congregation.

And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him (1 Ki. 16:29-33).

Someone had to call this to the attention of the people of Israel. The prophet Elijah was the man appointed by God to this unenviable task. For this, he was driven out of the land. And then the drought came for 42 months. After the drought, the king and the people were ready at least to hear his challenge.

What will it take today to catch the attention of Christians?

#### Elijah's Challenge and the Christians' Response

Christians today would be quite literally embarrassed by Elijah's direct challenge to the assembled representative of Israel: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (1 Ki. 18:21).

Today, they would answer him a word. They would answer him a dissertation. It is the dissertation which they have been taught from their youth in public schools, Baptist schools, Catholic schools (in the United States, anyway), and maybe even home schools. This familiar message has been proclaimed by the pulpits of the land. It would go something like this:

"Look here, sir, we know you mean well. We appreciate your enthusiasm and life-long dedication to evangelism. You no doubt have God's interests at heart, as you understand them. But you have set an "either/or" choice before us. You apparently do not recognize the complexity of the political situation we face today. While we no doubt all believe in God in our personal lives, just as you do, we are nevertheless not legally in a position to enforce our personal views on others. Indeed, it would be wrong even if we could do so. The essence of freedom is the systematic self-restraint which we, as well as all others in the community, demonstrate in not letting our personal religious views affect us when we serve as jurors, voters, and judges.

So, we will not choose today between Baal or God, since we have left that matter to the individual conscience. In civil affairs, we are completely neutral between Baal and God. Also Moloch.”

A modern-day Elijah might answer: “Then whose law is enforced in the civil courts of this land, Baal’s or God’s?” The predictable answer from the assembled representatives is: “Neither.” That is to say: “Not God’s.” But the God of the Bible is not content with this answer, for it always means: “Man’s.”

Were Elijah to persist in this continual political agitation, and if it looked as though he was getting a following, the major news media would run a 42-week exposé on his 42-month stay in the home of the widow of Zarephath. Her neighbors would be interviewed in depth, and the widow would be offered \$250,000 by *Penthouse* magazine for an exclusive interview, assuming her story was sensational. Those in charge of the national media — and they surely are not Christians — would correctly perceive that if he and his followers were to become politically successful, then their own days of power would be numbered, not just for political reasons, but because of the religious transformation that would make such a political transformation possible.

In our day, Christians are afraid to hear such a message. It frightens them. It points to a vast increase of personal and institutional responsibility for them — responsibility in fields they have previously chosen to ignore. They do not want any added responsibility y. They much prefer their chains. (And maybe even an occasional browsing through *Penthouse*—to read the latest political exposé, of course. )

### *A Message of Liberation*

In the next few pages, I am going to discuss the judicial and political implications of these verses dealing with strangers and the law of God. In the following subsection, “Sanctuary for Strangers,” I will introduce some very simple biblical ideas — ideas that have been suppressed, forgotten, or at least systematically neglected for at least two centuries. These ideas are no longer preached from the pulpits of the world. They are not discussed in public school textbooks. If the principles they reveal were widely honored, the world would be transformed. Radically transformed.

When you are finished with the subsection, I want you to sit there and say to yourself, “Do I really believe this?” If you say either “yes” or “maybe,” I want you to ask yourself another question: “Why

has no one ever told me about this before?" I have an answer: a *conspiracy*. Not simply a conspiracy of silence, which today unquestionably exists, but a self-conscious, deeply religious, highly intellectual, well-organized political conspiracy which gained a major victory over Christian civilization almost exactly two centuries ago. This conspiracy had previously been working for about a century to achieve this major victory. We do not call it a conspiracy because it won. A successful conspiracy is like successful treason, as described by John Barrington in 1613:

Treason cloth never prosper: what's the reason?  
Why if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

*Political Polytheism* is an attempt to overcome this contemporary conspiracy of silence. It is also a preliminary step in overcoming the political results of the three-centuries-old original conspiracy. My hope is that the spiritual and political heirs of this conspiracy will take little notice of this fat book until it is way too late for them to do much about it. This is one reason why I made it so fat. I hope those outside the Reconstructionists' paradigm shift will decide not to read it until after the shift.

Time is rapidly running out, for one side or the other.

I want to make it clear from the beginning that this is a politically nonpartisan book. It is a politically *panpartisan* book. All the political parties on earth should proclaim the crown rights of King Jesus. Every political platform should be 'governed by God's revealed law. Jesus Christ is the Lord of politics, for He is Lord of the universe. There is no "King's X" anywhere in the universe from the absolute authority of the King of Kings. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Ps. 139: 7-8). This pretty well covers all the potential loopholes.

### Sanctuary for Strangers

The ancient world was in spiritual darkness and bondage. There was only one exception, one light on earth: the nation of Israel. In Israel, there was civil liberty. Why? Because the Israelites were under God's liberating covenant. <sup>2</sup>They were also under the terms

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<sup>2</sup> Gary North, *Liberating Planet Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Blueprints* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).



and sanctions of God's covenant law. In Psalm 119, the longest passage in the Bible, the psalm praising God's law, we read:

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way. Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments. So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed (Ps. 119:37-46).

That next-to-the last verse is crucial: "And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts." The psalmist understood the fundamental biblical legal principle: *self-government under God's revealed law is the starting point for liberty*. Because he was formally under God's revealed law, and because he had memorized it and was progressively bringing his actions into conformity with it, day by day, he could say in confidence, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed."

Outside of Israel – and inside, whenever evil ruled the land through false priests and civil tyrants – there were only varying degrees of spiritual darkness and political oppression. These always go together: spiritual darkness and political oppression. Psalm 82 describes the plight of those under the reign of such darkness:

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course (Ps. 82:1-5).

God the Judge stood in the midst of the congregation. He judged among the gods, meaning among human judges.<sup>3</sup> Verse 6 reminds the people: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." This is meant in the same sense as "gods" in Exodus

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3. This interpretation of "gods" is standard among Bible commentators. For a dozen examples, see Gary DeMar and Peter Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity* (Ft. Worth: Texas: Dominion Press, 1988), pp. 80-81.

22:28: "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people." These "gods" were civil rulers, and they were rendering unrighteous judgment. The psalmist is speaking of God's rendering of righteous civil judgment against these evil human judges,

Where does God stand as Judge? In the sanctuary. Ultimately, this is the sanctuary of His throne-room in heaven. What is the meaning of sanctuary? It is the *set-apart place*. In early Israel, this was the Tabernacle, and later on, the Temple. The word *sanctification* comes from the same root word: to be set apart by God for His purposes. It is the same root word from which we get *saint* – the set-apart person. The sanctuary is therefore the set-apart place where God renders His perfect justice to the rulers of the land. They had better judge themselves as they judge others: in terms of God's revealed covenant law.

*Israel: Sanctuary for the World*

'Israel was the land which God had set apart for His glory. He ruled His covenant people through civil and ecclesiastical judges who were required to render public judgment in terms of His law. This is what Psalm 119 is all about: *rendering God's judgment*, beginning with self-judgment.

People outside the land of Israel who sought civil justice and liberty had a way to gain it: to go to Israel and live as resident aliens under God's law. God told the Israelites at the time of the Exodus that they would be required to treat all residents the same. There was to be only one civil law for all residents. "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you" (Ex. 12:49). The gates of Israel were always open to those who would agree to live under God's civil law. A stranger who was willing to subject himself to the external, civil laws of God was entitled to all the external covenantal blessings thereof.<sup>4</sup>

*Israel served as the Church in the ancient world.* The New Testament speaks of Israel as the Church. "This is he [Moses], that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7:38). Because of this, Israel had an *open-door policy*. As surely as the Church's doors are open today to all those living in spiritual darkness, so were Israel's gates open. As surely as the

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4. Cf. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), pp. 94-95.

spiritually lost today can seek God's truth in the Church, so could pagans in the ancient world seek God's civil justice in Israel.

But there is an important though neglected implication of this analogy: as surely as the non-member is not allowed to vote in a church election, or serve as an elder in a church, so was the stranger in the gates forbidden to serve as a civil judge in Israel. Why? *Because those who were not formally and voluntarily under the eternal covenant sanctions of God— not just the external sanctions — were not allowed to exercise temporal civil judgment.*<sup>5</sup> You had to become a church member in Israel in order to become a civil judge.<sup>6</sup> If you were not voluntarily under God's *eternal* sanctions, you were not allowed to impose God's negative *civil* sanctions.

Sanctions: here is that "sanct" root again. What are sanctions? They are blessings or curses on those who either obey or disobey the law.<sup>7</sup> Those who obey God's law are *set apart* from those who do not obey. They are set apart by means of God's blessings. Those who disobey are also set apart from those who obey; in this case, by means of the curses.

Covenant sanctions are applied lawfully by three (and only three) institutions: State, Church, and family. The key to understanding a covenant is the presence of an oath. One must *swear allegiance* to a covenant. Only these three organizations are authorized by God to require such oaths. When a man swears allegiance publicly to the civil government, he is allowed to become a citizen. When a man swears allegiance to a particular church, he is allowed to become a member. When a man swears allegiance to a woman, and she swears allegiance to him, he is allowed to become her hus-

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5. That the Israelites did understand the eternal nature' of the covenant's sanctions is made clear in Daniel 12:1-3: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and-they that turn many" to righteousness as the *stars* for ever and ever."

6. Why didn't a man have to become a member of the congregation in order to get married and thereby become the judge of a household? Because the command given by God to mankind regarding subduing of the earth constituted a universal familistic covenant, irrespective of formal theological confession (Gen.1:26-28; 2:23-24).

7. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 4.

band, and she his wife. In all cases, a person takes a *vow*. A *vow* is a *self-vaedictory oath*. It says that if he disobeys the promises in the oath, God may lawfully bring His negative sanctions against him.

*Civil Judges: Bound by Two Covenants*

A stranger within the gates was not allowed to become a civil judge until He swore formal, public allegiance to God. He had to be circumcised and become a member of the ecclesiastical congregation. This demonstrated that he acknowledged that he was under God's eternal covenant.<sup>8</sup> *He had two separate sets of judges over him: ecclesiastical and civil.* There was therefore a legal process of "naturalization" in Israel: circumcision. Actually, we can better understand this as a procedure for "de-naturalization"; the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14). He would come formally under God's eternal sanctions (which a resident alien was not, formally); he could now become a civil judge and exercise temporal civil judgments under God. He was voluntarily, formally, and officially under God's *eternal maledictory oath*; he could therefore lawfully bring others under the negative temporal sanctions of God's civil law if he became a civil judge. The office of civil judge was now legally open to him.

Today, every Christian understands this principle in reference to church membership: no *formal subordination under God's eternal authority, so no temporal authority within the congregation*. But hardly anyone understands this same principle with respect to God's civil government.

Israel could serve as a sanctuary for the pagan strangers of the ancient world precisely because no stranger could enforce civil sanctions inside Israel. Had strangers within the gates been allowed to exercise civil judgment, their covenantal commitment to their foreign gods would eventually have colored their official judgments. *There is no religious or judicial neutrality.* The office of civil judge would then have become a much-valued prize, a means of *subversion* for foreign gods and foreign nations. Israel would have been judicially open to foreign conquest from within. Every stranger within the gates would have been regarded as a potential spy or enemy agent. He would have been a potential threat to the holy commonwealth. This is obviously not the proper judicial or psychological basis for

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<sup>8</sup> The rules varied in terms of which gods the stranger had been under, meaning which nations: Deuteronomy 23:2-8.

open borders and sanctuary status internationally. *To maintain its open borders, Israel had to close its political borders.*

There can be no covenant without boundaries. *These boundaries are judicial.*<sup>9</sup> God's Church covenant places a judicial boundary around the communion table. Access to it is limited to those who have been baptized.<sup>10</sup> God's family covenant places a judicial boundary around the home. To violate this boundary sexually is to commit adultery and thereby break the covenant.<sup>11</sup> God's civil covenant places judicial boundaries around the voting booth, the jury room, and the civil magistrate's office. To violate these boundaries is to commit revolution or treason against God. To invade these boundaries physically is to disobey the biblical covenant.<sup>12</sup> To deny the existence of these boundaries is to deny the biblical covenant.

Had strangers in ancient Israel been given access to the office of civil magistrate, they would eventually have governed openly in terms of the laws of their household gods. Israel could not possibly have remained a civil sanctuary. There would have been endless political battles and even civil wars – wars between rival gods. In the ancient world, wars were understood as wars between gods or between rival alliances of gods, as Homer's *Iliad* makes clear, and as the Bible does, too.<sup>13</sup>

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9. *Ibid.*, ch. 3.

10. *Ibid.*, Appendix 9.

11. Ray R. Sutton, *Second Chance: Biblical Blueprints for Divorce and Remarriage* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987).

12. While it is legal for officers of one office to invade the geographical boundary of another in order to enforce a law against an individual, it is unlawful for the judicial boundary itself to be broken unless those inside have broken a covenant. For example, a police officer can lawfully break down the door of a house if he has reason to believe that a husband inside is strangling his wife, but this is still a protection of the home. The husband has broken the covenant judicially by strangling his wife. The policeman is acting in his capacity as the legal agent of the wife, who as the victim is the covenantal representative of the family covenant. The husband has dated himself outside the covenant, and therefore outside its protection.

13. "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisers" (Judges 5:20). The "stars" here were clearly angels, not physical stars. The Bible does not promote astrology. A similar use of "stars" is found in the Book of Revelation: "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, 10, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she *is* shaken of a mighty wind" (Rev. 6:12-13). These fallen stars are angels. Obviously, the flaming stars in the heavens do not literally come crashing down on earth. I am a biblical literalist, but let's agree to be sane about literalism.

We come therefore to a fundamental and inescapable conclusion: *without the supremacy of God's civil and ecclesiastical law within Israel, there could have been no international sanctuary in the ancient world.*

The question we need to answer biblically – and I stress the word *biblically* – is this: Is this still the case today? If not, why not?

### *Civil Rights us. Political Rights*

God's law has established the foundational principle of all civil rights: one civil law *code for all residents*. Not just one law for all *citizens*; one law for all *residents*. This is what distinguished ancient Israel from all other pagan societies. Pagan societies did not give non-citizens full legal access to their civil courts. Strangers therefore had no civil rights. This was as true in Greece and Rome as elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

In Israel, everyone had equal access to the civil courts, for everyone was under the same civil law. This was the basis of the psalmist's confidence: "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed" (Ps. 119:46). But the concomitant to this extraordinary civil liberty was *political discrimination*: the resident alien could not vote or serve" as a civil judge. The maintenance of civil liberty was not possible in a world in which resident aliens could exercise citizenship apart from taking God's covenant oaths, civil and ecclesiastical, especially ecclesiastical. It was a man's public affirmation of God's eternal sanctions that established his legitimate access to bear the sword.

Every society understands that citizenship requires an oath. Every society screens access to the voting booth and political office on the basis of an oath. The question is: To whom is the oath made? To God or to some other authority? The humanist says that the oath must be taken to the State or the People or the Constitution — all man-made deities. The Bible says that the oath must be taken to God, and that this oath must call down on the oath-taker eternal as well as temporal sanctions.

Only the Church of Jesus Christ has the God-given authority today to announce the application of God's eternal sanctions in the New Covenant era (Matt.18:18). Therein lies the rub for humanism and all other rival religions. Therein also lies the rub for every Christian who seeks to defend the doctrine of political pluralism.

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14. Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1864] 1955), Bk. 3, Ch. 12.

*Immigration Barriers*

Today, not a single sanctuary nation remains on earth. They all have restrictive immigration barriers. This is a recent development, a political product of World War I and the decade following (1914-24). Prior to 1914, there were no passports in the modern sense. Physically healthy people could cross national borders permanently without significant legal interference. The 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published in 1911, begins its brief section on "Passport" as follows: "PASSPORT, or safe conduct in time of war, a document granted by a belligerent power to protect persons and property from the operation of hostilities." The idea of a passport was the protection of individuals of one nation from bureaucrats of another. "In its more familiar sense a passport is a document authorizing a person to pass out of or into a country, or a licence or safe-conduct to the person specified therein and authenticating his right to aid and protection. Although most foreign countries may now be entered without passports, the English foreign office recommends travelers to furnish themselves with them, as affording a ready means of identification in case of need." Most people today can barely imagine such a world. Today, passports are universally required as a means of control over travelers from abroad. They are used to track the movements of travelers, foreign and domestic. (They are now computerized in the United States.) Passports exist for the sake of the bureaucrats, not citizens. We need to ask ourselves: What happened to the Old Testament concept of sanctuary, which Western nations, especially England, Holland, the United States, and Switzerland,<sup>15</sup> scrupulously honored before World War I?

What happened was that mass democracy had a head-on collision with cheap mass transportation. The almost destitute and the homeless of the world can now afford to seek sanctuary in a geographically distant land of plenty. And so the gates were closed by legislation, nation by nation.<sup>16</sup> Citizenship today is by birth in some nations; if you are a resident alien, your children will automatically become citizens. Thus, to keep from getting politically "swamped" by the children of strangers, these nations have closed their gates. In other nations, citizenship comes with property ownership. So, the

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15. All were originally Calvinist nations, it should be recalled.

16. In the United States, the 1924 immigration law was the major event. See Roy L. Garis, *Immigration Restriction* (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

rich can “buy their way in,” but the poor are told to leave. The selective barriers remain.

Immigration was not a political problem for ancient Israel. It was not physical birth that entitled a person to citizenship. It was rather the physical mark of a covenant oath, *circumcision*: the outward sign of the new *birth*.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, we reach a most important conclusion: *Israel was a sanctuary because Israel was God's theocracy*. There are no remaining national sanctuaries today because citizenship and rulership are based now on mass democracy. The State<sup>18</sup> is officially a covenant institution established by man rather than God. It derives its authority solely from the sovereign People. This is why in some Communist dictatorships and other dictatorships, it is against the law to refuse to vote on election day. The People must speak, even in one-party dictatorships. The public approval of the People is the source of the regime's legitimacy.

This crucial shift in the covenantal basis of citizenship is what the conspiracy of silence is all about. This is what the political conspiracy two centuries ago was all about. The conspirators have substituted new oaths, and Christian citizens have naively agreed to this, thereby sealing the doom of national sanctuaries in the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup>

Do you now understand the Old Covenant concept of sanctuary? Do you basically approve of the concept? Do you see why it was that without a biblical theocracy based on public oaths to God there could have been no Old Covenant biblical sanctuary? What was the nature of this theocracy? Political recognition of the principle of public covenant oaths that call down covenant sanctions – external (temporal, civil) and eternal – under God's covenant law.

Do you think there is anything in the New Testament that has significantly altered this judicial principle? If so, how? Think about it. And then read on.

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17. The reason why women did not normally exercise civil office in ancient Israel was that they were not circumcised. They could serve as judges only through their husbands, or because of their late husbands in the case of widows. Widows, as heads of households, could take independent vows (Deut. 30:9). Because females are baptized, this judicial restriction no longer applies in the New Covenant era.

18. I capitalize State when I refer to civil government in general. I do not do so when I refer to the regional political jurisdiction known as a state.

19. See Part 3, below.



### The Stranger as Oppressor

The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee (Deut.28:43-45).

The stranger was allowed to worship foreign gods in the privacy of his household in Old Covenant Israel. The State did not invade his home, although he could not proselytize publicly for his god or gods. <sup>20</sup> These household idols were false gods. They represented demons who were sources of spiritual bondage and therefore potential oppression. This is why the stranger had no political rights at all, meaning rights associated with the exercise of the franchise — voting — because voting is inescapably an aspect of civil rulership or judgeship. The voter brings sanctions against the rulers. To grant the stranger political rights apart from his public rejection of his foreign gods was inevitably to grant those gods a degree of civil authority in the land. *There is no neutrality.* The stranger would seek to impose different laws because he worshiped a different god.

This political principle is so obvious that only Christians who have been educated by “strangers” or the strangers’ certified taskmasters within the camp of the faithful will have trouble understanding it. Unfortunately, this means millions of them.

#### *The Politics of Polytheism*

Christians today are in bondage. They do not readily understand this fundamental theological principle: *many gods, many moralities, many laws.* This is the political principle of polytheism. It is also the fundamental principle — seldom or never stated publicly — of politi-

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<sup>20</sup> This was no great restriction on his religious liberty. Gods in the ancient world were almost always family gods or gods of a particular city. They might also be gods of a region. They were not universal gods. This is why the gods of Canaan were a serious threat to the Israelites; these gods were gods associated with the land. On the non-universal nature of pagan gods, consider the military results of the bad theology given to Ben-hadad: “And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD” (I Ki. 20:28).

cal pluralism. Christians do not understand this principle because they have been taught by strangers — the public school system, television, and the media in general — and also by the strangers' certified academic agents within the household of faith.<sup>21</sup>

The stranger within the gates was always a threat to Israel during times of apostasy. When the nation of Israel forgot God, the sign of this covenantal rebellion was the people's abandonment of God's revealed law. This opened the door either to conquest by foreign nations or conquest from within. Biblical law was Israel's tool of dominion; the enforcement of God's law by Church, State, and family was the public manifestation of the society's covenantal faithfulness to God.<sup>22</sup> Whenever the nation abandoned God's law, His negative sanctions of defeat and slavery threatened the whole society. There is one God, and only one God, and He demanded unquestioned loyalty from His people. No other god could lawfully be publicly worshipped in Israel.

In contrast to this biblical worldview stood ancient polytheism, most notably (for the history of the West) the polytheism of Greece and Rome. The foundation of classical political order was the belief that there can be political covenants among clans and alliances between cities on the basis of shared gods and shared sacrifices. Only by inventing gods that could be honored ritually by several clans — each with its own family deities — could the classical City-State become a reality. Shared sacrificial rites created a common political order. The pantheon of the city's gods was the public manifestation of the religion of the city.

These agreed-upon gods were political. They were not the real gods of the classical world. The real gods of the classical world were demons. The Greeks lived in terror of these supernatural entities.<sup>23</sup>

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21. See Chapter 5, below.

22. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Care Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

23. Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (3rd ed.; New York: Meridian, [1922] 1955), ch. 1. Her view is very different from the view expressed by Farnell, the author of a monumental — literally — late nineteenth-century study of ancient Greek religion and statuary: “. . . while Greek mythology was passionate and picturesque, Greek religion was, on the whole, sober and sane.” Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek City States*, 5 vols. (New Rochelle, New York: Caratas Brothers, [1895] 1977), I, p. ix. See also the book by the disciple of Harrison: John Cuthbert Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion: A Study in Survivals* (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, [1910] 1964). See also E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

Gods of the underworld were sometimes elevated to Olympian status, but they retained many of their underworld features. The snake, for example, was linked with the guardian genius (spirit) of the city of Athens, a vehicle of the wrath of the goddess Athena. 24 Jane Harrison is correct: Whatever may have been the view of the unthinking public, the educated man, as well as the barbarous Persian, knew that in past days the Greeks themselves had worshiped nature-powers.<sup>25</sup> The Olympian gods were essentially inventions; they served both intellectual and political purposes.

Two centuries before the birth of Christ, the Dea Roma cult in Smyrna had elevated the people of Rome and the city to divine status. The Roman Empire later elevated the "genius of the Emperor" to the status of divinity. In the Emperor was the personification of the divine State.<sup>26</sup> Rushdoony has summarized the implications for the Church of this development:

The conflict of Christianity with Rome was thus political from the Roman perspective, although religious from the Christian perspective. The Christians were never asked to worship Rome's pagan gods; they were merely asked to recognize the religious primacy of the state. . . . The issue, then, was this: should the emperor's law, state law, govern both the state and the church, or were both state and church, emperor and bishop alike, under God's law? Who represented true and ultimate order, God or Rome, eternity or time? The Roman answer was Rome and time, and hence Christianity constituted a treasonable faith and a menace to political order. The Roman answer to the problem of man was political, not religious. This meant, *first*, that *man's basic problem was not sin but lack of political order*. This Rome sought to supply, religiously and earnestly. *Second*, Rome answered the problem of the one and the many in favor of oneness, the unity of all things in terms of the state, Rome. Hence, over-organization, undue simplification, and centralization increasingly characterized Rome. 27

This was political religion, invented for the sake of politics and the *polis*. This was political polytheism, a supernatural plurality of

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24. Harrison, *Prolegomena*, p. 305.

25. Harrison, in *Epilogomena to the Study of Greek Religion* and *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (2nd ed.; New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, [1927] 1962), p. 446.

26. Cyrus Bailey, *Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 52; cited by R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1971] 1978), p. 93.

27. Rushdoony, *One and Many*, p. 94.

beings unified only by politics. Rome opened its pantheon of gods to the local deities of all its conquered territory. The Empire itself was the sole source of unity, not the local gods. Politics would henceforth supply the needed unity of man.

The response of classical political philosophers, like most other citizens, was to invoke one of two religions, both of which are inescapable for humanism: the power religion and the escape religion.<sup>28</sup> Sheldon Wolin has described this dual development:

Confronted with power, one impulse of political philosophy was to flee and seek refuge in a "golden age" located somewhere in the prepolitical past. In numerous writers we find this idea, but the significant point is that they pictured mankind in a society that had been purged of all political marks: neither law, coercion, property nor conflict had existed in the state of political innocence. Another and far stronger impulse, but one that was equally apolitical, was to suffuse power with religious symbols and imagery. Not the naturalism of a Polybius but a supernaturalistic view of power was dominant throughout much of the Hellenistic period and again in the centuries following the establishment of the Augustan Principate. This was a certain sign that men had come to look towards the political regime for something over and above their material and intellectual needs, something akin to salvation. If men could not flee from power to the golden age or to the universal city of reason, they would interpret it differently, treating it as the saving force that sustained the political world. As far back as Hellenistic times, the theories of kingship had revealed a trend in which the ruler stood as the symbol of the fears and yearnings of the politically disinherited. In the writings of the period, the other elements of a political theory receded to the background and the ruler stood alone and remote. The fate of the body politic was resigned to the moral character and foresight of its governing head. He was the sole instrument of the divine *logos*, of that saving force which, by his mediation, could regenerate society and its members; he alone could rid the world of conflicts and make it a replica of the divine *homonoia*; he must, therefore, be worshiped by the names of Savior, God Manifest, Benefactor, and Creator.<sup>29</sup>

In short, the Hellenistic world had already begun its journey down the road back to Egypt. The brief hiatus of the Greek *polis* had ended. The polytheism of the Greek family and the clans had be-

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28. Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), pp. 2-5.

29. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), p. 92.

come the political polytheism of the *polis*. That experiment, too, had suffered the fate of political religion: intermittent tyrants. 30 This local polytheism could not be sustained. When each *polis* was conquered, one by one, by Alexander the Great, the Pharaoh returned once again to his throne. The Roman Emperor was, theologically speaking, like Alexander: the Pharaoh reincarnate.

The culmination of classical politics came with the Emperor Gaius Caligula (37-41), less than a decade after the crucifixion of Jesus. He had probably been the instigator of the assassination of his predecessor Tiberius by the prefect of the praetorian guards. After eight months in office, he became very ill; upon recovering, he revealed traces of madness. He proclaimed himself a literal god and demanded ritual sacrifice, the first Emperor to do so, though not the last. He bestowed both the priesthood and a consulship on his horse, presumably to show his contempt for representative institutions. He raised taxes and executed wealthy people who resisted, confiscating their property. He announced that he wished that the whole Roman populace had one head, so that he could cut it off with one stroke. 31 Yet he also tried to promote popular elections, without success. 32 He could not be removed from office politically. He too, of course, could be assassinated. He began the Imperial tradition of having all visitors searched for weapons when they came into his presence. 33 But how could he protect himself against his own guardians? He couldn't; the praetorians assassinated him in A. D. 41.

Immediately after his assassination, the consuls declared an end to the emperorship; the now-sovereign praetorian guard ended this final experiment in political liberty 48 hours later. 34 This was the last gasp of meaningful political representation in pagan Rome's history. Caligula's symbol of the horse among the dignitaries had been appropriate; political representatives in Rome were by then clearly fit only for saddles and bridles. Rome's open pantheon had produced

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30. A. Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, [1956] 1963).

31. "Gaius Caesar," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 32 vols. (11th ed.; New York: Britannica, 1920), XI, p. 391.

32. A. H. M. Jones, *Studies in Roman Government and Law* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968), p. 49.

33. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study in Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1944] 1957), p. 132.

34. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), Milman edition, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, n.d.), I, p. 123.

closed politics. Rome had in fact extinguished politics. It therefore extinguished the religion of the classical world. Political power rather than political participation had become the central political fact.<sup>35</sup> Classical political philosophy collapsed in the face of Rome's universalist solution to the problem of the pluralistic pantheon of gods.<sup>36</sup> They had multiplied so rapidly that not one of them retained sufficient authority or respect to provide legitimacy to the new international *polis*. In that cacophony of blind, silent gods (Dan. 5:23), man officially inherited divinity — not men: one man. And the praetorian guards thereby became politically sovereign.

Rome was then invaded by the gods of the East. There are no religious vacuums.<sup>37</sup> *There is no neutrality*. The cacophony of the pantheon was followed by the cacophony of the competing cults of the Empire. The noise of the rituals below easily drowned out the silence from the pantheon above. By the third century, every aspect of Roman life had begun to break down. Political anarchy, drugs, famine, peasant revolts, and inflation shook the very foundations of the society. Of 26 reigning Emperors, 25 died violently.<sup>38</sup> But the crucial chaos was religious:

The results were not less disastrous in the realm of spiritual and intellectual life. All efforts to maintain a *cordon sanitaire* about Italy finally collapsed; Orientalism in its grosser forms broke in wave after wave upon the capital, and there now began in earnest the process of dilution whereby occidental values were to be overwhelmed. Meanwhile, the voice of Greek and Latin literature, which had been heard without interruption for centuries, was almost stilled; and the very silence testifies with eloquence to the wretchedness of the time. Such miserable records as survive point to an intensification of anxiety as the empire plunged into more and more hopeless confusion; and men began to anticipate the actual end of the world.<sup>39</sup>

They were correct; it was the end of the world — the classical world. Constantine made the Empire officially Christian in the first quarter

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35. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 91.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

37. Quantum physics teaches that there are really no vacuums. Even when all the matter of a system is removed, not all the energy is removed. This energy of the non-empty vacuum is called zero-point energy. This makes no sense, but neither does interplanetary gravitation — attraction at a distance without any intervening physical connection.

38. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, p. 153.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

of the fourth century. The chaos ended. The polytheism ended. One last brief attempt to re-establish the old order was made by Julian the Apostate in 361-63, who attempted to substitute the religion of the sun god for the religion of God the Son, but he failed.<sup>40</sup>

This grim political tradition was basic to the legacy of the classical world to the West. 41 From the collapse of pagan Rome until the Renaissance, this political-theological aspect of the classical legacy was repudiated by the Christian West. This is not to say that Christianity rejected pre-Imperial classical political *philosophy*. The seeming logical autonomy of classical political philosophy was both captivating and misleading; it led early Christian thinkers to conclude that the *polis* had not been the ritual-based association that it had been. The universalist of Stoic natural rights philosophy—which had been a desperate counter-move by nonpolitical Hellenistic scholars in the face of the disintegration of the *polis*<sup>42</sup>—also seemed to have found legitimate expression in the universal Church. Thus, Christians adopted some features of classical thought, especially the natural rights theories of the later Stoics. But Christian thinkers re-worked this tradition. Piety and impiety had been topics for classical political philosophers, but heresy had not been.<sup>43</sup> The rise of Christianity had radically altered this non-creedal aspect of classical political philosophy. What men believe about God became an important aspect of citizenship.

### *Modern Polytheism*

With the self-conscious revival of classical thought during the Renaissance came a revival of classical political theory, though of course modified by the cultural defeat of pagan idolatry during the Middle Ages. Supernatural elements of classical thought were removed. Machiavelli (1469-1527) is the familiar example, especially in *The Discourses*.<sup>44</sup> Machiavelli reacted against the conception of politics as an aspect of a holy commonwealth founded on an oath which implicitly or explicitly calls down God's eternal sanctions on the civil government. Politics, he taught, has nothing to do with eternal sanc-

40. *Ibid.*, ch. 7.

41. Fustel de Coulanges, *Ancient City*.

42. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, pp. 77-82.

43. Warren Winiarski, "Niccolo Machiavelli," in *History of Political Philosophy*, edited by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), p. 258.

44. Herbert Butterfield, *The Statecraft of Machiavelli* (London: Bell, 1955), pp. 39-40, 49-58.

tions. 'According to Machiavelli, this combination of universal, absolutized moral demands with their final sanction in the next world, instead of making man as good as possible by having the goal at the highest, have resulted in the utmost disorder and ruin.'<sup>45</sup> The humanist impulse is clear:

Machiavelli lowered the mark. He thus enabled man more easily to reach it. By liberating man from considerations of otherworldly perfection, he gave him expanded estimations of his own power as well as enlarged expectations for his own estate. No longer having to look up so high, man acquired a new dignity in his own eyes: he became not only lord of himself and his own destiny in the moral and political sphere, but was now free to become lord of nature itself. . . . As transcendent goals for human life are abandoned (on the ground that they make men indifferent to the earth), human life as such is divinized, made into something transcendent. . . .<sup>46</sup>

Machiavelli's classical political legacy is still honored today. Modern men are too sophisticated to erect a civic pantheon of local or regional gods. Men today have lost faith in the idolatrous polytheism of the ancient world. They have substituted instead a new polytheism, the *polytheism of originally autonomous individual* men. The family of man is the presupposition of this new polytheism — every man his own autonomous god. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political theory asserted that these "gods" came together at some time in the mythical past — hypothetical history<sup>47</sup> — in order to transfer some of their sovereignty to a common civil government. This transfer, in fact, created civil government. Such a view of civil government is polytheism stripped of its supernatural element, but polytheism nonetheless. This is the contract (compact) theory of the State,<sup>48</sup> a view still popular at the time of the American Constitutional convention, which was regarded by its defenders as at least analogous to the compact theory of the State.

Rushdoony has stated the problem of modern politics as well as anyone has: "Modern political orders are polytheistic imperial states, but the churches are not much better. To hold, as the churches do, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Calvin-

45. Winiarski, "Machiavelli," *op. cit.*, p. 259.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

47. Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), ch. 4.

48. Ernest Barker (ed.), *Social Contrast: Essays by Locke, Hume, and Rousseau* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).



ist, and all others virtually, that the law was good for Israel, but that Christians and the church are under grace and without law, or under some higher, newer law, is implicit polytheism.”<sup>49</sup>

### Civil War in the Family of Man

Jesus announced the destruction of the theological foundation of man’s confidence in the blood-based family of man, and in doing so, He also destroyed the theoretical foundation of political pluralism. He said: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matt. 10:32-36). If the bloodline family itself has been broken by Christ’s gospel, what legitimate hope can men have in the political unification of the family of man on any basis other than the complete triumph of the gospel in history *or* its utter defeat? For as long as there are churches still meeting, there cannot be a rebuilt Tower of Babel. Therefore, those who wish to worship at the Tower will seek to destroy the churches.

Paul announced to the Athenians regarding God as Creator: “And bath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and bath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:27). There is indeed a common humanity, but this humanity is fallen — from physical birth, man is in rebellion against God. This common existence is not sufficient to bring political unity, for at the Tower of Babel, man’s “lip” — his common God-denying, man-affirming confession — was forever shattered. But still we find that God-denying, man-affirming men seek to reconstruct that Tower and restore the lost unity of the society of Satan.<sup>50</sup> *Reconstruction is therefore an inescapable concept.* There is either Christian Reconstruction or Tower Reconstruction. God in-

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49. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), p. 18.

50. R. J. Rushdoony, “The Society of Satan” (1964); reprinted in *Biblical Economics Today*, II (Ott.-Nov 1979).

structs each person: "Choose this day which of these two international 'public works projects' you wish to get devote your life to."<sup>51</sup>

One of the areas of conflict between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan is politics. Humanism makes this arena the most prominent one, not Christianity. Salvation by politics is a humanist myth. As the kingdom of humanism has extended over the face of the earth, political conflicts have escalated. The twentieth century has been the age of mass warfare and the age of politics. 52 These two facts are not randomly connected.

Christian political theory asks this question: *Who is authorized to speak for God in civil government?* Also: On what judicial basis is this spokesman so authorized? Someone must speak the Word of God in judgment in civil government, just as in church government and family government. If God's judgmental Word is not spoken, then man's judgmental word will be. The question is: Can there be a *permanent* political arrangement in history in which God's Word and man's word are spoken together?

This is the fundamental question answered by political pluralism. It answers *yes*. How can Christians legitimately also answer *yes*?

### Problems With Political Pluralism

There are many problems with the modern philosophy of political pluralism. Permit me to list five of them.

1. Political pluralism is founded on a lie, namely, that all political issues are not at bottom religious. Political pluralists refuse to admit that temporary religious and cultural cease-fires are not permanent peace treaties. At best, pluralism masks the escalating historical conflicts only for a season.

2. Political pluralism is ultimately based on polytheism: many *moralities*, many *gods*, many *gods*. It ignores the fact that every god offers a covenant to men, and each insists that men submit to its terms. The terms vary, god to god.

3. Under political pluralism, we eventually get civil wars anyway. One side sees its covenant as the covenant of life, and its rival's covenant as a covenant with death.

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51. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

52. Cf. Robert Nisbet, *The Present Age: Progress and Anarchy in Modern America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

4. The ideology of political pluralism leads straight to government-financed education based on a politically announced set of “common civic virtues,” a set of virtues which is now and always has been a self-conscious program to destroy Christian education. 53

5. Public “neutral” education soon leads to increasing pressure for academic accreditation — primary, secondary, colleges, and universities — by humanists, leading directly to the destruction of systematically Christian formal education.

Political pluralism is the reigning political myth of our era. It rests squarely on the doctrine of *the sovereignty of autonomous man*, an eighteenth-century analogue of the divine right of kings. 54 The divine-rights doctrine claims that there is no judicial appeal in history beyond the designated sovereign agent: bishop, king, or people. Men can find peace only by submitting to this divine agent or by revolting against it and replacing it with a new authority.

Key questions inevitably arise: Who speaks for this sovereign agent in history? Who enforces his will? What if the sovereign agent is itself divided? How is his will then discovered? In short, what is modern political pluralism if not an attempt to reconstruct the Tower of Babel? How can men find peace in history if there is perpetual war within the Tower?

Christians have almost universally adopted the philosophy of political pluralism in our day. Like all pluralists, they have refused to face these questions courageously. They pretend that they can defer answering them indefinitely. They seek peace, and when they do not find it, they announce it anyway.

#### “Peace, Peace”

Like the humanist scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam, political pluralists seek peace and quiet from religiously irreconcilable conflicts in intellectual and institutional life. They presume that if reasonable men will simply leave dogmatic religion out of the discussion, they can come to a workable agreement. The humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries called on civilization’s warring combatants to calm down, have a little non-communion wine, and

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53. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1963).

54. Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988).

read an ancient manuscript or two, preferably untranslated. Their spiritual heirs today believe that the philosophical wars of civilization are not much different in principle from the personal conflicts of the college's faculty lounge.

These people conveniently forget that access to the faculty lounge has been systematically screened for many decades in order to remove or isolate all those who might cause epistemological dissent. Those trapped in the unaccredited or untenured 'outer darkness' are not considered to be part of the accepted universe of academic discourse. And so, in this sense, the faculty lounge really is the civil order writ small: no one worries too much about the plight of those who failed to gain authorized access. In pluralism, there is always some group "beyond the pale." There is always someone locked out of the voting booth because of what he believes or where he lives.

### *Irreconcilable Conflict*

The pluralist is unwilling to admit publicly one of the fundamental principles of the Bible: there is an irreconcilable conflict in history and in all of man's institutions between God and Satan, covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers, spiritual light and spiritual darkness. Paul made this principle clear when speaking of the voluntary covenantal institutions of Church and family.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship bath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion bath light with darkness? And what concord bath Christ with Belial? or what part bath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement bath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God bath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (II Cor. 6:14-18).

This same principle applies to the civil covenant. Christians are not to be unequally yoked with non-Christians. There is only one way to achieve this goal: *withdrawal from politics*. The question is: Who should withdraw, covenant-keepers or covenant-breakers? Pietists answer that covenant-keepers should withdraw; biblical theocrats insist that covenant-breakers should withdraw. One side or

the other must eventually exclude its rival. (Political pluralists argue that both groups can make a *permanent* political covenant.) The long-term goal of Christians in politics should be to gain exclusive control over the franchise. Those who refuse to submit publicly to the eternal sanctions of God by submitting to His Church's public marks of the covenant – baptism and holy communion – must be denied citizenship, just as they were in ancient Israel. The way to achieve this political goal is through successful mass evangelism followed by constitutional revision.

### The Question of Political Participation

This political question for Christians is: How much political participation, and why? One common line of reasoning is that Christians are to be “salt and light” in society. This position generally involves a call to limited participation. Not much can be done to heal the situation, but if we can do something positive, we should. This is the outlook of “politics as a rescue mission.”

Another approach is to appeal to the metaphor of the leaven. “Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matt. 13:33). If based on the principle of leaven, then the appropriate Christian approach to politics would be to adopt the strategy of *steady replacement* of evil with good. 55 Paul made it clear: there can be no permanent covenantal reconciliation between the Christian and the non-Christian. One or the other must forsake his covenant vows. 56 This has to apply to the civil covenant, for it is one of God's three designated covenantal institutions. The leaven of righteousness fills the political arena and thereby replaces the leaven of unrighteousness. Replacement is the goal, not long-term co-operation. This is why modern Christian social theorists are unlikely to adopt the metaphor of leaven. It is the one I use, however.

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55. It is preposterous *to argue*, as dispensationalists do, that leaven in the Bible is always associated with evil. What about the Old Covenant peace offering? “Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings” (Lev. 7:13), What about the Old Covenant firstfruits offering at Pentecost (yes, Pentecost)? “Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD” (Lev. 23:17).

56. There can be a cease-fire, *as* in the case of the believing spouse who remains with the unbelieving spouse. But remember: Christians are not voluntarily to enter into such permanent covenants with non-Christians; it only is supposed to exist when one spouse is converted to Christ after the marriage.

*The Three Views*

Actually, there are three common views today regarding Christians and political participation: withdrawal, preservation, and replacement (separation, accommodation, and transformation). Premillennial theology, especially dispensationalism, tended in practice toward the first view until the late 1970's. Its proponents were content to suffer the older, milder forms of persecution and ridicule by American political pluralism. Amillennialism and academic (historic) premillennialism have both favored the second view: salt and light in an age of permanent darkness. Its proponents have been self-consciously favorable to pluralism, even when the political system is authoritarian. They see no alternative except anarchy or outright tyranny. Theocratic postmillennialism favors the third view. Its proponents are ready to use political pluralism until the day that Christians have sufficient votes and voluntary support from the voting public to change the political rules. This is how the conspirators stole the republic from colonial American Christians; the stolen goods can be repossessed in exactly the same way.

The question remains: Why should Christians get involved in politics? For many years in American history, especially after the repeal of the eighteenth amendment (Prohibition), which had prohibited the legal sale of alcoholic beverages, in 1933,<sup>57</sup> fundamentalist Christians could not think of a good reason. They might vote occasionally, but they insisted that "politics is a dirty business," and that it is a waste of time to seek political solutions to the problems of this world. They did not vote as a self-conscious political interest group, as they had in 1918, when the eighteenth amendment was passed.

*Defeat by Default*

The problem with this attitude is that it leaves the political arena under the domination of those who do believe that political action is the way to solve the major problems of this world. Christians for decades did not understand that successful politics must be as much negative as positive: getting the State out of the affairs of men. (Few of them understand this today.) They did not devote themselves to the study of politics in general or to the biblical laws governing civil

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57. John Kobler, *Ardent Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Putnam's, 1973).

justice. (Few of them do today.) They did not learn that *the judicial goal of the civil government is overwhelmingly negative*: prohibiting morally evil public acts rather than coercing individuals or organizations into doing acts of positive good. Thus, they were out of office when those who believe in political salvation — salvation by law — came into power and reshaped the American republic. They could not halt or even slow down the engine of secular humanism. Christians have become third-class citizens precisely because they have for too long believed that politics is a questionable activity for Christians.

We are still residents in the world, of course, living in the midst of covenant-breakers. We cannot escape history. But Christians are inevitably at war throughout history with a rival kingdom which seeks to overcome us, as representatives of God's kingdom. Christ has already definitively overcome this rival kingdom. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16: 33). We shall progressively overcome it, too, as the representatives of Jesus Christ in history.<sup>58</sup> Only then will history end: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15:24-26).

If we represent God in history, how can we represent Jesus Christ in any capacity other than as definitive conquerors who are progressively working out the implications of this conquest in history? To do less, we inescapably deny representationally His definitive victory over sin at Calvary, and His elevation to the right hand of God at the ascension. This is what the early Church believed.<sup>59</sup> It should be the modern Church's vision, too.

### God's Law and God's Kingdom

The visible manifestation of God's kingdom in history involves the progressive extension of His law and gospel over all the earth, century by century. What ancient Israel was supposed to reveal for foreigners to see within its national boundaries, New Covenant civi-

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58. Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1954] 1981).

59. David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1973).

lization in all its diversity is required to manifest across all national boundaries: *the enforcement of God's Bible-revealed law*, beginning with self-government, through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Our proclamation must be: "All Nations Under God."<sup>60</sup> The following is progressively to become every covenanted nation's visible testimony to the world:

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who bath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that bath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:5-8).

This passage was the judicial foundation of Christ's discussion of the city on a hill:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:13-17).

The issue Jesus raises here is the law of God. Moses and Jesus are agreed: the testimony of the *gospel in action* is inevitably tied to the *public, visible enforcement of the Bible-revealed law of God*, beginning with self-government, but not stopping there. This, however, leads to an unpopular conclusion: *the inescapable warfare of rival law-orders*. Rush-

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<sup>60</sup> Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for Government* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).



doony has spelled this out: “. . . law is a form of warfare. By law, certain acts are abolished, and the persons committing those acts either executed or brought into conformity to law.”<sup>61</sup> And if a given political order is judicially schizophrenic, as all forms of political pluralism must be, then civil war or national defeat is inevitable: “If a doctrine of authority embodies contradictions within itself, then it is eventually bound to fall apart as the diverse strains war against one another. This has been a continuing part of the various crises of Western civilization. Because the Biblical doctrine of authority has been compromised by Greco-Roman humanism, the tensions of authority have been sharp and bitter.”<sup>62</sup>

### *Détente*

The modern humanist rejects all this. So does the modern political pluralist. So does the modern antinomian evangelical or fundamentalist. All three are agreed: we are to seek political peace within the total family of man. We must therefore allow “equal time for Satan” in society.

There is a growing problem with this platform: step by step, the civil authorities allow less and less time for Jesus. The transformation of the American public school system is the obvious example. The Darwinists control it by law. This is the inevitable result of the theology of *détente*, the quest for permanent peace apart from the unconditional surrender of all men to God.<sup>63</sup> The self-conscious party to the *détente* agreement will use the extra time to consolidate his position at the expense of the naive party who misunderstands the nature of the treaty: a temporary cease-fire. This explains Western foreign policy’s continual defeats at the hands of the Soviet Union, and it also explains the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century political triumph of secular humanism in the West.<sup>64</sup>

The prophet Ezekiel dealt plainly with those of his day who promoted the policy of *détente*. It stands as a warning throughout history to all those – especially priests within the household of faith – who would weaken the resistance of Christians to the lure of political pluralism. Political pluralism is the policy of the broken wall.

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61. Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, p. 191; see also pp. 92-95.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

63. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God’s Program for Victory* (3rd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

64. North, *Healer of the Nations*.

Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, 10, others daubed it with untempered mortar: Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD (Ezek. 13:10-16).

Political pluralism is a myth, the official philosophy of a perpetual cease-fire. Like *détente* with the Nazis or the Communists, it is a myth useful only to some, a gigantic public relations ploy of an implacable enemy, who uses a time of peace to consolidate his position for the next assault. Christians are naive. They believe that they should always think the best of people, giving their covenant-breaking opponents the benefit of the doubt. They should be ready rather to doubt the benefits.

#### What Defines What the Stipulations of a Covenant Are?

Something must define the religion of the covenant in every covenantal institution. Each covenantal institution needs answers: Who is God, who represents God, what are God's laws, what are His sanctions, and who will inherit? There is no escape from this set of five questions. Christians have refused to deal with these questions for over two centuries, as testified to by the civil covenants under which they live contentedly. They refuse to go to the Bible in search of the answers.

The Bible is the only self-authenticating visible Word today. It tells us what the laws of God are that govern each covenant. All men are therefore to seek their answers in the Bible. This moral requirement is also a legal requirement: God will hold all men and all societies responsible on judgment day, and in history, for searching His

Word for the answers to these questions. Either we go to God's Word in search of the answers or to man's word. The two words are mutually irreconcilable. *There is no neutrality.*

The political pluralist necessarily refuses to acknowledge that the Bible is authoritative in civil government. Were he to affirm such a thing, he would automatically abandon political pluralism. His official reason for not going to the Bible is that he fears a tyrannical mixture of Church and State. (I am including Christian defenders of political pluralism here.) He thinks of Old Covenant Israel as inherently tyrannical. Then what of Egypt and Babylon? What of Greece and Rome? Were they bastions of civic freedom? And if they were, why did they continually and systematically oppress God's covenant people? <sup>65</sup>

There will always be a Church, in time and eternity.<sup>66</sup> There will also be civil governments in history. There is no escape from the questions of the proper *judicial* relationships between Church and State. The six key questions are: 1) Who is the sovereign agent (or agents) who announces each covenant? 2) Who is authorized to defend each covenant? 3) Whose covenant standards will govern each covenant? 4) By what sanctions? 5) For how long? 6) What is the proper relation between these two covenantal institutions – the question of biblically appropriate mutual sanctions? American Christianity has deferred offering a clear answer to these six questions for over two and a half centuries.

### *The Tithe*

Consider an example that was never called into question in the West five centuries ago, and rarely called into question two centuries ago: State-enforced tithing. Does the State have the God-authorized authority (note: *authority* and *author* are linked) to compel all residents of a community to pay money to support a specific church, meaning, inevitably, a politically approved church? Today, few Christians would regard such State power as morally or legally valid. (I surely would not. ) Why not?

There are many reasons that could be offered: too much power for the State, too close an association between specific churches and

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65. Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

66. One reason why only the Church can in history lawfully announce God's eternal sanctions is because she alone survives intact as a covenant agency throughout eternity. She speaks for eternity today because she alone will survive in eternity.

the State, the bureaucratization of the churches, freedom of conscience, etc. But then another problem raises its head: What about State-authorized personal income tax deductions for gifts to churches? The economics of the two examples seem to be the same: the allocation of personal funds for State-approved religious purposes. In the first case, the State *compels the* transfer; in the second case, the State in some economic sense *subsidizes* the transfer by refraining from taxing the money so transferred. The transfer is encouraged by means of either a negative sanction (taxation) or a positive sanction (tax-deductibility).

Are the cases *economically* the same? Yes. The individual has less money after the transfer, and the State does not collect this money for its treasury. Are they *judicially* the same? This is a question which very few Christians are prepared to answer by means of a well-developed political theory.

If we do not distinguish between the rival concepts of the State as an agent of *positive compulsory good* and the State as an agent of *positive voluntary good*, we will find it difficult to distinguish the two cases politically. If the State can lawfully, morally compel a specific righteous action, then the State becomes in most people's eyes the dominant agent of social reform in society.<sup>67</sup> No other agency has the permanent power of physical compulsion. (A parent exercises some minimal physical sanctions over minors, but this power ends at some legal point in the child's life.) The State can force people to do what it wants.

If the State is limited to prohibiting evil acts (which would also include public health measures against non-human organic invaders), then the most it can do to promote a particular social good is to *restrain itself* by refusing to confiscate an individual's assets. It does not tell the individual what to do with his money. It only agrees to take less of the person's assets if he does certain State-approved things with the money. In other words, rather than being a restraint on the individual, as is the case with State-enforced compulsory tithing, tax deductions on charitable gifts are in fact a *politically imposed*

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67. In fact, the Church is the dominant agency of social reform, for it presents the heavenly model of the eternal covenant between God and man. It alone provides the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is God's common meal with redeemed mankind. But this fact of the Church's predominant position must be accepted on faith. It is much more difficult to prove this by an appeal to historical records, once the view of the State as the positive reform agent becomes widespread in a society, and the bureaucrats start collecting money and issuing orders.

*restraint on the State,*<sup>68</sup>

Not so with compulsory tithing. Compulsory tithing is a decision by one segment of the electorate to hand a large stick to the State which is then used by the tax collector to beat some other citizen over the back until he turns over his money. A tax deduction is a stick in the hands of the electorate to beat the tax collector over the back until he leaves charitable people alone. He is not allowed to tax what they have given away. There is a *difference judicially*, even if there is no difference economically. We get very different answers to the question: Who wields the stick, and whose back gets whacked? The difference between the two paths which the money takes is also crucial. On one path, the tax collector collects the funds and disburses them; on the other, the citizen does.

Yet there is still a nagging problem. If the citizen is allowed to give money away before the “locusts” in the tax office sweep down to collect the produce of “the field,” is he allowed to give it to anyone, for any purpose? May he give it to relatives, tax-free? To a profit-seeking business that he owns? I think most people — non-anarchists, anyway — see that this would be wrong, for it would discriminate among taxpayers. Those who refuse to give away money would have to pay it to the State. Yet we want to encourage charity. How can we do this? Only through political pressure: instructing a majority of legislators to allow tax exemptions for specific purposes.

Another question: Who decides what constitutes a church for tax purposes? It has to be an agency of the State.<sup>69</sup>

We are now back to the question of politics.

### *Indirect Control*

Humanist critics of the Church today are attempting to force the recipients of tax money to do all sorts of humanist-required activities. The case of Grove City College, a Presbyterian college in Western Pennsylvania, is instructive. It refused for many years to accept federal tax money, since it refuses to submit to a whole list of federal regulations governing many aspects of education. To thwart the

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68. This is not to say that the State cannot use this limitation to achieve its goals. If it offers a benefit, it can impose a cost. This is the great threat of tuition vouchers or tax credits for tuition to private schools. Their coercion is less direct. The bureaucrats must be more circumspect, however — less direct.

69. Harold O. J. Brown, “The Christian America Position,” in Gary Scott Smith (ed.), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), p. 146.

school's escape from the regulations, the federal government sued. The college does accept money from students who have received money from banks that are participating in a federal loan-guarantee program for student loans. Indirectly, the school benefits from the decision of the federal government to subsidize college education; hence, said the bureaucrats, it had to submit. The school protested, and the Supreme Court upheld the school. The Court said that Congress would have to enact specific legislation saying that all such monies constitute a back door to federal intrusion. In 1988, Congress overwhelmingly passed such a law, over the President's veto, in the name of civil rights. Today, any organization which receives any sort of money, direct or indirect, as a result of federal legislation comes under all of the civil rights legislative controls, and these controls are comprehensive. He who pays the piper eventually calls the tune. Or more to the point, the piper's authorized representative does, even if many individual pipers (taxpayers and voters) do not want to pay for it.

So much for "free" federal money or bank loans that result from a federal program! But even this does not satisfy the controllers. They want to control those institutions that receive funds even more indirectly: tax-deductible funds. Institutions receiving such funds are prohibited from engaging in all sorts of practices. Take another example of higher education. Bob Jones University in South Carolina prohibits inter-racial dating, a policy that most (probably all) of the parents of the students approve of. The school can more easily "take the heat" from protesting students than parents can, so the parents prefer to delegate this authority. The federal government removed the school's tax exemption in 1985. The Supreme Court upheld this decision. The precedent is set. There is no limit in principle as to how far this back-door intervention can go. It is a political question.

We are again back to the question of politics.

### The Embarrassing Question of Theocracy

In all these cases, the State has to determine what is or is not lawful. What is a lawful charity? What is a lawful local church? What can the designated recipients lawfully do with the funds received as a result of a federal subsidy, direct or indirect, compulsory or voluntary? *There is no neutrality.* Some groups and some activities will

always be prohibited from receiving the subsidy. The question then is: *By what standard should the State decide?*

These issues are now becoming clearer to the humanists who hate the Church, as well as to a much smaller number of Christians, but the recommended Christian solutions are not at all clear. Radical humanists would gladly repeal all laws that grant either tax-exemption or tax-deduction *privileges* for donors to churches and Christian schools. There are even a few humanist-influenced Christians who would agree. But most Christians see where such an argument easily leads: to the control of the churches by the State. The power to tax is the power to destroy, announced Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall in 1819<sup>70</sup> – the case revolved around the taxing of a federally chartered bank by a state government — and few Christians would disagree.<sup>71</sup> But how can the consistent Christian defend the lawful sovereignty of a particular church against State control without also raising the embarrassing question of theocracy? Who is to say what constitutes a church? *By what standard?*

If the Christian says that anyone can setup a tax-immune or tax-exempt institution designated as a church, whatever the theology of the church happens to be, he has thereby admitted that other religious faiths are judicially equal to Christianity. Such a latitudinarian view regarding the establishing of churches allows many “strangers in the gates” to establish rival institutions that compete on an equal basis with the true and only covenant Church. This clearly violates Old Testament law. Everyone recognizes this, so Christians today have publicly abandoned this aspect of Old Testament law.

But where does this principle of equality end? What about suttee, the Hindu practice of forcing widows onto the funeral pyres of their husbands? What about polygamy, the Mormon practice which has never been condemned theologically by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but only suppressed provisionally for the present? What about some “native Americans” (Indians’) practice of using hallucinogenic drugs in their worship services? What of orthodox Judaism’s practice of enforcing laws against work on Saturday? (In the state of Israel, radical Orthodox Jews sometimes block

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70. *McCulloch v. Maryland*.

71. Christians need to argue that churches are legally and inherently tax-immune. Churches cannot legally be taxed, for they are God’s lawful sovereigns that administer and enforce God’s eternal oath. But this is a different issue from the question of income tax-deductibility for those giving assets to a church.

the highways on Saturdays. It is illegal on Saturdays to serve a meal in a restaurant until the sun goes down. ) Some faiths will always be excluded from any society. There will always be certain practices and beliefs that are considered too perverse for any society to allow in public. *There is no neutrality.*

Still, if many "churches" are allowed to preach their rival messages, then this raises an unavoidable general question: *What is the basis of social cohesion?* It also raises a specific question: What should be the basis of civil law?

### *Natural Law*

Traditionally, the answer of Protestants since the Protestant Reformation has been an appeal to universal principles of natural law. The Roman Catholic Church also accepted this principle of law, which the Church fathers had reworked from Stoic natural rights theory. But there are several problems with this natural-law approach. The first problem is the religious basis of modern natural law theory: *humanism*. Historian Paul Hazard discusses this in his chapter on natural law: "Natural law was the offspring of a philosophy which rejected the supernatural, the divine, and substituted, for the acts and purposes of a personal God, an immanent form of nature."<sup>72</sup> How can Christians safely rely on a legal theory that is either atheistic or pantheistic?

Second, Darwinism blew natural law theory to Kingdom Never Come. Darwin's universe is a universe without purpose, where everything evolves in terms of *presently* sovereign but evolving environmental constraints. The iron law of nature changes. It is altered by random responses to environmental constraints. "Varieties then arise we know not why," said Thomas Huxley, Darwin's popularizer. <sup>73</sup> Darwinism persuaded men that the world is under the control of continually evolving forces in a purposeless environment. These laws can be discovered by scientists, thereby enabling "man" (meaning the scientists and technicians) to take control of his environment. Socialists then persuaded men that there are also evolving laws of society, that these laws can be discovered by highly trained experts, and these experts can then show politicians how to achieve their so-

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680-1715* (New York: Meridian, [1935] 1963), pp. 269-70.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Huxley, "The Origin of Species" (1860), in Huxley, *Essays*, edited by Frederick Barry (New York: Macmillan 1929), p. 91.



cial goals scientifically. 74

There is therefore no “natural law,” except the laws of impersonal competition (the ideology of long-defunct “Social Darwinism”) or the ever-evolving social laws which only man, meaning scientific man, as the universe’s only cosmic sovereign, can discover and put to use for personal and collective purposes (the ideology of central planning). But there is no moral law, no universal, permanent “natural” principles of morality. There is no cosmic sovereign, other than collective man, to appeal to. This intellectually powerful combination of Darwinism and central planning explains why the faith of the twentieth century has been in the power of the State to solve the fundamental problems of this life.

### *The Right of Appeal*

To what “higher law” can the Christian citizen appeal in the face of widespread injustice, injustice that has been fostered and protected by the State? To what lawful authority, other than mere power, can Christians appeal? Is Christianity just another special-interest group, clawing for political power? Or, even if Christians are acting as God’s spokesmen, must Christians always conduct themselves politically as if Christianity were just another special-interest group? Do Christians conduct evangelism this way? Do they believe that the gospel is just another competing worldview among many? That Jesus is just another Messiah competing among many? That the God of the Bible is just another divinity competing against many?

In short, in order to be a Christian, must a person accept as morally and judicially permanent a world in which there will always be many gods, many laws, many spokesmen, and many warring nations? Or can a Christian rest assured that someday, in history and on earth, the Spirit-induced spread of the gospel will at last silence the many rival voices, and that people will proclaim allegiance publicly to the God of the Bible? We know this will be true in the post-resurrection world. Can we not hope to see this world steadily begin to manifest its principles in history?

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74. The first and most prominent American scholar who maintained this view was the sociologist, Lester Frank Ward, whose two-volume work, *Dynamic Sociology* (1883), was the first study to articulate the view. By 1900, it was the dominant view among progressive social scientists. See Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), pp. 297-318.

If the answer is *no*, then what power on earth will allow Christians to maintain the status quo in a world that is going downhill religiously as a result of humanism's polytheism? This is what a world of many competing laws really is: polytheism. Whenever 'Israel allowed polytheism to flourish, she came under judgment: the nations of the gods Israel worshiped conquered the land for a generation or more. Why do we think we are immune to similar judgments?

In fact, hasn't this conquest already taken place domestically— in America's public schools, in the communications field, in the entertainment industry, in the abortionist's office, in corporate finance, in science and technology, and in politics?

We are again back to the question of politics.

### Pluralism's Silent, Empty Temple

It is time to face up to the real-world implications of the theology of political pluralism. Michael Novak, the Roman Catholic scholar, has become one of the major intellectual defenders of the pluralist ideology today. Until pluralism's Christian defenders come to grips with Novak's description of the theology which undergirds pluralism, they will be like blind men leading others into the ditch. Novak writes: "In a genuinely pluralistic society, there is no one sacred canopy. *By intention* there is not. At its spiritual core, there is an empty shrine. That shrine is left empty in the knowledge that no one word, image, or symbol is worthy of what all seek there. Its emptiness, therefore, represents the transcendence which is approached by free consciences from a virtually infinite number of directions. . . . Believer and unbeliever, selfless and selfish, frightened and bold, naive and jaded, all participate in an order whose *center* is not socially imposed."<sup>75</sup>

Questions: What holds the society together when the centrifugal forces of political ideology begin to shatter this ever-silent voice of pluralism? What voice of reason or morality can ever speak out from the empty shrine? And why should anyone pay any attention to it if it ever does? Can it impose sanctions in history?

Lutheran scholar Richard John Neuhaus says that he is disturbed by the implications of Novak's empty shrine, for it comes too close to the naked public square which Neuhaus rejects. But what

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75. Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Touchstone, [1982] 1983), p. 53.

does Neuhaus offer in its place? Democratic persuasion. “Democratic persuasion, not emptiness, is the alternative to coercion.”<sup>76</sup> What kind of answer is this? Certainly not an answer based on political theory, let alone Romans 13:1-7. Political persuasion is always and inescapably *persuasion to coerce others by means of civil law*. It means persuasion to change any existing coercive sanctions. How can democratic persuasion be proposed as an alternative to coercion? Democratic persuasion is a means to coercion. Don’t democratic majorities coerce those who lose the political battles? Aren’t the “ins” ready and willing to see the “outs” suffer the consequences of defeat at the polls? This is not to say that there are not all sorts of restraints on majorities, institutional and constitutional. But ultimately, all governments say *yes* to laws that say no to someone.

### *All Law Is Theocratic*

Once a pluralist admits this, he is led, kicking and screaming, into the open arms of the theocrats — theocrats who proclaim one god or another. Today, we live in a humanist theocracy where “man, the collective” is worshiped as god. On the other hand, if “we, the regenerate, covenanted people” ever get a sufficient number of votes, we could legally amend the Constitution. Unless you accept the view of those who argue that there must be absolute unanimity of all special-interest groups before civil government can lawfully take any action — some version of Calhoun’s utopian (and pro-slavery) theory of the concurrent majority<sup>77</sup> — you must accept the conclusion that *democratic persuasion is only an intermediary step to coercion*.

Coercion is also a way to increase democratic persuasion: the federal civil rights legislation of the early 1960’s is an example. White southerners literally changed their minds regarding racial segregation because of these laws, and they did so by the end of the decade. (Does any historian want to defend the hypothesis that the Civil Rights law of 1964 was passed by the U.S. Congress because the white-voter-dominated American South had *already* changed its collective mind?) All civil government is inherently coercive, for it possesses a lawful, God-granted monopoly to bear the sword. *Civil*

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76. Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 121.

77. John C. Calhoun, *A Disquisition on Government* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, [1845] 1953), pp. 27-51. This was first published posthumously in 1853. He died in 1850.

*government is an institution of legalized violence.* This is why theonomists believe that it must be restrained by God's law and enforce God's law. There can be no escape from the conclusion that *democratic persuasion is not an alternative to coercion; it is simply one competing system of coercion* among many.

This is the dilemma of democratic pluralism. It pretends not to be coercive whenever it challenges biblical theocracy. It pretends to have at its center a silent temple, when in fact the self-proclaimed god of autonomous man sits on the throne, with his authorized agents shouting orders. It is time for democratic pluralists to stop pretending. The temple has never been silent; the public square has never been naked. The humanist emperor has a whole wardrobe of humanist fashions. He only pretends to be theologically naked, the better to confuse the Christians. (And how well this pretense has worked!) It is time for Christians to shout the truth: "The Emperor has clothes!" His whole wardrobe is stolen. This is God's world, not Satan's. Christians are the lawful heirs, not non-Christians. 78

#### *The Silence of God*

The so-called "transcendent" is required by Novak's pluralist man to sit silent in its empty box. If "the transcendent" were to speak clearly in a voice other than autonomous man's, this would put an end to pluralism. Thus, when it comes to the transcendent, Novak insists, silence is golden — golden, as in "golden calf." Let the Christian defenders of pluralism deal openly with Novak's challenge: "The 'wasteland' at the heart of democratic capitalism is like a field of battle, on which individuals wander alone, in some confusion, amid many casualties. Nonetheless, like the dark night of the soul in the inner journey of the mystics, this desert has an indispensable purpose. It is maintained out of respect for the diversity of human consciences, perceptions, and intentions. It is swept clean out of reverence for the sphere of the transcendent, to which the individual has access through the self, beyond the mediations of social institutions. The domain of the transcendent, of course, is mediated by literature, religion, family, and fellows. But it is finally centered in the silence in each person."<sup>79</sup> That is to say, the transcendent had better keep its big mouth shut. Autonomous man is now on the scene. The

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78. Gary North, *Inherit the Earth: Biblical Blueprints for Economics* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

79. Novak, *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, pp. 54-55.

transcendent had better hunker down and play its man-appointed role: serving as a trans-historical Kantian political limiting concept — a concept which the determinist philosopher needs in order to pretend that he is not really determined.

Novak at least is honest, given the fact of the enormous deception of the myth of neutrality, which all pluralists must accept as true. He does not sugar coat pluralism's bitter theological pill: *the permanent silence of God*. He has delivered a "time-released" poison pill for Christians to swallow that would have pleased Pharaoh in the midst of his confrontation with Moses. Novak insists that at the center of the pluralist society is an empty shrine — morally, judicially, and theologically. He also admits that the present religious order is insufficient to sustain indefinitely the present pluralist social order. 'Such an order calls forth not only a new theology but a new type of religion.'<sup>80</sup> Now, are Christian defenders of pluralism willing to serve up this bitter pill without a sugar coating? Not yet. But instead of warning Christians against this bitter poison pill, they spend their time manufacturing the sugar coating.

#### God's Law Is Society's Covenantal Center

In the center of Israel, culturally speaking, was the dwelling place of God's glory cloud. God was in the midst of this cloud. The cloud resided in the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and later in the Temple (I Ki. 8:1). Inside the Temple was the holy of holies, where once a year the high priest representatively entered to offer a blood sacrifice for the nation. This was the meeting place between God and His covenant people. Inside the holy of holies was the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark of the Covenant were the two tablets of God's covenant law, the Ten Commandments, the treaty of the Great King.<sup>81</sup> It does not require a genius-level IQ to deduce the meaning of this spatial arrangement. It placed God's covenant law at the representative center of society. This is how God manifested Himself to mankind. Today, He manifests Himself visibly through the Bible and the sacraments.<sup>82</sup>

We theologians are surely at least as forthright as Novak is. We say that at the center of Christian society is the invisible glory cloud

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>81</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1963).

<sup>82</sup> That a pot of manna was placed before the Ark of the Covenant (Ex.16:31-33) testifies to the close connection between law and the sacrament of the ritual meal.

of God, and in the midst of this cloud is God. The visible manifestation of God's covenantal authority is the Bible, which contains His law. The religious center of Israel was the place where the tablets of the law were stored: inside the Ark of the Covenant, which was inside the holy of holies. The revealed law of God is supposed to be in the judicial center of every society today.<sup>83</sup> This is why the "theonomists of Tyler" have called for a comprehensive restructuring of modern political institutions in terms of the biblical covenant's model – or, if you prefer, the biblical covenant's blueprint.<sup>4</sup>

Christians are today being told that they must change either the prevailing religion (Novak's view) or the prevailing civil order (Christian Reconstruction's view). The Christian defenders of pluralism claim that democracy is a biblically legitimate middle way morally (Neuhaus' view). Who is correct?

### *Moving Society Off Center*

What we now need is the same sort of honesty from those Christian defenders of pluralism who are not "Novakians." They must deal forthrightly with the hard theological questions of political sovereignty, representation, ethics, legal sanctions, and the right of constitutional amendment, and they must do so by means of an appeal to the Bible rather than St. Thomas Aquinas<sup>85</sup> or St. Thomas More (who enthusiastically had Protestants burned at the stake)<sup>86</sup> or St. Thomas Jefferson. It is their task to explain how the pluralist worldview is not a departure from historic Christian theology, and also not an historical aberration which is unlikely to survive. After all, political pluralism was first developed in the late seventeenth century in the midst of a century-long scientific revolution that had transferred

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83. Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).

84. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 12.

85. Aquinas (1225-1274) was far closer to a theocratic position than his modern-day defenders are. He wrote: "In order, therefore, that men may know without any doubt what he ought to do and what he ought to avoid, it was necessary for man to be directed in his proper acts by a law given by God, for it is certain that such law cannot err." Cited by Charles N. R. McCoy, "St. Thomas Aquinas," in *History of Political Philosophy*, p. 221. Concludes McCoy: "In St. Thomas' doctrine, the divine law, by providing the ultimate safeguard against mere conformity and conventionality, makes possible the ultimate verification of the meaning of constitutional liberty." *Ibid.*, p. 222.

86. J. H. Merle d'Aubigne, *The Reformation in England*, 2 vols. (London: Banner of Truth, [1853] 1962), I, pp. 465-467; II, 72-74.

sovereignty to mathematically governed natural laws known by the nearly autonomous human intellect, 87 yet one in which most of the scientists were officially Christian and at least personally theistic (e.g., Newton); 88a world of militarily stalemated Christian nations and principalities that could no longer compel universal obedience to one church, yet a world which rested squarely on concepts of divine sovereignty to underpin civil rulership; 89 a world of State-established churches; a world of expensive international travel (low immigration) which kept most of those professing a rival religion safely at home; and a world in which only a handful of scholars and literary figures were atheists. 90 That world had broken with medieval theocratic universalist, but not with national theocratic particularism. Monarchs, whose exclusive divine right under God was no longer acknowledged by the end of the century, still sat on God-ordained thrones.<sup>91</sup> Parliaments still were filled with self-designated Christian representatives who regarded themselves as God's anointed agents to thwart abusive democratic mobs as well as abusive autocratic monarchs. This is surely not our world today. What presently sustains and legitimizes the worldview of political pluralism, now that its original theistic and economic underpinnings have been smashed by the secular humanism and international capitalism of our era?

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87. Edwin Arthur Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1925] 1954); Alexander Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957).

88. Stanley Jaki, *Science and Creation: From eternal cycles to an oscillating universe* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1974), ch. 12: "The Creator's Handiwork."

89. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) ended the Thirty Years' War by specifying that the religion of the local princes in the Germanic states of the Holy Roman Empire would be the religion of their subjects. C. V. Wedgwood summarizes the outcome of the war with these discomfiting words: "The Peace has been described as marking an epoch in European history, and it is commonly taken to do so. It is supposed to divide the period of religious wars from that of national wars, the ideological wars from the wars of mere aggression. But the demarcation is as arbitrary as such divisions commonly are. . . [T]he last of the wars of religion merged insensibly into the pseudo-national wars of the future." C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1961), p. 505.

90. Stoics and Epicureans, mostly. I am thinking of such figures as Justus Lipsius, Guillaume du Vair, and Montaigne, as well as the Cambridge Platonists. Cf. A. Lloyd Moote, *The Seventeenth Century: Europe in Ferment* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Heath, 1970), p. 84.

91. Even the philosophy of the divine right of kings was developed as a reaction to sixteenth-century Protestant and Catholic revolts against princes and monarchs who were members of the rival church. In other words, this doctrine was the product of the political vulnerability of monarchs, not their strength. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-43.

Merely the shared faith in autonomous man? Then what happens if autonomous collective man repeats the political centralization of the Tower of Babel, and society disintegrates in the cacophony of warring confessions? Where do we find authorization of Babelic politics in the Bible? Nowhere. Where do we find its authorization in the history of political theory? Nowhere. In ancient non-Christian political theory, the only alternatives to Babelic politics were theories of the divine people – i.e., discrimination against resident aliens without legal access to the city's rites (closed politics) – or else the divine State and its representative, the divine Emperor.<sup>92</sup> This is not the political order that Neuhaus wants, but what else can he expect? He has tried to demonstrate that Christianity is compatible with political pluralism, but he does not turn to the Bible for support. Christian pluralists must do better than this.

### *The End of the Road*

It is my contention that they cannot do better; they are visibly out of coherent arguments. They content themselves by repeating old ones, all of which rest squarely on two false presuppositions: 1) the myth of intellectual and moral neutrality and 2) the existence of natural law, recognizable by and authoritative for fallen man. It assumes, in short, the logical character of the ethical. Man is saved by knowledge, or at the very least, the road to salvation is made visible (to at least some men) through logic. "Right reason" can discover natural law. (But who determines which methodology is "right," and which logical presentation within that methodology is "right"?)

By means of these two false assumptions, pluralists conclude that it is illegitimate in the New Covenant era to presume that civil government is a covenantal institution, that is, bound by biblical law to enforce biblical law. As the faith of Christians wanes in these false presuppositions, the glaring inconsistencies of the pluralists will become increasingly apparent to Bible-believing Christians. They will then begin to see the escalating discrepancies all around them, discrepancies between the doctrine of natural law and the growing perversion of covenant-breakers. For example, the silent scream of over 50 million aborted babies per year, world-wide,<sup>93</sup> has begun to drown out the familiar choruses of Christian pluralism. Where is

92. See above, "The Stranger as Oppressor," pp. 75-83.

93. *World Population and Fertility Planning Techniques: The Next 20 Years* (Washington, D. C.: Office of Technology Assessment, 1982), p. 63.



pluralism's neutrality inside the operating room of the local abortionist? Where is the binding moral power of natural law? Where are the predictable negative sanctions of the politically pluralist State?

The myth of neutrality today flies a pathetically tattered flag. More and more Christians are growing tired of saluting it. Even more will grow tired of defending it as the irreconcilable issues multiply. *Christianity and pluralism are incompatible, and there is very little time remaining for this incompatibility to be hidden.* Once it is no longer hidden, Christians will be asked to make the same choice Elijah insisted that Israel make: choose this day whom you will serve, God or Baal. For three centuries – from Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory* (1673) to Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law* (1973) – Bible-believing Protestant social philosophers, like the Israelites, answered not a word. Their excuse? "Pluralism bids us be silent." Baal always was a polytheistic god; he still is: *many laws, many moralities, many gods.* But time is running out. God's sanctions in history are approaching. Choose *this day* whom you will serve.

### The Halfway Covenant

The New England Puritans believed in God's institutional covenants: ecclesiastical, family, and civil. But they made a strategic theological error in the early years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, one from which their holy commonwealth experiment never recovered. They added an extra-biblical requirement for entry into full church membership: the recounting of a personal conversion experience. This rule was added sometime in the period 1633-36.<sup>94</sup> No longer would the familiar Reformed pair of requirements – profession of orthodox faith and an outwardly moral life – be sufficient for entrance into full church membership. The second generation of New England Puritans did not experience the emotions of the "exodus" from England, so the majority of them "failed to own the covenant," as the language of the day put it. They did not become communicant members, or they did so only after bearing children.

This created a major theological problem: What was to be done with their children? Should these children be baptized or not? Their parents had been baptized, but were not communicant members. So, in what way did the third generation have a covenant claim on the rite of baptism?

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94. Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), pp. 99-105.

*The Original Grandfather Clause*

To answer this, the Puritans of New England devised a complex theology known as the halfway covenant. They had to depart from the old norm: that only the children of full church members could be baptized. The churches baptized the grandchildren of that first generation, but they refused to serve them communion. Writes historian Edmund Morgan: "Given both infant baptism and the restriction of church membership to visible saints, it was impossible for the Puritans either to evade the questions just posed or to answer them without an elaborate casuistry that bred dissatisfaction and disagreement. The history of New England churches during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was in large measure a history of these dissatisfactions and disagreements."<sup>95</sup> The Congregational system never recovered from this confusion of status. It was replaced in the first four decades of the eighteenth century by revivalism and sectarianism. The political and theological foundations of the holy commonwealths of New England collapsed under the resulting social strain when the third generation came to maturity. %

Thus, one seemingly minor theological error early in New England Puritan history – the requirement of an extra-biblical experience of conversion — led step by step to the destruction of the Puritan experiment in covenantal order. This error was not the only cause of the failure of that experiment, but it was a major one. It was a theological failure, and the New England Puritans, Calvinists to the bitter end, took theology very seriously.

I have adopted the term *halfway covenant* in this book for a reason: to show how seemingly minor errors in an otherwise consistent Calvinist theological system can and have led to a serious breakdown of Calvinist theology. Because of the ethical nature of these disastrous and fundamental errors — the denial of four of the five points of the biblical covenant — they strike at the heart of all forms of Bible-believing Christianity. These errors are widely shared, but Calvinists, being more theologically inclined, and possessing a more detailed and rigorous theological system, have had the greatest difficulty in dealing with these discrepancies. These discrepancies strike at the heart of covenant theology, and Calvinists are self-consciously the

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95. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-29.

96. Richard Bushman, *From Puritan To Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (New York: Norton, [1967] 1970), Part 4.

developers and defenders of covenant theology. These discrepancies therefore appear far more radical in Calvinist theology than in other systems. They have had catastrophic repercussions far beyond the narrow debates of professional theologians.

### Conclusion

This book begins with the assumption that God's Old Testament law is still valid in New Testament times, unless a particular law has been annulled specifically or by clear implication by the New Testament. I do not want to defend this thesis here. It has been defended by others elsewhere.<sup>97</sup> I have explained at considerable length (and expense!) how Old Testament laws apply to the field of economics.<sup>98</sup>

This challenge to the humanist social order has been delayed for three centuries. Christian casuistry – the application of God's fixed laws to the changing realm of history – as a separate discipline went into eclipse in the final quarter of the seventeenth century, and only re-emerged three centuries later. As recently as 1948, Kenneth Kirk could write: "But in general it may be said that the lack of a continuous and authoritative tradition, the pressure of other interests, the growth of philosophical individualism, with the consequent decline of the sense of loyalty . . . all combined to sterilise the Reformed casuistry. From the beginning of the eighteenth century you may look in vain for anything approaching a systematic grasp of the particular problems of morality. It is for the historian of modern Christianity to say how far this fact has been the cause of that impotence of the Churches which is so often deplored."<sup>99</sup> In 1948, there was no change on the visible horizon. Now there is.

What I want the reader to understand is that he cannot legitimately avoid the religious problems associated with politics. Whose

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97. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973); Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (2nd ed.; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984); Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).

98. North, *Dominion Covenant: Genesis*; North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985); North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986); North, *Tools of Dominion*.

99. Kenneth E. Kirk, *Conscience and Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry* (new ed.; London: Longmans, Green, 1948), pp. 206-7.

voice should be heard in history, God's or Satan's? Who is autonomous, God or man? All the other competitors to the throne of heaven are false gods.

What about claimants to the thrones of history's political kingdoms? Who are God's ambassadors? What authority do they receive from God's assignment? They must consider the five aspects of God's covenant:

Transcendence/presence  
 Hierarchy/authority/representation  
 Ethics/law/dominion  
 Oath/sanctions  
 Succession/continuity/inheritance

Whose sovereignty should Christians preach, whose hierarchies – Church, State, and family - should be dominant in history, whose law should they affirm, whose sanctions should they recommend that the State enforce, and who will inherit the earth? <sup>100</sup>

If they refuse to affirm the covenant of God, they will inevitably affirm some other covenant. *There is no neutrality.* When Christians present the gospel to someone, they may say: "Remember, no decision for Christ is still a decision. It is a decision against Jesus Christ." This statement is true, but it is also true in every area of life, including politics. "No biblical covenant" means *another god's covenant*, in Church, State, and family. *There is no neutrality.*

Chapters 3-5 of this book are negative. So is Appendix B. <sup>101</sup> They refute the idea that there can be neutrality in history, especially judicial neutrality. What we find, unfortunately, is that the most prominent Christian spokesmen (Calvinists all) who have publicly affirmed that there is no neutrality, and who have publicly denied the myth of neutrality, also steadfastly have refused to affirm the revealed law of God as binding in civil and constitutional affairs. But 'no affirmation' is in fact a *denial*. Once again, *there is no neutrality*, especially in regard to the denial of neutrality. Thus, these spokesmen have led Christians into the troubled world of judicial and therefore political *schizophrenia*: the denial of natural law, the denial of the myth of neutrality, and yet the denial also of biblical law. Schizophrenic people cannot function properly. They have split per-

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100. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*.

101. Appendix A is also negative, but not with respect to the question of the covenant.

tonalities. These personalities work at cross purposes. So do political schizophrenics.<sup>102</sup>

This book is fairly lengthy. I know of no way to overcome about 1,900 years of error in, say, 185 large-print pages. So, I have concentrated on reaching “the best and the brightest” in order to refute the most representative, most intelligently argued defenders of halfway covenant religion. I have devoted a lot of space to summarizing their arguments, so that no one can say in response, “You quoted them out of context,” This means I had to give the reader a lot of context.

### *The Choices Before Us*

There are three choices politically: life under God’s civil covenant, life under a rival sovereign’s civil covenant, and life in a *temporary* civil order in which there are rival civil covenant principles competing for allegiance, where the outcome of the competition is still an open question in the minds of most political participants. This last system is generally called *political Pluralism*. Its defenders think this system can be made permanent. They are incorrect. There are too many people around like I am who eventually topple the system. Political pluralism is a halfway house system that lasts only as long as no group or major coalition can take over politically and announce a specific new civil covenant. It is a stand-off, a temporary stalemate, a temporary cease-fire. It is defended today as if it were a permanent condition, “as if pluralism were a permanent political philosophy. It is not. It is the political philosophy of the temporary cease-fire.

Today, the West lives officially under the civil covenant of political pluralism, but the balance of political power in this century has shifted to a humanist theocracy. The humanist theocrats hide what has happened in the language of moral and judicial neutrality. This has been a very successful camouflage operation. Until the abortion question blew a hole in the rhetoric of the myth of neutrality, the vast majority of Christians believed in political pluralism as a philosophy. That majority is still vast, but less so than before. But vast, three-quarters ‘vast’, or even less, it is clinging to a philosophically and morally dead system. Its defenders have yet to present a systematic defense of its claims to universality. They have not been able to demonstrate how pluralism is compatible with the Bible, the writings of

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102. See especially Chapter 4, below, pp. 198-206, on C. Everett Koop.

Mohammed, or the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. In short, they have not been able to show how political pluralism is compatible with the three major worldviews that are struggling for world domination today.

There is an old political rule: you can't beat something with nothing. This is what the defenders of political pluralism refuse to acknowledge. Those who are Christians who defend political pluralism have understood this principle least of all. This book should remind them of what they have never done well, what they have done poorly, and what they can never do: show how the Bible can be reconciled with pluralism, the political philosophy of polytheism: *many gods, many moralities, many laws.*

There goes many a ship to sea, with many hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common, and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination or society. It bath fallen out sometimes, that both papists and protestants, Jews and Turks, may be embarked in one ship; upon which supposal I affirm, that all the liberty of conscience, that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges – that none of the papists, protestants, Jews, or Turks, be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship, nor compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they practice any. I further add, that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also command that justice, peace and sobriety, be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any of the seamen refuse to perform their services, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help, in person or purse, towards the common charges or defence; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship, concerning their common peace of preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders and officers; if any should preach or write that there ought to be no commanders or officers, because all are equal in Christ, therefore no masters nor officers, no laws nor orders, nor corrections nor punishments; — I say, I never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander or commanders may judge, resist, compel and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits.

Roger Williams (1654)\*

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\**Letters of Roger Williams, 1632-1682*, Narragansett Club Publications, 1st ser., vol. III, pp. 3-4. Cited in Arisen Phelps Stokes, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, [1950] 1964), p. 15.

## CONCLUSION, PART 1

*Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods (Ex. 23:32).*

This commandment was given to the Israelites regarding their future conquest of the land of Canaan. They were to exterminate the Canaanites because of the threat that Canaan's local, land-based idols of Canaan would pose to them. The gods of the land in the ancient world were always the most threatening to the conquerors, which is why conquerors either exterminated their enemies or made slaves of them, sending them back to the home city. There could be no peace treaty without shared gods.

The Israelites did not at first knowingly make national covenants with the gods of Canaan, but over time, they adopted the ethical and ritual practices of these gods. Step by step, they broke God's covenants: in family, Church, and finally State. From time to time, God delivered them into the hands of invaders who would reign in the land. Finally, He allowed invaders to enter the land, capture the people, and send them into foreign bondage. But He had promised them that they would not remain in bondage there permanently, for He had made His covenant with them: "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God" (Lev. 26:44). He was God over Babylon, too.

The problem in the New Testament era is culturally different. Christians understand that to worship another god is to break covenant with Christ. So, Satan has invented a remarkably successful strategy: to persuade Christians that the God of the Bible is the same god as the one who is discovered by the light of autonomous reason. If this god of mankind's common reason can be foisted off on Christians as the God of the Bible, then they can be persuaded to establish



a covenant with the people of this god, especially a civil covenant. This form of covenant-making has been going on in civil government ever since Roger Williams established the province of Rhode Island in 1636.

Philosophically, this transfer of covenantal allegiance had been going on since the early Church's apologists adopted Greek categories of reasoning. A truth that could be proven by Greek logic was assumed to be a truth for the God of the Bible. After all, Christians reasoned, "there cannot be two kinds of truth. There is only one truth." The problem was, they did not understand that a system of logic that begins with the presupposition of the adequacy of the fallen mind of man is not going to lead to the same conclusions as a system of logic that begins with the presupposition of the self-contained, Trinitarian, Creator God of the Bible. The conclusions may initially appear to be the same, but they are different. Christians do not understand this principle today, either. The existence of the "neutral" public school system filled with the sons and daughters of Christians is a visible testimony to this fact of self-imposed blindness.

If Christians can be seduced into believing that the common reason of man leads to the same system of moral law that the revelation of the Bible presents, then the first step toward a forbidden covenant has been taken. If the moral law-order is the same, then why not the civil law-order? And if the civil law-order is the same in each system, then why not establish a constitutional order in which there is universal suffrage based on physical birth or on non-creedal criteria for "adoption," i.e., naturalization?

The day that such an order becomes the civil law of the land, Christians have entered into a civil covenant with those who worship different gods. Political struggles to control the institutions of civil government will then begin in earnest. A civil war breaks out, but Christians are the last ones to recognize it. They refuse to see it. To admit that there is no common law-order based on common reason is to admit that Christians have entered into a prohibited civil covenant. Christians have been lured into such prohibited covenants all over the world. To admit that this has taken place would be to admit their sin, not their mere ignorance, and so they do not admit it. They deny it with every fiber of their being. They denounce Old Testament law in favor of the common laws of common reason, even in a world in which their enemies have long since abandoned faith in common human reason. They call Old Testament law tyrannical,

and they praise Greece and Rome. They declare their continued commitment to political neutrality on religious questions. They do not seek to persuade others to put their trust in Jesus Christ as a first step in establishing explicitly Trinitarian civil covenants. They accept a program of evangelism that denies the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, 10, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

This process of perpetual cease-fire has been going on at the national level in the United States for exactly two centuries. (See Part 3.) The enemies of the faith have systematically used this cease-fire to consolidate their gains in the corridors of power.

The American Civil War began long before Lincoln sent in ships to relieve Fort Sumter. It began in Rhode Island in 1636 with the world's first halfway civil covenant.

**Part 2**  
**HALFWAY**  
**COVENANTALISM**

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? bath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty y, not many noble, are called: But God bath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God bath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, bath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (I Cor. 1:18-2:5).

## INTRODUCTION, PART 2

*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:5-8).*

Halfway covenant thinking begins with a principle of hermeneutics, i.e., biblical interpretation. It divides Old Covenant Israel from all New Covenant nations. This is the heart of all Christian political pluralism: to make a definitive break from ancient Israel, for the pluralists must persuade their listeners that there are no sanctions in history for disobeying God's national covenantal laws. Their strategy is to make a rigorous judicial separation between ancient Israel and modern national covenants. Their tactic is to make Old Covenant Israel utterly unique in covenant history, meaning *judicially* unique. Their rhetoric is designed to obscure the judicial connection — especially historical *sanctions* — by means of endless qualifications and exceptions. Writes Kenneth Myers:

Israel had an obligation to be a covenantally righteous nation, to meet standards that God did not establish for, say, Egypt. Israel was a holy nation as no nation before or since could claim to be. Its national identity was a mechanism of God's redemptive work in a unique way. In every aspect of its national life as ordered by God, Israel was anticipating the character of the people of God upon the consummation of redemptive history. . . . To regard either the law (as do my postmillennialist friends and some of my premillennialist friends) or the prophets (as do many of my premillennialist and amillennialist friends) as speaking univocally to the United States begs too many questions, to say the least. There are certainly many principles for the development of political thinking within the Old Testament. But any application of a text that ignores its original context in redemptive history,

especially the relationship of the covenant to the original recipients of the text, must be regarded as of dubious value.

There is no a priori reason to believe that any given aspects of the law of Israel are normative for the U.S. civil code. . . . Unless we have established that the law is normative for our age, we must not assume it to be. Similarly, we must not take the declamations of the prophets out of their eschatological context and regard them as timeless wisdom. The citation of 2 Chronicles 7:141 as an emblem of American moral renewal is unwarranted, if well-intentioned. . . . Unfortunately, many of these doctrines are obscured in the attempt to reduplicate Israel's national polity or to anticipate the eschatological kingdom in ways we are not meant to. Until Christ returns, the church is God's new holy nation, and God has postponed his judgment. Our thinking about political obedience must keep this in view. <sup>2</sup>

God has postponed His judgment, we are reassured. Indeed He has – His *final* judgment. This is so obvious a fact that we need to search for the reason why Myers even mentions it. The reason is rhetorical: he wants to deflect the reader's attention from the fundamental covenantal question of the *historical* sanctions brought by God against New Covenant era nations. But, to reassure us regarding his orthodoxy, he announces: "I am not dismissing the Old Testament; I am merely trying to respect its intentions."<sup>3</sup> If this sounds to you like the old liberal refrain, "I am not dismissing the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Christ; I am merely trying to respect its intentions," then you detect what I detect, and I suspect that the reasons for each statement are analogous: *to escape the covenantal implications in history of God's Word.*

I would be less harsh with these people if they ever got down to brass tacks. I keep looking for their commentaries on the proper application of the Old Testament. They do not write any. I wait patiently for their practical essays in applied Old Testament biblical theology; they never appear. What I get is a lot of rhetoric about the many lurking dangers — dangers of "eschatological justice,"<sup>4</sup> of "con-

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1. 1 H Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

2. Kenneth A. Myers, "Biblical Obedience and Political Thought: Some Reflections on Theological Method," in Richard John Neuhaus (ed.), *The Bible, Politics and Democracy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 24-25.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

cocting notions of perfect government,”<sup>5</sup> of “transnationalism,”<sup>6</sup> and of ignoring “essential Christian truths .”<sup>7</sup> What I want is a list of concrete, Bible-supported policies that are morally mandated today. What I want is *casuistry*. What I want is guidance based on what the Bible tells all mankind to do in history, on threat of punishments in history. What I get is verbiage:

To adapt the principles of love and public justice to circumstances today we must understand how they were implemented in the Mosaic civil legislation. Today’s civil magistrates are not “exempted” from God’s law in its permanent form, but are still under the comprehensive love commandment as it applies to public justice. They are only exempt from the specific Mosaic statutes that were adaptations to Israel’s unique and temporary position as the Old Testament people of God after He constituted them a theocracy.<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Schrotenboer is an amateur in the verbiage game, however hard he tries. He has never been able to advance to professional status. Nevertheless, he has faithfully promoted the professionals. Consider this statement by A. Troost, a professor at the Free University of Amsterdam, which Mr. Schrotenboer published while he was editor of the *International Reformed Bulletin*. In reply to my criticisms of his vague call for a return to something resembling medieval guild socialism in the name of Christ, “Professor Troost wrote a classic “clarification” of Christian social ethics apart from Old Testament law. He began his clarification with this statement: “I hope that this further elucidation clears me sufficiently of the charge of antinomianism and vague pietism.” Judge for yourself:

As for so-called social ethics, let me explain it in the following way: The question of what justice is in the concrete case and of what love to my neigh-

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5. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

6. *Idem.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

8. Paul G. Schrotenboer, “The Principled Pluralist Response to Theonomy,” in Gary Scott Smith (cd.), *God and Politics: FOUR Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), p. 60. This book is a compilation of papers given at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania in 1987: “Consultation on the Biblical Role of Civil Government.”

9. Gary North, “Social Antinomianism,” *International Reformed Bulletin* (Oct. 1967), pp. 46-52. It was also published in the Netherlands in the *Gereformeerd Gezenblad* (Ott. 28, 1967), much to the consternation of Dr. Schrotenboer, who wrote to me regarding his disapproval. Dr. Troost had not expected to have anyone blow the whistle in public “back home.”

bor means, cannot any longer be viewed as a metaphysical 'given'— as all forms of idealistic ethics suggest. However, the content of justice and love in the concrete case *hic et nunc* is not found literally in the Bible as a recipe for all time. But here the biblical-a[p]riori of faith in the divine creation order must *function* in the philosophical and social investigation. In so far as this has in broad lines and outline form led to preliminary results in the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, this philosophy has shown that in the concrete giving of form to justice and love cultural-historical basic possibilities and the regulating function of faith always play roles in a normative way.<sup>10</sup>

Try reading this to your spouse as you both sit in bed this evening. It is a non-prescription cure for insomnia.

"Gee, Grandma," said Little Red Riding Hood, 'what big words you have.' "The better to keep the Bible-thumpers at arm's length, my dear, while cashing their checks for an entire career."

#### *A Denial of Judicial Specifics*

Christian pluralist James Skillen promises, but he never delivers: "This response does not, of course, answer the question of what does constitute a God-honoring, limited, and legitimate political order today. That we must work out in accord with the hermeneutical and historical suggestions outlined above."<sup>11</sup> I want biblical judicial specifics; he wants the pluralistic status quo. Specific recommendations based on a hermeneutic consistent with the Bible and John Locke are what we never, ever get from Christian political pluralists. But still they keep making promises of comprehensive guidelines to come: "The Scriptures reveal God's plan for reordering social relationships and institutions. Despite sin's intrusion in the world, God's creation ordinances remain in force."<sup>12</sup> This sounds good, but after 350 years of such unfulfilled promises, I grow skeptical.

Their problem runs deeper than a mere absence of a hermeneutic. If they really believed that specific biblical answers existed, they would then have to accept the reality of *explicitly Christian alternatives to the status quo of the present pluralistic world order*. This would be a denial of their theology of political pluralism. They would have to become Trinitarian social thinkers rather than polytheistic social thinkers. So

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10. A. Troost, "A Plea for a Creation Ethic," *International Reformed Bulletin* (Oct. 1967), p. 54.

11. James W. Skillen, "The Principled Pluralist Response to Christian America," *God and Politics*, p. 164.

12. Gary Scott Smith, "The Principled Pluralism Response to National Confession," *ibid.*, p. 215.



we are regaled with verbal gymnastics affirming the integrity of the Bible on one hand, and taking it back whenever a specific policy question arises. For example:

There is much more to biblical revelation, of course, than mere commands and statutes for human beings to obey. I am not suggesting that the Bible is primarily or only a rule book for living. The Bible reveals God and the meaning of his covenants with his creatures, showing the purpose of creation, exposing human sinfulness, and proclaiming the judgment and redemption of all things in Jesus Christ. The Bible is an all-encompassing testimony to the meaning and destiny of the world. 13

'I am not suggesting that the Bible is primarily or only a rule book for living.' Marvelous! And what Bible-believing Christian, pray tell, would argue with him? But what has this got to do with the price of tea in China, or more to the point, with the legitimacy or lack thereof of price controls on the price of tea in China? Absolutely nothing: "As will become clear in what follows, my acceptance of biblical authority and my interpretation of biblical texts does not lead to an absolutizing of certain Old Testament experiences, laws, and customs as the 'model' for a contemporary state."<sup>14</sup> There is a good reason for this: he rejects biblical law, and he also rejects any model for a contemporary state. As with all political pluralists, he "plays it by ear," and both the melody and the rhythm are what he remembers from graduate school, as reinforced by *The New Republic* and the *New York Times*.

Again, a recurring theme is the absence of God's sanctions in history: "A Christian view of justice, a Christian view of modern politics, I believe, should be built on this understanding of God's gracious patience during this age."<sup>15</sup> This leads him to political pluralism, the politics of (we hope and pray, silently, of course, in our private prayer closets) *equal time for Jesus*. "It would not be *Christian* justice for Christians to enjoy some political privilege denied to others."<sup>16</sup>

This kind of enthusiastic rhetoric for the integrity of the Bible but without any commitment to its judicial specifics or attached civil sanctions is analogous to enthusiastic rhetoric for the integrity of marriage by bachelors who subscribe only to *Playboy*. It sounds good, but I am more than a little suspicious regarding both the intent of the rhetoric and its probable outcome.

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13. Skillen, "The Bible, Politics, and Democracy: What Does Biblical Obedience Entail for American Political Thought?" in *Bible, Politics and Democracy*, p. 56.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

16. *Idem.*

Professor Roscoe Pound and other modern jurists have criticized the natural-law basis of sovereignty on the same ground as the critics of the pre-Christian era: namely, that it does not furnish a specific consensus of ethical judgment. It boils down, says Pound, to what the individual conscience dictates; and consciences differ. "An eighteenth-century jurist laying down natural law and Bentham's man who claimed to be one of the elect are in the same position. Each is giving us his personal views and is assuming that those views must be binding upon everyone else." The point is well taken as regards eighteenth and much of nineteenth-century thought, under which there is no longer a common ethos, for lack of it, as Pound points out, jurists have fallen back on interest as the basis of law, and have conceived the problem of jurisprudence as the evaluation or harmonization of interests — as indeed, on the practical plane, it largely (though never wholly) is. But the problem is insoluble without criteria. The evaluation of anything is impossible without a standard. The assumption that out of the clash of group interests *as such* an harmonious synthesis can be devised or discovered is simply a return to natural law by the back window because the key of the door has been lost. As Woodrow Wilson said in 1918, "interest does not bind men together: interest separates men . . . There is only one thing that can bind people together, and that is common devotion to right ." The emphasis is on the word common. Only where there exists a fundamental agreement, not perhaps of explicit belief, but of outlook, feeling, and value, is true toleration possible. It was this that both Burke and Acton had in mind; it was to this that Catholic scholars referred — as they still do — when they made the secular state subject to natural law; it was this that made political freedom possible. Destroy that foundation and everything else falls to pieces.

William Aylott Orton (1945)\*

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\*Orton, *The Liberal Tradition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1945), pp. 95-96.

## HALFWAY COVENANT ETHICS

*Here let me say a word on behalf of the need for constructive critical analysis of Van Til. Van Til, like any human thinker, infallible. Those who love and honor him can pay him no higher service than to help him see his own weaknesses and thereby to increase the effectiveness of his future efforts. We must therefore be greatly saddened by the fact that there has been almost no quality critical work done on Van Til's writings from sources sympathetic to his position. . . . They simply laud Van Til's positions and castigate his opponents without any serious wrestling with the issues Van Til raises. Such writers mean to do him tribute, yet meek acquiescence is hardly an adequate response, certainly no compliment, to a thinker who means to challenge us at the most profound and spiritual level,*

*John Frame (1976)'*

Doubt concerning the relevance of the Bible to social affairs is universal in today's Christian world. Christians have lacked the intellectual self-confidence that Cornelius Van Til's<sup>2</sup> presuppositional apologetic approach has offered them. <sup>3</sup>But Van Til's apologetic method has a crucial flaw in it: it is inherently antinomian. By this I mean that Van Til did not believe in the covenantal concept of law, as I have summarized this concept in Chapter 1. He did not go to the biblical covenant model, or even to its constituent individual parts, in order to build his apologetic system. Worse: in three of the five

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1. John Frame, "The Problem of Theological Paradox," in Gary North (cd.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976), pp. 297n-298n.

2. 1895-1987.

3. For introductions to Van Til's thought, see Frame, *ibid.*; Richard Pratt, *Every Thought Captive: A Study Manual for the Defense of Christian Truth* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1979); R. J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard? An Analysis of the Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til* (Tyler, Texas: Thoburn Press, [1959] 1983).

points, he either denied the truth of the particular biblical requirement or else completely ignored it.

### Van Til on Special Creation

Van Til unquestionably defended point one: the absolute sovereignty of God. In fact, this is the heart of his methodology: a clear defense of the doctrine of special creation. He insisted on a radical distinction between Creator and creature. He also insisted on the total providence of God the Trinity. He defended the biblical concept of cosmic personalism, a Trinitarian doctrine. <sup>4</sup>Van Til was a self-conscious creationist. More than any other philosophical system in man's history, his is anti-evolutionary. <sup>5</sup>He was adamant: "The doctrines of creation and providence imply that God originates and arranges all the facts of the universe according to a logic' that is above man. Man's systems must therefore be consciously analogical to the system of God."<sup>6</sup> Even more emphatically: "It is in terms of God who is self-existent and self-contained and in terms of the doctrines of creation and providence, taken without qualification, that man knows the goal, the standards and the motivating principle of life."<sup>7</sup> "The idea of creation makes a distinction between God and man. Anyone holding to the idea of creation (we speak of temporal and not of logical creation) must also hold to the idea of a God who existed apart from the world and had meaning for himself apart from the world. And this point goes counter to the first principle of Greek speculation spoken of, that all things are at bottom one. If theism is right, all things are at bottom two, and not one. . . . For this reason we have sought to point out that the idea of creation is an integral part of the Christian theistic system of thought. We accept it because

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4. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 1.

5. His creationism was the heart of his criticism of neo-orthodoxy: "In rejecting the doctrine of temporal creation, Barth and Bruner have, in reality, rejected the orthodox doctrine of the immanence of God . . . For, as noted, with the rejection of temporal creation goes the rejection of the ontological Trinity. Accordingly the transcendence doctrine of one who rejects causal creation cannot be that of a God who is really free. It must always be the transcendence of a God who is necessarily related to the universe. In other words, with the rejection of causal creation goes the acceptance of the correlativity of God and the universe ." Van Til, *The New Modernism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1947), pp. 6-7.

6. Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977), p. 78.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

it is in the Bible and we believe that which is in the Bible to be the only defensible philosophical position.”<sup>8</sup> He begins his book on epistemology — what he calls *revelational epistemology* — with an affirmation of God’s temporal creation of the universe.<sup>9</sup>

Another key feature of Van Til’s system was his denial of any neutral common-ground reasoning between the covenant-keeper and the covenant-breaker. The only common ground between them, he insisted, is their shared image of God.<sup>10</sup> This was the basis of his denial of all forms of natural law theory, the unique feature of his apologetic system. “It will not do to ignore the difference between Christians and non-Christians and speak of reason in general. Such a thing does not exist in practice.”<sup>11</sup> His radical, uncompromising rejection of all forms of natural law philosophy separated him from all previous Christian apologists. He was aware of this, and was systematic in his criticisms of all other Christian apologists for their compromises with natural law, common-ground intellectual strategies.

The image of God in man was important for another aspect of his system of epistemology: the link between human minds, and between God’s mind and man’s. Epistemology asks: “What can man know, and on what basis does he know it?” Van Til taught that man is supposed to think his thoughts after God as a creature made in God’s image. This is clearly a system of *hierarchical reasoning*. Man is the subordinate. “Human reason is not a simple linear extension of divine reasoning. The human activity or interpretation always runs alongside of and is subordinate to the main plan and purpose of God.”<sup>12</sup> God is the primary thinker; man is secondary. God thinks creatively; man thinks re-creatively. “The natural man wants to be creatively constructive instead of receptively reconstructive.”<sup>13</sup> To this extent, Van Til was faithful to point two of the covenant: hierarchy.

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8. Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, vol. II of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (den Dulk Foundation, 1969), pp. 18-19. Distributed by Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., Phillipsburg, New Jersey.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

10. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1963), ch. 8: “Common Grace and Scholasticism.”

11. Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, vol. V of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1961] 1978), p. 25.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

### Van Til as an **Antinomian**

Why do I think that Van Til was an antinomian? Because apart from point one, and apart from his concept of analogical reasoning, he denied the biblical covenant model. The details of this model had not been developed by Sutton while Van Til was still intellectually active, but Van Til actually denied the biblical content of this model, section by section. While he affirmed point two – hierarchy – in terms of *individual* reasoning, he did not discuss the question of *corporate* reasoning, i.e., the division of intellectual labor covenantally. Furthermore, he told men to think reconstructively, but he never spoke of this reconstructive thinking as leading to the reconstruction of social institutions. He never discussed the obvious: that wherever self-proclaimed autonomous man has attempted to build human culture on the basis of his assumption that he is creatively constructive, he has built institutions that clearly need to be reconstructed. Van Til self-consciously refused to affirm the legitimacy of Rushdoony's attempt to extend Van Til's reconstructive apologetic methodology into the field of social philosophy. More than this: he never publicly discussed how any other such attempt at Christian social reconstruction might be begun.

Van Til also ignored all questions regarding judicial *representation* — specifically, the judicial-covenantal basis of all institutional hierarchies, especially civil governments. In short, *Van Til had no doctrine of the national covenant*. Yet this is a crucial aspect of man's obedience to God as a covenant-keeper. God has not abolished the covenantal foundation of civil government in the New Testament era (Rem. 12:17-13: 7). So, the biblically legitimate question is never "covenant or no covenant" with respect to civil government. It is always a question of *whose* covenant.

#### *Points Three Through Five*

When it came to points three through five of the covenant, he was either silent (the content of God's law: point three), or hostile (historical sanctions and historical inheritance: points four and five). Van Til's amillennial view of God's promised external, cultural, covenantal blessings (Deut. 28:1-14), as with premillennialism's view, was exclusively attached to a trans-historical, discontinuous event: Christ's second coming. This *ethical futurism* is the heart and soul of his system's antinomianism. It is also the heart and soul of the antinomianism that today afflicts the whole Christian Church. It is the

theology of “pie in the sky by and by.” It is the necessary theological foundation of the various Christian versions of the escapist religion.<sup>14</sup> Its widespread influence in our day has both paralleled and aided the growing influence of Marxist liberation theology, which correctly labels such a view of history as escapist and irrelevant to the material and social needs of people in time and on earth.<sup>15</sup> The Church must abandon such a view of the supposed impotence of God’s covenantal judgments in history; if it refuses, planet earth will not be liberated.<sup>16</sup>

Van Til never referred in his writings to God-revealed Old Testament biblical law as the only systematically Christian alternative to autonomous man’s natural law. He quite properly called on Christians to abandon every trace of natural law philosophy, and then refused to suggest an alternative. But it was not enough for Van Til to offer us a technical apologetic approach; he was obligated to offer a biblical ethical alternative. He steadfastly refused to comment on the specifics of real-world ethical matters. His silence was inappropriate, given the magnitude of his presuppositional apologetic methodology’s successful demolition of natural law theory.

Van Til challenged the autonomy of man in every area of thought but one: law. He self-consciously and systematically destroyed the epistemological foundation of natural law theory: the concept of neutral human reason. He was a biblical presuppositionalist as no other Christian philosopher in history had ever been before him. He fully understood this, and he operated professionally in terms of this.<sup>17</sup> He denied that at any point can men see anything neutrally. There is no neutrality anywhere in the universe, he insisted. You either believe God or you don’t. You are either a covenant-keeper or you aren’t.

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14. Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), pp. 3-5.

15. See José Miranda, *Communism and the Bible* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1982), p. 15.

16. Gary North, *Liberating Planet Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Blueprints* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

17. A professor at Covenant Theological Seminary has humorously summarized the history of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary as follows: “Van Til taught that everyone else was wrong. Frame teaches that everyone is to some degree correct and to some degree wrong. Poythress teaches that everyone is correct, from a certain perspective.” Frame would no doubt regard this comment as accurate to some degree, but in other respects inaccurate. Poythress, however, will see the truth of it from a certain perspective.

*Blowing Up the Cultural Dike*

He was a Dutchman. He should have understood what he was doing. He was like a demolitions expert who places explosives at the base of a dike and triggers an explosion. This is what he did at the base of the incomparably leaky dike of natural law theory. But Van Til never publicly asked himself this crucial question: "After the dike of natural law is shattered, what will take its place?" Even more to the point, "Should I build a back-up dike before I blow up the existing one?" Van Til never offered any answers to these crucial questions. He had no recommendations regarding Church or civil legal standards. He apparently believed that it was not his job to provide such answers, as if natural law philosophy had not stood for almost two millennia as virtually the sole foundation of Christian political theory. All he ever wanted to do academically was blow up theologically inconsistent leaky dikes. He built no restraining wall. The only reliable materials available for building such a wall are the biblical case laws, found mostly in the Old Testament, and Van Til refused to use them. But the pagan sea of ethical nihilism always threatens to rush in with full force to carry away the last traces of Christian civilization. (This was also my criticism of Free University of Amsterdam professor A. Troost back in 1967.)<sup>18</sup>

Van Til taught that there is a radical distinction between covenant-keeping man's concept of culture and covenant-breaking man's concept. He insisted that there must be a specifically Christian goal, standard, and motivation for culture. The goal is the glory of God. The standard is the way of Christ. The motivation is the discovery of God's grace in culture.<sup>19</sup> But he offered no explicitly biblical definition of this standard, which would also make it impossible for covenant-keepers to assess when they have found God's grace in culture. As I shall argue throughout this essay, Van Til's antinomianism (no explicitly biblical standard for culture) was the fraternal twin brother of his pessimism regarding Christianity's earthly influence in the future (amillennialism).

I think his theological supporters instinctively recognize the risk in such a demolition operation, yet they are also hostile to biblical law, so he has never recruited many disciples. They know that he is

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18. Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), Appendix C: "Social Antinomianism."

19. Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education*, pp. 35-38.



asking them to make an intellectual *and cultural* frontal assault against the entrenched enemies of God, but without a positive alternative. They recognize that you cannot beat *something with nothing*. Even the most enthusiastic Davids of the world recognize the importance of a sack full of stones when dealing with the world's Goliaths. By removing our judicial tool of dominion, God's revealed law, Van Til set out to do battle with God's enemies without adequate offensive armaments. This becomes especially apparent when the student of Van Til begins to face the problems of social ethics.

Rushdoony did use biblical law in the construction of his preliminary judicial restraining wall, so he had no fear of using Van Til's apologetic system to attack natural law. This is why the Christian Reconstructionists have inherited the bulk of Van Til's legacy.<sup>20</sup> We alone are willing to blow up *every* dam based in any way on natural law, no matter where we find one, because we alone have a reliable retaining wall in reserve: biblical law. Nevertheless, we are talking here only of theory; we do not want to create a prematurely revolutionary situation. We must wait patiently for the general public to begin to accept, in theory and in practice, the judicially binding nature of the Old Testament case laws before we attempt to tear down judicial institutions that still rely on natural law or public virtue. (I have in mind the U.S. Constitution. )

Van Til was always very nervous about Rushdoony's use of his apologetic system, which is why he seldom referred to Rushdoony in print or in the classroom,<sup>21</sup> but since Van Til refused to designate his

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20. Cf. Frame, "Theological Paradox," *op. cd.*, p. 298n.

21. After I had completed this essay, Gary DeMar provided me with a photocopy of a May 11, 1972 letter from Van Til to C. Gregg Singer. Van Til commented on the proposed book I was editing at the time, for which Singer supplied the chapter on history: *Foundations of Christian Scholarship*. I knew at the time that Van Til was not happy about the project, and I suspected the reason. His letter confirms my suspicions sixteen years later. He wrote: "Then too I am frankly a little concerned about the political views of Mr. Rushdoony and Mr. North and particularly if I am correctly informed about some of the views Gary North has with respect to the application of Old Testament principles to our day. My only point is that I would hope and expect that they would not claim that such views are inherent in the principles I hold," Problem: When you abandon both Roman Catholic natural law theory and Gordon Clark's apologetic notion of the principle of non-contradiction as the point of contact between saved and lost, yet you also reject evolutionism, process philosophy, and existentialism in all forms, you need to ask yourself: "What is the view of law inherent in my philosophy?" Van Til apparently never asked himself this crucial question; he certainly never answered it publicly. This is why his system is antinomian, and in need of reconstruction.

intellectual heir — he stood alone, by choice, all of his life, battling bravely but seemingly with little thought about who would succeed him — he could hardly specify those who would not be allowed to inherit. Like Queen Elizabeth I, he never publicly named a successor.<sup>22</sup> This was consistent with his basic operating presupposition: “Everyone else is wrong.” (Rushdoony subsequently has suffered from this same dilemma over inheritance. ) .

### The Key Contradiction

No one has said this in print, but it is time to say it: Van Til’s original system has a glaring contradiction in it, one which doomed it from the beginning. All his life, he proclaimed the sole and exclusive validity of *presuppositional apologetics*. What did he mean by the term? He meant that there are two (and only two) ways of viewing the world: as a covenant-keeper or as a covenant-breaker. At the heart of his apologetic method was the fundamental concept of the biblical covenant. <sup>23</sup> He spoke of man as “a covenant personality.”<sup>24</sup> He insisted that “The rational creature of God must naturally live by authority in all the activities of his personality. All these activities are inherently **covenantal** activities either of obedience or disobedience.”<sup>25</sup> But *Van Til never explained in detail what the biblical covenant is*. (I suspect that this was because he deferred to the writings on the covenant of his teacher Geerhardus Vos, whose influence over him was great, <sup>26</sup> and his colleague at Westminster, the Presbyterian ethicist John Murray. <sup>27</sup>) From time to time, and in many, many places — just try to locate some key phrase — he did describe in piecemeal fashion certain of the covenant’s features. The covenant is a legal *bond*

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<sup>22</sup> I suspect that he would have preferred Greg Bahnsen, but Bahnsen upheld the dreaded doctrine of theonomy, even going so far as to name it. To have had Bahnsen as his successor would have produced the same bothersome result: students might conclude that theonomy and presuppositionalism are inherently linked, the idea Van Til was at pains to deny privately and ignore publicly.

<sup>23</sup> “Thus Scripture may be said to be the written expression of God’s covenant with man.” Van Til, “Nature and Scripture,” in *The Infallible Word: A Symposium*, by the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1947), p. 256.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>26</sup> William White, Jr., *Van Til: Defender of the Faith* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1979), ch. 6.

<sup>27</sup> John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957).

between man and God, one which Adam broke, and which he furthermore broke as mankind's judicial representative. Adam *disobeyed* God. He *broke God's law*, which is how one breaks a covenant. In short, at the heart of Van Til's epistemology is *ethics*. Ethics is fundamental, he repeated throughout his career, not intelligence. He used to say in the classroom that Christians do not get a new set of brains when they get converted. Obedience to God is fundamental, not precise thinking. In one of his marvelous analogies, he said that it does not matter how much you sharpen a buzz saw if it is set at the wrong angle: if it is crooked, it will not cut straight. The "angle" obviously has to refer to God's covenant law, but he never discussed any details.

Despite the centrality in his thinking of the biblical covenant,<sup>28</sup> Van Til refused to discuss covenant law. He refused to discuss which laws are still part of God's covenant law-order. He always discussed *epistemology* — "What can man know, and how can he know it?" — in terms of *ethics*: "What does man do, and why does he do it?"

Now if anything is obvious from Scripture it is that man is not regarded as properly a judge of God's revelation to him. Man is said or assumed from the first page to the last to be a creature of God. God's consciousness is therefore taken to be naturally original as man's is naturally derivative. Man's natural attitude in all self-conscious activities was therefore meant to be that of obedience. It is to this deeper depth, deeper than the sinner's consciousness can ever reach by itself, that Scripture appeals when it says: "Come let us reason together." It appeals to covenant-breakers and argues with them about the unreasonableness of covenant-breaking.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, despite his heavy reliance on the concept of covenantal obedience as the basis of man's correct knowledge about the universe, Van Til steadfastly refused to discuss biblical law. He attacked natural law but put nothing in its place. He devoted his life

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28. Along with other doctrines: the sovereignty (providence) of God, the Creator-creature distinction, the image of God in man as the sole point of contact between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers, rationalism vs. irrationalism, unity vs. diversity, change vs. stability, continuity vs. discontinuity, univocal vs. equivocal reasoning, biblical analogical reasoning, and the impossibility of a uniquely "central" doctrine in theology. On Van Til's denial of any single central doctrine, see Frame, "Theological Paradox," op. cit., p. 305. I think the Trinity, creation, the fall of man, redemption, and God's providence are the fundamental doctrines of his overall theology, while the covenant is the heart of his epistemology, i.e., his discussion of what and how men can know anything correctly.

29. Van Til, "Nature and Scripture," *Infallible Word*, p. 273.

to discussing why all other Christian apologists had in effect “set their buzz saws at the wrong angle,” but he refused to discuss the God-revealed “straight edge” against which we measure deviations from perfection: *covenant law*.

The true heart of his apologetic system is covenantal ethics, but the system is cloaked in the language of logic and epistemology. The heart of his system is the covenant, but his language is misleadingly philosophical. This misleading language is reflected in his famous phrase, *epistemological self-consciousness*. By this phrase, he meant a person’s ability (and willingness) to see what he is in relation to God, and then think in terms of it. Yet he always knew that thought is tied to action, that it is not just what man thinks but also how he acts. We always know God covenantally and *only* covenantally. There is no other God to know but the God of the covenant. The heart and soul of Van Til’s presuppositional methodology is therefore not epistemological self-conscious but rather *ethical self-consciousness*. Yet I do not recall ever seeing this phrase in his writings.

### Ethics and Eschatology

Part of this self-imposed confusion in Van Til’s apologetics is the fault of his amillennial eschatology: it leads to a debilitating pessimism concerning the earthly future of the kingdom of God. 30 He followed what he thought had been the eschatology of Geerhardus Vos: “Dr. Vos makes plain that there is a two-fold aspect to Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom. Righteousness and conversion have to do with the present aspect of the kingdom, and blessedness primarily with the future aspect of the kingdom.”<sup>31</sup> (In fact, Vos may have been a mild postmillennialist, but since he was Dutch, no one could quite believe it.)<sup>32</sup> In other words, Van Til and other Dutch-background amillen-

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30. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 4: “Van Til’s Version of Common Grace.”

31. Van Til, *Christian Theistic Ethics*, vol. 3 of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1958] 1980), p. 121.

32. His interpretation of Matthew 24 was quite similar to that of J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1971), Section II. He saw the “immediately after” of verse 29 as referring to the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Vos, “Eschatology of the New Testament,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1929), II, pp. 982-83. He saw a future conversion of the Jews with some kind of gospel increase (Rem. 11): *ibid.*, p. 983. See especially the subsection, “Events Preceding the Parousia.”

nialists argue that Christians are personally responsible for being covenantally faithful in this world, but God's granting of covenantal, collective, external, and visible blessings in response to this faithfulness comes mainly after death. They argue that because God refuses to grant His covenant people the external blessings necessary for the construction of a uniquely Christian civilization, Christians will never be able by the Spirit to subdue His enemies in history. There is supposedly a sharp discontinuity in the New Testament era between God's covenantal promises and their temporal fulfillment, between faithful performance and visible reward.

Van Til said that the full manifestation of God's covenant blessings will come only at Christ's final coming, which he calls a "catastrophic" event.<sup>33</sup> He utterly rejected postmillennialism's optimism concerning the temporal future: "On the other hand there is a danger that we should think that since Christ has set before us the absolutely comprehensive ethical ideal of perfection for the whole universe, we can actually accomplish that ideal without or prior to his catastrophic return."<sup>34</sup> He kept talking about Christians' "actual and complete blessedness," reminding us that "they cannot be perfectly blessed till bodies are free from the last evil consequence of sin, that is, death. They cannot be fully blessed till all of nature be recast with glory resplendent. In short, they cannot be fully blessed till 'the regeneration of all things.'"<sup>35</sup>

This is all true enough: the *fullness* does not come until the end of history. But the crucial observation here is Van Til's systematic neglect of the concept of *progressive sanctification*, either personal or institutional. He spoke of visible blessings for covenantal faithfulness only with respect to *final* sanctification — not in history, but beyond history at God's final judgment. We seldom find cases where Van Til cheats or fudges intellectually, but here is one case where he did, and did so on a systematic, continuing basis. He deliberately confused the ethical issue by referring to the blessings and the ethical victory of Christians only with respect to the final, post-historical, post-second coming era. He disguised this systematic refusal to deal with progressive sanctification in history by contrasting the admittedly incomplete present with the fullness of the post-resurrection future. He therefore was forced to deny explicitly that God's covenant is

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33. Van Til, *Ethics*, p. 122.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

visibly related to His imposition of progressive sanctions in history. In this sense, Van Til's worldview was apocalyptic rather than prophetic. It looked forward only to the end of the world, not also to the historical transformation of the world by the gospel. This apocalyptic outlook undermined his apologetic emphasis on ethics as being more fundamental than logic. Covenantally faithful ethical behavior, in his system, does not and cannot lead to the transformation of the world. Covenantally disobedient behavior can and will maintain control of world civilization.

What I am saying here is very simple: *Van Til, like all non-theonomic amillennialists,*<sup>36</sup> *had a radically anti-historical concept of covenantal ethics, and this led Van Til, like all non-theonomic amillennialists, into antinomianism.*

In the Old Testament era, Van Til argued, there was considerable continuity between covenantal faithfulness and external blessings, but this is no longer the case in the New Testament era. He maintained that Christians cannot have legitimate hope in the earthly success of the gospel prior to the second coming of Christ in final judgment. Instead, he argued, Christians must content themselves with looking forward to a post-historic "absolute future."<sup>37</sup> The amillennialist does not believe in a visible progressive manifestation of God's kingdom (Christian civilization), except within a comparative handful of small (and probably shrinking) congregations and within Christian families. "Negatively we may affirm that our hope for the future cannot be found chiefly in the possibility that as time goes on men will be more readily convinced of the reasonableness of our program. In fact we may expect the contrary of this."<sup>38</sup> With respect to a vision of the future, the amillennialist is basically a premillennialist without earthly hope.

The best statement I have seen that reveals Van Til's eschatology of paganism's inevitable historical continuity (the historical victory of covenant-breakers) and Christianity's inevitable historical discontinuity (the sudden, post-historical victory of covenant-keepers) is found in his collection of essays on Christian education. You could not ask for an eschatological statement any clearer than this:

We maintain, in the first place, that the fruits of our labors will not appear in their full significance till after this life. And what is more, we maintain

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<sup>36</sup> I will discuss later why there can be, in theory, theonomic amillennialists and premillennialist.

<sup>37</sup> Van Til, *Ethics*, p. 104.

<sup>38</sup> Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

that those fruits will suddenly appear in their fulness and beauty at the time of the judgment day. It sometimes happens that the spring is cold and wet and that in addition to all this a hailstorm sets back the crops. Yet to the great surprise of all the fall will bring an abundance of fruits. Now this is true in a much greater degree in the realm of spiritual things. In this world there is opposition from without and opposition from within while we build our program. Hailstorms descend upon us and cut all things level with the ground. There is very little in the way of fruitage that can be seen. Yet we know that when all the opposition of sin will be removed and the sunshine of the Son of Righteousness will shine upon it all the time, then there will be such fruitage as has never been seen in this world. 39

Van Til offered the Church this cosmic weather report: “We interrupt our regular programming with this emergency weather bulletin. This afternoon, Christians can expect wet, cold weather, followed by hailstones this evening. Tomorrow we will have more of the same, only worse. Sunny weather is predicted for next week, immediately following the end of the world. Details at eleven.”

Let us understand the nature of amillennialism. Insofar as eschatology refers to human history, *amillennialism is postmillennialism for covenant-breakers*. Covenant-breakers take dominion progressively in history. (Dispensational premillennialism is also postmillennialism for covenant-breakers, insofar as eschatology refers to the Christians who live and labor prior to Jesus’ physical second coming, the so-called Church Age. All their good works will be swallowed up during the great tribulation period, either immediately before Jesus returns — the post-tribulation position — or in the seven-year period which follows the “secret Rapture”: pre-tribulationism.) *Postmillennialism is an inescapable concept*. It is never a question of cultural triumph vs. no cultural triumph prior to Jesus’ second coming; it is a question of *which kingdom’s* cultural triumph.

### Ethical Neutrality in History?

Van Til, as with premillennialists and amillennialists generally, argued that there is no reliable, predictable, statistically relevant ethical cause-and-effect relationship between covenantal faithfulness and external, visible covenantal blessings, or between covenantal unfaithfulness and external, visible covenantal cursings. Van Til ac-

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39. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

tually stated that “it may even be said that it seems as though it is as often true that those who are righteous are not as prosperous as those who are not righteous.”<sup>40</sup> This is the standard implicit theme in pessimillennialism generally: “Christians are historical losers, and isn’t it grand to be a Christian?” But this outlook regarding historical cause and effect implies *ethical neutrality*: random visible effects from rival ethical systems. But Van Til knew there can be no ethical neutrality. His whole career was devoted to denying such neutrality in the field of philosophy. This, in fact, was his great intellectual contribution to the Church. Therefore, if we accept Van Til’s apologetic system, we know that any supposed ethical neutrality with respect to ethical cause and effect in history must be a myth. He maintained that the neutrality doctrine is always a cover for an anti-Christian worldview. *But then so is neutrality regarding ethical cause and effect in history.* Jesus promised: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).<sup>41</sup> There is a *positive relationship in history* between covenantal faithfulness and external, visible blessings, although persecutions accompany the blessings.

This positive relationship is self-consciously denied by traditional premillennialism and amillennialism.<sup>42</sup> What amillennialism and premillennialism implicitly and often explicitly assert is a *negative relationship* between covenantal faithfulness and external, visible blessings, and a *positive relationship* between unfaithfulness and external, visible blessings. In other words, the righteous will supposedly become pro-

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40. Van Til, *Ethics*, p. 104.

41. Obviously, disciples will not receive a hundred sets of biological mothers, or a hundred times as many biological children. What Jesus was promising us is this: as the gospel spreads, disinherited disciples will find that new converts will welcome them into their homes, and the economic assets of hundreds of families will be made available to them for the spread of the gospel. They will become members of many families covenantally as the triumphant Church grows in numbers.

42. By “traditional,” I mean the views preached for the last century from the pulpits of the largest and most influential churches, the viewpoints expressed in the best-selling Christian books, and the viewpoints expressed in theological seminaries and Christian college classrooms.



gressively weaker and less influential culturally over time, while the unrighteous will supposedly become progressively stronger and more culturally influential. This was Van Til's explicit argument in *Common Grace* (1954). God supposedly says to His eternal enemies, "I hate you so much, and My hatred of you is increasing so rapidly, that I will let you beat the stuffing out of My people, whom I love with increasing fervor as they increase in righteous self-knowledge . . ." The ways of God are strange . . . if you are an amillennialist or a premillennialist. 43

### The Doctrine of Ethical "Unevenness"

Van Til spent his career preaching against natural law philosophy, yet he steadfastly refused to recommend the adoption of biblical law as the Christian alternative to natural law. He adopted a doctrine of ethical cause and effect which, *temporally* speaking, is inherently pagan. This is strong language, but Van Til's own arguments bear this out. In attacking modern apostate ethical theory, he wrote: "In the first place, it is said that the idea of ethics having anything to do with externals has been done away with in the New Testament. We are no longer considered morally impure when we are physically impure. Then, too, it is not a part of the New Testament teaching, as it was of the Old Testament teaching, that redemption has anything to do with the external world."<sup>44</sup> Yet he himself adopted a similar view of ethical cause and effect in history – a view which in fact *denied* moral cause and effect in history. This is his doctrine of the historical unevenness of ethical causes and external effects:

. . . according to all non-Christian ethics there is no *relation at all between moral and physical evil*. There is thought to be a physical evil that is independent of man which befalls man irrespective of his moral life. There is a sense in which this is true. We too believe that those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were no greater sinners than others. But on the other hand we do believe that the fall of man has brought physical evil in the world. And because we believe this we can also believe that a good moral man, who suffers physical evil, is not therefore necessarily at a final disadvantage in comparison with him who, though he suffers no physical evil, is morally corrupt. In other words, we have, as Christians, a longer range, the range

43. North, *Dominion and Common Grace*, p. 82.

44. Van Til, *Ethics*, p. 116.

of everlasting life, from which we can view the "unevenness" in the present world. Non-Christians, on the other hand, have only the range of the present world and the present life of man to use as a standard. From this point of view it is impossible to view things otherwise than as absolutely uneven. Accordingly, all non-Christians must, in accordance with their assumptions, maintain that the ethical life is necessarily individualistic. 45

Van Til opposed such pietistic individualism. He said that we Christians must get involved socially and politically. In this he was a true heir of Abraham Kuyper, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands at the turn of the twentieth century, who was also a major theologian, the founder of a university, and the founder of several newspapers. 46 Van Til warned against the temptation succumbed to by the premillennial fundamentalism of his day to 'spend a great deal of their time in passive waiting instead of in active service. Another danger that lurks at a time of apostasy is that the few faithful ones give up the comprehensive ideal of the kingdom and limit themselves to the saving of individual souls.' 47 In short, he warned against ethical individualism. He understood that such individualism is a denial of covenant theology.

Nevertheless, in view of his discussion of "uneven" ethical cause and effect in history, he viewed the external results of righteousness as *random*. He did not use such an obviously apostate term, but this is precisely what his doctrine of "unevenness" means. Yet he knew better. There is never randomness in history. There is always forward movement. Covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers work out in history the implications of their respective religious faiths. No, Van Til did not truly believe in ethical randomness; it was much worse than this. Van Til believed with all his heart that *Satan and his followers will be triumphant in history*. He therefore believed with all his heart that *evil triumphs visibly in history, and righteousness loses*. He taught throughout his career that *the principles of evil produce visible power and victory*, whereas *the principles of righteous living under God produce historical defeat*. Thus, Van Til's unique lapse into the myth of neutrality — his doctrine of ethical unevenness in history — proved to be as much a myth as ever. History is not neutral; one side or the other wins; one ethical system or the other produces victory; and

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45. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

46. Frank Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper: A Biography* (St. Catherine, Ontario: Paideia Press, [1960] 1978).

47. Van Til, *Ethics*, p. 122.

Van Til sided with those who proclaim that Satan's system works (wins) in history. He made this plain:

But when all the reprobate are epistemologically self-conscious, the crack of doom has come. The fully self-conscious reprobate will do all he can in every dimension to destroy the people of God. So while we seek with all our power to hasten the process of differentiation in every dimension we are yet thankful, on the other hand, for "the day of grace," the day of undeveloped differentiation. Such tolerance as we receive on the part of the world is due to this fact that we live in the earlier, rather than in the later, stage of history. And such influence on the public situation as we can effect, whether in society or in state, presupposes this undifferentiated stage of development. <sup>48</sup>

Notice especially his words, "we are yet thankful, on the other hand, for 'the day of grace,' the day of undeveloped differentiation." This is nothing short of a ghastly reworking of the idea of God's grace. He knew it, too, which is why he puts the words *the day of grace* in quotation marks. He knew that it is the opposite of grace that Christians are not fully self-conscious epistemologically, and more to the point, *ethically*. But his amillennialism had a stranglehold on his theory of ethics. He viewed today's earlier so-called "day of grace" as a day in which covenant-breakers are also not fully self-conscious, and this, in the amillennialist's universe of progressive Church impotence and progressive humanist power, is a good thing for covenant-keepers in an external, cultural sense. In short, as time goes on, covenant-breakers retain control – Satan's doctrine of "squatter's rights"<sup>49</sup> – and steadily consolidate their hold over world civilization as they become more consistent with their religion, while covenant-keepers fail to gain or lose control over civilization because they become more consistent with their religion. *This is the ethical outlook of both premillennialism and amillennialism*. Ethics is tied to eschatology. If your eschatology is incorrect, your ethics will be incorrect if your worldview is internally consistent. To teach that the progress of the gospel in history is not progressive, i.e., that the gospel does not lead to worldwide dominion by covenant-keepers, is to teach that *ethical cause and effect in history is perverse*, testifying not to a God who keeps His promises in *history* but rather to a god who breaks them.

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48. Van Til, *Common Grace* (1947), in *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1972), p. 85.

49. Gary North, *Inherit the Earth: Biblical Blueprints for Economics* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 61.

Those in the amillennial and premillennial camps who are upset that we theonomic postmillennialists dismiss their eschatological views as if they were not worth considering have failed to recognize that our uncompromising hostility to rival eschatological views is based on our commitment to biblical ethics. Our eschatology is deeply influenced by our view of biblical law and its effects in history. It is not this or that rival interpretation of this or that prophetic Bible passage that is the primary focus of our concern. It is rather the overall view held by our eschatological opponents regarding *the culture-losing effects of biblical law in history* which draws our fire. Their view of history is not neutral; it is not random; and it surely is not “even.” It is perverse: a belief that God will not bless covenant-keeping in history, and will not curse covenant-breaking.

### *The Supposed Perversity of History*

With respect to ethical cause and effect in history, Van Til’s system appears to defend a radical discontinuity between ethics and dominion in history. History, he insists, is ethically “uneven.” But this seeming discontinuity is an illusion. There is continuity in Van Til’s view of history: the visible triumph of evil forces. There *is* ethical cause and effect in Van Til’s amillennial scheme: evil triumphs visibly in history, while righteousness visibly loses.

Van Til adopted this radically anti-covenantal view of ethical cause and effect in history because such a view was more consistent with his amillennial theology. Why do I say that his view was anti-covenantal? Because the *sanctions* of Old Testament law are, contrary to Van Til, still in operation in the New Testament era, and still “even” *in the long run* with respect to the consequences of ethical behavior. Covenant theology, to be consistent, must affirm the long-term continuity in history between obedience to God and God’s external rewards. It must take seriously the Book of Job, which teaches that hard times and external defeat can afflict the righteous man temporarily, but seldom for a lifetime (unless his society has come under God’s visible, covenantal punishment). “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning . . .” (Job 42 :12a). History is covenantal. Yet Van Til actually begins with the Book of Job to defend his case for judicial “unevenness” in history!

We have already adverted to Job when first discussing this question of the future. To a large extent the difficulty that Job had was that he was not able to see things at long range. He knew that righteousness, holiness and

blessedness belong together. On this point he was right, but the difficulty was that he could not see that they could be temporarily separated from each other. In order for Job to see the absolute ideal at all, he had to see it in a form that came very close to him. Then, when his blessedness was taken away from him, he only slowly began to see that there was a future in which matters would be rectified.<sup>50</sup>

Where did Job go wrong? “He was not able to see things at long range.” He did not see that covenant-keeping and external covenantal blessings “could be temporarily separated from each other.” This is admitted by all orthodox Christians; it is indeed a basic teaching of the Book of Job. (The book’s primary message is the absolute sovereignty of God: point one of the biblical covenant model.) So, what is Van Til’s real point? Though Van Til writes “temporarily,” he really means *temporally*. When Van Til said “temporarily separated,” he really meant *separated throughout pre-second-coming history*, as we have seen. He said that when it comes to the cause-and-effect relationship between righteousness and visible blessedness, “the one may be far ahead of the other.”<sup>51</sup> By “far ahead,” he means *inside history*, and his implicit meaning of “far behind” is *beyond history* (after the final judgment). He simply ignored James 5:11 on Job’s earthly career.

Van Til refused to use words that would have revealed more plainly what he really believed about covenantal history. As to why he refused, I can only speculate. I suspect that the main reason was that he did not want his readers to think that running through his entire ethical system, and therefore his entire philosophical system, was his eschatology, even though it really did. He always insisted that covenant-keeping and covenant-breaking ultimately govern philosophy, but what he could not bring himself to admit was that they also govern history. Amillennialism reverses the cause-and-effect relationship described in Deuteronomy 28. Van Til always avoided mentioning his eschatological preference for amillennialism. He seldom mentioned the dread word “eschatology,” and never, ever used words like “postmillennialism” or “amillennialism.” It was as if he believed that he could be eschatologically neutral when writing about philosophy and ethics. This was a strange tactic for a man who denied neutrality in any area of thought and life. The fact is, his mind-set was established by his Dutch amillennial heritage, and he

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50. Van Til, *Ethics*, pp. 120-21.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

did not think outside of these Dutch categories. 52

Van Til did not convert many followers to his apologetic system during his lifetime. There was not much visible positive feedback in his intellectual ministry. He could not have expected much, either, given his view of the future. His own eschatological pessimism may have been responsible for this lack of converts. His work is being extended to a broader Christian audience primarily through his most vocal followers, the “dreaded” Christian Reconstructionists, who do not agree with either his amillennialism or his social antinomianism. The old political slogan holds true: “You can’t beat something with nothing.” You cannot defeat humanism’s natural law theory with a halfway covenant theology of judicial “unevenness” in history.

#### “Even” Sanctions: Tools of Evangelism

In order to make all this so clear that nobody can miss what I am saying, let me say this: I am arguing for the continuing evangelical significance of God’s visible covenantal sanctions in history. 53 I am arguing that the *evangelical testimony of historical* sanctions that was available to the nations round about ancient Israel is still in operation (Deut. 28). I am arguing that the existence of these covenantal sanctions in history still serves to persuade individuals of the inherent integrity of God’s law, just as they did in Moses’ day: “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who bath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that bath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?” (Deut. 4:5-8). I am arguing that amillennialism in general and Van Til’s amillennialism in particular has denied the New Testament continuation of this evangelical testimony.

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52. Because premillennialism has an identical view of God’s sanctions in history prior to Christ’s second coming, and because modern Calvinistic postmillennialism was developed by Rushdoony, who was Van Til’s intellectual disciple, no one ever challenged Van Til by calling attention to the extent to which his eschatology governed his whole system. By the time I figured out what he had done, he was too old to interact.

53. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 4.

To deny this continuing testimony, non-theonomic amillennialists inescapably remove a major tool of dominion in history: the testimony of evidence favoring the international spread of the gospel. They are forced to argue that this strong apologetic evidence of God and His covenant was available in the Old Testament era, but God has abandoned this tool of evangelism in the New Testament era. The non-theonomic amillennialist implicitly assumes that for some unstated reason, God has abandoned the strong witness that outward covenantal success brings to the case for the gospel in history.

Christian Reconstructionists assert that this covenantal tool of evangelism is still operating, and that it still impresses lost sinners. We affirm the *long-term "evenness"* of God's covenant sanctions – blessings and cursings – in history. We affirm that ethical cause and effect is sufficiently “even” over time so that lost sinners can recognize the difference between the *historical results* of covenant-keeping and covenant-breaking, and that lost sinners will be impressed by the righteousness of the terms of the covenant. They will see that God's sanctions of blessings and cursings do operate in history. They may well prefer to deny the “evenness” of God's covenant sanctions in history. After all, Van Til did and Meredith G. Kline does. To do this, however, they will increasingly seek to repress mentally this visible testimony of God, to hold back the truth in unrighteousness (Rem. 1:18).<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, they will inevitably be confronted with the reality of God's sanctions in history. They cannot escape it. This testimony is no less real and no less effective in the New Testament era than it was in the Old Testament era. In fact, it is more effective, because the Holy Spirit has come, and the gospel is now a worldwide phenomenon.

#### Meredith G. Kline vs. God's Historical Sanctions

If you preach that adherence to biblical law produces “positive feedback,” both personally and culturally, and also that disobeying it produces “negative feedback,” both personally and culturally, then you are preaching the inevitable expansion of Christian civilization and the inevitable defeat of satanic civilization. You are *preaching the progressive fulfillment of the dominion covenant*. In short, you are preaching postmillennial Christian Reconstruction. Only if you deny that there is any long-term sustainable relationship between external cov-

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54. On the active suppression of the truth, see John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 36-37.

enant-keeping and external success in history — a denial made explicit by Meredith G. Kline — can you escape from the dominical implications of biblical law.

Kline says that any connection between blessings and covenant-keeping is, humanly speaking, random. “And meanwhile it [the common grace order] must run its course within the uncertainties of the mutually conditioning principles of common grace and common curse, prosperity and adversity being experienced in a manner largely unpredictable because of the inscrutable sovereignty of the divine will that dispenses them in mysterious ways.”<sup>55</sup> Largely unpredictable? Dr. Kline has obviously never considered just why it is that life insurance premiums and health insurance premiums are cheaper in Christianity-influenced societies than in pagan societies. Apparently, the blessings of long life that are promised in the Bible are sufficiently non-random and predictable that statisticians who advise insurance companies can detect statistically relevant differences between societies.

What Kline is arguing is that the testimony of God’s law and covenant sanctions in history was scrapped by God after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The visible sanctions of God do not operate in the era of the Church. Ethical cause and effect in culture is random. In this sense, Kline is a faithful disciple of Van Til. He holds the same eschatology. He holds the same view of common grace. But like Van Til’s viewpoint, Kline’s is also not entirely forthright. Kline argues for the unpredictable nature of ethical cause and effect in New Testament history; Van Til argues for “unevenness.” But in fact both of them are really defenders of *ethical perversity in history*, not randomness. They view the Church as if it were a progressively besieged outpost of faith in a world of hostile Indians. Not only that, but the Indians have stolen most of the repeating rifles from the Christians. Worse; they have even stolen the production techniques, and now manufacture top quality rifles and ammunition. Meanwhile, the Christians are holed up in their tiny fortresses, praying for the miraculous arrival of Col. Jesus and His angelic troops.

I do not deny that there will be a rebellion at the last day, and that it will resemble this description (Rev. 20:9-10). But there will be this crucial difference: the rebels will be rebelling against a visibly

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55. Meredith G. Kline, “Comments on an Old-New Error,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, XLI (Fall 1978), p. 184.



Christian civilization, not a humanist one. They will be rebelling against a superior degree of testimony regarding the effectiveness and reliability of God's covenantal sanctions in history. Most important, they will not be allowed to inflict visible defeat on the Church before Christ forever silences them in final judgment.

It is theoretically possible for a consistent Christian Reconstructionist to argue that there will steadily be a religious falling away in history that will be comparable to Israel's falling away in the days of Jesus. But it would not be possible for a Christian Reconstructionist to argue that this falling away will be accompanied by the steady replacement of Christian-run institutions by pagans. This would be a denial of God's covenant sanctions in history. This is why most Christian Reconstructionists are postmillennialist. They do not believe that God's covenant sanctions can or will fail in history, and they also do not believe that it is possible in the long run for a minority of Christians to run the social order on a biblical basis in a world that has abandoned faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Why do most Christian Reconstructionists believe that there will not be this falling away until the very end of the millennial era, just before the second coming of Christ? *Because most Christian Reconstructionists have a very high view of the historical effectiveness of the work of the Holy Spirit.* Premillennialist argue that Jesus must be present bodily in order to usher in His earthly kingdom (Christian civilization). So, for that matter, do amillennialists; they just say that because He will not return bodily to set up His earthly kingdom until He returns at the final judgment, there will never be a pre-final judgment earthly kingdom (Christian civilization).

In contrast to these culturally pessimistic views, most Christian Reconstructionists believe that today's presence of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to empower Christians to establish, as Christ's ecclesiastical "body" and also as His personal representatives and ambassadors, a self-consciously Christian civilization. We must never forget that Jesus *departed from this world bodily in order that the Holy Spirit might come.* He spoke of this as an advantage to the Church. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). Understand what this means. *Because Jesus Christ is not bodily present in this world of sin, the Church is far better off.* Because He is not present, the Church has far greater power. Jesus could not have said it any plainer than this:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (John 14:12). Christian Reconstructionists accept Christ’s words at face value — just not “face to face” value. He does not have to tell us this face to face for us to believe Him. It is sufficient that we read it in His written Word.

Why, then, are amillennialists and premillennialist so adamant that the gospel will fail to transform world civilization as time progresses? Why do ‘they believe that Jesus Christ needs to be bodily present in this sinful world in order for it to be conformed progressively to the image of the Son of God? It is surely not necessary for Jesus to be present bodily for individual Christians to be transformed in this way (i.e., progressive Personal sanctification). It is also not necessary for Jesus to be present bodily for Christian families to be transformed in this way (i.e., progressive *familial* sanctification). It is not necessary for Jesus to be present bodily for the Christian Church to be transformed in this way (i.e., progressive *ecclesiastical* sanctification). So, why is it necessary that Jesus be bodily present in order for world civilization to be transformed in this way (i. e., progressive cultural sanctification)? Why is the Holy Spirit’s presence sufficient to produce the first three forms of progressive sanctification, but not the fourth?

### Empowering by the Spirit

Greg Bahnsen has argued repeatedly that what distinguishes biblical law in the New Testament era from the Old Covenant era is the vastly greater empowering of Christians by the Holy Spirit to obey the law.<sup>56</sup> I agree entirely with this argument. The Spirit’s empowering is a fundamental distinction between the two covenantal periods. It is also interesting to note that the only broad-based acceptance of the theonomic position today is taking place in charismatic circles – circles in which the positive power of the Holy Spirit is stressed. But this greater empowering by the Spirit must be made manifest in history if it is to be distinguished from the repeated failure of believers in the Old Covenant era to stay in the “positive feedback” mode: blessings . . . greater faith . . . greater blessings, etc. It is this

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56. Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God’s Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), pp. 159-62, 185-86. Cf. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (2nd ed.; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1984), ch. 4.

positive feedback aspect of biblical law in New Testament times which links “theonomy” with postmillennialism (though not necessarily post-millennialism with theonomy).<sup>57</sup> The Christian Reconstructionist affirms that this testimony of God’s transcendence over this world, yet also His presence in this world, becomes clearer over time.

Bahnsen has argued forcefully that any discussion of the expansion of God’s kingdom must include a discussion of the visible manifestations of God’s kingdom in history. To speak of the kingdom of God without being able to point to its expansion of influence outside the narrow confines of the institutional Church is misleading.<sup>58</sup> This argument also is correct.

But what of a parallel argument? If we were to argue that the greater empowering of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament era is only a kind of theoretical backdrop to history, and therefore biblical law will not be widely preached and obeyed in this pre-final-judgment age (which is the amillennialist argument), then we would really be abandoning the whole idea of the Holy Spirit’s empowering of Christians and Christian society in history. It would be an argument analogous to the kingdom arguments of the amillennialist: “Yes, God has a kingdom, and Christians are part of it, and it is a victorious kingdom; nevertheless, there are no progressively visible signs of the king or His kingdom, and Christians will be increasingly defeated in history.” Similarly, “Yes, the Spirit empowers Christians to obey biblical law; however, they will not adopt or obey biblical law in history.”

Will the progressive manifestation of the fruits of obeying biblical law also be strictly internal? If so, then what has happened to the positive feedback aspect of covenant law? What has happened to empowering by the Holy Spirit?

I prefer to argue that the greater empowering by the Holy Spirit for God’s people to obey and enforce biblical law is what invalidates the implicit amillennialist position regarding the ineffectiveness of biblical law in New Testament times. If Christians obey it, then the positive feedback process of *external, visible Christian culture* is inevitable; it is part of the theonomic aspect of the creation: “from victory unto victory.” If some segments of the Church refuse to obey it, then

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57. On Jonathan Edwards’ pietistic, antinomian postmillennialism, see North, *Dominion and Common Graze*, pp. 174-75.

58. Greg Bahnsen, “This World and the Kingdom of God,” *Christian Reconstruction*, VIII (Sept./Ott. 1986).

those segments will eventually lose influence, money, and power. Their place will be taken by those Christian churches that obey God's laws, and that will therefore experience the covenant's external blessings. These churches will spread the gospel more effectively as a result. This is the positive feedback aspect of biblical law.

Again, let me stress that I am not saying that the *external* success of God's civilization automatically or necessarily converts sinners *inwardly* to faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Men are not saved by law or by the historical sanctions of the law. What I am saying is that the defiant sinner in the millennial future will reject the gospel in the face of even more visible testimony to the historical benefits of saving faith. He will suffer even greater quantities of eternal coal on his resurrected head (Rem. 12: 20).

Kline attacked both of Bahnsen's recommended doctrines – biblical law and postmillennialism – in his critique of *Theonomy*.<sup>59</sup> Kline rejects the idea of a New Testament covenantal law-order, and he also rejects postmillennialism. Kline and his fellow amillennialists are consistent in their rejection of both biblical law and postmillennialism.

Postmillennialists should be equally consistent in linking the two positions. We must argue covenantally, and this necessarily involves the question of the positive feedback of *external* covenantal blessings and the Church's empowering by the Holy Spirit. If we accept the possibility of a defense of God's law that rejects the historic inevitability of the long-term *cultural* expansion of Christian dominion through the covenant's positive feedback, then we face a major problem, the one Bahnsen's theory of the empowering by the Spirit has raised: *how to explain the difference between the New Testament Church and Old Testament Israel*. If the Christian Church fails to build the visible kingdom (Christian civilization) by means of biblical law and the power of the gospel, despite the resurrection of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit, then what kind of religion are we preaching? Why is the Church a significant improvement culturally and socially over Old Testament Israel?

What does such a theology say about the gospel? What kind of power does the gospel offer men for the overcoming of the effects of sin in history? Is Satan's one-time success in tempting Adam never going to be overcome in history? Will Satan attempt to comfort himself throughout eternity with the thought that by defeating Adam, he

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59. Kline, *op. cit.*

made it impossible for mankind to work out the dominion covenant in history, even in the face of the death and resurrection of Christ? If we argue this way — the failure of a Spirit-empowered biblical law-order to produce the visible kingdom — then we must find an answer to this question: Why is sin triumphant in history, in the face of the gospel?

Then there is the impolite but inevitable question: *Why is Jesus a loser in history?*

And, just for the record, let me ask another question: When in history will we see the fulfillment of the promise of Isaiah 32, when churls will no longer be called liberal, generous people will no longer be called churls, and (presumably) the historic defeat of the Church will no longer be called the victory of God's kingdom?

### *Preaching External Defeat*

Amillennialists, by preaching eschatological impotence culturally, thereby immerse themselves in quicksand — the quicksand of social antinomianism. Some sands are quicker than others. Eventually, they swallow up anyone so foolish as to try to walk through them. Social antinomianism leads into the pits of cultural impotence and retreat. No one wants to risk everything he owns, including his life, in a battle that his commander says will not be won. Only a few diehard souls will attempt it. You can build a ghetto with such a theology; you cannot build a civilization.

Amillennial Calvinists will continue to be plagued by Dooyeweerdians, neo-Dooyeweerdians, mystics, liberation theologians, natural-law compromisers, and antinomians of all sorts until they finally abandon their amillennial eschatology. Furthermore, biblical law must also be preached. It must be seen as the tool of cultural reconstruction. It must be seen as operating *today*, in New Testament times. It must be seen that there is a necessary relationship between covenantal faithfulness and obedience to God's revealed law — that without obedience there is no faithfulness, no matter how emotional believers may become, or how sweet the gospel tastes (for a while). Furthermore, there are external blessings that follow covenantal obedience to God's law-order.

### Christian Cultural Ghettos

The Dutch-American community has long criticized American fundamentalists for being too individualistic, and for ignoring the dominion covenant, what they call prefer to call the cultural man-

date.<sup>60</sup> But they have never been successful in this appeal, precisely because they share American fundamentalism's hostility to biblical law, as well as premillennialism's pessimism toward the Church's future this side of Christ's second coming. Dutch amillennialists and American fundamentalists deny a covenantal view of ethics – a long-run, historically manifested “evenness” between obedience to God's law and external blessings (Deut. 28:1-14). Thus, the failure of the Reformed Dutch-Americans to persuade American fundamentalists to abandon the latter group's individualistic ethics is closely related to amillennialism's necessary doctrine of ethical “unevenness”: the supposed cultural discontinuity in New Testament times between external obedience and visible reward. To the extent that the amillennialist adopts this near-pagan doctrine of temporal unevenness (ethical futurism), to that extent he becomes impotent to challenge both humanism's individualistic ethics and fundamentalism's individualistic ethics.

But no one can live without some sort of social and cultural continuity. Social antinomianism unquestionably produces individualism, for it denies the applicability of God's covenant promises to New Testament society; therefore, some other doctrine or outlook must offset individualism in order to maintain cultural cohesion. Historically, there have been many rivals to the continuity of covenantalism, with its powerful doctrine of progressive cultural sanctification: for example, political power, racial purity, linguistic affinity, national custom, membership in a “vanguard” of some sort, or membership in a secret society. The descendants of mid-nineteenth century Dutch immigrants adopted a national-linguistic alternative in order to establish cultural continuity (“evenness”). This has led to the creation of Dutch enclaves in both Canada and the United States, meaning the creation of ghettos, very often rural ghettos. This is a failing that their better theologians have warned against, but without success.<sup>61</sup> (American fundamentalists until quite recently have lived in similar cultural ghettos, although the marks of their ghet-

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60. Henry R. Van Til, *The Calvinistic Concept of Culture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959). Henry was Cornelius' nephew.

61. R. B. Kuiper wrote in 1959: “By this time it has become trite to say that we must come out of our isolation. . . . Far too often, let it be said again, we hide our light under a bushel instead of placing it high on a candlestick. . . . We must acquaint ourselves with the American ecclesiastical scene.” Kuiper, *To Be or Not to Be Reformed? Whither the Christian Reformed Church?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 186.

toes have not been primarily linguistic, unless speaking in tongues is considered linguistic. This ghetto mentality is beginning to change, much to the shock and consternation of Dave Hunt and his dispensational followers.)<sup>62</sup>

### Theonomic Pessimillennialism

It is undoubtedly possible to argue in favor of biblical law (theonomy) and still hold to amillennialism or premillennialism. The pessimillennialist denies that there will be a huge harvest of souls in the future; this in fact is the meaning of pessimillennialism. On what basis could a Christian Reconstructionist argue this way? First, a Calvinist Christian Reconstructionist could argue that God will not direct His Spirit to compel the conversion of large numbers of people. God could compel this, but He chooses not to. Second, an Arminian argues that people will always be able to reject the offer of God's saving grace, i.e., he denies the sovereignty of God in electing sinners to salvation. He therefore denies the doctrines of irresistible grace and effectual calling. A pessimillennial Christian Reconstructionist, Calvinist or Arminian,<sup>63</sup> affirms that men will reject the gospel despite the visible sanctions of God in history. The Calvinist says that this rejection was predestined by God, and He has revealed this grim future to us; the Arminian says that it was not predestined, but it was foreknown by God, and He has revealed this grim future to us.

What no Christian Reconstructionist should ever argue is this: that historical sanctions alone will bring worldwide salvation. Men are not saved by law or by judicial sanctions; they are not saved by the testimony of law and the law's visible sanctions. They are saved only by the work of the Holy Spirit. But what every Christian Reconstructionist must affirm is this: for men to reject God's message of eternal salvation, they will have to reject *progressively clear and progressively impressive testimony* regarding the authority of God, God's revealed law, and the sanctions of God in *history*. Rebels will have to reject all five points of the covenant. We dare not argue that the revelation of God decreases in intensity and clarity over history.

It is possible for a person to be a Christian Reconstructionist and still remain a non-postmillennialist, but to do so, he must systemat-

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62. Gary DeMar and Peter Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity: A Biblical Response to Dave Hunt* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1988).

63. There are Christian Reconstructionists who are Arminians, but they do not write for the general public. The leadership of the movement has been Calvinist.

ically affirm that the vast majority of mankind will reject the progressively visible signs of external success that God grants to covenant-keepers. He must also affirm that most men will choose to accept the progressively visible failure and looming destruction that God brings in history to covenant-breakers. We know that all those who hate God love death (Prov. 8:36). Therefore, a consistent Christian Reconstructionist can hold to a non-victorious eschatology. But he must argue that the reason for this failure of the gospel message in history is the result of men's rejection of an ever-clearer, ever-more condemning visible testimony to the reality and reliability of God's law and its sanctions in history.<sup>64</sup>

Anyone who is a full-scale theonomist must affirm both the continuing moral validity of Old Testament law and the continuing sanctions of God in history. Biblical law does not come to man apart from historical sanctions: blessings and cursings. Deuteronomy 28 is still binding in history. Thus, *visible*, external covenantal victory for those who obey God's law is inevitable. Nevertheless, this does not prove that a worldwide conversion to saving faith is inevitable. Therefore, the consistent theonomic pessimillennialist has to adopt a view of theocracy which is inherently elitist spiritually. He is arguing that the spiritually lost will voluntarily allow biblical law to be enforced culturally, perhaps for the sake of receiving the external blessings and avoiding the external cursings, even though they will not really possess eternally saving faith in the Son of God.

This is a theologically questionable view. I have argued in Chapter 6 of *Dominion and Common Grace* that a society's external adherence to God's law requires saving faith for most members of that society. Even for the sake of external benefits, covenant-breakers cannot indefinitely adhere to God's external covenant standards. They cannot tolerate the testimony of God's sovereignty in their midst. They must eventually rebel. They *do* rebel at the last day (Rev. 20:9-10). Thus, theonomic postmillennialists argue that long-term cultural faithfulness to God's covenant law can only be sustained by the continuing work of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. Large numbers of people will have to be brought to eternally saving faith in order to sustain a worldwide holy commonwealth. *It*

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64. This is in fact what I believe the rebels of the last day will do: rebel against near-perfect testimony of God's grace in history: Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace*, pp. 189-90. I do not believe that these rebels will constitute a majority of mankind.



is this process of widespread regeneration that alone can sustain international theocracy. Anything else inevitably must involve top-down elitist suppression by the State, and this is what we theonomic postmillennialists reject, both in principle and as a short-run tactic. We are calling for a bottom-up transformation of society. We are calling, in short, for *democratic theocracy*—the social, cultural, and (last of all) political product of a majority of eternally saved people.<sup>65</sup>

The reason why theonomists are continually accused of wanting to set up a “dictatorship by the saints” is because our critics reason in terms of premillennialism or amillennialism. They simply refuse to take seriously our defense of postmillennialism. They cannot imagine a future society in which a majority of people will voluntarily agree to be governed in every area of life in terms of the comprehensive covenants of God. They cannot imagine such a move of the Holy Spirit. So, when they read that we want to see the whole world run in terms of God’s law, they inevitably think, “international elitist tyranny.” Over and over, we affirm our faith in the conversion of the world’s masses to faith in Christ, but our critics refuse to listen. They are judicially deaf: “hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (Matt. 13:13 b).

So, when people ask me, “Can a person be a Christian Reconstructionist without being a postmillennialist?” I answer yes. But to be a *consistent* theonomic pessimillennialist, he has to adopt a view of the future that most people find even more difficult to accept than mine: a world in which the vast majority of people are covenant-breakers, a world in which the law’s historical sanctions are still being applied by God, and in which a dwindling elite of saints rule over a growing though weakened army of God-haters. This sounds like a top-down theocracy to me. I do not think such a theocracy can survive the test of time. Anti-elitism is another reason why the vast majority of Christian Reconstructionists are also postmillennial. They reject the vision and the likelihood of a top-down theocracy. It is conceivable over the short run, but it is not conceivable over the long run. We postmillennial Christian Reconstructionists are concerned about the long run. Postmillennialism requires voluntarism: widespread predestined conversions.

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65. Gary North, Editor’s Introduction, in George Grant, *The Changing of the Guard: Biblical Blueprints for Political Action* (Ft. Worth: Dominion Press, 1987), pp. xviii-xxii.

### Political Pluralism and Christian Pessimism

What characterizes antinomian thinking is the acceptance of three ideas: first, that God's Old Testament case laws do not apply in New Testament times; second, that Christians must therefore seek common-ground definitions with non-Christians in the fields of civil law and politics; third, that there is therefore no such thing in history, even as an ideal for history, as a Christian civilization, for such a civilization would obviously have to be structured in terms of explicitly biblical standards in every area of life, especially civil law. Antinomianism therefore leads directly to the concept of political pluralism.

Political pluralism is part of an overall philosophy of life. It is not simply some neutral political solution to a series of technical political problems. Ideas have consequences, and these consequences are frequently not perceived by those who will suffer them. I have said that antinomianism, biblically defined, leads to political pluralism. Political pluralism has consequences. It leads directly to polytheism: *many moral law-orders; therefore, many gods*. Polytheism (all gods are equal) leads to relativism (all moral codes are equal); relativism leads to humanism (man makes his own laws); and humanism leads to statism (the State best represents mankind as the pinnacle of power). As Rushdoony remarks, "because an absolute law is denied, it means that the only universal law possible is an *imperialistic law*, a law imposed by force and having no validity other than the coercive imposition."<sup>66</sup> We are being dragged by the theology of pluralism back to the Tower of Babel.

It should be understandable why Protestant Christians in this century have suffered from a massive inferiority complex. They have not believed that God has given them the tools of dominion, God's revealed law. They do not believe that *in history* they are already in principle, and will become, "more than conquerors" (Rom 8:37). The title of Douglas Frank's history of early twentieth century American Christianity is appropriate: *Less Than Conquerors*.<sup>67</sup> Eschatology matters. Doubt concerning the future inevitably paralyzes systematic efforts to achieve social transformation.<sup>68</sup> Widespread doubt is

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<sup>66</sup> Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Douglas W. Frank, *Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelical Entered the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986).

<sup>68</sup> Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

what has led to the accelerating retreat of Western humanism in the face of international Communism,<sup>69</sup> which has a positive eschatology. 70 The beginning of Christian reconstruction must be the recovery of confidence in the future, based on what God's law offers regenerate mankind: the tools of dominion.

Ethical futurism must be based on the biblical concept of three-fold sanctification: definitive (Christ's resurrection), progressive (history), and final (final judgment). To deny that the process of progressive sanctification applies historically to institutions as well as to individual Christians is to remove or at least cripple the impulse to dominion. This is why we must affirm postmillennialism: not only because it is logically correct, or more consistent than other eschatological systems, or less compromising in its handling of the Bible's prophetic texts, but also because *postmillennialism is alone consistent with the Bible's view of ethical cause and effect in history*. It preaches God's covenantal sanctions as the basis of long-term dominion.

Ethics should be our primary motivation rather than eschatology. Obeying God should be more important motivationally than collecting temporal rewards. God is sovereign, not man. This is why I believe so strongly that one's *eschatology grows out of his view of ethical cause and effect in history*. In the five-point biblical covenant model, eschatology (succession) is last; it is preceded by sanctions and ethics.<sup>71</sup> My faith in the accuracy of this covenant model is the reason why I choose to fight a simultaneous five-front theological war, not five wars, one book at a time. Nevertheless, the existence of these rewards and punishments in history must be affirmed, for the sake of theology proper (the sovereignty of God), institutional justice (the hierarchical authority of law enforcement), ethics (the moral integrity of God's law), sanctions (testimonies of God's visible covenantal sanctions), and eschatology (positive feedback for gospel victory). We must affirm historical sanctions in order to affirm the covenant. We must affirm *whole covenant theology*.

To deny the long-term historical relationship between covenant-keeping and external blessings is to adopt Satan's preferred ethical system — not ethical neutrality ("unevenness") but rather *ethical perversity*: the triumph in history of covenant-breakers, who will

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69. Jean François Revel, *How Democracies Perish* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984).

70. F. N. Lee, *Communist Eschatology* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1974).

71. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, chaps. 3-5.

maintain their existing control of this world's institutions by default. This means that Satan will not be effectively challenged, worldwide and in every area of authority, in his doctrine of "squatter's rights." Jesus won back the rights to the whole world (Matt. 28:18-20), and transferred the kingdom to the Church (Matt. 21:43), yet the supposed historical impotence of His Church will never allow His people to reclaim title in His name covenantally, meaning *representatively* (point two of the biblical covenant).

In a world in which people are born judicially as covenant-breakers, Christianity necessarily loses institutionally and culturally by default if there is no positive feedback for covenant-keeping and no negative feedback for covenant-breaking. *Deny God's covenant sanctions in history, and you thereby proclaim the inevitable institutional and cultural defeat of Christianity in history.*<sup>72</sup>

### Conclusion

No better case study exists of this denial of God's covenant sanctions than the amillennial theology of Cornelius Van Til. His amillennialism undermined his ethical system, and this inevitably called into question his life's work: the destruction of halfway covenant philosophy. He expected his followers to enter the historical battle needlessly ill-equipped: to fight as God's earthly representatives against Satan's earthly representatives, but without God's covenant sanctions in history. He called them to fight something (Satan's existing cultural strongholds) with nothing (a worldview that denies God's covenant sanctions in history). That very few people have heeded Van Til's call to join him in his intellectual battle should not be surprising; they implicitly recognize that this battle is far more than merely intellectual. It is at bottom ethical, and therefore it involves a personal confrontation in every area of life. To enter such a battle without faith in God's covenant sanctions in history is the theological equivalent of joining a squad of Japanese kamikaze pilots

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72. While it is true that God might convert the whole world to Christianity, without a uniquely Christian law-order, and without covenant sanctions, there would be no fundamental change in the nature of world culture. The world's institutions would be operated just as they are now: by standards that are not biblical. This is why the older postmillennialism of Princeton Theological Seminary, like the postmillennialism of Jonathan Edwards, was unconvincing intellectually and theologically. It was not tied to biblical law. It was ethically neutral, meaning antinomian. It was pietistic rather than covenantal.

in early 1945. No matter how enthusiastically you shout “Banzai!” you know where things are headed.

Van Til affirmed forthrightly only the first of the covenant’s five points: the transcendence of God. He keyed his philosophy to this crucial doctrine: the Creator-creature distinction. This is why he revolutionized Christian apologetics. But he adopted a false doctrine of temporal succession: the progressive triumph of Satan’s representatives in history. Thus, he had the second point of the covenant incorrect: representation/hierarchy. While he believed in a hierarchical approach to epistemology — man’s thinking God’s thoughts after Him — he fervently believed that Satan’s representatives can successfully run the world throughout history, i.e., successfully maintain political and cultural power. But how can they do this, since they deny God’s revealed law (point three), thereby placing themselves under God’s negative sanctions in history (point four)? Van Til did not believe in God’s covenant sanctions in history, and therefore he could not affirm the power and historical authority of biblical law, a law-order that cannot be separated from God’s historical sanctions.

Thus, Van Til laid the intellectual foundations for the acceptance of political pluralism: the doctrine that God is represented politically throughout history by those who refuse to affirm His absolute sovereignty, His comprehensive (multi-institutional) theocratic rule, His revealed law, His sanctions in history, and the progressive triumph of His kingdom in history. This means that he refused to abandon ethical pluralism in the field of social ethics. Nevertheless, such a view of political and ethical pluralism is inextricably tied to the doctrine of natural law or evolutionary law, i.e., tied to the autonomy of man. Yet he denied this doctrine throughout his career. Van Til was a classic victim of intellectual schizophrenia, a schizophrenia produced by his amillennialism. He got point five of the covenant wrong, and points two through four toppled, too.

He always said that there is no neutrality in thought or life, yet he constructed his apologetic system as though there could be eschatological neutrality. His denomination affirms that there must be eschatological neutrality organizationally. But in Van Til’s case, this cloak of eschatological neutrality was a cover for a radical pessimism regarding the earthly future of the gospel, the Church, and Christian culture. And so we must say with respect to this cloak of eschatological neutrality, “The emperor wears stolen clothes!”

What saved Van Til's system from self-destruction was his unwavering commitment to point one of the biblical covenant: the ontological Trinity, meaning the transcendent yet immanent God.<sup>73</sup> What saved it was his clear-cut defense of creationism: the Creator-creature distinction. As part of his view of creation he defended the absolute providence of God. He was strong on point one of the covenant, and because of this, his apologetic method can legitimately be said to have launched the Christian Reconstruction movement. But this is true only with regard to his defense of point one. His views regarding the other four points, if accepted, would undermine the Reconstructionist position. Professor Meredith G. Kline has seen this more clearly than most of our critics.

What saved Van Til's system could not save the system of his former student, Francis Schaeffer. Schaeffer believed in but did not emphasize in his writings either predestination or special creation. He was a "closet Calvinist" in his published writings. His system was therefore even more the victim of halfway covenant philosophy. His system was even more vulnerable to the myth of political pluralism. His sheep are today even more scattered, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

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73. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 1.

From the time of the Puritans until about the middle of the nineteenth century, American evangelicalism was dominated by a Calvinistic vision of a Christian culture. Old Testament Israel, a nation committed to God's law, was the model for political institutions. Hence the Christian ideal was to introduce God's kingdom – a New Israel – not only in the lives of the regenerate elect, but also by means of civil laws that would both restrain evil and comprehensively transform culture according to God's will. . . . The contrast [in twentieth-century evangelicalism] between the present New Testament age of the Spirit and the previous Old Testament age of law did involve a shift toward a more "private" view of Christianity. The Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of individuals and was known primarily through personal experience. Social action, still an important concern, was more in the province of private agencies. The kingdom was no longer viewed as a kingdom of laws; hence civil law would not help its advance. The transition from postmillennial to premillennial views was the most explicit expression of this change. Politics became much less important.

George M. Marsden (1980)"

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\*Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 86, 88.

## HALFWAY COVENANT SOCIAL CRITICISM

*But the great item of unfinished intellectual business confronting the Protestant denominations was and is the problem of religious freedom. And here the situation is almost as desperate as increasingly it becomes clear that the problem cannot be solved simply by maligning the character of those who question the American practice.*

*Is it not passing strange that American Protestantism has never developed any sound theoretical justification of or theological orientation for its most distinctive practice? Today we should probably have to agree with the writer of 1876 who said that "we seem to have made no advance whatever in harmonizing (on a theoretical level) the relations of religious sects among themselves, or in defining their common relation to the Civil power"*

*Sidney E. Mead (1953)1*

Nowhere in the writings of contemporary evangelical social thinkers does the continuing reality of Professor Mead's comments appear more clearly than in the later works of Francis Schaeffer, especially *A Christian Manifesto* (1981). His intellectual career represents a 40-year wandering in the wilderness, like the generation of Moses that had escaped from the bondage of Egypt, but which would not cross over into the Promised Land. They did not believe in the complete reliability of the laws announced by Moses, and neither did Rev. Schaeffer. But as time went on, he grew less and less willing to put up with the laws of Pharaoh. He rejected the judicial leaven of

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1. Sidney E. Mead, "American Protestantism During the Revolutionary Epoch," *Church History*, XXII (1953); reprinted in *Religion in American History: Interpretive Essays*, edited by John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 175; citing J. L. Diman, "Religion in America, 1776 -1876," *North American Review*, CXXII (Jan. 1876), p. 42.



Egypt, but he could not stomach the judicial leaven of Moses. He had to put up with manna.

### A Closet Presbyterian Calvinist

Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) was a Calvinist. He was not a Puritan Calvinist, but he was a Presbyterian Calvinist within the tradition of the old (pre-1929) Princeton Seminary.\* He was also a premillennialist, although not a dispensationalist, which placed him closer to the camp of post-Civil War American fundamentalism<sup>3</sup> than to traditional American Calvinism, which in the nineteenth century was more commonly postmillennial<sup>4</sup> and in the twentieth century has generally been amillennial.<sup>5</sup> He was a pastor in Carl McIntire's Bible Presbyterian Church for two decades, which was explicitly a premillennial church.

As a seminary student, he spent two years at J. Gresham Machen's<sup>6</sup> Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, where he studied apologetics under Cornelius Van Til. He began his ministerial career shortly after he joined fundamentalist-premillennialist-Calvinist Carl McIntire<sup>7</sup> in the 1937 split of the one-year-old Orthodox Presbyterian Church.<sup>8</sup> He appears in the photograph of the departing Bible Presbyterian Church leaders in *A Brief History of the Bible Presby-*

2. Princeton's faculty had been mostly postmillennial until the 1920's, and those who were not postmil were amillennialists. Also, the anti-alcohol (abstinence) position of American fundamentalism, embraced by the young Schaeffer, was not prominent in the old Princeton tradition. But Schaeffer's commitment to biblical infallibility and to an intelligent, well-informed evangelism was surely Princetonian.

3. Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

4. In the North, the postmillennialism of the Hodges and Princeton Seminary dominated; in the South, the postmillennialism of Dabney and Thornwell: James B. Jordan, "A Survey of Southern Presbyterian Millennial Views Before 1930," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Winter 1976-77), pp. 106-21.

5. This was the influence of Dutch Calvinism after the demise of orthodoxy at Princeton after 1929. See Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), Appendix.

6. Pronounced GRESSum MAYchen.

7. Pronounced PERsonal conTROL.

8. George P. Hutchinson, *The History Behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod* (Cherry Hill, New Jersey: Mack Publishing, 1974), p. 229n. The OPC was at that time called the Presbyterian Church of America, but it was taken to civil court and successfully sued by the mainline Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. for infringement on that church's name. The new church was forced by the courts to change its name in 1939. Charles G. Dennison (ed.), *Orthodox Presbyterian Church 50, 1936-1986* (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), p. 7.

terian Church and Its Agencies.<sup>9</sup> The primary theological issues dividing the OPC from McIntire's Bible Presbyterian Church were eschatology and "temperance," meaning total abstention from alcohol. The Bible Presbyterians in 1938 adopted an anti-alcohol platform, a traditional fundamentalist position.<sup>10</sup> In 1937, at its first meeting, the newly assembled group vowed to amend the Westminster standards "in any particular in which the premillennial teaching of the Scriptures may be held to be obscured."<sup>11</sup> This was done in 1938, when they rewrote the Westminster Confession's section on eschatology.<sup>12</sup> Schaeffer served in 1948 as Moderator of the General Synod of McIntire's Bible Presbyterian Church in 1948, the year after his first visit to Europe.<sup>13</sup> He later joined the exodus from McIntire's church to form a new "Columbus Synod" in 1956, which merged in 1965 with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod, to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.<sup>14</sup> Seventeen years later, this small denomination merged with the Presbyterian Church in America, the evangelical denomination that had separated from the liberal Southern Presbyterian Church. He was still alive when this merger took place, and he ended his life as a Presbyterian pastor in an officially Calvinistic denomination.

In short, Rev. Schaeffer remained a Calvinist and premillennialist, although the sharp edges of his earlier fundamentalism faded from his theology over time. "As early as 1942," writes one Church historian, "Francis Schaeffer laid emphasis on the Church's strong and definite doctrinal basis in contrast to the doctrinal weakness and vagueness of modernist and fundamentalist alike."<sup>15</sup> Yet the fact of

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9. No copyright, no place of publication, no publisher, and no date of publication, but which I received from the Bible Presbyterian Church; the latest date I can find in its text is 1968. The photograph appears on page 63.

10. Hutchinson, *Brief History*, pp. 63-64.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

14. Rev. McIntire's reflections on this split are typical: "In 1954, there arose a group in the Bible Presbyterian Church under the leadership of the Rev. Francis Schaeffer, Dr. Robert Rayburn, and the Rev. Tom Cross, who felt that the church could get a great deal farther if it would take a softer approach in dealing with the apostasy. They also were distressed over the fact that the church was not as tightly organized and under central control as they wished." Cad McIntire, *The Death of a Church* (Collingswood, New Jersey: Christian Beacon Press, 1967), p. 166. The second statement is especially remarkable, given the fact of Rev. McIntire's legendary control over his ever-shrinking denomination, which continues to this day (July 1989).

15. Hutchinson, *Brief History*, p. 263.

his Calvinist Presbyterian background may come as a shock to many of his Arminian evangelical followers, who are even less doctrinally rigorous than the fundamentalists of 1942. Very few of Francis Schaeffer's followers have known what he really believed theologically, or what his oath of ministerial office affirms (The Westminster Confession of Faith and its Larger and Shorter Catechisms). For example, Rev. Schaeffer took a public oath as a Presbyterian minister that he believed the following doctrines regarding personal salvation:

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, bath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto. <sup>16</sup>

All those whom God bath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; . . .

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it. <sup>17</sup>

There is little doubt that the vast majority of those who have purchased his books are unaware that he believed these classic Calvinist doctrines, nor do they share such beliefs. This is part of the problem in dealing with Rev. Schaeffer and his intellectual legacy: he systematically hid so many of his opinions from his readers.

### Why The Silence?

I cannot recall a single instance in his (misleadingly titled) *Complete Works* in which he mentions, let alone defends, his own five-point Calvinism <sup>18</sup> or his ecclesiastical connections. His readers are given no indication that his intellectual background was deeply rooted in the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. <sup>19</sup> His close asso-

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16. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, IX: III.

17. *Ibid.*, X:I, II.

18. The five points of Calvinism are summarized by an acrostic, TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement (i.e., particular redemption), irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

19. The classic statement of this position in Schaeffer's generation was Loraine Boettner's *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (1932), kept in print by Presbyterian & Reformed. Boettner is still alive as I write this.

ciation with Rev. Carl McIntire was concealed entirely in his wife's two (or possibly three) <sup>20</sup> biographies, which were expressly written for a broadly Arminian ("free will") evangelical audience. Few people know that McIntire's Independent Board for Foreign Presbyterian Missions sent Rev. Schaeffer to Switzerland in 1947. I know of nothing in print which clearly and without Mrs. Schaeffer's "pre-1950 fog" discusses his life, church connections, theology, and intellectual development. When asked in 1968, "Where did your husband get all this?" Mrs. Schaeffer offered a long, rambling disquisition about his discussions with "existentialists, logical positivists, Hindus, Buddhists, liberal Protestants, liberal Roman Catholics, Reformed Jews and atheistic Jews, Muslims, members of occult cults, and people of a wide variety of religions and philosophies, as well as atheists of a variety of types." This went on for two pages. <sup>21</sup> What she and he both refused to mention throughout their mutual career were the sources of his theology rather than his intellectual targets. Reading Mrs. Schaeffer's books gives the reader the impression that Francis Schaeffer the philosopher-critic appeared mysteriously one afternoon after a walk in the Swiss Alps. That this remarkable transformation appeared after a long struggle with (and rejection of) Cornelius Van Til's rigorously presuppositional apologetics and Carl McIntire's rigorously personal ecclesiastics is nowhere discussed.

### *Why the Criticism?*

My essay on Rev. Schaeffer is mostly critical. I believe that he gave away far too much ground to the humanists and liberals who were the targets of his critiques. I believe that his apologetic approach, like Cornelius Van Til's, was deeply compromised by anti-nomianism and by eschatological pessimism. To prove my case, I have had to take a critical stand against him. This is a one-sided, specialized essay, not a well-rounded assessment of his personal ministry overall. I believe that on the whole, he (like Van Til) fought the good evangelical fight, given his self-imposed theological handicaps, his lack of advanced formal academic training beyond seminary, and his geographical isolation in Switzerland. (To some extent, all three were advantages: they kept him out of the intellectual] y debilitating clutches of the academic compromisers who control the humanities

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<sup>20</sup> Her book, *L'Abri*, is a partial biography.

<sup>21</sup> Edith Schaeffer, *L'Abri* (London: Norfolk), pp. 226-27.

classrooms of the modern Christian liberal arts colleges.)<sup>22</sup> He inflicted serious wounds on humanists within the modern evangelical Church, which is why they are so vindictive, now that he is gone.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, his counsel and books brought many intelligent young people to saving faith in Jesus Christ in a turbulent period of Western history. Finally, he did elevate the terms of evangelical intellectual discourse from 1968 until his death. My disagreement with Rev. Schaeffer centers on the fact that he did not go far enough down the confrontational road. He waffled on key issues. He operated a halfway house intellectual ministry, with all the liabilities associated with any ideologically middle-of-the-road operation. He did, however, sell over two million books. None of his published critics can match that performance, including me.

I am comparing him to what he could have been, had he remained more faithful to the older Puritan standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith that he affirmed at his ordination. I am comparing him to what he might have been had he taken the Old Testament case laws more seriously and the earthly future of Christianity more seriously. I am comparing him to what he should have been had he thoroughly abandoned the myth of neutrality that he publicly attacked, and had he really adopted the presuppositional apologetic approach that he sometimes claimed that he accepted. Most of all, I am comparing him to what we needed him to be, had he turned away from the political pluralism that he adhered to. Pluralism's moral foundation is relativism, which he forthrightly warned against — a warning which has outraged his neo-evangelical academic critics. But compared to Hal Lindsey, he was a breath of fresh air. Compared to Robert Schuller, he was a theological life-support system. Compared to Tony Campolo, he was the Apostle Paul.

#### From Apologetics to Social Theory

In the early 1970's, Van Til issued a mimeographed collection of letters that he had written to Schaeffer personally from 1967 on. This devastating, 54-page, single-spaced critique of Schaeffer's halfway house philosophical defense of Christianity was titled simply, *The Apologetic Methodology of Francis A. Schaefer*. It exposed the extent to

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22. See my Foreword to Ian Hedge, *Baptized Inflation: A Critique of "Christian" Keynesianism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986).

23. I have in mind the collection of academic essays, *Rejections on Francis Schaeffer*, published in 1986, which I cite extensively below.

which Schaeffer was committed to traditional “natural law” apologetics, meaning the idea of intellectual neutrality, which ultimately means ethical neutrality. Van Til argued that Schaeffer did not begin with the Bible as the self-attesting Word of God, with the Trinity, the providence of God, and the creation as the necessary presuppositions for all human thought. In short, he did not start with Van Til’s version of presuppositionalism, a rigorous and uncompromising presuppositionalism that teaches that *there is only one point of contact between the covenant-breaker and the covenant-keeper: the image of God in man.*<sup>24</sup> Man’s logic is fallen; thus, there is therefore no logically neutral common ground. Whatever logic the covenant-breaker possesses is based on stolen presuppositions<sup>25</sup> – logic that he abandons as soon as he sees clearly that it points to the God of the Bible. Instead, he always worships the creature rather than the Creator (Rem. 1:18-22).

Schaeffer did not believe in this form of philosophical presuppositionalism, although he frequently used the term “presuppositional” to describe his own apologetic approach. He sought first to establish an independent and prior concept of truth — neutral common ground — which can serve as a point of contact between the saved and the lost. Schaeffer adopted the analogy of a man who lives under a roof. The roof is his system of anti-biblical presuppositions. It shields him from the real world, the world God has made. Thus, Schaeffer concluded, when we deal with this man, we must let in certain truths from outside the roof. We must remove the shelter a piece at a time. What is our first step, logically speaking? To avoid an initial appeal to the Bible. “*The truth that we let in first is not a dogmatic statement of the truth of the Scriptures, but the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is.* This is what shows him his need. The Scriptures then show him the real nature of his lostness and the answer to it. *This, I am convinced, is the true order for our apologetics in the second half of the t wen-*

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24. This is admitted by Forrest Baird’s survey article on the background of Schaeffer’s thought: “Schaeffer by and large accepted this presuppositionalism of Van Til. But as Kenneth Harper has pointed out, Schaeffer was not a thoroughgoing presuppositionalist. . . .” Baird, “Schaeffer’s Intellectual Roots,” in Ronald W. Ruesegger (ed.), *Reflections on Francis Schaefer* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 1986), p. 57. He cites Kenneth C. Harper, “Francis Schaeffer: An Evaluation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 133 (1976), p. 138.

25. Van Til called this theft “borrowing,” but this is not strong enough language. Cf. Van Til, *The Case for Calvinism* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1964), p. 106; *Essays on Christian Education* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977), p. 63.

*tieth century for people living under the line of despair.*"<sup>26</sup>

To this, Van Til replied: 'But, I ask, do we have to let in' this truth? Clearly not. Man already knows 'the external world' and its 'mannishness.' God doesn't have to tell him and we don't have to tell him what God has, from the beginning, told him. God needs only to 'refer' to what he already knows; surely this is also all we as believers in God need to do, as we seek to win men to an acceptance of Christianity."<sup>27</sup>

What Van Til was concerned about was not that Schaeffer had borrowed Van Til's terminology of presuppositionalism without credit; rather, he was concerned that Schaeffer had not fully understood or fully accepted the explicit biblical foundation of presuppositionalism: *the denial of neutral common-ground natural logic*. Van Til's rigorous critique exposed Schaeffer's apologetics as only halfway presuppositional.

To put this in the terminology of covenant theology, Schaeffer was not sufficiently precise on the doctrine of God's transcendence, meaning His absolute sovereignty. He was therefore not solid on the doctrine of hierarchy: man's ability to think God's thoughts after him *only* as a totally dependent, non-autonomous creature. Schaeffer waffled: 1) on affirming the absolute sovereignty of God; and 2) on denying every degree of autonomy in man. On the final three points – law, sanctions, and continuity – he was no worse than Van Til in theory, but he was far more vocal, making him a much greater liability. In summary, Schaeffer affirmed publicly none of the five points of biblical covenantalism, although officially he did so when he affirmed the Westminster Confession of Faith and its catechisms. In this, he was like the last three centuries of Presbyterians, who have affirmed these confessional standards while ignoring their Puritan theocratic roots.

### *Why the Silence?*

Rev. Schaeffer never replied publicly to Van Til, but these criticisms rankled him. 2s As his disciple-biographer remarks: 'Later one

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26. *The God Who Is There*, in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview*, 5 vols. (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1982), I, pp. 140-41. Emphasis in original.

27. Cornelius Van Til, *The Apologetic Methodology of Francis A. Schaeffer* (mimeographed, no date), p. 27.

28. Van Til's published version does not indicate that Schaeffer ever responded privately to these letters, nor does Schaeffer's biographer. In fact, the biographer makes it appear as though Van Til raised these objections only after his retirement. On the contrary, he was still teaching at the time these essays were written.

theological professor [note: he does not say “the professor who had taught Schaeffer apologetics four decades earlier”], who for years often publicly criticized Schaeffer’s way of helping people become Christians, retired and then wrote a long critical treatment of Schaeffer’s view of Christian faith and evangelism. Rev. Schaeffer responded privately to some within L’Abri: ‘I would hate to think that I might spend my retirement doing something like that!’<sup>29</sup> Clearly, Schaeffer took these criticisms personally, never understanding that Van Til wrote strictly from a professional and intellectual basis. He treated everyone else the same way! Van Til understood what every Christian apologist must do: *defend the faith*, especially from those who have made crucial errors that will inevitably lead to disastrous intellectual (i.e., moral) compromise later on. This is exactly what has been the fate of the Schaeffer movement in less than half a decade since his death: disastrous compromises with secular humanism, and all in the name of Christian pluralism.

This same commitment to the neutrality doctrine was subsequently reflected in Schaeffer’s social theory in *A Christian Manifesto* (1981). What I argue in this chapter is that his commitment to the neutrality doctrine in philosophy destroyed what little remained of the Schaeffer movement after his death in 1984. When the Schaefferites at long last realized that they could not maintain a commitment to biblical Christianity and ethical and epistemological neutrality in their so-called “secular” callings, they abandoned their formerly outspoken commitment to Christianity in their respective professional callings. This has been most visible in Dr. C. Everett Koop’s “condom wars” and in Franky Schaeffer’s ill-fated 1987 R-rated movie, *Wired to Kill*.

Every Christian social theorist is required by God to make a key intellectual (but ultimately ethical) decision. He must identify one *and only* one of the following as a myth: neutrality or biblical theocracy. Christian social theorists today will do almost anything to avoid making this identification, but sooner or later they have to decide. From the demise of Puritanism after 1660 until the appearance of the Christian Reconstruction movement, Christian social theorists sought to avoid this decision, in order to avoid deciding in favor of theocracy, meaning the world under God’s revealed law. Implicitly

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29. Louis Gifford Parkhurst, Jr., *Francis Schaeffer: The Man and His Message* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1985), p. 49.



or explicitly, for over three centuries, Christian social theorists chose to defend the myth of neutrality.

This was also true of the Schaefferites, but in a different way. Schaeffer and his followers kept saying that secular neutrality is the myth, but when push came to shove in the early 1980's, they finally decided that political pluralism is the lesser of two evils, and that theocracy is the really dangerous myth, so they publicly re-adopted neutrality. This decision had been implicit from the beginning in Francis Schaeffer's apologetics. It took a decade, 1975-85, for Franky Schaeffer and Dr. Koop to become consistent with that original apologetic method. Francis, Sr. had died with the dilemma still unresolved, but his successors could no longer sustain his system's inherent intellectual and ethical schizophrenia.

Schaeffer's followers were systematically misled throughout his public, published career regarding what he really believed. I think it is safe to say that it was not an oversight on Schaeffer's part that he neglected to reprint his 1976 pamphlet defending infant baptism in his misleadingly titled five-volume set, *Complete Works* (1982). This pamphlet had been published by an obscure local publisher long after he had become the nation's best-selling evangelical philosopher-critic, a very peculiar publishing arrangement.<sup>30</sup> As I will show in this chapter, there were other significant elements of self-conscious deception in his later, post-1967 career. His odd combination of theological doctrines inevitably led him into trouble after he began publishing in 1968, trouble that eventually destroyed the institutional remains of his intellectual legacy.

### Schaeffer & Son

Francis Schaeffer was the dominant influence in the intellectual revival among American Protestant evangelical, 1968-84. By 1979, his books had sold over two million copies.<sup>31</sup> As he correctly observed regarding his own influence, "I don't know anyone who has really taken a clear Christian position who has been more widely accepted in the secular area."<sup>32</sup>

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30. Francis Schaeffer, *Baptism* (Wilmington, Delaware: Trimark Publishers, 1976).

31. Philip Yancey, "Francis Schaeffer: A Prophet for Our Time?" *Christianity Today* (March 23, 1979), p. 16.

32. "Schaeffer on Schaeffer, Part I," *Christianity Today* (March 23, 1979), p. 20.

How did this officially hard-core Calvinist ever gain such influence with an Arminian audience? Simple: by failing to mention, let alone affirm, any of Calvinism's unique doctrines in his popular writings. From the beginning, Francis Schaeffer's public career— post-1968 — was based heavily on deception. This reliance on deception eventually undermined his theological legacy, as well as his institutional legacy.

From an intellectual standpoint, there was a strong element of theological schizophrenia in his later career after he had departed from Rev. Carl McIntire's brand of Presbyterian fundamentalism. A similar schizophrenia burdened all of the leaders of the post-1979 New Christian Right, before that short-lived movement disappeared into the swamp of Ronald Reagan's Presidency.<sup>33</sup> He steadily became trapped by his pessimistic eschatology, by his negative view of biblical law, and by his halfway house apologetic methodology (part neutral-ground rationalism, part Van Tillian presuppositionalism). He was a transitional figure, but an important one for a decade and a half.

### *Why the Silence?*

He borrowed from Van Til's apologetic methodology, under whom he had studied at Westminster Seminary in the mid-1930's, and also from R. J. Rushdoony's writings of the 1960's and early 1970's, but he never gave either of them credit in his footnotes and bibliographies. (See below, "The Case of the Missing Footnotes.") This indicates that he was nervous about his reliance on their highly controversial work.<sup>34</sup> Footnotes or not, however, there is little doubt,

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33. Gary North, "The Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right," *Christianity and Civilization*, 1 (1982), pp. 1-40, The key event in the life of that movement was the National Affairs Briefing Conference that was held in Dallas in late summer, 1980. Brief indeed !

34. L'Abri Tapes used to make available a set of three discussions by Rev. Schaeffer entitled "Relativism: The Real Enemy." The first two discussions (two hours each) were a survey of the first (unpaginated, spiral-bound) edition of Rushdoony's *This Independent Republic*, which Schaeffer liked very much at the time. This is referred to by Ronald A. Wells, who says that when he visited L'Abri in the 1960's, and asked about Rev. Schaeffer's views on American history, a staff member referred him to this taped discussion of *This Independent Republic*. Wells, "Schaeffer on America," *Rejections on Francis Schaeffer*, p. 234.

The third discussion took place in 1964, the night Barry Goldwater lost the Presidential election. It is most revealing. Rev. Schaeffer repeatedly stated that Johnson's electoral victory showed the truth of what he had taught at L'Abri, that if modern man is given a clear choice between good and evil, he will choose evil. Rev. Schaeffer's strongly conservative political views were not immediately apparent in his James Sire-edited early books, but once they became more visible, he ceased to be the darling of the neo-evangelical, InterVarsity crowd.

as Forrest Baird concludes, that "Schaeffer was heavily influenced by Van Til."<sup>35</sup> When, toward the end of his career, his son Franky quite properly radicalized him regarding the ethical issue of legalized abortion, he began to move from his strictly intellectual critique of humanist civilization into social activism. He wrote *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Crossway, 1983), an attack on the social and political apathy of American evangelical churches. This alienated many of his followers. A year later, he died of cancer.<sup>36</sup>

Neither he nor his son Franky ever resolved the immense contradiction in their attempt to create an intellectual defense of Christian activism while simultaneously denying biblical law and postmillennialism, and also while staying discreetly quiet about the institutional Church and the sacraments. The father died in the summer of 1984 without suggesting any resolution to the theological dilemma that his writings had created. Eventually, this contradiction overwhelmed the son. In the fall of 1984, Franky cancelled all his future Christian audience speaking engagements, and he disbanded his own *Christian Activist* tabloid newspaper a few months later. He sold the tabloid's mailing list and then disappeared from the evangelical scene in order to produce an atrocious R-rated, teenage violence motion picture, *Wired to Kill*, that was released in 1987 and flopped financially, fortunately, because almost nobody went to see it. The film received scathing reviews by Christian film critics for its needless bloodshed and its lack of any Christian theme. By the grace of God, it was a total economic failure in theaters, and the investors lost their money.<sup>37</sup> Christian film critic Ted Baehr wrote: "So, in the end, this is a humanistic film about humanistic despair, showing no

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35. Baird, "Schaeffer's Intellectual Roots," *Rejections*, p. 64.

36. I met Schaeffer twice, the first time in late 1963 or early 1964 in the den of Rev. Richard Gray in Pennsylvania, where he discussed his ministry with a few seminarians, and again in late 1982 at a private meeting at Pat Robertson's Virginia Beach headquarters. Rev. Robertson had invited me, Schaeffer, Franky, and lawyer John Whitehead to advise him regarding programs that CBN University could launch. I wrote a paper for him which was later published as "Levers, Fulcrums, and Hornets," *Christianity and Civilization*, 3 (1983), pp. 401-31. As far as I know, Rev. Robertson never adopted any of our suggestions. Rev. Falwell did; his Liberty University's videotape-based home college education program was developed after Falwell's assistant, Ron Godwin, read the essay and adopted its educational strategy.

37. I know. I was one of them. In retrospect, it is understandable why Franky asked us to invest without reading the screenplay in advance. It is not fully understandable why we were all so foolish as to invest, screenplay unread. In any case, far better that we lost our money than to have had lots of people see this disastrous movie.

way out, no alternative. . . . Stay away from *Wired to Kill* unless you want to weep at how an opportunity for Christian filmmakers was thrown away.”<sup>38</sup> Franky could not sustain the theological battle without the inspiring presence of his father and without biblical law, As we shall see, neither could C. Everett Koop.

### *Religiously Neutral Capitalism*

It is not an accident that Franky’s edited collection of essays, *Is Capitalism Christian?* (Crossway, 1985), contains not one essay showing the well-known Christian roots of capitalism. Of its seventeen chapters and five appendixes, most are written by self-conscious humanists. Part Five of the book does include essays by Christian authors. These essays tell us what does not work — socialism and economic interventionism by the State — but they do not tell us what economic program is biblically incumbent on Christians to pursue as a systematic replacement for the modern welfare State. The book’s title asks a question which in fact is never dealt with by any of the essays: Is capitalism Christian? This book is an unbaptized defense of anti-socialist secular humanism, which Franky calls democratic capitalism and pluralism.

If capitalism is not Christian, why should Christians concern themselves very much about defending it? If it is not worth defending in the name of Jesus Christ and the Bible, why should Christians devote very much time, energy, and money in coming to its rescue? If capitalism is nothing more than a system that works well to make more people wealthier, why should Christians regard it as any more crucial to their lives than the next election or some new technological development, i.e., only marginally important in the overall development of God’s kingdom? Capitalism may be only a brief historical force that will be transcended — a traditional criticism made by most socialists. These are a few obvious practical questions.

There are also crucial theoretical and historical questions. If capitalism is not Christian, then why did it arise only in the Christian West? If capitalism “works,” then by what standard should we evaluate it? If it works better than all other economic systems, why are all the rest of them equally Christian, meaning equally non-Christian, meaning equally neutral theologically? And how does it happen that Christianity, which is the only true religion, and the only religion

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38. Ted Baehr, *The Movie & Video Guide for Christian Families* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Sons, 1987), p. 213.

that “works” eternally, is not the only possible source of the best system of economics in man’s history? Could it be that there is no fixed relationship between covenantal faithfulness and external blessings? Could it be that there is no covenantal relationship between Christianity and economic freedom, which is *only* produced by free market capitalism? Could Christianity be *that* irrelevant socially?

Franky and his authors did not ask any of the questions, because (select one): 1) most of them are not Christians; 2) none of them believes in the biblical covenant sanctions for society (Deut. 28); 3) they have no answers to these questions; 4) they forgot the answers; 5) they are scared to death of appearing to be theonomists; 6) all of the above.

Franky Schaeffer came to this embarrassing position because both he and his father systematically refused to defend the idea of an explicitly Christian economics — an economic system that is self-consciously based on Old Testament law. He called for a study of the economic evidence, as if such evidence were neutral, as if religious presuppositions do not control every person’s interpretation of evidence, as if he had forgotten the subtitle of his book, *A Time for Anger: The Myth of Neutrality* (Crossway, 1982). Once again, he was the intellectual heir of his father’s hostility to Van Til’s rigorously presuppositional apologetic method. Franky wrote that “we must then look about us and decide on the basis of evidence, not ideology, what economic systems presently and realistically available best provide for the needs of most people.”<sup>39</sup> When he said “ideology,” he also meant “theology.” It was the same argument used by the pro-abortionists: “Let us just look as neutral observers at the evidence to see whether this or that unborn child should be murdered. Let us appeal to evidence, not ideology.” The proper Christian response must always be: “Let us appeal to the law of God, not to the evidence selected by humanist economists in terms of the religious presuppositions of secular humanists.” In the book’s bibliography, there is no mention of me, Rushdoony, E. L. Hebden Taylor,\*” or any other person even remotely connected with Christian Reconstruction.

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39. Franky Schaeffer, Introduction, in Franky Schaeffer (ed. ), *Is Capitalism Christian?* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985), p. xxvii.

40. Author of *Economics Money and Banking* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1978).

*If Not Biblical Law, Then What?*<sup>41</sup>

It does not matter how many times a person assures us that he is in favor of Christian civilization and opposed to the humanistic myth of neutrality. If he does not affirm the continuing validity of the biblical case laws, his affirmation in favor of Christian civilization is in vain, intellectually speaking.<sup>42</sup> At some point, his denial of the continuing moral *and judicial* authority of God's revealed law will logically force him to affirm some form of natural law theory or common-ground reasoning, i.e., the myth of neutrality. He may prefer for matters of personal taste to deny the myth of neutrality when writing about what goes on inside the abortionist's office, but if he enters the classroom or the pulpit and publicly affirms democratic pluralism as Christianity's only temporal goal for society rather than as merely a temporary and transitional historical phenomenon, then he is in principle an ethical and epistemological humanist. He speaks with a forked tongue. If he denies the continuing validity of the revealed law of God, he is implicitly *and operationally* a humanist. Democratic pluralism is his true religion, not biblical Christianity.

Franky Schaeffer denies the continuing law of God for society. "Christians, *of all people*, do not want a theocracy. The idea of theocracy denotes the lack of checks and balances."<sup>43</sup> This statement, if taken at face value, is a direct attack on God, for it was God who established theocratic civil government in ancient Israel, as well as theocratic family government and theocratic Church government. Was God's law for Israel inherently tyrannical because it was inherently "unbalanced"?<sup>44</sup> Yet if Schaeffer's statement is not taken at face value, it makes no sense at all. Does he think that the concept of institutional checks and balances came from somewhere other than the Old Testament? Does he think that the Greeks or Romans invented the idea of citizenship which is protected by political checks and balances? If so, he ought to read Fustel de Coulanges' masterpiece, *The Ancient City* (1864).

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41. For the origin of this rhetorical phrase, see Franky Schaeffer, *Bad News for Modern Man: An Agenda for Christian Activism* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1984), pp. 54-55.

42. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

43. Schaeffer, *Bad News*, p. 104. He means "connotes," not "denotes."

44. God is a Trinity, three yet one. Thus, biblical theocracy always has a division of governmental powers: Church, State, and family. In each, the executive possesses more authority than his advisors, but not exclusive authority. This same kind of balance existed in the theocracies of the Old Testament.

His father was equally hostile to the biblical theocratic ideal .45 Wrote Francis Schaeffer concerning Christian civil government:

In the Old Testament there was a theocracy commanded by God. In the New Testament, with the church being made up of Jews and Gentiles, and spreading all over the known world from India to Spain in one generation, the church was its own entity. There is no New Testament basis for a linking of church and state until Christ, the King returns. The whole "Constantine mentality" from the fourth century up to our day was a mistake. Constantine, as the Roman Emperor, in 313 ended the persecution of Christians. Unfortunately, the support he gave to the church led by 381 to the enforcing of Christianity, by Theodosius I, as the official state religion. Making Christianity the official state religion opened the way for confusion up till our own day. There have been times of very good government when this interrelationship of church and state has been present. But through the centuries it has caused great confusion between loyalty to the state and loyalty to Christ, between patriotism and being a Christian.

We must not confuse the Kingdom of God with our country. To say it another way: 'We should not wrap Christianity in our national flag.'<sup>46</sup>

What he really means, of course, is that we *should not wrap our nation in Christianity's flag*. But every nation must be wrapped in some religious flag. There is no religious or ethical neutrality, after all. So, we must ask ourselves, what flag did Francis Schaeffer prefer that we wrap our nation in? He never said, but since there is no neutrality, there will always be a flag (i.e., a public symbol of political sovereignty). It flies high today in the name of neutrality, flapping over the public school system. It flies high every time a nation defaults from an explicit religion. That flag is the flag of secular humanism.

#### Francis Schaeffer vs. the National Covenant

There are four major problems in the passage cited above. *First*, notice the confusing use of the word "church" in his argument. He rejected any link (undefined) between Church (undefined) and State: "There is no New Testament basis for a linking of church and state until Christ, the King returns." What does he mean by the word "church"? Did he mean the Church as the historic institution

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45. For evidence, see Gary North and David Chilton, "Apologetics and Strategy," *Christianity and Civilization*, 3 (1983), pp. 116-31.

46. Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1981), p. 121. This statement appears in *The Complete Works*, V, pp. 485-86.

which exclusively offers the sacraments? If so, there is never a time when Church and State are supposed to be fused (if this is what he means by “linked”) in God’s kingdom (civilization), not even in the coming premillennial kingdom that Schaeffer believed in. Church and State are separate covenantal institutions. The State is supposed to enforce the specified negative sanctions of biblical civil law by means of the sword; the Church offers the positive sanctions of the sacraments and enforces its discipline in terms of the negative sanction of withholding the sacraments. Schaeffer never got this clear in his own mind. If he had, he would have had to affirm the New Covenant legitimacy of a theocratic republic.

On the other hand, if he meant Church as *ekklesia* – “called-out” Christians – then his argument officially turns the civil government over to Satan. If Christians *as citizens* are not required by God to bring their Bible-based views to bear on politics, and to pass legislation that conforms to God’s revealed case laws, then anti-Christians inherit all civil governments by default. Sometimes Schaeffer rejected such an idea, and he called for Christian political participation, but he always rejected the idea that biblical law is to be the model for Christian legislation. At other times (such as in this passage), he affirmed the separation of Christianity and State by rejecting the idea of a national covenant, for such a covenant clearly necessitates public obedience to biblical law.

Second, what did he mean by the word “linked” when he wrote: “There is no New Testament basis for a linking of church and state until Christ, the King returns”? He never said what he meant. Did he mean a legal tie, with the institutional Church giving orders to civil magistrates? Did he mean that church membership is required for voting, meaning that only Christians are allowed to give orders to civil magistrates? He simply did not tell us what he meant. This necessarily confuses the reader.

### *Loyalty to Jesus Christ*

*Third*, he correctly observed that the fusion of Christianity (not the institutional Church) and State “has caused great confusion between loyalty to the state and loyalty to Christ, between patriotism and being a Christian.” So what? So has the fusion of family and Christianity, as Jesus predicted, quoting Micah 7:6.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his



father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household (Matt. 10:34-36).

To paraphrase Schaeffer, "through the centuries it has caused great confusion between loyalty to the family and loyalty to Christ, between being a good family man and being a Christian." The point is, *deciding these inescapable conflicts of loyalty in favor of Jesus Christ is the essence of loyalty to Jesus*. There is no more neutrality in the relation between Christianity and civil government than between Christianity and family government or Christianity and Church government. *Every human institution and human relationship is to be brought under the visible, covenantal lordship of Jesus Christ. There are no exceptions*. If this leads to 'confusion,' then the proper solution to such confusion is to think about these problems from the point of view of the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments, rather than to abandon biblical law in favor of an implicit acceptance of some version of Greek natural law theory.

#### *Whose Flag?*

*Fourth*, he said, "We must not confuse the Kingdom of God with our country. To say it another way: We should not wrap Christianity in our national flag." He was correct, but he deliberately failed to discuss what the Bible teaches that we should do: *wrap our national flag in Christianity*. We must not confuse the kingdom of God with our country, for the kingdom of God is international and above all nations,<sup>47</sup> but each Christian should work all his life to do what he can to lead his business, his children's school, his family, his church, his local community, and his country into the international kingdom of God in history. This is what it means to deny the myth of neutrality; it means affirming the legitimacy of positive kingdom activities in history and then working to achieve some of them locally.<sup>48</sup> This is also what it means to pray in faith and confidence, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). If Jesus did not expect this prayer to be answered in history, He would not have told us: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7).

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47. Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for Government* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987); Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

48. For an extended critique of Rev. Schaeffer's attack on theocracy, see Gary North and David Chilton, "Apologetics and Strategy," *op. cit.*, pp. 116-31.

Schaeffer's disciple-biographer has written: "True Christianity seeks pluralism within society, a pluralism that allows for the free discussion of ideas in a true democracy, where there is tremendous freedom, but within the moral boundaries set by God in the Bible. Christians believe that in the marketplace of ideas they can demonstrate the superiority of Christian ideas; therefore, Christians are not afraid to discuss their beliefs with others and promote freedom of speech. Christianity teaches that God has given us moral boundaries for the public good or for the good of society, as well as for the good of each individual. Christians stand up for biblical absolutes in the essential areas of public morality, because we know that in doing so we are preserving good government, our society, and our culture."<sup>49</sup> Hear, hear! This is the correct biblical view, as stated. The judicial and political problem comes when we get down to that crucial clause, "within the moral boundaries set by God in the Bible." *What moral boundaries?* How do we gain public agreement about them? Do we appeal to natural law? To existentialism? To the will of the people? *What standards?* The whole Bible, Old and New Testaments? Or man's autonomous mind? *Which absolutes?* (There are lots of absolutes in the Bible.) Then come additional questions. Which areas of public morality are essential? How are the appropriate biblical standards to be enforced? This was the problem of political sovereignty that Schaeffer avoided dealing with in detail throughout his entire career, for he could see where the answer to such questioning must eventually lead: to theocracy, or to natural law philosophy, or to raw totalitarian power. Illogically, he denied all three, and his movement disintegrated within four years of his death.

### *The Unresolved Tension*

There was an unresolved tension in his later writings regarding political questions, just as there had been an unresolved tension in his earlier philosophical writings: the presupposition of the Bible as the starting point of all knowledge (revelational apologetics) vs. the acceptance of the autonomous human mind as the judge of all knowledge (neutral common-ground apologetics). Schaeffer used a halfway house apologetic method, neither fully presuppositional nor fully evidential. Baird's assessment needs correction: ". . . Schaeffer accepted Van Til's presuppositionalism, though he placed more em-

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49. Parkhurst, *Francis Schaeffer*, pp. 131-32.

phasis on the common ground the believer has with the nonbeliever.<sup>50</sup> What Van Til taught was that there is no common *philosophical* ground between covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers; there is only the common ground of the *image of God in man*. The covenant-breaker sees, but represses, the truth of God's special and natural revelation to him (Rem. 1:18-22). Thus, it is not surprising that Schaeffer's halfway covenant apologetics led to confusion. Nor is it surprising that, as Baird remarks, that Schaeffer "always seemed uncomfortable when cornered on the question of his apologetic approach."<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting that Schaeffer's escape hatch with respect to his vague apologetic methodology was the same as Van Til's escape hatch regarding eschatology and biblical law: "It's not my field!" Baird reports: "Asked at a large meeting whether he was a presuppositionalist or an evidentialist, Schaeffer replied, 'I'm neither. I'm not an evidentialist or a presuppositionalist. You're trying to press me into the category of a theological apologist, which I'm really not. I'm not an academic, scholastic apologist. My interest is evangelism.'" <sup>52</sup>

Schaeffer's answer was deceptive, perhaps even self-deceptive, just as Van Til's was. It was no more possible for Schaeffer to separate his religious-philosophical critique of twentieth-century humanism from the question of apologetic methodology than it was for Van Til to separate his apologetics from the questions of biblical law and eschatology. Hollinger is correct: "Francis Schaeffer was first and foremost an apologist, a defender of the Christian faith to the twentieth-century mind."<sup>53</sup> His interest was evangelism, but his chosen mission field was the world of academic scholarship, art, and literature. He did not get invited to speak at Oxford University because he was a country boy preacher. Country boy preachers have to content themselves with satellite ministries, Lear jets, and colleges named after them.

Schaeffer's few remaining institutional heirs have no self-conscious apologetic approach, and they have willingly adopted the philosophy of permanent political pluralism, the philosophical basis of which is

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50. Baird, "Schaeffer's Intellectual Roots," *Reflections*, p. 64.

51. *Idem.*

52. *Idem.* Baird cites Jack Rogers, "Francis Schaeffer: The Promise and the Problem," *Reformed Journal* (May 1977), pp. 12-13. This response is clear, to the point, and unashamed. It is far better than Gordon R. Lewis' attempt to defend academically Schaeffer's methodology against Van Til's presuppositionalism. See Lewis, "Schaeffer's Apologetic Methodology," in *Reflections*, ch. 3.

53. Dennis P. Hollinger, "Schaeffer on Ethics," *ibid.*, p. 245.

either a forgotten remnant of pre-Darwinian natural law theory or else a systematic denial of permanent law (existentialism). They have adopted political pluralism *because they do not believe that Christians can ever win in history*. They are trying to buy time by leasing out the crown rights of King Jesus to the highest bidder. They are willing to rely on judicial decisions made by the second-rate humanists of the democratic West in preference to proclaiming the legitimacy of biblical theocracy, yet these Western humanists are busy selling out the West to the first-rate humanists behind the Iron Curtain. 54

### *The Myth of Neutrality*

By denying the biblical legitimacy of the idea of the national covenant, Schaeffer was necessarily proclaiming the myth of neutrality, the myth of natural law, and the myth of permanent political pluralism. Ultimately, this is a single myth: the myth of *equal time for Satan*. There is no logical escape from this conclusion. If neutrality is a myth, then there is a full-scale war going on between Jesus Christ and Satan, between Jesus' kingdom and Satan's empire, between Jesus' law and Satan's counterfeit laws. This is why Schaeffer, despite occasional language to the contrary, never broke with Greek natural law theory. This is why his published followers still publicly proclaim the ideal of political pluralism through natural law, although they refuse to use the phrase "natural law." The deception continues.

### The Cancer of Relativism

Francis Schaeffer hated the inevitable result of political pluralism: *relativism*. What he refused to admit anywhere in his writings was that this relativism has been implicit in pluralism from the beginning. The following extract from *A Christian Manifesto* reveals his problem. The transition from what is described in the first paragraph to what is described in the second was not the result of a discontinuous historical break; it was the result of a continuous philosophical development:

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54. Jean François Revel, *How Democracies Perish* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984); Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart" (1978), *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard* (Washington, D. C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980); Solzhenitsyn, "Misconceptions about Russia Are a Threat to America," *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1980). Cf. North, *Healer of the Nations*, ch. 8.

Along with the decline of the Judeo-Christian consensus we have come to a new definition and connotation of "pluralism." Until recently it meant that the Christianity flowing from the Reformation is not now as dominant in the country and in society as it was in the early days of the nation. After about 1848 the great influx of immigrants to the United States meant a sharp increase in viewpoints not shaped by Reformation Christianity. This, of course, is the situation which exists today. Thus as we stand for religious freedom today, we need to realize that this must include a general religious freedom from the control of the state for all religion. It will not mean just freedom for those who are Christians. It is then up to Christians to show that Christianity is the Truth of total reality in the open marketplace of freedom.

This greater mixture in the United States, however, is now used as an excuse for the new meaning and connotation of pluralism. It now is used to mean that all types of situations are spread out before us, and that it really is up to each individual to grab one or the other on the way past, according to the whim of personal preference. What you take is only a matter of personal choice, with one choice as valid as another. Pluralism has come to mean that everything is acceptable. This new concept of pluralism suddenly is everywhere. There is no right or wrong; it is just a matter of your personal preference. . . . This new definition and connotation of pluralism is presented in many forms, not only in personal ethics, but in society's ethics and in choices concerning law.<sup>55</sup>

To which I reply: "What else did you expect? That the philosophy of political pluralism could protect a society against a wave of immigrants if civil law grants them all the right to vote? Would you expect to be able to protect the covenantal integrity of a church if anyone could walk in, join the church, and vote, no matter what he believed theologically? Did you think it is possible to restrict relativism in personal ethics to the heart of man, and not have it become relativism in social ethics?"

Schaeffer was trapped by the terms of his own philosophy. He, as is true of all Christian social antinomians, really did believe that the personal ethics of Christianity need not, *and should not*, become the exclusive judicial foundation for society in general and civil government in particular. Thus, he had to believe that the inherent relativism of humanism's *personal* ethics would not inevitably invade and capture any civil government judicially founded on the principle of political pluralism, which is itself nothing more than the political philosophy of relativism writ large. He really did believe that it is

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55. Schaeffer, *Christian Manifesto*, pp. 45-47; *Complete Works*, V, p. 440.

possible, philosophically and perhaps even historically, to affirm the independence of the State from the requirements of biblical law in the name of an inherently undefinable moral law, yet simultaneously preserve the integrity of the Church from the same principle of pluralism (antinomianism) that one has already affirmed as judicially binding on the State.

What Schaeffer refused to face was that this “new” pluralism is in fact the old pluralism become consistent. When the common grace of God was removed from natural law theory, as Darwinism made its rapid worldwide conquest, the underlying relativism of natural man’s philosophy became visible. It had always been relativistic, but it has become visibly so in the twentieth century. Schaeffer fought this humanistic development of relativism in the fields of personal ethics, art, literature, philosophy, and popular culture. He did not fight it – could not fight it – in the field of political action, given his view of the religiously neutral State. And when it was all over, his son made a ghastly R-rated, violence-filled movie that contained no explicitly Christian message of redemption. This was the fate of his halfway covenant social criticism: relativism invaded his own household by means of the epistemological and ethical drawbridge that he left down in the field of political theory. The principle of the leaven means that the conflict is total. *There is no neutrality.*

### The Professors’ Knee-Jerk Political Pluralism

Schaeffer has been criticized in recent years by neo-evangelical scholars who think that he did not go far enough in proclaiming the wonders of pluralism. They see him as a kind of closet theocrat, whereas we theocrats see him as the Pied Piper of Pluralism. The man in the collapsing middle is like a fish caught between two cats.<sup>56</sup>

#### *Wells*

It is interesting to note that even Schaeffer’s mild observation concerning the effects of late nineteenth-century immigration outrages Calvin College historian Ronald A. Wells. “While he does not name the Irish specifically, Schaeffer suggests that 1848 is a turning year, a year in which the mass migration from famine-ridden Ireland began. Here one may have a vestigial remain of that virulent Protes-

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<sup>56</sup> I have stolen Ben Franklin’s remark: ‘A man caught between two lawyers is like a fish caught between two cats.’”

tant disease: Anglo-Saxon anti-Catholicism. This is appalling. . . .<sup>57</sup>

What Schaeffer may *have* meant is conjectural. What we *do have* here is the case of a professional historian with a clouded memory for dates and facts. The great migration to the United States did indeed begin in 1848, and it accelerated with the development of the steamship in the 1870's. It was not just the Irish famine that swelled the seaboard cities of the East. What does not seem to have occurred to Professor Wells is that 1848 was also the year of the socialist revolutions of Continental Europe, the year of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels celebrated these revolutions, and were saddened that they did not triumph and did not go far enough in their radicalism.<sup>58</sup> In the wake of the defeat of those revolutions by conservative forces, several thousand humanist, socialist, and anti-Christian political refugees streamed into the United States, accompanied by three quarters of a million peasants, not all Irish, who had also decided that it was time for a change.<sup>59</sup> Few of the immigrants were revolutionaries; most were Northern Europeans. But 1848 is the obvious year to date the beginning of the change in the religious make-up of the American voter.<sup>60</sup> The year 1854 was the peak year for immigration until 1873, with over 400,000 immigrants entering the U. S.<sup>61</sup> Historian Marcus Lee Hansen calls the 1850's "The Great Migration."<sup>62</sup> Schaeffer was right on target historically. Professor Wells ignores all this, preferring instead to tar and feather Schaeffer posthumously with the accusation of his possible anti-Irish Know-Nothingism.<sup>63</sup> My response to him is what he said of Schaeffer: "This is appalling." Judiciousness with regard to historical facts is not

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57. Wells, "Schaeffer on America," *Rejections*, p. 236.

58. Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850 (1850)*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1978)*, vol. 10, pp. 48-145; Engels, *Two Years of a Revolution; 1848 and 1849 (1850)*, in *ibid.*, pp. 353-69. Cf. Jean Sigmann, 1848: *The Romantic and Democratic Revolutions in Europe (New York: Harper & Row, [1970] 1973)*; Frank Eyck (ed.), *The Revolutions of 1848-49 (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1972)*.

59. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860 (New York: Harper Torchbooks, [1940] 1961)*, p. 274.

60. *Ibid.*, ch. 12.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 303.

62. *Ibid.*, ch. 13.

63. The American Party, a minor, anti-immigration political party of the 1850's, was known as the Know-Nothing Party, for whenever questioned about it, its members insisted that they knew nothing. Its lack of importance is testified to by the lack of modern monographs on it written by tenure-hungry historians.

characteristic of modern Christian classroom defenders of political pluralism, as we shall again see in Chapter 5.

Wells and his politically liberal campus colleagues ignore many things besides the historical facts. They ignore the enormous problem of evangelism that nineteenth-century American Christians faced, a battle for the heart of the United States and thereby for Western civilization. Secular historians are sometimes far more sensitive to this problem. Historian Paul Kleppner calls attention to a Methodist conference statement in 1891 which described the problem well: "Unsaved millions of foreigners are coming to our shores, forcing upon us one of the greatest missionary questions of modern evangelism, viz.: — shall America be unamericanized, or shall millions of North American citizens be brought into sympathy with our Christian institutions through the church of Jesus Christ?"<sup>64</sup>

It also should be noted that during the era in which Christianity was dominant politically in the United States, there was wide-open immigration. It was only after modern democratic humanism gained total power at the national level — after World War I — that the immigration law of 1924 closed the door of sanctuary to most foreigners. So, the problem of political pluralism is in fact international in both scope and theory, an *inescapable fact that all the defenders of democratic political pluralism refuse even to mention, let alone deal with*. Today's democratic pluralists in every nation use coercive immigration barriers to keep out the "great foreign unwashed" who might not fit into national humanist plans. Today, the humanists screen primarily by means of race, although this is hidden because of the language of annual *national* immigration quotas. This racial screening was quite openly admitted in the 1920's, when racial Darwinism and especially eugenics (genetic racial selection) were dominant ideas. Immigration barriers, sterilization of retarded people and sometimes even the poor, and national intelligence tests all appeared at once in the United States, and all were promoted in the name of scientific racism — humanist planned, financed, and delivered.<sup>65</sup> Eugenics

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64. *Minutes of the Maine Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1891*. Cited by Paul Kleppner, *The Third Electoral System, 1853-1892. Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), p. 198.

65. Allan Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Cost of the New Scientific Racism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), chaps. 10-13, 18-20. For a thought-provoking reconsideration of the scientific rigor of the scientists who testified for Scopes, see Burton W. Folsom, "Scientific Blunders and the Scopes Trial," *The World & Z* (June 1989), pp. 583-97.



faded in popularity after the Nazis gave it a bad press, but IQ testing and immigration laws are with us still. Professor Wells is silent on this topic, too.

Pluralism today is only for those who get through U.S. customs and pass the citizenship exams. (And, I might also add, get through a mother's birth canal. Margaret Sanger, the founder of the pro-abortion Planned Parenthood movement, was a dedicated racist and eugenics promoter. <sup>66</sup> A major screening device of modern political pluralism is the abortionist's knife. ) But the idea that any nation (other than Israel) might legitimately screen access to the polling booth in terms of statements of religious faith or church membership is considered barbaric by the humanists and their Christian accomplices. Yet every nation screens access to its polling booths, i.e., the exercise of political sovereignty. The debate ought to be over the *biblically* legitimate basis of screening, not the legitimacy of screening as such. But the classroom defenders of political pluralism carefully avoid mentioning this point. They refuse to debate. They much prefer to launch factually unsupported diatribes. "

Professor Wells cites Schaeffer's sentences: "Pluralism has come to mean that everything is acceptable. The new concept of pluralism suddenly is everywhere. There is no right or wrong; it is just a matter of your personal preference." Then he comments: "But, one asks, what is the alternative in a democratic society? Does Schaeffer mean that, given the freedom to advocate Christianity (he means 'proselytization'), Christians should enforce their views by 'law' if people will not accept Christian belief and behavior by choice?"<sup>67</sup> To which any Christian not paralyzed with guilt should reply: "That is what Schaeffer should have meant, even if it wasn't what he did mean. The English rulers in Hindu India banned the practice of suttee, charitably disregarding an ancient Hindu tradition which required that a widow be forcibly placed on her husband's funeral pyre. Protestants and Catholics combined politically at the national level in the United States to create legislation making illegal in Utah the Mormon practice of polygamy, and they did it in the name of Christianity. Would you call these actions immoral, Dr. Wells? And are you willing to say so in your classes at Calvin College?" There is also the question of legalized abortion, a question which some Christians are

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66. George Grant, *Grand Illusions: The Legacy of Planned Parenthood* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988), ch. 5.

67. Wells, "Schaeffer on America," *Reflections*, p. 236.

answering by illegally standing in the doorways of abortion clinics. <sup>68</sup>

What does Professor Wells think a civil law is, if not the political act of one group or coalition to use the threat of legal coercion in order to restrain the behavior of residents and citizens? He admits that it "is the essence of a social contract" — notice, he refuses to refer to civil government as a covenant — "in a modern nation-state: that we try to change law and practices through the law courts and by political means."<sup>69</sup> Precisely; and it is *only* the Calvinistic postmillennialist who believes that God's Holy Spirit will surely transform the hearts of a majority of people — the doctrine of h-resistible or efficacious grace<sup>70</sup> — to accept Christianity. Since this conversion process happens progressively in history, Christians will unquestionably "change law and practices through the law courts and by political means." It is the self-imposed intellectual curse of amillennialism and premillennialism that its defenders do not understand that biblical theocracy *in every area of life* can and should come through majority vote or acceptance. And when Christians have the votes, they will then be faced with the moral and political question that today's Christian antinomians dread and deeply resent: *By what standard?*

I find it a bit amusing that Wells says of Schaeffer that 'What Schaeffer really cannot handle is pluralism, although he says he defends it.'<sup>71</sup> Just because Schaeffer was morally appalled by the obvious relativism of pluralism — a relativism which Wells does not even try to deny — Wells dismisses him as an enemy of pluralism. Question any aspect of political pluralism in terms of biblical morality, and you thereby question humanist democracy; question humanist democracy, and you invoke the wrath of the social studies and humanities professors of every Christian liberal arts college in the land. (You, too, can send your child into the clutches of these people, to be taught, graded, and perhaps even captured, and it will only cost you \$40,000 or so after taxes. )

Rev. Schaeffer deserved Professor Wells. Wells proves that it does no good to soft-pedal biblical social ethics. No matter how softly you pedal, someone at Calvin College will be outraged.

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68. Gary North, *When Justice Is Aborted: Biblical Standards for Non-Violent Resistance* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1989).

69. Wells, *Reflections*, p. 237.

70. Boettner, *Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, pp. 162-81.

71. Wells, *Reflections*, p. 236.

*Hollinger*

But Wells is mild compared with David P. Hollinger, a professor at Alliance Theological Seminary. Listen to his assessment of the supposed irrelevance, impotence, and downright malevolence of the idea of a Christian society: “Only a solid biblical doctrine of the church enables us to assert that the kingdom of God is qualitatively different from the powers of this world, and that the latter cannot live by specific Christian principles, since they do indeed have a different view of reality. To impose Christianity on society, or seek to make it the legal basis of a social order, tends to generate undue hostility in a pluralistic context. More importantly, it undermines the uniqueness of the church. The theocratic ideal, which Schaeffer seems implicitly to support, fails to recall that it is the church, not America, that is ‘a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.’”<sup>72</sup> And what is he professor of? You may not believe this: Church and Society.

What he seems to be saying is that if Christian standards are used to govern society in general, this “undermines the uniqueness of the church.” Does this also include standards for the family? If so, then on what basis shall God-fearing people promote civil laws against incest? Or bestiality?

This raises another important question: Will the pluralist principle of “equal time for Satan” exist in eternity? If not, will this absence of rival theological views in eternity undermine the uniqueness of the Church?

Schaeffer actually said pretty much what Hollinger says about the necessity of distinguishing America from the Church, as well as the necessity of political pluralism, but Hollinger is so outraged – I see no other obvious motivation — by the mildly worded moral warning that Schaeffer raises regarding pluralism’s moral relativism (i. e., immorality) that he literally cannot understand what Schaeffer has clearly written. This seldom stops a liberal from going into print.

*Judicial Blindness*

I am preparing you for evidence in Chapter 5 that Christian academic pluralists are so utterly enraged by the very idea of biblical theocracy – the visible manifestation of God’s kingdom (civilization)

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72. Hollinger, “Schaeffer on Ethics,” *ibid.*, p. 266

in history — that they literally lose their ability to follow the line of an opponent's argument or deal honestly with historical documents. They have become judicially blinded. They hate God's law with all their hearts. They want humanist theocracy — “vox populi, vox dei” — in preference to biblical theocracy. They prefer the social philosophy of “equal time for Satan,” even when this always produces “no time for Jesus Christ.”<sup>73</sup> (And do they ever screen access to college classroom teaching positions ! Have you ever wondered why political liberals always seem to control the colleges, even so-called Christian colleges? Because when it comes to their monopolistic turf, political pluralism is anathema. Rival views are screened out with a vengeance. It is a classic example of “Do as I say, and not as I do.”)

Schaeffer had his faults. He suffered from a major liability: he chose to enter the academic battlefield without advanced formal training in any academic discipline. He had been isolated in Switzerland for two decades, teaching himself about the humanist West. He was not the recipient of high wages and tenure at some college. He did not have access to a scholar's library. He tended to borrow selectively from other scholars, not always granting credit through footnoting. But his parent-subsidized neo-evangelical opponents have played fast and loose with the facts. They have had more than adequate time and financial support to enable them to begin to deal honestly with their intellectual opponents, but they much prefer to beat up the less prepared opponents, preferably posthumously. They select targets who cannot easily fight back. The tenured professors in neo-evangelical colleges are willing to attack Schaeffer, but they are strangely silent about the writings of Bahnsen, Rushdoony, and North. There are reasons for this. <sup>74</sup>

### The Case of the Missing Footnotes

The following remarks need this preface: I do not think Francis Schaeffer actually researched or wrote *A Christian Manifesto*. At the

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73. The Scopes “monkey trial” of 1925 was fought over the legal right of a public school biology teacher to teach Darwinism alongside creationism. Today, it is illegal for public school teachers to mention creationism in a science classroom. But our Christian pluralists say not a word in protest. George Marsden even went so far — ideologically and geographically — to testify in favor of the AC LUS position during the Arkansas creation trial, *McLean v. Arkansas*, in 1981.

74. Read what Ian Hedge did to Douglas Vickers in *Baptized Inflation*, and you will understand their hesitation. These men are skating on epistemologically thin ice, and they prefer to avoid the fires of heated intellectual combat.

very least, we at the Institute for Christian Economics were told by one of his associates that he did not personally do the all of the basic research for it. Like his popular early books, which were edited by James Sire from tapes of Schaeffer's lectures,<sup>75</sup> *A Christian Manifesto* may have been merely edited in its final stages by Schaeffer. If he did research it, then he was even more dishonest in hiding footnotes than I have previously indicated.

### *Chilton's Discovery*

In 1981, David Chilton spotted a phrase on page 97 of *A Christian Manifesto* which had been lifted virtually word for word from page 200 of Chilton's essay on John Knox, published in early 1979. Here is what he found:

**Chilton:** Within a few years, tens of thousands of Huguenots were offering armed resistance to the French government; and the year Knox died saw the beginning of the successful Calvinist revolt and takeover of Holland and Zeeland. Knox had shocked the world with his *Admonition to England*, but he had also convinced it. As Ridley states it, "The theory of the justification of revolution is Knox's special contribution to theological and political thought."<sup>76</sup>

**Schaeffer:** Within a few years, tens of thousands of Huguenots were offering armed resistance to the French government; and the year Knox died saw the beginning of the successful revolt and saving of Holland. Knox had shocked the world with his *Admonition to England*, but he had also been convincing. Jasper Ridley in *John Knox* writes, "The theory of the justification of revolution is Knox's special contribution to theological and political thought."<sup>77</sup>

Then Chilton spotted another direct lifting, in this case from Richard Flinn's essay on Samuel Rutherford, which appeared in the

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75. Philip Yancey, "Francis Schaeffer: A Prophet for Our Time?" *Christianity Today* (March 23, 1979), p. 16. Yancey says that only *What Ever Happened to the Human Race* (1979) and *How Should We Then Live* (1976) were books actually written by Schaeffer, as distinguished from edited tapes (p. 17).

Tremendous pressure was brought against the editor of IVP, through Franky Schaeffer's mobilizing of public protests to the IVP Board of Trustees when IVP's published the pro-abortion book, *Brave New People* (1984) by D. Gareth Jones. As Franky said in an interview on Pat Robertson's "700 Club," IVP made its money with his father's books and then wound up publishing a pro-abortion book. IVP soon dropped the book, Eerdmans then picked it up.

76. David Chilton, "John Knox," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, V (Winter, 1978-79), p. 200. This was the Symposium on Puritanism and Law, which I edited.

77. Schaeffer, *Complete Works*, vol. V, p. 472.

same issue of the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* in which Chilton's essay had appeared.

**Flinn:** Rutherford suggests that there are *levels of resistance* in which a *private person* may engage. Firstly, he must defend himself by supplications and apologies; secondly, he must seek to flee if at all possible; and, thirdly, he may use violence to defend himself. One should not employ violence if he may save himself by flight; so one should not employ flight if he can save and defend himself by supplications and the employment of constitutional means of redress. Rutherford illustrates this pattern of resistance from the life of David. <sup>78</sup>

On the other hand, when the offense is against a *corporate group* such as a duly constituted state or town or local body, or such as a church, then flight is often an impractical and unrealistic means of resistance. <sup>79</sup>

**Schaeffer:** In such an instance, for *the private person*, the individual, Rutherford suggested that there are three appropriate levels of resistance: *First*, he must defend himself by protest (in contemporary society this would most often be by legal action); *second*, he must flee if at all possible; and, *third*, he may use force, if necessary, to defend himself. One should not employ force if he may save himself by flight; nor should one employ flight if he can save himself and defend himself by protest and the employment of constitutional means of redress. Rutherford illustrated this pattern of resistance from the life of David as it is recorded in the Old Testament. <sup>80</sup>

On the other hand, when the state commits illegitimate acts against a *corporate body* — such as a duly constituted state or local body, or even a church — then flight is often an impractical and unrealistic means of resistance. <sup>81</sup>

Even some of the italics are the same! Chilton complained about these clear-cut cases of plagiarism in a letter to Schaeffer, and he received a reply from a subordinate pleading that Schaeffer had been given the material from a researcher without any source notes attached, and that the lack of acknowledgment was not really Schaeffer's fault. If this was the case, it is pathetic. If this was not the case, then it is also pathetic.

In the eighth printing of *Christian Manifesto*, dated 1982, Schaeffer acknowledged in a pair of footnotes his debt to the two articles in

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78. Richard Flinn, "Samuel Rutherford and Puritan Political Theory," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

80. *Complete Works*, V, p. 47.5.

81. *Ibid.*, V, pp. 475-76.

general, though he did not admit to his prior verbatim liftings.<sup>82</sup> Chilton let bygones be bygones and stopped complaining. He and I did not mention this incident in our 1983 essay on “Apologetics and Strategy,” although we did mention the nearly verbatim lifting of certain material from Rushdoony’s *The One and the Many* (1971). We had not noticed that Schaeffer’s *Complete Works* (1982) reproduced the first edition of the *Christian Manifesto*, so the footnotes acknowledging Chilton and Flinn were again missing. Had we spotted this, we might not have been so conciliatory. Printing and typesetting schedules were presumably responsible for the omission, but when you or your research assistant literally steal other men’s works, and the victims catch you at it, then you should go out of your way to rectify things, even if it means some extra typesetting fees or a delay in publishing your *Complete Works*. Make the set complete: add the missing footnotes (not to mention the missing essay on infant baptism).

*Rutherford: Yes and No*

Why all of this space devoted to an unsavory incident? Because of the highly revealing nature of the material that Schaeffer refused to plagiarize or even mention: Flinn’s lengthy section on Samuel Rutherford’s use of the Old Testament’s case laws. What is missing points clearly to the theological schizophrenia of Francis Schaeffer’s social criticism: an attempted rejection of humanism, yet also a rejection of biblical law.

Here is what Flinn concluded regarding Rutherford’s teachings on the case laws. First, Rutherford used the Old Testament magistrate as the model for today’s civil magistrate. Second, he insisted that God’s law alone properly defines crime. Flinn observes: “We have seen that the magistrate cannot arbitrarily suspend punishment from or pardon those crimes which God’s law stipulates as capital crimes, and requiring the death penalty. To do so is to deify the state.”<sup>83</sup> Rutherford’s third principle regarding the civil magistrate and the case law is that the magistrate has a duty to enforce all ten commandments, not just the second five.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, wrote Flinn, “The most conclusive evidence for Rutherford’s position on the case law being one of continuing validity for

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82. *Christian Manifesto*, p. 141, notes 2 and 7.

83. Flinn, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

jurisprudence, government, and theology is the way in which the author uses the case law in his arguments. A cursory reading of *Lex, Rex*, for example, will demonstrate that Rutherford's whole case is predicated upon Deuteronomy 17. This part of the case law is what he uses to provide the foundation for his doctrine of the civil magistrate and civil government. What is of particular interest in the use of this case law is that *it specifically calls for the application of that same case law to civil government, crime, lawmaking, and punishment. . . .* But, what is of further interest in this regard, is that whereas Deuteronomy 17 is the most frequently quoted passage of Scripture in *Lex, Rex*, it is followed in only slightly less frequency by references to Remans 13:1-6. This is highly significant, for it proves beyond doubt that *Rutherford believed that there is continuity throughout history of the divine prescriptions for civil government and the civil magistrate.* The doctrine of Remans 13 does not abrogate the Old Testament stipulations for government, but ratifies them and builds upon them."<sup>85</sup>

Francis Schaeffer returned to the life and supposed legacy of Samuel Rutherford again and again in *A Christian Manifesto*. His close associate, lawyer John Whitehead, named his Christian legal defense organization The Rutherford Institute. Yet it is clear that Schaeffer's reliance on Rutherford's example was half-hearted, just as his reliance on Van Til and Rushdoony was half-hearted. He appealed to a narrowly and even ultimately *misleading* selective segment of Rutherford's witness. He refused to admit to his readers where Rutherford's position clearly led: *to the Old Testament's case laws.* Why? Rutherford died just as the civil authorities were coming to try him in court and then execute him. No one was coming to arrest Francis Schaeffer for any similar breach of evangelical etiquette when he passed from the scene. What was his problem? It was this: *Francis Schaeffer was nervous about his own Calvinist theological heritage—nervous in principle, but also nervous strategically.* If he was too embarrassed to admit to his evangelical followers that he had once written a pamphlet in favor of infant baptism, then he was hardly going to tell them the full story regarding his proposed model theologian, Samuel Rutherford, who accepted the continuing validity of civil laws against homosexuals, witches, and adulterers.<sup>86</sup>

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

86. This does not deal with the other problem, namely whether Rutherford was an influential source of the American Constitutional settlement. I agree with Richard V. Pierard: there was little or no direct influence, and there is no documentation that indicates such a direct connection. Pierard, "Schaeffer on History," *Reflections*, pp. 212-15. He cites Timothy D. Hall, "Rutherford, Locke, and the Declaration," unpublished Th. M thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984.



What the reader needs to understand is that Francis Schaeffer did not have anything like a developed philosophy of political action or civil law. He was much more interested in the arts. His writings are theologically self-contradictory at their very core (e. g., myth of neutrality vs. fear of theocracy). His hostility to theocracy led him to reject the continuing validity of the case laws of the Old Testament. *This rejection of biblical law forced him into a disastrous compromise with natural law theory.* His closely related unwillingness to go the whole distance with Van Til's presuppositional defense of Christianity led to his unwillingness to break completely with humanism's faith in the autonomy of man's mind. His premillennial eschatology left him devoid of hope that Christians could do anything to reverse the drift into humanistic disaster. Thus, the great evangelical disaster was also his disaster. The sad fate of his spiritual and intellectual heirs testifies to this continuing legacy of disaster.

Franky Schaeffer is like his father in a crucial respect: as a premillennialist, he does not believe that Christians can ever be successful in replacing the corrupt humanist institutions of this world. He thinks that the world could be converted,<sup>87</sup> but that it will not be converted. Also like his father, he has spent his career publicly ignoring the writings of the Christian Reconstructionists. But the old political slogan is correct: "You can't beat something with nothing." He demonstrated the reality of this principle when he departed from the evangelical scene in 1985.

### The Co-Opting of Dr. Koop

Franky's relatively quiet drift out of Christian activism was paralleled by the noisy public defection by Schaeffer's former anti-abortion associate, Dr. C. Everett Koop, the Surgeon General of the United States, 1981-89.'s That he was known by his associates throughout his stay in Washington as "Chick Koop," short for *Chicken*, is one of the great ironies of recent American politics, for in terms of his self-conscious public abandoning of everything he had proclaimed prior to 1980, he was indeed chicken. He had come into office under fire from the liberal news media.<sup>89</sup> He left in July of 1989 as the last remaining Reagan political appointee to have won univer-

87. Franky Schaeffer, *Bad News for Modern Man*, p. 131.

88. C. Everett Koop, M.D. and Francis Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1979).

89. R. Emmett Tyrrell, "Chicken Koop," *American Spectator* (June 1989), p. 34.

sal praise from the liberal media for the final three years of his tenure. The media had not changed; Koop had – which, of course, he denied to the very end.<sup>90</sup>

When he came on the scene as the only visibly Christian appointee by the Reagan Administration, he was vocally opposed by the liberal media. The office of Surgeon General carries with it very little legal authority, and prior to Dr. Koop, the office had never been a publicly visible office, yet the liberals nevertheless strongly resisted his appointment. Even his presence was resisted. He had been too vocal an opponent of abortion. Writes Marie Winn of the *New York Times*: “The nomination was held up for more than eight months. Only after Dr. Koop promised to abandon the antiabortion circuit and to refrain from using the surgeon general’s office as a pulpit for his right-to-life beliefs did the Senate finally vote its approval. Not only did he keep his promise, but his policies as Surgeon General proved so different from what his fearful opponents expected that in time, almost without exception, they publicly disavowed their former words about C. Everett Koop.”<sup>91</sup> That Koop agreed to stop talking about abortion in order to secure his approval was also reported by the Rutherford Institute, the Schaeffer-founded activist public law organization.<sup>92</sup>

For the next two years, he slipped into obscurity. Meanwhile, in 1982, a newborn handicapped infant was allowed to die of starvation and dehydration by a hospital and local judge in Indiana. The federal government in response drew up anti-infanticide regulations. No hospital that discriminated against the life of a handicapped infant could receive federal funds. The U.S. Supreme Court declared these regulations unconstitutional; it is the parents’ right to decide, the court said. Koop had been on the side of the government in this battle. But he had caved in to the medical establishment by agreeing to a rewritten version that allowed the hospitals’ medical ethics committees to make the final decision regarding the infants’ life or death.<sup>93</sup>

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90. He will continue to deny it in his forthcoming book or books, I hereby predict.

91. Marie Winn, “The Legacy of Dr. Koop,” *The Good Health Magazine*, a Sunday supplement to the *New York Times* (Oct. 9, 1988), pp. 28-29. Cf. “Cooing Over Koop,” *National Review* (Feb. 10, 1989), p. 17.

92. Martin Mawyer, “Whatever Happened to C. Everett Koop?” *Rutherford Institute* (Spring 1989), p. 10. Statements by Koop are taken from the *Washington Post* (Oct. 2, 1981).

93. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Time passed. Then came the 1986 Surgeon General's report on AIDS. Koop in 1986 and 1987 officially called for sex education on AIDS in the public schools as early as kindergarten<sup>94</sup> and for public school instruction on how to use condoms. <sup>95</sup> We see here the classical Greek heresy: *salvation through knowledge*. "If men know what is right, they will do it." This is utter nonsense. It reverses the epistemological truth regarding fallen man, as Schaeffer fully understood.

### *Safer Sodomy*

Under questioning, Dr. Koop admitted that as Surgeon General, he would have to recommend abortion as one way of dealing with the unborn children of mothers with AIDS. <sup>96</sup> "Better that than to resign publicly," he seemed to be saying. He loved to wear his Admiral's uniform, which the Surgeon General's position entitles him to wear. (Why the U.S. Surgeon *General* wears an admiral's uniform is beyond the scope of this essay. )<sup>97</sup>

Conservative political activist Phyllis Schlafly called Dr. Koop's recommended approach "safe sodomy." Dr. Koop became the source of huge increases in sales of condoms, reflected by the 1987 boom in the share prices of firms that manufacture condoms. Then, without media attention, he quietly reversed himself in the fall of 1987, admitting that condoms really are not much protection for homosexual contacts. <sup>98</sup> I like to think of this admission as Koop's self-condemnation. This devastating admission received very little publicity. Pro-life activist Jo Ann Gasper, a high-level civil servant who has served in both the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education, has put it very well: "When Dr. Koop came out for safe sex, he was like a man standing on top of a church who slashes open a feather pillow and shakes it. He will never get all of the feathers back in the pillow, no matter how hard he tries."<sup>99</sup>

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94. *Washington Post* (March 24, 1987), "Health Focus." "

95. I have written elsewhere: "Koop has become a kind of bureaucratic condom himself: Preaching a prophylactic solution to a world facing a religious crisis. He has betrayed his trust." Gary North, "Koop's Condom Argument Has a Hole in It," *A.L.L. About Issues* (May-June 1987), p. 48; published by the American Life League.

96. "Koop suggests abortion as option for AIDS carriers," *Washington Times* (March 25, 1987).

97. Tyrrell referred to Koop's "attempt to introduce into American fashion the uniform of the Paraguayan navy. . . ." Tyrrell, "Chicken Koop," p. 34.

98. "Koop Warns on Risk of AIDS in Condom Use," *Los Angeles Times* (Sept. 22, 1987).

99. Statement to the author, July, 1987.

By the spring of 1987, Koop was self-consciously in retreat from his earlier Christian position. With respect to the abortion issue, he commented: "I've written all that I have to write on that issue. There are other, bigger things that I should turn my attention to as surgeon general: Where this country is and where it's going in health care"<sup>100</sup> He had openly adopted ethical neutrality as his theology. In an interview with the liberal *Washington Post*, he announced: "I am the surgeon general of the heterosexuals and the homosexuals, of the young and the old, of the moral and the immoral, the married and the unmarried. I don't have the luxury of deciding which side I want to be on."<sup>101</sup> This is the essence of political pluralism: a man seeks to represent the entire community, meaning every individual self-proclaimed autonomous god. It invariably results in the abandonment of God's law and the triumph of God's enemies.

In this crisis, when God raised him up so that he could make visible the nation's highest official medical office, in the very year that AIDS was identified, 1981, Dr. Koop returned to the common-ground philosophy of natural law and neutral science. In 1987, he announced: "I am not afforded the luxury of bringing ideology or morals into my job, especially with the sort of threat we have with AIDS. When you walk into a lab to do a sterile technique, you do a sterile technique. When you walk into a health job, you make pronouncements about health based on facts."<sup>102</sup> Facts? *Neutral* facts? In the fall of 1986, his office released an AIDS report under his name that was misleading medically through its understatement of the risks of transmission, and which did not call for drastic measures in the face of what he himself says is a plague.<sup>103</sup> There is a reason for this. AIDS is a very special plague, a *politically protected plague*.

### *The Economics of Sex Education*

What is the solution? Dr. Koop said it was sex education. One professional economist knows better. She has concluded that what is needed is more church attendance. It is a remarkable irony of

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100. "The Still-Crusading Koop Keeps the Moralizing Quiet," *Insight* (March 16, 1987). This is published by the conservative *Washington Times*.

101. *Washington Post* (March 24, 1987), "Health Focus." This is what he had said publicly from the beginning; *Washington Post* (Oct. 2, 1981).

102. "Dr. Koop Defends His Crusades," *New York Times* (April 6, 1987).

103. Gene Antonio, *A Critical Evaluation of the Surgeon General's Report on AIDS* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987); Richard Bishirjian, "AIDS Education and the Tale of Two Cities," *World & I* (Sept. 1989), pp. 555-67.

Koop's tenure that he took the standard humanist route to national healing— more taxpayer-financed education — while an economist teaching at a state university called for a spiritual solution.

The rise of promiscuity among teenagers always accompanies the rise of sex education in the public schools. Prof. Jacquelin R. Kasun<sup>104</sup> of California's Humboldt State University summarizes the findings of two social scientists who discovered that teenagers who have had classroom sex education courses are more likely to engage in premarital sex at an early age – 15 and 16 – than those who have had no formal classroom instruction. The study, by William Mariglio and Frank L. Mott, was actually published by the Guttmacher Institute's journal, *Family Planning Perspectives* (July/Aug. 1986). The Guttmacher Institute at one time was the research affiliate of the pro-abortion Planned Parenthood organization. A second study by Deborah Anne Dawson, published in the same issue of the Institute's journal, argues that there is no consistent statistical effect, but does report that one of her statistical models shows that "prior contraceptive education increases the odds of becoming sexually active at age 14 by a factor of 1.5," meaning by 50 percent.

Then what does work to increase chastity? *Church*. Dr. Kasun reports that the effects of regular church attendance on premarital sexual behavior by girls over 17 are stronger than any other observed effect. She concludes: "The policy implications of these findings are obvious. If the intent is to reduce premarital sexual activity and pregnancy among teenagers, there is no evidence that sex education will help. Church will. And so will a stable home environment."

As a good economist, Dr. Kasun chides the sociologists who wrote these studies for their inattention to the economist's prime factor: *price*. "A youngster who is given free contraceptives by her school birth-control clinic without her parents' knowledge and with the promise of a free and confidential abortion in the case of pregnancy, faces a low price for premarital sex activity. She can be expected to consume more of it than a girl with less easy access to contraceptives and abortion." She then goes on to summarize her own findings, that states that spend most heavily to provide free contraceptives and abortions have the highest rates of premarital teenage pregnancy. The differences are major between states that spend and those that

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104. Author of *The War Against Population: The Economics and Ideology of Population Control* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988).

do not. Teenage fertility was declining before the government birth-control programs were instituted in the late 1960's, but it has not declined since 1976. "Extra-marital teenage fertility has increased markedly since the programs were begun, and is no lower in states where public expenditures are highest. " She explains why: "Free birth control encourages sexual risk-taking and therefore a higher level of unintended pregnancy; in this situation many young women find themselves unwilling to undergo abortion. The result, indicated in studies, is a higher level of births that [than] would otherwise occur."<sup>105</sup> The long-run effects of the Presbyterian Church in America's most famous public official are predictable: more fornication, more abortions, and more disease.

### *A Series of Federal Crusades*

As he wound down his tenure as Surgeon General, Koop used his office: 1) to send out a pro-condom report to every home in the country (at taxpayers' expense),<sup>106</sup> 2) to launch an anti-smoking crusade (at a time when 70 percent of Americans had stopped smoking), 3) to publish a 700-page report informing Americans that they eat too much fat; and 4) to call for higher taxes on liquor.<sup>107</sup> He refused to call officially for zero sex outside of marriage as the only sure way to halt the spread of AIDS. Condoms, he said, would at least reduce some of the risk of infection, since people are inevitably going to have sex outside of marriage. The suggestion that AIDS is God's negative historical sanction against homosexuals and against the society that tolerates them is unthinkable in Dr. Koop's view, or at least unprintable. For him, smoking is an addiction; promiscuity is only "behavior."<sup>108</sup> He has uncompromisingly condemned all cigarettes, even those with filter tips. He recommends only abstinence. For promiscuity, he recommends condoms. As he said: "Total abstinence

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105. San Diego *Union* (March 5, 1987). For corroborating evidence, see the book by psychiatrist Melvin Anshell, *Killers of Children: A Psychoanalytical Look at Sex Education* (Stafford, Virginia: American Life League, 1988).

106. *Understanding Aids* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1988). Half of page 4 is devoted to the condom pitch. Under "risky behavior," the report lists "Unprotected sex (without a condom) with an infected person." "Safe behavior" is described as: "Not having sex. Sex with one mutually faithful, uninfected partner. Not shooting drugs ." Notice the reference to "partner" rather than "spouse."

107. "Koop Urges Tax and Ad Moves to Curb Drinking," *New York Times* (June 1, 1989).

108. Ed Payne, "A Family Doctor Responds: Koop Was Wrong on AIDS ," *World* (March 4, 1989), p. 6.

from all sexual relations is one answer, but it is totally unrealistic, and I'm not ready to give up on the human race quite yet."<sup>109</sup>

Judy Brown of the American Life League is correct: "In 1986 both as a physician and as Surgeon General he rejected the demand that conclusive proof of harm to nonsmokers was needed before public action could be taken. Why does he change the public policy rules when dealing with sex? He used to call the reported 1.5 million children aborted per year the biggest preventable cause of death among Americans. Now he claims it is the estimated 300,000 who die from smoking."<sup>110</sup>

This was how the Schaeffer movement died: not with a bang but with a series of taxpayer-funded whimpers.

### *The Plagues During Koop's Watch*

While Dr. Koop fretted about animal fats in other people's diets, along with cigarettes and liquor, sexual plagues were taking their toll on Americans. It was not just AIDS that appeared during Koop's watch; it was an escalating horde of tiny killers. Each year in the U. S., there are ten million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases. This breaks down as follows. There are two million new cases annually of gonorrhea that are actual] y reported by women, but as many as 70 percent of those women afflicted with it do not know they have it. Among school-age children, gonorrhea is now the most common disease, surpassing the *combined* number of cases of chicken pox, mumps, measles, and rubella (German measles). Penicillin is losing its effectiveness against some strains of this disease. There are four to five million new cases of chlamydia. Twenty-five million Americans now suffer from herpes.<sup>111</sup>

Out of wedlock births are up by nine to one since 1950; abortion is now the most common surgery procedure in America.<sup>112</sup>

Through it all, Dr. Koop remained visible but silent. He wore his uniform proudly and basked in the escalating applause of the humanist Left. Those Christians serving in public office who take

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109. Mawyer, *Rutherford Institute* (Spring 1989), p. 13.

110. "One Woman's Opinion: What Happened to Koop?", *The New American* (March 13, 1989).

111. Patrick Buchanan, "Casualties of our own revolution," *Washington Times* (June 12, 1989).

112. *Idem.*

pluralism seriously as an ethical system are risking similar results in their careers: acceptance by the humanist media at the cost of a betrayal of both their faith and their Christian constituents. The price is too high. But Christians have been enthusiastically paying it in North America for over three hundred years.

*Tyrrell Writes Koop's Epitaph*

I cannot resist quoting at length from R. Emmett Tyrrell's evaluation of Koop's tenure in office. Tyrrell is not a Christian, but he is a conservative. As editor of *The American Spectator*, he brought the magazine (now a tabloid) from utter obscurity 'in 1967 to perhaps the leading popular organ of conservative opinion in the United States by the early 1980's.<sup>113</sup> His editorial style is modeled along the lines of H. L. Mencken's. But allowing for his stylistic exaggeration, Tyrrell's comments are on target. He wrote the political obituary of C. Everett Koop a few weeks before Koop publicly announced his retirement. It appeared in his regular column, "Public Nuisances ."

As with most evangelical Christians, he was not on the offensive, expanding the power of the church against state; rather he was the embattled believer attempting to preserve traditional morality from the onslaughts of the New Age ideologues directing the police power of the state against the church. But once in office Dr. Koop proved his modern political mettle, which is to say his capacity for publicity, braggadocio, and sniffing out the course of least resistance. Thus as the months slipped by so did Surgeon General Koop, and in June 1987 our own Tom Bethell awarded the Surgeon General his Strange New Respect Award "for putting condoms before continence." Bethell confers this award upon that conservative who suddenly rises in the esteem of Liberals by seeing the world from their point of view. . . . From opposing abortion and homosexuality he has slipped into a mindless tolerance, with no explanation offered. His solution to the spread of AIDS is the placebo propounded by all dope-fetchers, to wit: he urges education. Furthermore, he is an aficionado of the condom. He beseeches the sexually aroused — whether homosexual or heterosexual — to roll on those condoms, consult a nearby sex manual, and recall all relevant data proffered in Sex Ed. Sex education is the cure for all the perils of Eros, according to Dr. Koop, and the great enlightenment should begin with kindergarten and continue until all kinks have been covered. . . . How sex education might benefit kindergartners who have only recently discovered that their private parts are useful for discharging bodily waste, I cannot imagine.<sup>114</sup>

113. I wrote for it in the early 1970's until I started my own publishing firm.

114. Tyrrell, "Chicken Koop," pp. 34-35.



Tyrrell made one other comment that should be taken seriously by those Christians seeking the comfort of low responsibility under political pluralism: the inescapability of the pulpit in political office. "Dr. Koop has not honored his promise not to turn his office into a 'pulpit .' Throughout his tenure he has preached from it on behalf of all manner of trendy kookery and intolerance. . . . Last summer, when his report on nutrition came out, he again identified the tycoons of the food industry as the greedy malefactor of our cholesterol count. And when it comes to one of his favorite subjects — AIDS — he castigates hospital personnel unwilling to treat AIDS patients ."

But Tyrrell has seen the real heart of Koop's message: unrelenting hypocrisy camouflaged in the rhetoric of public health. "Last summer, during the unveiling of his report on nutrition, Dr. Koop revealed how unserious a man he is. . . . He consumes junk foods happily and two martinis with lunch even more happily. He brags about taking no exercise and being a workaholic. And so when asked at the unveiling of his nutritional report why he ignored his own recommendations in his own life, he replied, 'For myself I'm counting on my genes. If your cholesterol is OK and you think your genes are good, why should you sit on a hill the rest of your life and eat yogurt?'" Tyrrell called for Koop's retirement, which Koop did announce a few days later, though not because of Tyrrell. Tyrrell's parting shot is worth citing: "If he worries the citizenry any further our next Surgeon General will have to be a clinical psychiatrist ." <sup>115</sup>

### The End of the Road for the Schaeffer Movement

Koop's public defection revealed that there is just about nothing remaining of Francis Schaeffer's premillennialism-based, anti-theonomic, pro-pluralism, silently Calvinistic, Christian protest movement. (The one major exception is the public law organization, the Rutherford Institute, which was never under Schaeffer's direct control, and which has always had an independent agenda. It is not Calvinistic.) Jo Ann Gasper, who was fired from her position at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1987 for having attempted to enforce existing federal laws in the pro-life field, gave this evaluation of Dr. Koop, and it serves as the epitaph for the whole Schaeffer movement: 'When Schaeffer was alive, he was the one man Dr. Koop respected and listened to. Schaeffer was a kind of

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115. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

moral rudder. Without Schaeffer he was left rudderless." <sup>116</sup> The problem Koop faced was the problem all of Schaeffer's disciples faced: without biblical law, they were adrift. He had led them into Christian political activism, and now he was gone. Within a few years, so were they.

Schaeffer's son-in-law, Udo Middleman, buried in 1987 what was left of the movement's theological remains. In a rambling, jargon-filled essay — toothless and feckless — he issued the standard assertion that Christians "are not called to reestablish the OT kingdom in any form. . . ." He went on, not all that clearly: "Calling out of a broken situation and working with a 'living God' rather than an established law of the Medes and the Persians, the Bible speaks of things that may well be out of the grasp of people while being presented to their reach" <sup>117</sup> What does this mean? positively, it means "We're on our own; Christians get to make things up as we go along"; negatively, it means that God's law does not constrain us. Stylistically, it means that when you are trying to abandon biblical ethics in the name of the Bible, you may be tempted to try to cover your tracks by substituting such terms as "broken situation" for public evil and "law of the Medes and Persians" for God's Bible-revealed law.

Without faith in the law of God or faith in the victory of God's people in history (the "Church Age"), what else should we have expected from that short-lived movement? Or any other Christian movement, for that matter?

### Political Pluralism and Christian Pessimism

Theocracy means simply that God rules: *theos* (God) *kratos* (rules). The kingdom of God's rule extends to every area of life, not just politics. Should Christians deny that God rules, in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18)? How can a Calvinist, who affirms the absolute sovereignty of God over every aspect of history, deny the existence of theocracy? Should Christians deny that the ethical life of each person is supposed to conform progressively to God's written law as his personal sanctification progresses and he matures in the faith? Of course not. But this raises the key question: *By what stan-*

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116. *Rutherford Institute* (Spring 1989), p. 15.

117. Udo W. Middleman, "The Wider Horizon in Biblical Mandates for Relief and Development," p. 14; distributed at the Villars Consultation on Biblical Mandates for Relief and Development, April 22, 1987.

*dard*? Whose law is to set the standards of ethical performance? God's or man's? The answer has to be: God's revealed law.

Having accepted this in principle, why should Christians then deny that the life of each covenanted *institution* is also supposed to conform progressively to the written requirements of God's law as its corporate sanctification increases and it matures in the faith? Yet they do deny it, by the millions, generation after generation. They simply refuse to think through the obvious implications of their faith. They may even be willing to make the intellectual jump from personal covenants to God's voluntary corporate covenants of Church and family, but not to the State. They therefore deny the possibility of the progressive sanctification of the State. And because they fully understand that the State exercises the greatest visible power of any human institution, their unwillingness to admit the future progressive sanctification of the State leads them straight into eschatological pessimism: premillennialism or amillennialism. The world's evildoers will progressively conquer the instruments of civil power, they proclaim, and there is nothing in the long run that Christians can do about it.

This truncated version of Christianity proclaims the theology of the rescue mission. The institutional Church is seen as little more than a giant rescue mission to the bums of the world. To pessimillennialists, the whole world is skid row, and it will surely get worse as time goes by. The bums who visibly run this world can never be sobered up, nor can they ever be replaced by sober Christians. Pessimillennialists are saying that the inescapable theocracy of God's rule over the universe will not be progressively manifested in civil government or the vast majority of contractual institutions on earth until Jesus comes again in person, either to set up a millennial kingdom (premillennialism) or His eternal kingdom (amillennialism).

Yet they also realize that *there is no neutrality*. But if Christians cannot rule institutionally, then humanists and non-Christians will rule. The humanists will inevitably rule in the name of their god, autonomous man. There is no escape from the concept of theocracy. The only question is: Which god is sovereign? Thus, a denial of biblical theocracy in history (pre-second coming) inescapably leads to the theological and emotional acceptance of a *humanistic theocracy* or some other imitation god's political rule in "the Church Age." Those who deny the historic possibility of the progressive sanctification of civil government must therefore also deny the existence in New Testa-

ment times of positive feedback between covenantal faithfulness to God's revealed law and God's external blessings in history (Deut. 28:1-14). Implicitly or explicitly, this is exactly what they do deny. They necessarily remove the institutional covenantal sanctions and promises from the New Testament era. The Old Testament then becomes God's discarded first draft.

This hostile attitude regarding the legitimacy of specified Old Testament covenant sanctions in civil government eventually spills over into Church government and family government. "We're under grace, not law" is a misleading slogan that cannot be bottled up in the realm of civil government; it reflects an attitude corrosive of all government: self-government, family government, and Church government. Thus, we find that biblical antinomianism — hostility to God's revealed law — becomes either libertinism or legalism, and sometimes both. The best example of this dual process is fundamentalism's hostility to tobacco and liquor — "Never, ever, for any reason!" — and its institutional tolerance of adultery, especially by pastors. They may click their tongues, but they often do not permanently defrock their adulterous leaders. (Since fundamentalist pastors rarely wear robes in the pulpit, the word 'defrock' has no visual reference-point to them.) At most, the denomination or local church suspends them for a period.<sup>118</sup> And when the adulterous pastors refuse to submit even to this, which is most of the time, they are not publicly excommunicated as rebellious church members, but are only removed quietly from the group's ministerial responsibilities.<sup>119</sup> In some

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118. Internationally known television evangelist Jimmy Swaggart visited a prostitute for over a year in Louisiana. This was publicly exposed in early 1988 by another pastor whose sexual life had also been corrupt, and whose large ministry had disintegrated when he had been exposed publicly by Swaggart. (It is not wise to consort with a prostitute who operates within a mile of the man whose career you destroyed with a similar accusation.) The Assemblies of God denomination suspended Swaggart for a year. This preposterously mild tap on the wrist was too hard for Swaggart, who left his denomination in protest and continued to run his disintegrating worldwide ministry. This is what virtually all of them do. The modern Church pays no attention to God's sanctions (blessings and cursings) that accompany the Lord's Supper, so excommunication means little to either church governments or the excommunicated members. The idea that God brings His sanctions in history appeals to them only when dealing with their rivals. Nevertheless, their ministries never fully recover. Incredibly, Charles R. Fontaine and Lynda K. Fontaine have written a defense of Swaggart against the Assemblies of God, *Jimmy Swaggart: To Obey God Rather Than Men* (Crockett, Texas: Kerruso, 1989).

119. The Assembly of God imposed no public excommunication on adulterous Jim Bakker in 1987 or on Swaggart in 1988, their most well-known television preach-

cases, a presbytery will simply allow a known adulterous pastor to take a call from a church in a different presbytery, if only he will leave without forcing the presbytery to conduct an embarrassing formal trial. In short, "Keep him away from our wives; other husbands must take their chances!"<sup>120</sup>

Should we be surprised when we find that this denial of covenant sanctions in history eventually undermines pastors' own leadership? It destroys their own institutional continuity. This is why both amillennialism and premillennialism are doomed. Their theologians insist that Christianity (pre-second coming) is doomed to failure and progressive impotence, and their followers act accordingly. Their view of ethics inevitably affects their view of historical progress. Denying Deuteronomy's covenantal cause-and-effect relationship between ethics and God's judgments in history, pessimillennialists thereby commit institutional suicide. Ideas do have consequences.

### Why This Chapter?

Until Francis Schaeffer arrived on the scene, there was literally not a single nationally known Bible-believing intellectual leader in American Protestantism after the death of J. Gresham Machen on New Year's Day in 1937. There had been a gap in America's Protestant leadership that lasted almost a full generation. There were conservative theological books defending this or that circumspectly limited theological doctrine – written primarily by Lutherans or faculty members of Machen's Presbyterian Westminster Theological Seminary – as well as Bible commentaries, but there was barely a six-day creationist movement and no visible conservative Christian activism, political or otherwise. Protestant Christianity disappeared as an intellectual force in the United States early in the second term of President Franklin Roosevelt, and did not reappear until several years after the assassination of President John Kennedy in 1963. It did not emerge as a major political force nationally until the 1976 Presidential election (Carter vs. Ford), when fundamentalist Chris-

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ers, when each of them refused to submit to the denomination. Bakker never showed up to the formal hearing, and Swaggart refused to obey the denomination's one-year ban from preaching. The only sanction was the erasure of their names from the denomination's ministerial rolls.

120. I am not exaggerating. I purchased part of the library of such a man when he decided not to take his presbytery's offer. He voluntarily resigned from the pastorate; he was not removed.

tians who did not understand how committed to humanism Carter was decided to vote for him because of his public profession of a vague biblical faith.<sup>121</sup>

Rushdoony's study of Cornelius Van Til's philosophy, *By What Standard?* (1959), was a full-scale attack on humanist thought, but it was disguised as a narrowly theological book on apologetics, which was hardly a popular topic. His books that followed began to reveal the broad range of his thought: *Intellectual Schizophrenia* (1961), *The Messianic Character of American Education* (1963), *This Independent Republic* (1964), *The Nature of the American System* (1965), *Freud* (1965), *The Mythology of Science* (1967), and so on. He wrote in the 1960's mainly on the topics of history and education. *The Institutes of Biblical Law* appeared in 1973, after Schaeffer's books had begun to soften the resistance to intellectual Christianity in evangelical circles. Rushdoony's books were published by tiny Craig Press (Presbyterian & Reformed), and they did not sell well. Most of them were allowed to go out of print.<sup>122</sup>

The major intellectual transformation in the evangelical and fundamentalist communities came with the publication of Schaeffer's *The God Who Is There*. This book appeared in 1968, when the counter-culture had become a worldwide phenomenon. This was thirty-one years after the death of Machen. The period 1965-71 was the crucial period for fundamentalists to re-enlist in the battle for the minds of men in the West — their best opportunity since the Scopes "Monkey Trial" of 1925, which the fundamentalists had lost to the evolutionists in the court of public opinion. Now, in the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination and the Vietnam War, conventional liberalism was coming visibly unglued. The self-confidence of pragmatic political liberals was shattered by the campus riots and then student and race riots in the cities. The free speech movement that began in the fall of

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121. Bob Slosser, who co-authored *The Secret Kingdom* with Pat Robertson (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Sons, 1983), also co-authored a paperback book that can best be described as a campaign tract: *The Miracle of Jimmy Carter* (Logos International, June, 1976). I bought my copy in a British used book store in 1986. It was published in Britain by Logos sometime in 1976.

122. Half a dozen titles were picked up by young David Thoburn, who used his own money to reprint them as paperbacks in 1978. They have not sold well since, except for one large "fire sale" that I promoted in my newsletter, *Remnant Review*, in 1982. I financed the republication of *By What Standard?* in 1983, and was reimbursed by Thoburn from early sales. These books will probably not be reprinted when they go out of print, unless in a large, expensive, and very difficult to sell "collected works" version.

1964 at the University of California (Berkeley) was followed the following August by the riots in Watts, a black suburb of Los Angeles. Liberals were aghast; two of their favorite proposed solutions – public higher education and federal legislation (the Civil Rights Act of 1964) – had failed to bring peace to the campus or the ghetto.

Schaeffer spoke out with a series of intelligent though limited critiques of modern humanist thought and culture. He offered no Bible-based solutions, for he had neither eschatological hope nor a developed social theory, but at least he pointed eloquently to the root causes of the philosophical, moral, artistic, cultural, and political problems of the modern world: the denial of the God of the Bible. His writings began to attract the attention of Christians in many camps: evangelical, fundamentalist, and traditionally Reformed. They recognized the value of a uniquely Christian approach to social criticism.

Meanwhile, dispensationalist premillennialists committed intellectual suicide when they failed to direct scholarly or practical attention to the fundamental political and cultural issues raised by the counter-culture. They offered no explicitly Bible-based answers to real-world questions of the day. They offered no social theory consistent with dispensational eschatology. Most important, they offered no cause-and-effect criticism of humanist civilization that was based on a detailed study of that civilization in terms of biblical standards. When dispensationalist theologians remained silent in this crucial moment of cultural opportunity, they implicitly published their own manifesto, *The Movement That Isn't Quite Here*. Then came Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), an implicit defense of traditional dispensational retreat, but magnified: we were supposedly running out of time. Jesus would return soon, probably in 1981. There was therefore no possibility of successful Christian social action: not enough time. Better (and easier! ) to hand out gospel tracts on the beach. Surf's up! This deafening dispensational silence on the biblical basis of social action has continued since 1971, and has been made into a worldview by Lindsey's paperback successor.<sup>123</sup> This silence doomed the dispensational movement far more surely than the completion of the State of Israel's first forty years (1948-1988) – popular dispensationalism's "generation of the fig tree" – without the prom-

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123. Dave Hunt, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1988).

ised Rapture. <sup>124</sup>

Francis Schaeffer's books became the foundation of an evangelical critique of humanism, 1968-1984. These introductory books were in fact lengthy essays that had been edited from his taped lectures; they were nevertheless regarded as heavy reading by most evangelicals. These books led to a revived interest in social action by fundamentalists, 1976-84, after half a century of intellectual hibernation. <sup>125</sup> Only the leftist Siderite movement (Protestantism's mild-mannered version of liberation theology) was generally regarded as an activist evangelical alternative to Schaeffer's anti-abortionism in this period. <sup>126</sup> These movements were the two major American Protestant intellectual alternatives to Christian Reconstructionism, and by 1985, they had both begun to fade, at least in the United States. <sup>127</sup>

### *The Next Phase*

The overnight disappearance of the Schaeffer movement opened up the Christian intellectual community to Christian Reconstructionism, a fact which by 1986 had become far clearer to the modernist Christian left.<sup>128</sup>

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124. A classic document relating to the end of popular dispensationalism was the May 1988 issue of the dispensational magazine, *Moody Monthly*, which was devoted to "Israel at 40: A Nation in Midlife Crisis." It included a highly revealing admission of defeat, Garry Friesing's article, "A Return Visit," a mild but devastating critique of Hal Lindsey's failed prophecy regarding the forty-year generation of the fig tree. In January 1988, I launched a new newsletter, *Dispensationalism in Transition*, with an issue devoted to "1988: Dispensationalism's Year of Crisis." I did not know that in the summer of 1988, one Edgar C. Whisenant would self-publish his "two books in one" predicting the Rapture sometime between September 11 and 13, 1988, nor would I have guessed that it would sell over four million copies and become front-page news. See, for example, "Book on Second Coming attracts attention," *Orlando Sentinel* (Sept. 5, 1988), p. 1. The books were titled *On Borrowed Time* and *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be In 1988*.

125. George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Douglas W. Frank, *Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelical Entered the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986).

126. David Chilton, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators: A Biblical Response to Ronald J. Sider* (4th ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986).

127. Books by Schaeffer and Sider were also popular in English evangelical circles. Intervarsity Press on both sides of the Atlantic published the early Schaeffer books, as well as Sider's.

128. A warning to this effect – utterly ignored, as far as we in Tyler could determine – had been sounded by David A. Rausch and Douglas Chismar, "The New Puritans and Their Theonomic Paradise," *Christian Century* (Aug. 3-10, 1983).



the secular humanist left,<sup>129</sup> the neo-evangelical middle-to-left,<sup>130</sup> and the pietist fundamentalist right.<sup>131</sup> The mid-1980's was a watershed period for the Christian Reconstruction movement because the major Christian intellectual alternatives to Christian Reconstruction had simply disappeared as self-confident, serious intellectual and ethical forces. Only the liberation theologians remain, and they are oblivious to our existence for the moment.<sup>132</sup> The average Christian evangelical in the pew knows nothing about liberation theology, and would be appalled at its socialist economics.<sup>133</sup> He is instinctively conservative, which means the Reconstructionist message can be filtered down to him by way of less controversial sources. The fundamentalists and evangelical will either have to come to Reconstructionist-like conclusions or else fade away socially and politically. In either case, they are unlikely to adopt liberation theology. (Some of their children may, however, if they attend Christian liberal arts colleges and enroll in the social sciences or humanities. God willing, they won't, employment opportunities being what they are. If they do, I hope their parents will be wise enough to require them to read Gary DeMar's *Surviving College Successfully* before leaving home.)<sup>134</sup>

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129. Tom Teepen, "The march toward theocracy," *Atlanta Constitution* (July 3, 1986); Frederick Edwards and Stephen McCabe, "Getting Out God's Vote: Pat Robertson and the Evangelical," *The Humanist* (May/June 1987). The non-profit and government-subsidized Corporation for Public Broadcasting showed Bill Meyers' three-part series on Christianity and politics in December of 1987. The third segment was devoted exclusively to the Christian Reconstruction movement. Fortunately, it was ignored. Most local Public Broadcasting television stations broadcast it during Christmas week, which is not a prime-time market for "intellectual" documentaries.

130. Rodney Clapp, "Democracy As Heresy," *Christianity Today* (Feb. 20, 1987). See Gary North, "Honest Reporting As Heresy: My Response to *Christianity Today*," a position paper released by the Institute for Christian Economics (1987).

131. Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson, "Apocalypse Now?," *Policy Review* (Fall 1986). This magazine is a publication of the secular conservative Heritage Foundation of Washington, D. C.

132. On Christian Reconstruction's alternative to liberation theology, see Gary North, *Liberating Planet Earth: An Introduction to Biblical Blueprints* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987). On liberation theology's infiltration of Roman Catholicism, see Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits: The Society of Jesus and the Betrayal of the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

133. For critiques of liberation theology, see Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster, *Liberation Theology: The Church's Future Shock* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian's Library Press, 1984); Ronald H. Nash (ed.), *Liberation Theology* (Milford, Michigan: Mott Media, 1984); Michael Novak (ed.), *Liberation South, Liberation North* (Washington, D. C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy, 1981); James V. Schall, S.J., *Liberation Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982).

134. Gary DeMar, *Surviving College Successfully: A Complete Manual for the Rigors of Academic Combat* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988).

There is another reason for this digression, however: Christians need to understand that natural law philosophy and the ideal of *permanent* political pluralism <sup>135</sup> are closely linked, and they have and always must lead to a dead end for Christians. The Hebrews of Jeremiah's day were warned by God not to put their trust in polytheistic Egypt in their confrontation with the polytheistic Chaldeans (Jer. 42: 19); neither is there any help against today's "Chaldeans" of Communism, socialism, and sodomism in the pluralism of "Egypt." The halfway house Christianity that is tied to natural law philosophy and permanent political pluralism is just that: halfway. Choose this day whom you will serve: God or Baal, Jesus or Aristotle.

### The Many Sides of Francis Schaeffer's Ministry

Francis Schaeffer's ministry had several sides. One side was evangelical yet personal: he attracted to his chalet the "up and out" children of the upper middle class, especially in the late 1960's, when they wandered aimlessly around Europe in search of adventure, meaning, and purpose. He led many of them to Christ.

Another side was intellectual: he became a self-educated critic of humanism, especially the arts. He taught himself a great deal about many fields, although he did not meet the intellectual standards of tenured neo-evangelical professors who teach all of 9 to 12 hours a week, earn fat salaries, take four months of paid vacation each year, conduct no evangelism programs, counsel no wandering "riff-raff," and have lots of time to read obscure journal articles written by specialists.

He wrote books aimed at literate Christians. He surprised everyone, especially his publisher, InterVarsity Press, when he found that market far larger than anyone had imagined. How he accomplished this is as much a mystery as how the Beatles did what they did or Hal Lindsey did what he did. All of a sudden, there were buyers of rather sophisticated books on Bible-believing Christianity and modern culture, and Schaeffer's reputation as a scholar began to spread. He became a scholar through the back door. This sometimes showed, but it rarely mattered.

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135. I am not, let it be said, arguing that political pluralism cannot be defended as a temporary system during which all sides are mobilizing to capture the system permanently. There is nothing inherently wrong with a temporary cease-fire.

A third side was inspirational: he offered a glimmer of hope to a generation of Christian college students who were being indoctrinated daily by their humanist professors. He showed them that they could remain Christians without sacrificing their intellects. He thereby broke the spell of an influential humanist myth as well as a paralyzing evangelical suspicion, a myth that had prevailed since at least the Scopes trial of 1925.<sup>136</sup> Schaeffer performed an intellectual service for the evangelical world comparable to what Henry Morris and the Creation Science movement performed for fundamentalism: he encouraged Christian laymen by providing footnotes.

The trouble was, he did not always provide all the footnotes. He deliberately concealed from his readers the most theologically radical of his sources, meaning the most Calvinistic.

### Theological Schizophrenia

There was something dark and somewhat mysterious in the thinking of Francis Schaeffer — a kind of ominous foreboding about the movement he had launched. The cultural, political, and above all *covenantal* issues threatened to get out of hand. I think they did get out of hand, just as they did for Jerry Falwell and the now-defunct Moral Majority, as well as for the presently invisible New Christian Right. They were trapped from the beginning by their intellectual schizophrenia, as I wrote in 1982:

I feel sorry for those visible leaders of the New Christian Right who have to face the savage attacks of the humanists, and who also face the moralistic attacks of those former supporters who are remaining true to their anti-covenantal, anti-political presuppositions. The radical independents are upset that men like Falwell and [James] Robison are challenging them with new, unfamiliar responsibilities — responsibilities that are meaningful only within a Christian framework of covenant theology. But neither Falwell nor Robison believes in covenant theology. . . . The Baptists who are influential in the New Christian Right movement are being torn apart, epistemologically speaking. Their political conclusions lead straight into covenantal theocracy, but their Anabaptist presuppositions lead right back into pietism and ultimately into anarchism. Once a man acknowledges that there is no neutrality, he has to confront this crucial intellectual problem. Will it be covenant theology or Anabaptism? Will it be theocracy or anarchism? Or will it be a life of being caught in the middle, with humanists and

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136. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, ch.21.

independents both calling for your scalp, and with covenant theologians standing on the sidelines, watching you get ripped to pieces? <sup>137</sup>

By the time this essay appeared, James Robison, the hard-preaching Baptist evangelist who in 1980 had co-sponsored and hosted the openly political National Affairs Briefing Conference in Dallas, had adopted a radical form of pietism, advocating a near-charismatic view of life. A local charismatic layman had supposedly chased the demons out of his life, as Robison described it in 1981, and Robison was never the same. He became a spokesman for a theology of zero confrontations among Christians. In 1984, Schaeffer died, having lost the support of thousands of his pietist disciples because of *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. By 1985, Falwell had left the visible political scene; in the summer of 1989, he shut down the Moral Majority, his political action organization (which had been all but dead since at least 1984). None of these men ever resolved this theological dilemma. <sup>138</sup>

#### *Returning Halfway to the Covenant*

Schaeffer's criticism of modern humanist culture forced him in principle back to a doctrine he had been taught in seminary: the covenant. But rather than just a Church covenant — the circumscribed topic of seminary classrooms — the biblical covenant is also civil. The concept of God's kingdom on earth threatened Schaeffer's views about both ethics and eschatology, just as it had threatened Van Til's view. Van Til could hide inside the Westminster Seminary library, protesting that culture was not his field, pretending that his refutation of natural law theory had not in principle unleashed the theocratic whirlwind. Because of the nature of Schaeffer's chosen arena of intellectual confrontation, he could not hide from tough cultural questions that could only be answered in one of two ways: either the biblical covenant or the myth of neutrality (natural law or existentialism). He feared the first and publicly denied the second. Then his fear overcame him, and he dejectedly re-adopted the second alternative, in the form of political pluralism. He died without resolving the dilemma.

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137. North, "Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right," *Christianity and Civilization* (1982), pp. 29-30.

138. The classic statement of this theological schizophrenia between "socially relevant Christianity" and "anti-theocratic Christianity" is Charles Colson's book, *Kingdoms in Conflict* (1987), co-published by fundamentalist publisher Zondervan and humanist publisher William Morrow.

In the final analysis, Francis Schaeffer was a defender of halfway house Calvinism. In his popular writings, he never mentioned the fundamental doctrines of the Calvinist faith, such as predestination, irresistible grace, limited atonement, and covenant theology, all of which he had affirmed at the time of his ordination as a Presbyterian minister. (By affirming his commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith, he indirectly affirmed these doctrines.) Remember: in 1976, he wrote a pamphlet on infant baptism, but refused to publish it in his misnamed *Complete Works*. Was this refusal strictly tactical, i.e., a means of keeping his mainly Baptist audience happy? Or was it that he could no longer face the covenantal implications of infant baptism once he had confronted the disturbing covenantal implications of political sovereignty?

Consider other evidence of intellectual schizophrenia in his halfway covenant theological system:

He accepted the Calvinist doctrine of the total depravity of man, yet he believed that Christians could successfully appeal to commonly held truths as a means of evangelism of sinners.

He adopted the language of Van Til's presuppositional apologetics, yet he rejected the key epistemological concept in Van Til's system: the radical and unbridgeable distinction between the covenant-keeper's view of facts and covenant-breaker's view of facts. He then systematically spent his career covering up the fact that he had studied under Van Til and had adopted his terminology.

He gained his initial knowledge of the Christian roots of the United States from Rushdoony's *This Independent Republic*, stole portions of Rushdoony's research in *The One and the Many* almost word for word, stole the words of Chilton and Flinn almost word for word, and then gave the impression (through lack of appropriate footnoting) that he had never heard about Christian Reconstruction.

He recommended the writings of Samuel Rutherford in his defense of the moral right of Christian resistance against unlawful civil government, but he also systematically refused to mention anything about Rutherford's theocratic worldview, which was the theological basis of Rutherford's theory of lawful resistance.

He rejected the myth of neutrality, but then adopted as his recommended political ideal the concept of pluralism, which rests philosophically and judicially on the doctrine of neutrality.

He warned against the moral implications and actual social results of political pluralism; nevertheless, he adopted pluralism's operating presupposition: the rejection of biblical theocracy.

He wrote: "We must not confuse the Kingdom of God with our country. To say it another way: We should not wrap Christianity in our national flag." But because he dared even to mention the inescapable implication of pluralism – moral relativism — he has been posthumously ridiculed by "academic gentlemen" in Christian college classrooms, who insist that he was a "closet theocrat" anyway.

He called Christians to a life of risky confrontation with the State over the abortion question, but as a premillennialist, he believed that all such crusades are in the long run futile culturally.

He attacked the social and political apathy of the modern pietistic evangelical world, which promptly abandoned him because it shared his premillennial, antinomian worldview. The pietists knew enough not to get involved in a losing political battle that Schaeffer's own premillennialism implied was futile. Why get involved in politics anyway? To quote Schaeffer, "There is no New Testament basis for a linking of church and state until Christ, the King returns. The whole 'Constantine mentality' from the fourth century up to our day was a mistake."

Both his son and Dr. Koop apparently understood what this meant, and therefore quit the fight as soon as he was dead. His son produced a violent R-rated movie. Dr. Koop abandoned every public trace of Christian morality to become a pitchman for condoms and a promoter of a national no-smoking campaign (Prohibition revisited).

Although he was a political conservative, his few remaining intellectual disciples have refused to get involved in politically conservative causes, and in fact now appear to be in the camp of the political liberals (e.g., those aligned with England's John R. Stott).

### Conclusion

Such has been the fate of what was originally an implicitly conservative Christian ministry that had adopted an essentially negative, critical approach to culture: the rejection of humanism, the rejection of biblical law, the rejection of the idea of a national covenant, and the rejection of the possibility of building a Christian civilization before the second coming of Christ. Like the amillennialists Van Til and Dooyeweerd, and also like consistent premillennialists everywhere, Schaeffer had nothing positive to affirm concerning the future except the hope of a personal discontinuous escape from history: either death or the second coming of Christ, whichever comes first. For Schaeffer, death came first.

In short, Francis Schaeffer's ministry ran head-on into the hard reality of the old political slogan: "You can't beat something with nothing." In a time of intellectual and social disintegration, which this century surely is, those clinging desperately to the collapsing center cannot be expected to do much more than hold on for dear life. The collapsing center surely cannot pave the way to a better temporal world when it is unable to hold things together. Without hope for the earthly future, Francis Schaeffer could not persuade the bulk of his followers to move off-center, away from pietism: neo-evangelical, Reformed, or fundamentalist. There were only three ways out of pietism when he died: liberation theology, theocracy, and apostasy. Schaeffer rejected all three. He died before the center collapsed. It is unlikely that his spiritual heirs will escape that easily.

Things could have been worse, however. Francis Schaeffer might have been a political liberal. He might even have been a trained historian. If you think Schaeffer sounds confused, or even theologically schizophrenic, wait until you discover the theories of professors Nell, Hatch, and Marsden in Chapter 5.

Finally, Christian historians themselves made a strategic adjustment that both opened a door to their participation in the university world and encouraged more respectful treatment of religion. This adjustment was to abandon — at least while working within university precincts — the tradition of providential historiography stretching back to Constantine's Eusebius. It marked a willingness to consider history writing in the sphere of creation rather than in the sphere of grace, as a manifestation of general rather than special revelation. Put differently, Christian historians in the modern academy have made the implicit confession that history is not theology. This confession means that they construct their accounts of the past from facts ascertained through documentary or material evidence and explained in terms of natural human relationships.

Usually without defining their theoretical commitments explicitly, these historians have hewn to a middle course. They have eschewed providential history; Christian historians assume that a scholar working with the data of historical research cannot know God's mind for past events in the way that the inspired writers of Scripture did, and they assume that the primary purpose of historical writing is not apologetics or evangelism. . . .

With strategic adjustments by Christian historians themselves, the forceful voice of neo-orthodoxy, and the decay of grand secular explanations, the modern academy has made room for serious historical writing compatible with Christian values and useful for Christian purposes. Christians who write this kind of history can still fall between stools. A believer who leaves to theologians the job of assessing human events from the divine perspective can be labeled a traitor within the church. A Christian who refuses to reduce religion to a supposedly more fundamental reality can be scorned as sentimental in the academy. Nonetheless, it is now possible to conduct such historical work in departments of religion at Princeton, Yale, Duke, Chicago, Edinburgh, Oxford, Cambridge, and other major universities of the English-speaking world, and also to function with such a perspective in the history departments of most universities.

Mark A. Nell (1988)"

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\*Nell, "Contemporary Historical Writing: Practice and Presuppositions," *Christianity and History Newsletter* (Feb. 1988), pp. 17-18.



## HALFWAY COVENANT HISTORIOGRAPHY

*What of the place of the Bible, then, as a basis for political action? Should we not bring the nation and its legislation back to the Bible? Here we have to make a careful distinction. Christians' own political decisions should be informed by biblical principles. This is an important point not to miss. Nevertheless, when bringing these decisions to bear on civic debate and legislation we must agree to the rules of the civic game, which under the American constitution are pluralistic. That means that no matter how strongly the Bible or other revelation informs our political views, for the purposes of civic debate and legislation we will not appeal simply to religious authority.*

*Nell, Hatch, & Marsden (1983)'*

Historians Nell, Hatch, and Marsden offer us what they propose as a defense of political pluralism as the theoretical and judicial basis of the American political experiment. They offer this as Christian scholars.<sup>2</sup> They are professors in both senses: collegiate and confessional. What I wish to discuss in this chapter is one question: Are they trustworthy professors?

Their statement regarding the Bible and political action sounds so reasonable. What Christian would reject the idea of becoming informed by "biblical principles"? This does raise some controversial questions: "Which principles? Derived through what source?" Another important question: Are these biblical principles *permanent* principles? If so, then they are laws. Are these men calling for a

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1. Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1983), p. 134.

2. Nell teaches at Wheaton College, Hatch at Notre Dame, and Marsden in 1983 taught at Calvin College. He is now a professor at Duke Divinity School, one of the most radically liberal theology departments in the U.S. It has a great library, however, which I thoroughly enjoyed using free of charge in the late 1970's.

return to Old Testament laws? Have they become theonomists in principle, though not in practice? The term “biblical principles” is like a blank check. Whether it bounces or not depends on how large the account is compared with the amount of the check. As we shall see, both the account and the check are remarkably small. In fact, by the time you finish this chapter, you probably will expect to see their check returned to you, with the grim notation: “insufficient funds.”

Two other bothersome questions may also intrude into the mind of a thoughtful Christian. *First*, the U.S. Constitution permits amendments. This allows for peaceful political continuity.<sup>3</sup> What if a large majority of voters in the United States should someday convert to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and then, over several decades or more, repeatedly amend the Constitution in order to reflect the progressive transformation of the nation into a bottom-up, decentralized, theocratic republic? I am not yet raising the question of the wisdom of such a political act, though of course I would favor it under the historical conditions I have specified. I am merely raising the question of the legality of such a program of Constitutional revision. If it is legal, why not do it? If it is not legal, on what basis is it declared illegal?

There is no doubt, as the authors correctly observe, that the United States is legally a pluralistic nation today. This is not the primary point. The far more important question is: Is today’s political pluralism necessarily a judicially and politically *permanent* condition? Even more to the point: Is it *Constitutionally* permanent? At what point in history may a majority of voters legitimately begin to amend the Constitution to make it conform to “the will of the People,” if those voters have become theonomists? If We, the People” should self-consciously become “We, God’s covenanted people,” what legal or moral principle can the pluralist offer which would prohibit the peaceful, voluntary, and majoritarian abandonment of the doctrine of political pluralism, both in word and in deed?

### The Myth of Neutrality (Again)

So, the U.S. Constitution can be lawfully amended to revoke political pluralism. A *second* question occurs. On the one hand, they

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<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Constitution is divided into five parts. These parts happen to correspond to Ray Sutton’s description of the Bible’s five-point covenant model, although not in the same order. The fifth point of the covenant, continuity, corresponds to the fifth section of the Constitution: the amending process. See Chapter 10.

insist that "At the base of every human culture is a shared set of 'religious' values that help hold the society together."<sup>4</sup> (Why do they place quotation marks around the word religious? They do the same thing repeatedly with the word *Christian*. Why such hesitation adopting these crucial words with the words' full force? Why do they try to soften the power of these words by placing them inside quotation marks?) On the other hand, the authors promise that "for the purposes of civic debate and legislation we will not appeal simply to religious authority." A most intriguing goal! But their promise raises a crucial question: *What authority, pray tell, is not religious?* (Dr. Marsden studied apologetics under Cornelius Van Til at Westminster Seminary. He is aware of Van Til's arguments regarding the impossibility of religious neutrality. At the heart of Van Til's apologetic system is this presupposition: *All authority is at bottom religious*. There is no religious neutrality. I wonder if he has rejected Van Til's conclusions. I believe that he must have. How else could he have signed his name to such a statement?)

Now, if our three professors of history are, as they insist, also professors of Christ, why do they believe that those who deny Christ have a leg (or an epistemology) to stand on? Every knee should bow at the name of Jesus: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10). The verse does not say that every knee *shall* bow at judgment day, but rather that every knee *should* bow today, morally speaking. It is an ethical imperative, not an eschatological prophecy. So is the requirement that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:11).

If our three professors are saying only that we do not need to cite the Bible every time we speak, they are saying nothing special. I can legitimately order a sandwich from a waitress without reminding her that man does not live by bread alone. (By "man" I of course mean mankind, as in "the family of man." I include women in my use of the word here. No need to offend liberal academic sensibilities at this early stage!) But our three professors mean something a bit more substantial. What they are talking about is *common grace*: the ability of non-Christians to understand logical arguments even though they reject the Bible, God, and Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-37,

Of course non-Christians can understand logic, but as Van Til says, they are capable of understanding anything well enough to function in life only because God graciously allows them to think. He restrains them from becoming totally consistent with their own covenant-breaking presuppositions. Should they ever become totally consistent, they could not think at all, Van Til insisted, for they have borrowed (stolen! ) from Christianity every premise that allows them to think clearly.<sup>6</sup>

### *Consistency and Conflict*

The question must then be raised: If covenant-breakers should steadily become more consistent with their religious presuppositions, would they continue to listen to Christians who have adopted the authors' hoped-for common-ground arguments? Or to put it another way, once covenant-breakers more fully see what Jesus Christ really demands from them in history, and they also see what *consistent* Christians should demand from them in civil affairs (e. g., the public execution of convicted abortionists as murderers: Exodus 21:22-23), will they not rush to shut the open door policy of the Constitution? Won't they try to make abortions legal, for example, by means of a Supreme Court interpretation? (Oops, sorry: they already did this.) And if that should be overturned by legislation or a subsequent Court decision, will they try to replace the Constitution (as several humanist groups are now actively seeking to do)?<sup>7</sup>

In short, as covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers become more consistent with their rival and *irreconcilable* religious positions over time, what happens to the reality of pluralism's judicially open door? More to the point, isn't the primary premise of political pluralism the assumption that men will become progressively more self-conscious religiously over time? What if C. S. Lewis (who is cited so favorably by our three authors)<sup>8</sup> is correct in the statement in his novel, *That Hideous Strength*? Lewis wrote: "If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family – anything you like – at a given

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6. "The natural man must not be encouraged to think that he can, in terms of his own adopted principles, find truth in any field. He must rather be told that, when he finds truth, even in the realm of the 'phenomenal: he unwittingly finds it in terms of principles that he has borrowed,' wittingly or unwittingly, from Christianity." Cornelius Van Til, *The Case for Calvinism* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1964), p. 106.

7. Gary North, "Hijacking the Constitution: Phase One," *Remnant Review*, XII (May 24, 1985),

8. Van Til, *Case for Calvinism*, pp. 145-47, 154.

point in its history, you always find that there was a time before that point when there was more elbow room and contrasts weren't quite so sharp; and that there's going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision and choices are even more momentous. Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder."g This was also Van Til's position regarding history, as Dr. Marsden knows. *What becomes of political pluralism in the middle of an escalating religious war?* And what can prevent such a war if Lewis is correct regarding the historical process of "sharpening and hardening" in both the past and the future? <sup>10</sup>

Let me put it bluntly: as *covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers become more consistent in thought and life, pluralism will be shot to pieces in an ideological (and perhaps even literal) crossfire*. Pluralism is a political arrangement based on a temporary religious and ideological cease-fire. When this cease-fire ends, pluralism also ends. So will the appeal of its ideology.

Each time a Christian presses the claims of the gospel on a fallen world, he makes plain the irreconcilable differences. This is true no matter what he does to "soften the punch." Thus, we can expect escalating confrontations as time goes on if Christians preach and live the gospel, until the final assault on the Church at the end of time (Rev. 20:9-10). But in the meantime, who becomes dominant: the covenant-breaker or the covenant-keeper? Our trio of historians believes that covenant-breakers will; I believe that Christians will. This may sound like a peripheral debate over eschatology, but it is at the very center of our conflicting views of American history, as we shall see. Because our authors do not want to provoke unbelievers, they prefer to avoid pressing God's claims on them in the field of civil government. They have reinterpreted colonial American history in order to justify their call for Christians to withdraw from the political arena as people with an explicitly Christian political agenda.

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9. C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 283.

10. That Lewis refused to consider this question publicly is obvious from his muddled defense of political pluralism in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 198-99. I have dealt with this in my book, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), pp. 148-53.

*Life-and-Death Issues*

The liberal, pluralistic viewpoint represented by our three scholars is representative of virtually all modern Christian political theory. They have simply articulated the position better than most — and more cunningly. Their viewpoint, however, is quite common.

This viewpoint cannot be separated from what Van Til calls epistemological self-consciousness. I prefer to call it *ethical* self-consciousness. This self-consciousness will increase. I believe that as time goes on, *life-and-death issues will finally be perceived by the voters as life-and-death issues*. Abortion is one such issue. There is no way to reconcile “pro-choice” murderers and God’s law. This conflict will not go away. It will escalate. It is escalating.<sup>11</sup> There will be other similar conflicts. The social and political fabric will be ripped apart, as surely as Christ said that families will inevitably be ripped apart because of disagreements over who He is (Matt. 10:34-37). No doubt there are pro-family people who resent this disruption. They might be called familistic pluralists. No matter. Their world was destroyed in principle by Christ’s incarnation, ministry, and resurrection. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (v. 37).

So also the world of political pluralism. He who loves the U.S. Constitution more than he loves Jesus Christ is not worthy of Jesus Christ. (He who loves academic respectability more than he loves Jesus Christ is equally unworthy. But what a pathetic mess of pottage to sell one’s birthright for!)

## The Word of God (Emeritus)

The Christian who claims to believe the whole Bible faces a very difficult problem if he is a political liberal, or even a political moderate. The Old Testament is neither politically liberal nor politically moderate. Would you conclude that the legislative enactment of the case laws of the Bible will soon be part of the political platform of any known liberal political party? Not “the reasonable” case laws, but all of them, taken as a package, unless one of them has been annulled by the New Testament? This question requires no heavily footnoted answer. Even the conservative parties would not touch the

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11. Randall A. Terry, *Operation Rescue* (Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1988); cf. Gary North, *When Justice Is Aborted: Biblical Standards for Non-Violent Resistance* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1989).

case laws. The case laws are too radical religiously, too biblically theocratic. The present Western theocracies of autonomous man will not tolerate such opposition.

This poses a problem for the vast majority of academically employed Christians. Their academic peers are liberals. Or Marxists. So, they are in no position to defend publicly, let alone promote, the legislative enactment of Old Testament law. Nevertheless, they claim to be Christians. There is only one acceptable tactic: to deny that the case laws are binding in New Testament times. (They share this viewpoint with 99.9 percent of all covenant-breakers, excluding only a few cults. ) But without the case laws, there is no way to distinguish Christian legislation from non-Christian legislation. Christians in academic positions understand this, so they conclude that there can be no legitimate Christian civil legislation. Then they set out to prove it. Any other conclusion would be regarded by their present employers as an unacceptable narrowing of the Christian worldview, and it would also lead rapidly to a drastic narrowing of their career opportunities.

It is the contention of theonomists that the Old Testament is not "the Word of God (emeritus)." We take its laws seriously. This is why we are "persona non grata" in every Christian college faculty in the land. Our three authors do not make explicit their theological objections to theonomy. They ignore theology as such. Instead, they put on the protective clothing of professional academic specialization. They have written a lengthy tract against Old Testament law and have disguised it as a survey of American political history.

### *Humanism? Arrogant Humility*

They make a series of assertions regarding the American past. They understand that people who take the whole Bible seriously tend to be political conservatives. They themselves are not political conservatives. They must reject the notions that 1) they themselves are not Christians and 2) they themselves are not consistent Christians. To do this, they must assert the only logical alternative, namely, that *the New Testament is inherently ambiguous — politically, economically, and in every other way.* This is exactly what our trio of historians announce regarding politics, but only toward the end of their book. They are representative of the whole neo-evangelical academic world. "The Bible is not a political handbook." <sup>12</sup> (What stick man

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12. *The Search*, p. 137.

ever said that it is? The crucial question that our authors do not want to consider is this: Does the Bible establish moral and judicial *first principles* that lead inevitably, over time, to certain kinds of political institutional arrangements when these principles are observed by Christians? For example, do these principles lead to the creation of a decentralized republic rather than a one-party unitary State?) They continue: “This political side of Christians’ action – whether on the political right, left, or middle – should be marked by humility. We should not too readily claim the authority of God for a political or economic program by saying that ours is the ‘Christian’ position.”<sup>13</sup> Note the academic hedge words, “not too readily.” Maybe there is a “Christian position” after all! If one utterly denies this possibility, one then appears as a moral relativist. Then again, maybe there really is no Christian position. One does not want to appear dogmatic. Dilemmas, dilemmas. The safe thing to do is to adopt loophole phrases, such as “not too readily.” (Such phrases are used by academic people far too readily.)

The authors point to the fact that “the most common use of the Bible in politics has been to justify one’s own self-interests.”<sup>14</sup> True enough; but what if one’s own self-interests happen to be biblical? After all, isn’t the whole purpose of personal regeneration and progressive moral sanctification to conform oneself *and one’s institutions* to Christ? Furthermore – and this is where things get sticky for anti-nomians and political pluralists — isn’t biblical law the standard by which Christians are supposed to examine our personal *and institutional* moral progress? Isn’t biblical law the permanent standard that God applies to us, both in history and at the final judgment? The authors do not raise this question. They should.

We theonomists keep asking: *If not biblical law, then what?* By what other standard?

Our authors continue, adding hyperbole – and perhaps even just a bit of sarcasm. (But, hey, who am I to object to a little sarcasm?) “Because we are not immune from this human frailty and because we are imperfect in understanding both the Bible and the dynamics of modern politics, we should think at least twice before claiming to speak with the authority of a Hebrew prophet.”<sup>15</sup> Again, notice the

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13. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

14. *Idem.*

15. *Idem.*



hyperbole. Who claims to speak today with the authority of a Hebrew prophet? Only an occasional cultist or madman. But are Christians morally required to remain as silent as Michael Novak's "transcendent" in the face of escalating political problems? <sup>16</sup> If so, why? If we as citizens have the legal right to speak out politically, then in whose name do we speak? Or do we speak neutrally, simply in the name of ourselves as nothing more than a unique segment of the Great God Humanity? Wouldn't their rhetorical flourish against drawing political conclusions "with the authority of a Hebrew prophet" apply just as easily to theological conclusions made by a Christian Church? Don't those church officers who affirm *and enforce* creeds, and who conduct public excommunications, speak in a similar fashion? Humanists who ridicule all churches argue just exactly that.

### *Thoughtful Covenantalism*

I ask Professor Marsden, a Calvinist Presbyterian: *What about the Westminster Confession of Faith?* Didn't the Westminster attendees "think twice"? Didn't four or five years of intense public debate, 1643-47, constitute a sufficient period of thoughtfulness? Why would the addition of the adjective "political" lessen the logic of the accusation? How do our three scholars expect to be able to toss the rhetorical acid of relativism in the faces of the Puritans as political theorists and not expect to scar them also as theologians? They affirmed the covenant in civil government; <sup>17</sup> they also affirmed it in Church government. If they were incorrect regarding the former, then why not also the latter?

My economic commentary on Exodus 21-23, *Tools of Dominion*, is over 1,200 pages long. I have thought about this more than twice. I have thought continually about this for over a quarter of a century. I have concluded that the Bible is not all that ambiguous morally or judicially. The Bible is sufficiently clear to earn it the hostility of generations of humanistic political liberals. The accusation of its am-

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16. Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Touchstone, [1982] 1983). See my Introduction, above.

17. Perry Miller writes: "Nevertheless, we do know that well before the Civil War began in England [1640's], Parliamentarians – and these included virtually all Puritans – had asserted that societies are founded upon the covenant; that the forms of a particular society, even though dictated by utilitarian factors, are of divine operation; that rulers who violate the agreed-upon forms are usurpers and so to be *legitimately* resisted." Perry Miller, *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 98.

biguity is simply a defensive reaction by men who are politically liberal but who still seek to maintain allegiance to the Bible. *Ambiguity* is a kind of hiding place in the shadows for political liberal Christians caught in a crossfire between secularists and conservative Christians. *Ambiguity* allows them to escape the limitations imposed by the biblical civil covenant.

Our authors are quite clear about their commitment to non-covenantal Christian politics: "We should have Christian approaches to politics, recognizing that there will be a variety of these, but we should not expect to produce 'the Christian political program.'" <sup>18</sup> (I cannot resist citing the punch line of the old Lone Ranger and Tonto joke: "What you mean we, paleface?") Three centuries from now, or three continents away, this phrase will baffle some weary graduate student. ) They apparently view Christian ethics as if it were a microcosm of pluralism's morally ambiguous world. Christians disagree with other religious groups, and they also disagree with each other. (Theonomists, being masters of disagreement, are hardly in a position to disagree with our trio. ) But what if Lewis is correct? "Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder." If so, then the areas of disagreement within each camp will narrow. The inescapable conflict in every area of life between rival camps will become clearer. Then what happens to pluralism?

They at last come to the heart of the matter: "Finally, this whole question comes back to what kind of book the Bible is in relation to modern politics, Specifically, which do we emphasize more, the parts of the Old Testament which focus on national Israel, or the themes in both Old and New Testaments which speak to all people?" <sup>19</sup> Notice the imposed dichotomy: *national Israel* (read: special revelation, now judicially obsolete) and all *people* (read: natural law or common-ground reasoning, forever and ever, amen).

#### The Dilemma of H. Richard Niebuhr

The thinking of Nell, Hatch, and Marsden is intimately bound up in a vision of what constitutes Protestantism, as we shall see. What I argue in this chapter is that their conception of Protestantism

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18. *The Search*, p. 139

19. *Idem*.

is essentially that of the liberal humanist, H. Richard Niebuhr, the brother of Reinhold. Reinhold was a political activist, a "realist," a pursuer of the Kantian *phenomenal* realm.<sup>20</sup> His brother was a pietist, a pursuer of the Kantian *noumenal* realm. They made quite a theological team. Neither of them was a Trinitarian Christian.

H. Richard Niebuhr set forth a principle of interpretation which is fundamental to *The Search for Christian America*. He argued in 1937 that Protestantism faces an acute dilemma. Then he took the Kantian dilemma and baptized it. (This is what Karl Barth had begun doing two decades earlier.)

The dilemma of Protestantism lay rather in these factors: it had no will to power and in view of its positive principle could have none, for supreme power belonged only to God and evil resulted from every human arrogation of his dominion; it had no definite idea of the end toward which it was traveling and could have none, since the future lay with the free God; and it could not be ruthless since it had the inhibiting commandments of the gospel ever before it. As a theory of *divine* construction the Protestant movement was hard put to it to provide principles for human construction. Yet it was unable to be supine, awaiting in patience what God might do, since it was evident that men lived in a crisis and that they could not stand still but were hastening either to destruction or to life. It was necessary to press into the kingdom.<sup>21</sup>

Good relativist that he was, Niebuhr then pointed out to his readers what he found in himself "The Protestant saw how relative were the judgments about good and evil, about right and wrong, and how much the moral commandments of society were conditioned by the interests of the powerful."<sup>22</sup> Does this description sound to you like Martin Luther? No? Well, then, does it sound like John Calvin? No? How about John Knox? No? Well, then, who does it sound like? I think it sounds like a skeptical liberal theologian whose far more famous older brother was all too confident about

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20. Donald B. Meyer, *The Protestant Search for Political Realism, 1919-1941* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, [1960] 1973); Ronald H. Stone, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet to Politician* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1981); Ernest F. Dibble, *Young Prophet Niebuhr: Reinhold Niebuhr's Search for Social Justice* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1978); D. R. Davies, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet from America* (Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania: Ayer, 1945).

21. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, [1937] 1959), p. 30.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

everything political, and who had even run for Congress on the Socialist Party ticket seven years earlier. 23

The Protestant principle, he said, suffered from a major defect. "There was no precision in it; it offered no standard whereby men could make choices between relative goods and relative evils; it gave them no scale of values whereby their interests could be harmonized and the higher be made to control the lower. The Catholic critic seemed unanswerable when he said that Protestantism led to moral anarchy.<sup>24</sup> And then he drove home his point: "What was true of the moral sphere was perhaps even more true of the political and economic."<sup>25</sup>

The reader is warned in advance: here is the heart, mind, and soul of modern defenses by self-professed Christians of political pluralism and the Keynesian mixed economy. This is the mind-set of the academic Christian today. The Bible, they insist, provides no blueprints, no moral absolutes that can be translated into historic creeds and political platforms. It is this assumption which leaves them no choice but to reject the judicial and social worldview of the Puritans in the name of modernity. They are Protestants, they tell us, and they are indeed caught in a dilemma: Kant's dilemma.

What about the Bible? Doesn't it provide blueprints? The early New England Puritans believed it does, as Niebuhr shows. But it was a false hope, he insisted. "The equation of the Scriptures with the revealed will of God led to virtual denial of the living reality of God."<sup>26</sup> Here it is again: the Kantian dilemma. To the extent that the Kantian god is said to be revealed in a phenomenal form, the Bible and creeds derived from it, to that extent does he retreat ever-deeper into the noumenal shadows. What we need is mystical union with God, not a rule book: ". . . the Scriptures taught the immediate activity of God through his Holy Spirit and criticized severely the worship of the letter."<sup>27</sup> The deeply antinomian impulse of Niebuhr's outlook is obvious.

A good summary of Niebuhr's thought is found in the *Dictionary of American Religious Biography*, What he wanted was what Barth wanted: confession *without content*. "His critical orthodoxy was a form

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23. "Niebuhr, Karl Paul Reinhold," in *Dictionary of American Religious Biography*, edited by Henry Warner Bowden (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1977), p. 333.

24. Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God*, p. 32.

25. *Idem.*

26. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

27. *Idem.*

of confessionalism, but it avoided both self-defensive apologetics and any conflation of expression with content. Confessional forms of religious thought were points of view, not absolutes, and they did not attribute ultimacy to symbols themselves instead of to the God who is viewed in faith. From this perspective it made sense to discuss the historical dynamics of belief acquired through evolutionary, revolutionary processes, more so than to contemplate doctrines expressed as conceptual packages outside an encounter with real events."<sup>28</sup> In other words, "He is God, and He is Not Silent; You just Can't Pin Him Down on Anything Specific."

Understand: Nell, Hatch, and Marsden are Niebuhr's devoted sociological disciples, as we shall see.

### Assuming What You Intend to Prove

In 1982, Dr. Marsden contributed an essay to a *festschrift* for his Church history professor at seminary, Paul Woolley.<sup>29</sup> The title of the essay tells all: "America's 'Christian' Origins: Puritan New England as a Case Study." Notice the familiar quotation marks around the word *Christian*. It gives away the game. He began the essay with this observation: "One of the opinions most persistently and widely held in the American evangelical community and in many conservative Reformed circles is that America had essentially Christian origins from which lamentably it turned in the twentieth century."<sup>30</sup> Then he goes on: "Yet if it were shown that the Puritans who settled America did not establish truly Christian dominant cultural principles that were in some important ways perpetuated, then a strong suspicion might be raised that the entire case for a now-lost Christian America rests on rather nebulous foundations."<sup>31</sup> *If this can be shown*, then he is correct: the entire case for a Christian America would indeed rest on nebulous foundations. But his attempt to show this supposed failure of the Puritans falls flat.

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28. *Dictionary*, p. 331.

29. I also took one course under Woolley. He had a remarkable memory and a commitment to political liberalism. I reviewed his book, *The Significance of J. Gresham Machen (1977)* in *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, IV (Winter, 1977-78), which I found to be a good deal less than scholarly.

30. Marsden, "America's 'Christian' Origins: Puritan New England as a Case Study," in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, edited by W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1982), p. 241.

31. *Idem*.

Notice the weasel word, “truly.” It gives him a great deal of latitude to dance the professional historian’s jig. So does the phrase, “some important ways .” Then he refers to the “ambiguous character of much of the Puritan cultural achievement and influence .”<sup>32</sup> What is in fact ambiguous is Dr. Marsden’s reconstruction. He admits, to his credit, that “This thesis in turn is based on a more theoretical argument questioning whether there are likely to be found any actual historical examples of truly Christian cultures.”<sup>33</sup> Notice where this is headed. If *in theory* it is unlikely that there can be any historical examples of truly Christian cultures — the heart, mind, and soul of “Marsdenism” and neo-evangelical historiography generally — then of course the Puritans did not achieve a truly Christian society.

#### *The Puritan Experiment*

He admits that they had a “relatively free hand” in building their society. They represent “an uncommonly ideal ‘laboratory’ in which to analyze the possibilities and pitfalls of a truly Christian culture .”<sup>34</sup> He also admits that “Puritan conceptions long remained major influences in America.”<sup>35</sup> He cites Church historian Sydney Ahlstrom’s recognition of the “dominance of Puritanism in the American religious heritage.”<sup>36</sup> But, asks Marsden, did they provide “a truly Christian basis for American culture?” Then he discusses the difficulties in defining *Puritan* and *Christian*. This is the historian’s ambiguities game, a tactic developed early in his training, a skill especially useful when presenting a “new, improved” interpretation of something. He lists several signs of a truly Christian culture: peace, charity to the poor, and morality. “Cultural activities such as learning, business, or the subduing of nature would be pursued basically in accord with God’s will.”<sup>37</sup> Notice here the phrase “God’s will.” Notice the absence of another phrase, “God’s Bible-revealed law.” This is not a mistake on Dr. Marsden’s part; this, too, is basic to all of modern neo-evangelical social concern. It refuses categorically to appeal directly to Old Testament law as the basis for discovering God’s will. This would be “legalistic.” More to the point, an appeal to

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32. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

33. *Idem.*

34. *Idem.*

35. *Idem.*

36. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

the Old Testament inhibits one from baptizing some social reform program that was discarded by the liberals as unworkable ten years ago.

The Puritans were Calvinists, he says. They believed in the sovereignty of God.<sup>38</sup> They were moral people.<sup>39</sup> In forming a civil government, Governor John Winthrop appealed back to the Old Testament idea of covenant, with its doctrine of God's historical sanctions against nations.<sup>40</sup> And here is the problem — for Marsden, not for Winthrop: "Winthrop accordingly assumed that he could transfer the principles of nationhood found in ancient Israel to the Massachusetts Bay Company with no need for explanation."<sup>41</sup> Here is the sharp object that sticks in Marsden's throat. He cannot swallow this. *If he did, he would have to equate Christian civil government with theocracy.* He coughs hard and spits it out. He cites Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity" speech given on board the *Arbella* in 1630.

Here, before the main body of Puritans ever set foot on American shores, is compressed in Winthrop's thought the paradoxical character of almost the entire Puritan enterprise. They believed their vision for the transformation of human culture was grounded solely on the best principles drawn from Scripture. Yet their historical experience — a tradition of over a thousand years of living in "Christendom," a concept that classical Protestantism did not dispel — led them to interpret Scripture in an ultimately pretentious way that gave their own state and society the exalted status of a new Israel.<sup>42</sup>

Here is the reason why the critics of Christian Reconstruction regard us as pretentious. It is because any attempt to designate any culture as Christian is regarded as pretentious, if this designation is in any way tied to Old Testament law and the covenant sanctions of that law-order. Thus, says Marsden, the Puritan theory of its new Israel status produced "dubious practical consequences." Such as? Such as: "Old Testament law was directly if not exclusively incorporated into the legal systems of New England."<sup>43</sup> He then cites the dozen capital crimes listed in the Body of Liberties (1641). "Such laws were not all without precedent in English Common Law and elsewhere, yet here the Old Testament texts were copied directly into the

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38. *Idem.*

39. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 245-46.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

43. *Idem.*

New England law books.”<sup>44</sup> I mean, Old Testament laws right there in their law code! Just think of it!

This just about settles it, in Marsden's eyes. New England Puritans were clearly not engaged in building a “truly Christian” society, since they appealed directly to the Bible in order to establish their civil laws. They assumed that they were the New Israel, and their law code testified to this assumption. But just to make sure we get the picture, he reminds us of their harsh treatment of the American Natives. (Oops, sorry: Native Americans. Capitalized.) “Nowhere do the dangers of this assumption become more clear than in the Puritans' treatment of the Native Americans.”<sup>45</sup> Puritans stole the Indians' land, he says. And then he gets to the point:

They regarded themselves as the new political Israel; but it was a case of mistaken identity. The result was worse than if they had made no attempt to find a Christian basis for politics. <sup>46</sup>

Here it is, in black and white. Better not to seek becoming a Christian society than to put biblical law into your society's civil law code. Better to live in a humanist, pluralistic society than to seek to establish a theocracy. Better to sit under the humanists' table and eat the scraps that fall from it, even though the humanists will have taxed you heavily to put food on their table. In short, better pluralism's civil covenant than God's. *This is the presuppositional basis of our trio's rejection of the idea that America was ever a Christian nation.*

#### *The Appeal to Roger Williams*

To whom does he then appeal as the “truly Christian” political philosopher of that generation? Roger Williams, the spiritual father of the Baptists. “Williams too may be counted among those Calvinists who contributed to the American heritage, though among Calvinists themselves he represented a minority position. In his view of the Church, Williams in a sense was more a puritan than the Puritans.” In what sense? In the sense that Calvin College is today “more Calvinist” than Harvard College was in 1640. That is, it is more like Wheaton College. “Thus perhaps we ought to credit Williams as the best exemplar of the truly positive Calvinist influence in American

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44. *Idem.*

45. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

46. *Idem.*



culture.<sup>47</sup> This is the equivalent of identifying William Jennings Bryan as the best exemplar of Grover Cleveland's truly positive Presbyterian influence in American politics, or Woodrow Wilson as the best exemplar of Bryan's positive Presbyterian influence in American politics. 48 That is to say, the idea is preposterous. Any similarity between the Massachusetts Bay Colony or Connecticut and Rhode Island is limited to geography."

Although Dr. Marsden, a former student in Dr. Van Til's classes, somehow failed to mention this, *he has taken his readers back to natural law*. Williams defended his anti-Massachusetts errand in the Rhode Island wilderness by an appeal to natural law theory.<sup>49</sup> Like the dog returning to its vomit (II Pet. 2:22), those who adopt Van Til's presuppositional apologetics without also adopting the theonomists' view of biblical law in civil society eventually are tempted to return to Thomas Aquinas in the name of John Calvin and/or Abraham Kuyper. It is clear that Dr. Marsden is Mr. Woolley's disciple, far more than Dr. Van Til's.

Having labeled the Puritan experiment as "paradoxical," ending in a 'maze of paradoxes," he then labels their legacy one of "uneven foundations."<sup>50</sup> He says that they really did hold to the view of biblical law that Rushdoony says that they did: ". . . the law is a silent magistrate, and the magistrate a speaking law."<sup>51</sup> This was a higher law concept. Then he goes on to claim John Locke as part of "the next generation." John Locke? He has jumped across 3,000 miles of ocean and two revolutions — the Puritan Revolution (1638-60) and the Glorious Revolution (1688) — in order to reach Locke. Are we being told that Locke's natural law concept of society was part of "the next generation" of *Puritans*? Marsden is too clever to say this, but his move from the New England Puritans to Locke takes place within a single paragraph. From there — the same paragraph, mind you — we move back across the ocean and forward another eight and a half decades to 1776 and . . . Thomas Paine! They all held a similar view of the "higher law."

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47. *Idem*.

48. Cleveland was a pro-gold standard, veto-wielding defender of limited government; Bryan was basically a Baptist who believed vaguely in infant baptism, and whose politics was anti-gold standard, Populist, and radical; Wilson was a secular humanist who believed in rule by the educated elite.

49. See below: "Roger Williams: Hero of the Pluralists," pp. 245-54.

50. *The Search*, p. 249,

51. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

This is indeed paradoxical.

He then refers to the English Whigs, John Adams, and eighteenth-century political thought in general. He correctly observes that Puritan political ideas became mixed with Whiggery in the eighteenth century. But what he does not do is tell us how this mixture took place. It took place because of the resurgence of Stoic natural law theory dressed in scientific Newtonian garb, transmitted through "Unitarian" Masonry.<sup>52</sup> He then tells us that this compromise is the basis of his rejection of the idea of Christian America. They had all abandoned a Christian social outlook and had become political pluralists.

I cannot resist asking: *Does this mean that the natural law-dependent, anti- Old Testament law perspective of modern neo-evangelicalism also makes it impossible to speak of "truly" Christian scholarship?* Does their comparable and analogous compromise equally negate their Christian foundations? Dr. Marsden and his colleagues really ought to respond to these questions. What is sauce for the colonial goose is also sauce for the neo-evangelical gander.

Marsden admits that during the Revolution, preachers identified the Revolutionary cause with the new Israel. This was a survival of Puritanism. Again, he says that this is a black mark on the churches, a visible demonstration of "Christian ideological imperialism."<sup>53</sup> Yet he still refuses to discuss the possibility that the existence of this "Christian imperialism" proves the case that this nation was originally founded on Christianity.

*Ambiguity: The Ethical Foundation of Pluralism*

How does he end his essay? Of course: with a discussion of the conclusion with which he began his research: "Why There Are No Christian Cultures." The results of any attempt to Christianize culture are inescapably . . . *ambiguous*.<sup>54</sup> All that Christians can expect to be able to do is act as a "retardant" against sin in society.<sup>55</sup> All Christianity has provided America with is a "general moral influence in helping to create a law-abiding citizenry with a strong conscience."<sup>56</sup> American historical roots might just as well have been Confucian.

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52. See Part 3, below.

53. *The Search*, p. 253.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

55. *Idem.*

56. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

What he is saying is simple: *There can never be an authentically Christian reconstruction of any society this side of God's final judgment.* This is his theological starting point, but it is carefully disguised as an historical conclusion.

There is an even more fundamental conclusion lurking in the shadows: *let Christians rest content with political pluralism; it is the best we can hope for in history.* This is the presupposition our trio begins with as their operating assumption. Their other conclusions follow.

Van Til is correct: finite man must reason in circles, either vicious circles or covenantal circles. What man assumes determines what he concludes. It would save us all a lot of time and trouble if scholars admitted this in their prefaces or introductions. Readers would know in advance where a book is headed.

### Proving What You Have Already Assumed

Marsden's 1982 essay set forth the basic themes of *The Search for Christian America*. As I said before, this book is an ideologically motivated tract in favor of political pluralism, but is presented as a work of historical scholarship. The authors of *The Search for Christian America* claim that they did not find Christian America. Since they very clearly embarked on their academic journey in order to avoid finding it, this is not surprising. They of course do not tell the reader that the absence in history of a Christian America was their intellectual starting-point. On the contrary, they insist that it was "a study of the facts" that led them to this conclusion. "We feel that a careful study of the facts of history shows that early America does not deserve to be considered uniquely, distinctly or even predominantly Christian, if we mean by the word 'Christian' a state of society reflecting the ideals presented in Scripture. There is no lost golden age to which American Christians may return."<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, "the idea of a 'Christian nation' is a very ambiguous concept . . . ."<sup>58</sup> (Lost Golden Age? This is part of pagan man's theory of cyclical history, the myth of the eternal return. The Church was in a revolt against such a view of history from the beginning, culminating with Augustine's *City of God*.<sup>59</sup> Why do they keep using this utterly misleading rhetoric in a

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57. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

58. *Idem.*

59. Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study in Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1944] 1957).

supposedly scholarly historical study? Yes, yes, I know; you don't have to tell me: for rhetorical purposes.)

As we read the book, we find that if we used the same criteria which they employ to define and identify a Christian nation in history to define a church, family, or individual, we would just as surely find that "early [whatever] does not deserve to be considered uniquely, distinctly or even predominantly Christian, if we mean by the word 'Christian' a state of [whatever] reflecting the ideals presented in Scripture." This is because "the idea of '[Christian whatever]' is a very ambiguous concept."

*New England as a Test Case*<sup>60</sup>

They fully understand, as Marsden did in his essay, that if they are to maintain their thesis successfully, the hardest historical nut for them to crack is Puritan New England. It was self-consciously Calvinistic. It self-consciously proclaimed the three biblical covenants: Church, family, and above all (for the authors' thesis) civil. Indeed, although the authors do not refer to it, the civil covenant known as the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639) is generally recognized by scholars as the very first written constitution to launch a new political unit in history.<sup>61</sup>

They do discuss the Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641, in which every Old Testament capital crime except sabbath-breaking<sup>62</sup> was brought under the civil sanction of execution. Predictably, they are hostile to such a covenant document. They begin their discussion of the Body of Liberties with this dubious statement: "But these positive accomplishments were offset by more dubious practical consequences. Old Testament law was directly if not exclusively incorporated into the legal systems of New England."<sup>63</sup> (The word *dubious* is Marsden's; we find it in the 1982 essay.) In other words, these Christian professors of American history are morally disturbed by

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60. The authors' subhead (p. 31).'

61. McLaughlin writes: "But we cannot pass over unnoticed the organization of the river towns of Connecticut, where, it has been said, was formed the first written constitution in history." Andrew C. McLaughlin, *The Foundations of American Constitutionalism* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett, [1932] 1961), p. 35.

62. As in the case of all churches in history, they implicitly recognized a shift from the Old Testament's sanction to something different in the New Testament era. On this shift, see Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), ch. 4, Appendix A.

63. *The Search*, p. 35.

the obvious historical fact which refutes their thesis: the presence of biblical case laws and their sanctions in the written civil covenant of Puritan Massachusetts. In short, the best single piece of evidence that New England was self-consciously, covenantally Christian becomes, in their pluralist hands, evidence that it was *not* Christian. Because New England looked back to Old Testament Israel as their judicial model, New England was being untrue to Christ.

### *A New Israel*

In the section “A New Israel,” the authors cite the presence of biblical case laws as a major problem — not for their thesis, but rather for New England’s claim to be Christian. “The central problem, however, immediately presented itself when Winthrop, the civil governor, attempted to apply the summary of the law to the entire society of Massachusetts Bay. While he made the distinction between justice, which should be expected in any society, and mercy, to be found in Christian associations, he clearly considered the entire Massachusetts society as such to be essentially Christian.”<sup>64</sup> Notice carefully the direction in which their argument is headed. “Most ironically, probably the principal factor turning the Puritan cultural achievement into a highly ambiguous one was the very concept that is the central theme of this chapter — the idea that one can create a truly Christian culture .”<sup>65</sup> In short, because Winthrop regarded Massachusetts Bay as a Christian culture, we know that it could not possibly have been a “truly” Christian culture.

Truly, theirs is a strange argument. Think about it. Does it sound strange to you? They are arguing that precisely because the New England Puritans sought the establishment of a self-consciously biblical civil government, it could not therefore have been *truly* Christian. If you think this sounds weird, then you have already concluded that it must not be inherently anti-Christian (or “not ‘truly’ Christian”) for a society to pursue the establishment of a Bible-based covenant which embraces the fundamental principle of biblical law, including Old Testament law. You may not approve of this as the only possible Christian approach to politics, but you understand that it is not inherently anti-Christian, i. e., a society which establishes such a covenant cannot therefore be dismissed automatically as not

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64. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

“truly” Christian. But our three authors do not think this way. They are so thoroughly committed to the ideology of political pluralism that they have written a book denying the claim of being Christian to the New England Puritans’ civil covenant. They really do believe that the Puritans’ rejection of political pluralism is a sufficient cause to remove from their civil order the adjective “Christian.” They seriously propose what has become known as a Catch-22 dilemma.<sup>66</sup> If you say your civil government is Christian, it cannot be, but if you set it up so that it isn’t Christian, it may be Christian, if it really and truly isn’t. (It sounds as though Marsden wrote this section of the book.)

Winthrop cited Deuteronomy 30 in his “Model of Christian Charity” speech on board the good ship *Arbella* as the little band of Puritans sailed toward New England in 1630. He stated that they were “entered into Covenant with him for the worke. . . .” He cited the presence of God’s sanctions, blessings and cursings, which are dependent on God’s covenant law. This is what so outrages our trio: “. . . to interpret Scripture in an ultimately pretentious way that gave their own state the exalted status of a New Israel.”<sup>67</sup> This supposedly was the great sin of New England: *pride*. “Behind all the practical confusion of church and state was the overriding presumption that New England was the New Israel.”<sup>68</sup> If you trace your political ethics back to the Old Testament, and if you view your political institutions as modeled after the Old Testament’s civil covenant, then you are obviously prideful. Hence, your political vision is not truly Christian. (Corollary: to be a consistent Christian is necessarily to be a political pluralist, and therefore a political antinomian. This is precisely what they believe, as they tell us at the end of their book. But not up front.)

Let us be clear about all this. New England Puritans wanted to serve as the city on the hill for the rest of the world (Matt. 5:14). The authors know this, and refer to it.<sup>69</sup> This Puritan goal was evangelical in the same sense as Deuteronomy y 4: to allow fallen Europe to see the blessings of God in history. Puritans did not claim to be an

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<sup>66</sup> The phrase comes from the title of a novel by Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1961). The novel pictured a soldier’s dilemma. Anyone who said he wanted to get out of the U.S. Army in World War II could not be dismissed because of insanity; he was obviously sane. A person who said he wanted to stay in the Army was clearly crazy and would be given a discharge. This was Catch-22 of the regulations.

<sup>67</sup> *The Search*, p. 35.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

exclusive New Israel in history. On the contrary, they saw New England as the latest in a long series of national conversions. But the authors do not explain this. They make it appear as though the Puritans were somehow radically nationalistic. The authors feel compelled to stop such an "Israelite" idea from spreading abroad. In effect, these scholars are involved in a job of putting the Puritans' light under a bushel (Matt. 5:15). They are not the first scholars to do so.

### Roger Williams: Hero of the Pluralists

This insistence that Israel must be regarded as historically unique, and in no way should be regarded as a legitimate covenantal model for New Testament civil governments, was basic to Roger Williams' denial of the civil order of Massachusetts Bay. He sent a long letter (now missing) to Governor Winthrop in 1637, the year following his flight to the wilderness of Rhode Island, in which he insisted on "the differences between Israel and all other states."<sup>70</sup> (He was careful always to issue his blasts against hierarchical authority only after he had removed himself from the jurisdiction of his intended targets, a remarkably common practice of separatists down through the ages. They hate hierarchical authority, but they recognize it.)

Williams' spiritual heirs today control the institutions of Christian higher learning. It is not surprising that Williams has for centuries been the darling of the anti-Christian humanists who reject the Bible's explicit theocracy in their quest to establish autonomous man's implicit theocracy. What may be initially surprising is that he has had so many allies in the Christian camp. Why should this be? Why should he have supporters in both camps? Because there is now, and always has been, an *operating political and philosophical alliance between the escape religion of Christian pietism and the power religion of humanism*, the same sort of alliance that operated between Israel's elders in Egypt and the tyrannical Pharaoh. It is based on the supposedly shared principles of civic morality (for example, the common rejection of execution as the appropriate civil sanction against first-degree murder).

The pietists, as always, warn the theocratic dominionists: "The LORD look upon you, and judge; because you have made our saviour

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70, Cited by Perry Miller, *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (New York: Atheneum, [1953] 1965), p. 42.

to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us" (Ex. 5:21). They court Pharaoh's blessings, and they fear his taskmasters. And so they invent a political philosophy suitable in the eyes of the taskmasters: natural law. The taskmasters then use it to keep the slaves orderly, until the restraints of natural law grow too restrictive, whereupon the taskmasters abandon any pretence of adhering to natural law, and they return to the pure version of the power religion. (In the 'West, this took place in the generation after Darwin's natural selection philosophy elevated "man, the planner" into power, while simultaneously destroying any remaining traces of humanist philosophical support for natural law theory. )71

For many years, naive Christian pietists have chosen to go along with this self-deception, still dreaming of a pluralistic republic based on common neutral principles of civic morality. They "go along to get along," to cite the late Speaker of the House, 'Mr. Sam" Rayburn. The humanists' version of common morality has become dominant in the Christian camp. Where Christian pietists once joined humanists in a common rejection of murder, they become willing to accept, however belatedly, the taskmasters' position on abortion, *all for the sake of the fading pluralist alliance*. The Christians sell their birthright for a mess of suffrage.

#### *Parrington's Political Interpretation*

The radical humanist literary historian Vernon L. Barrington was utterly hostile to the Puritans and a great fan of Williams. His intellectual influence was dominant in the field of Puritan studies until Perry Miller, another specialist in American literature, arrived on the scene in the early 1930's. Barrington rhapsodized about Williams: "A child of light, he came bringing not peace but the sword. A humane and liberal spirit, he was groping for a social order more generous than any theocracy – that should satisfy the aspirations of men for a catholic fellowship, greater than sect or church, village or nation, embracing all races and creeds, bringing together the sun-dere societies of men in a common spirit of good will."<sup>72</sup> In short,

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71. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), Appendix A: "From Cosmic Purposelessness to Humanistic Sovereignty."

72. Vernon L. Barrington, *The Colonial Mind, 1620-1800*, volume I of *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York: Harcourt Brace Harvest Book, [1927] 1954), pp. 62-63.



Barrington's version of Roger Williams had Williams calling for a return to the one-world humanist political order of the Tower of Babel, but with Trinitarian orthodoxy in the hearts of men, of course.

Williams' groping for universal good will turned him into a firebrand, as Barrington described him. Williams' intellectual heritage, Barrington said, later manifested itself in Transcendentalism, Unitarianism, and the political philosophy of Thomas Paine.<sup>73</sup> I believe Barrington. Why don't Christian pluralists believe him? <sup>74</sup> Why don't they perceive where Williams' natural law doctrines, coupled with his "inner light" doctrines, lead to? Or do they seriously believe that they can "clean up" a few "minor deviations" in Williams' political philosophy, thereby making it suitable throughout the ages for Christians to support? If they really believe this, then where is the evidence that Williams' doctrines can be cleaned up? Where is a body of consistently biblical and equally consistent pluralist political philosophy which reconciles the two positions? It does not exist, as well our pluralist historians know, which is why they turn to Deists and non-Trinitarians to defend their cherished pluralist faith, as we shall see.

Why, for that matter, do Christian pluralists refuse to acknowledge the truth about natural law's atheist or at least pantheist foundations? Historian Paul Hazard is forthright in his chapter on natural law: "Natural law was the offspring of a philosophy which rejected the supernatural, the divine, and substituted, for the acts and purposes of a personal God, an immanent form of nature."<sup>75</sup> Because to acknowledge this would reveal the nature of the deadly compromise that Christian social philosophy has made with the enemies of God, and faithful Christian people in the pews and (even more fearfully) the voting booth might at last abandon any such ties. To reject the hybrid philosophy of natural law necessarily brings Christians face to face with the question of the continuing authority of Old Testament law. This, above all, is what our pluralist Christian academicians wish to avoid. So do the humanists who train them in the prestige universities, certify them, and then reserve unto themselves the

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73. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

74. Cf. L. John Van Til, *The Liberty of Conscience: The History of a Pun"tan Idea* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1972), ch. 3. He is Cornelius Van Til's great-nephew.

75. Paul Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680-1715* (New York: Meridian, [1935] 1963), pp. 269-70.

power to grant Christians academic tenure after seven years of academic "indentured servitude."<sup>76</sup>

Barrington was quite correct with regard to Williams' subsequent importance. It was not strictly as a theologian that he gained his primary reputation in history; it was as a political philosopher. He was "a forerunner of Locke and the natural-rights school, one of the most notable democratic thinkers that the English race has produced. . . . He was a social innovator on principle, and he left no system unchallenged. . . ." His pluralist political legacy is the one promoted in the name of Christianity by our trio. Wrote Barrington:

Broadly, the development of his thought falls into three stages: the substitution of the compact theory of the state for divine-right theory; the rejection of the suppositions compact of the earlier school and the fictitious abstract state — still postulated by many thinkers — and the supposition of a realistic conception of the political state as the sovereign repository of the social will, and the government — or agent of the state — as the practical instrument of society to effect its desired ends; and, finally, the difficult problem of creating a democratic commonwealth, as the exigencies of the Rhode Island experiment required. . . . In his substitution of the compact theory for divine right, Williams was brought face to face with the fundamental assumption of the Massachusetts theocracy, based on numerous passages of Scripture, that the political state is established by the God of the Hebrews. . . ,<sup>77</sup>

Getting even closer to the pluralist hearts of our trio, Barrington asserted, quite correctly, that "he accepted the major deductions

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76. It is interesting that the major American universities in the 1950's and 1960's used the sabbatical year concept in their tenure track system. If an assistant professor was not elevated in his eighth year to associate professor, he did not gain permanent tenured (lifetime guaranteed) employment. These days, there are so many unemployed Ph. D's available that tenure is seldom granted, because of wage considerations. Assistant professors are cheap. Thus, a perverse ranking system that was supposed to assure professors lifetime employment and power against the administration has backfired: it has destroyed lifetime academic employment for all but a few, making permanent the system of "indentured servitude." The untenured professor goes from university to university seeking but never finding the shelter of guaranteed lifetime income. This system keeps aging assistant professors publicly humble and orthodox in their humanism, which is appropriate for their subordinate position. They do not challenge their masters. What was originally promoted as a system of academic freedom to encourage professorial intellectual independence has become visibly a system of academic suppression. Sociologist-historian Robert Nisbet warned about this in 1965, and he has been proven correct . . . again. Robert A. Nisbet, *Tradition and Revolt: Historical and Sociological Essays* (New York: Random House, 1968), ch. 12: "The Permanent Professors: A Modest Proposal," originally published in *Public Interest* (Fall 1965).

77. Barrington, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

from the compact theory of the state: that government is a man-made institution, that it rests on consent, and that it is founded on the assumed equality of the subjects."<sup>78</sup> What Barrington did not mention, but which Perry Miller, Edmund Morgan, and most modern historians of Puritan thought do admit, is that the Puritan concept of the civil covenant also rested on the consent of the governed. Those who did not consent could leave, which Williams did, rapidly, when he learned that he was about to be deported back to England. What alienated Williams, and what continues to alienate his spiritual and political heirs, is that the Puritans assumed that only those who professed faith in Christ and who were members of a church would be allowed by civil law to interpret and apply the civil laws of God. Why did they assume this? Because they understood the governing principle of representation in a biblical holy commonwealth: #anyone refuses to affirm publicly that he is under God's historical and eternal sanctions, he has no lawful right to enforce God's civil laws on others. This was a recognized principle in American courts until the twentieth century: atheists, not believing in God's final judgment, were not allowed to testify in many state courts. In short, *the Puritans held to covenant theology*: a sovereign God who rules hierarchically through human representatives in terms of His revealed law. The rulers are required by God to bring sanctions in God's name against individuals who violate God's civil law. Why? In order to keep God from bringing far worse sanctions on the whole society. But modern commentators, *including our trio*, deny either explicitly or implicitly that God brings such corporate sanctions in history. Thus, hypothetically neutral political pluralism seems safe and sound rather than full of sound and fury — fury against God's law.

#### *Pluralism and Natural Law Theory*

Perry Miller and most modern historians fault Barrington for viewing Williams as a political theorist rather than as a theologian,<sup>79</sup> but this is not to say that Barrington's assessment of the Williams' operational legacy was incorrect. Williams is still remembered by most Americans even today, if he is remembered at all, as the persecuted saint who challenged the dour political theocracy of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This is still the Roger Williams of the high school textbooks, Miller's detailed and subtle revisionism notwith-

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78. *Idem.*

79. Miller, *Roger Williams*, pp. 27-32.

standing. 80 Williams' challenge to the Puritan theocracy was founded on a specific alternative political philosophy: *pluralism and natural law*. Williams understood far better than his modern pluralist disciples that you cannot beat something with nothing. He left a unique political legacy. Deny its presuppositions – natural law theory and the myth of neutrality — and you must logically reject his political philosophy.

But logic is not always a man's dominant concern. In this transitional era, Christian social philosophers – e. g., Van Til, Schaeffer, and our trio — cannot bring themselves to go beyond the first stage of reconstruction: the denial of Williams' first principles, natural law and the neutrality doctrine. Thus, they remain intellectually schizophrenic and dualistic – heart-mind dualism, law-grace dualism, spiritual-secular dualism, politics-religion dualism, heaven-earth dualism – or remain silent on real-world issues, or disappear from the scene, or else decide to accept the myth of neutrality after all. But what they categorically refuse to do is to publish a detailed, documented, Bible-based, cogently argued presentation of the hoped-for, longed-for, and implicitly promised reconciliation of inevitably non-neutral Christianity and political pluralism. Williams could not write it, and this inability was not simply because, in the words of Perry Miller, “we may well doubt that he could ever construct a sustained logical argument of his own . . . .”<sup>81</sup> It was because the two worldviews are theologically irreconcilable. Pluralism is the philosophy of the temporary cease-fire; in contrast, Christianity is the religion of escalating historical confrontation, to be followed by God's eternal sanctions. Humanism is also a religion of escalating confrontation. The debate between Christianity and humanism is over which side will win this confrontation.

### *Williams us. Covenantal Hierarchies*

What the high school textbooks neglect to mention is that this bright young man, who fled Massachusetts at about age 33, was a professional emigrant. He could not settle down, intellectually or

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80. A classic study on Williams is Dexter's 1876 book, *As to Roger Williams, and his "Banishment" from the Massachusetts Plantation*. . . published by the Congregational Publishing Society. Excerpts are reprinted in *Christianity and Civilization 1 (1982)*. Another version appears in *Roger Williams and the Massachusetts Magistrates*, edited by Theodore P. Greene (Lexington, Massachusetts: Heath, 1964).

81. Miller, *Roger Williams*, p. 102.

geographically. He fled England in 1630 at age 27. He could no longer tolerate the English church because it practiced open communion. 82 He was offered the pastorate of a church in Boston, but he refused. The Puritans were “non-separating Congregationalists,” and Williams could not tolerate this. 83 He moved to Salem, and from there to Plymouth, the colony of the true separatists. He fled Plymouth in 1633. The Plymouth church, he said, was not sufficiently separatist. When visiting England, its members attended the Church of England. Too lax! 84 He returned to Salem. Once outside of Plymouth’s jurisdiction, he wrote a letter to Plymouth, telling the authorities that they had no legal title to their land because they had not purchased it from the Indians (see below). At Salem, he was again offered a pastorate, and he took it. (Why no concerns about its prior imperfection this time? Employment opportunities? A “bully pulpit” of a pulpit?) He fled Massachusetts in 1636 because the magistrates were about to send him back to England. Only after this did he begin his war of the pamphlets with Massachusetts. But he was careful always to flee the jurisdiction of the court he was about to savage. He understood the reality of hierarchy, and he hated it.

Here is the heart and soul of Williams’ thought and early life: not his theology, not his political philosophy, but *his hatred of covenantal hierarchies*. He rejected point two of the biblical covenant model. He wanted no intermediary between his conscience and God’s mind. God was to speak to Williams and everyone else directly, which meant that *God had to remain silent in public*. Williams was in principle an early theologian of Novak’s empty temple.

When Williams began to preach publicly that the King’s patent was invalid and that the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, like the Pilgrims of Plymouth, also had no valid titles to their land, and when he began saying that the Church of England was not a true church, he was brought under suspicion. He was attacking the King and the magistrates. He was attacking the English Church. In short, *he was attacking the fabric of English society*. Then all residents were asked by the magistrates to take an oath to support the colony against all enemies. He refused, saying that this was an oath, and that it was

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82. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), p. 117.

83. Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, 1630-1650* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1933] 1959), pp. 157-58.

84. Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma*, p. 120.

therefore an act of worship. It would have involved Williams in communion with unregenerate people, he said. This was a denial of covenant status to the civil realm — precisely the view of our trio. *Williams recognized the inherently religious nature of an oath.* He denied that the civil government could lawfully require one. He then persuaded others of his view.<sup>85</sup>

Next, he said that regenerate men and unregenerates should not pray together, and this included praying with wife and children. There should be no prayers of thanks after meals. All of Salem was aglow with his strange ideas. The colony was ready to split. What saved it from a split was that Williams continued on and on, claiming that all the churches of Massachusetts had given up congregational independence and were therefore not true churches.<sup>86</sup> He rapidly lost his support, and when threatened with deportation to England, he fled.

He rejected hierarchy, and he rejected the legitimacy of civil covenant sanctions. But this was not enough. He had to attack the hierarchical Church covenant, too. A few followers joined him in Providence. There, he became a Baptist. He would no longer baptize infants. He had himself and his followers rebaptized. But was this baptism valid? No, he then concluded, they must wait for God to raise up a new apostolic power. He withdrew from the church, and would take communion only with his wife. But then he reversed himself. *He would not take the final step in his war against hierarchy, i.e., abandon his family covenant.* Therefore, having abandoned the principle of absolute separatism at this point, he then abandoned his separatism altogether. He finally concluded that no church can attain purity in this world, which is what the Church of England and John Winthrop had always maintained. From that point on, he would preach, pray, and take communion with everyone.<sup>87</sup> All of this took place within one decade, 1630-40. But he never recanted his political views.

In short, by any standard, Roger Williams was a nut, a loose cannon rattling around on the deck. He had come full circle to a theologically corrupted form of Anglicanism — open church, open communion — although he still refused to join that national, hierar-

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85. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

chical church. Meanwhile, he had left dizzy, disoriented followers in his wake. He had offered them a political philosophy of “principled dizziness,” pluralism, and it was much later to become the dominant political philosophy in Western culture.

### *The Legacy of Roger Williams*

His intellectual heirs are still dizzy. Christian pluralists call for an empty civil temple, yet decry the naked public square. They insist on the rights of conscience, yet they defend the sovereignty of political majorities. They promote political pluralism, a political philosophy which allows its own suicide by majority vote. They deny the myth of neutrality, yet they also deny the legitimacy of theocracy. They insist that man has been given common grace in order to think clearly by means of natural-law categories, yet they also say that common grace is being removed as men become increasingly morally perverse. They say that the basis of pluralism is mankind’s handful of shared moral presuppositions, and then they insist that as covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers become more consistent over time, these shared areas of moral agreement grow ever more narrow. They are in a moral and theological muddle, and they call it Christian social theory.<sup>88</sup> (The major American publisher of this muddle is William B. Eerdmans Co., but InterVarsity Press and Crossway Books are not far behind. To be respectable in academic Christian circles, you must defend the ethical and theological muddle of political pluralism, and this commitment to a hybrid worldview steadily undermines theology proper in all the other areas, just as it did with Roger Williams. To paraphrase the Mormon view of God and man, “What Eerdmans once was, Crossway is, and what Eerdmans is, Crossway may become.” And someday, Rupert Murdoch may buy them all out, thereby collecting the backlist of titles of the formerly faithful. )<sup>89</sup>

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88. As I argued earlier (footnote #10), C. S. Lewis exhibited this same dualism: escalating divisiveness vs. political pluralism. At least Lewis made no claims regarding his skills in political philosophy or historiography. His muddle was not professional.

89. This blacklisted book income is valuable. When InterVarsity Press published D. Gareth Jones’ defense of abortion, *Brave New People* (1984), Franky Schaeffer went on CBN Television’s “700 Club” and correctly observed that it had been his father’s books that had bankrolled InterVarsity Press. InterVarsity Press’ board capitulated to the public Christian pressure that Franky stirred up, pulling the book out of print, whereupon Eerdmans negotiated with Jones and became its publisher.

The legacy of Roger Williams is clear: once you *enter the Rhode Island wilderness, you lose your sense of direction*. To cross over into Rhode Island, you are required at the border to abandon man's only valid compass, the biblical covenant.

### Relativism vs. **Covenantalism**

Our three scholars at last present us what they have been leading up to for 139 pages: *political relativism*.<sup>90</sup>

. . . Calvinists in the English Puritan tradition, who have had disproportionately large influence in America, often stressed, as we have seen, nationalistic parts of the Old Testament in assessing our nation. Intimating that America's relationship to God is similar to that of ancient Israel, they long have held up the ideal of "Christian" politics and a "Christian" nation.

If, however, we emphasize more the other side of the American Protestant heritage, that which sees the New Testament as the primary guide to political attitudes in this age, all politics is relativized. Christians have civic responsibilities and obligations to promote justice. In modern democracies, where to an extent the people rule, these responsibilities are greater than in the Roman Empire. Yet the New Testament nowhere intimates that the Kingdom is political or that it can be identified with a nation or with national objectives.<sup>91</sup>

*All politics is relativized*: here is humanist pluralism's official political manifesto. *The kingdom is not political*: here is the escape religion.<sup>92</sup> But what Christian has ever said that the kingdom is political, meaning *essentially or primarily* political? Not anyone who I have ever heard of. (Many humanists, however, surely see their kingdom as primarily political.)<sup>93</sup> These men know all about the Christian theology of

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<sup>90</sup> Touse a baseball pitching analogy: the long, slow curve, and then the fast-ball.

<sup>91</sup> *The Search*, pp. 139-40.

<sup>92</sup> Gary North, *Moses and Pharaoh: Dominion Religion vs. Power Religion* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), pp. 3-5.

<sup>93</sup> Gary North, Editor's Introduction, George Grant, *The Changing of the Guard: Biblical Blueprint-s for Political Action* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), pp. xviii-xxii. Some humanist philosophers have embraced politics, Levi writes, while others have rejected it. However, "it is possible to see that the frequent humanist withdrawal from the political arena does not always represent a repugnance for politics as such, but rather the judgment against a politics which is too narrow, in which the stakes are petty and trivial when measured against the humanitarian ideal." Albert William Levi, *Humanism and Politics: Studies in the Relationship of Power and Value in the Western Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 454.



politics and culture developed by Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch scholar and Prime Minister of the late-nineteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Surely he was no defender of a political kingdom!<sup>95</sup> They also know that the Puritans were in no sense political salvationists. Their own book demonstrates how concerned the Puritans were regarding religious purity: “. . . early New Englanders had determined that they were God’s chosen people because they had such pure religion.”<sup>96</sup> So why does the trio adopt such rhetoric? This rhetoric regarding the kingdom as political is misleading, and I believe deliberately so. All they need to do is appeal to the Bible. Their rhetoric establishes a false dichotomy between biblical law and New Testament ethics. It asserts a false dichotomy between the Old Testament’s civil covenant and New Testament civil covenants.

### *Rhetoric Instead of Scholarship*

Why do they substitute rhetoric for solid historical analysis regarding the New England Puritans’ theory of politics? Certainly there are some excellent monographs on the topic, yet their footnotes do not refer to any of them. At the very least, they should have referred to T. H. Breen’s *Character of the Good Ruler*. Breen writes: “The Puritans’ concern about the good ruler grew out of their even greater concern about the covenant. They insisted that the Lord had made a compact with the English people at some indeterminable time in the past, granting them peace, prosperity, and Protestantism in exchange for obedience to scriptural law. The Puritans regarded this agreement as a real and binding contract for which all men could be held responsible. If a nation failed the Lord by allowing evil to flourish, He punished the entire population, saints and sinners alike.”<sup>97</sup> In other words, because they believed in the historical sanctions of God, the Puritans attempted to obey God in the civil realm by affirming the case laws of the Bible. This was done for the good of the whole society, so as to avoid external negative sanctions. Breen’s standard scholarly study appears neither in the book’s footnotes nor in the bibliography.

94. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, [1898] 1931), ch. 3.

95. Cf. Frank Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper. A Biography* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, [1960] 1978).

96. *The Search*, p. 112.

97. T. H. Breen, *The Character of the Good Ruler: Puritan Political Ideas in New England, 1630-1730* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 15.

Why this self-conscious neglect of the scholarly literature on Puritanism's view of politics? I suggest it is because the Puritans were so self-consciously covenantal. Our trio had a *hidden theological agenda* which was not revealed until the book's final pages: *the denial that there is a valid civil covenant between God and any society in the New Testament era*, meaning a covenant by which God visits corporate rebellion with historical sanctions. They must therefore affirm that all civil covenants are earth-bound. They have implicitly denied the very existence of a civil covenant. They have adopted Locke's position that there is merely a civil *contract* made among men. This is precisely what the Puritan political experiment explicitly denied. (In a sense, so did Rousseau's version of social contract, for it replaced God with the absolutely sovereign general will, which speaks only through the rulers of the civil government.<sup>98</sup> This sovereignty imparts to Rousseau's civil contract the character of absoluteness which is characteristic, not of a biblical covenant, but of a pagan city-state.)

The authors' defense of "New Testament anti-covenantalism" is highly selective. It applies only to the civil covenant. Would they say the same about families? I hope not. About churches? I hope not. So, on what authority have they unilaterally declared the permanent abolition or annulment of civil covenants between God and men? I suggest this answer: on *the authority of Immanuel Kant*, who was the master at creating false dualisms that push God and His law out of the realm of autonomous man.<sup>99</sup>

### The Rejection of National Covenants

The trio had already asked the modern neo-evangelical's favorite rhetorical question regarding biblical politics: ". . . is it proper ever to look upon the American nation as the special agent of God in the world?"<sup>100</sup> They wait until the end of the book to answer this rhetorical question, and their answer, not surprisingly, is in the negative. What they, as self-conscious political pluralists, love to do is to challenge the assertion by Christian Americans that God has (or has had in the past) a special (i. e., covenantal) relation to this nation. Why? *Because such an assertion raises the issue of national covenants, which in turn*

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98. Robert A. Nisbet, *Tradition and Revolt*, *op. cit.*, ch. 1: "Rousseau and the Political Community."

99. I return to this theme in Appendix A: "The Authority of H. Richard Niebuhr."

100. *The Search*, p. 21.

necessarily raises the question of biblical law and God's sanctions in history. They reject the idea of God's covenant judgments against any nation in the New Testament era. (If this statement is exaggerated, which I do not think it is, then at the very least they assume that we cannot determine whether any event or group of events is part of God's positive or negative sanctions in history. Dr. Marsden states this emphatically, as we shall see.)

They have adopted this attitude from the anti-Trinitarian professors who taught them, certified them, and tenured them. Their former professors have a much deeper reason for adopting such a view of God's sanctions: God's covenantal judgments in history, if accepted as a fact of history, point directly to God's final judgment beyond history. Presumably, Nell, Hatch, and Marsden are not worried too much about final judgment. But they are quite ready to remove the civil-judicial aspect of the gospel from serious consideration. Our three scholars announce openly regarding their previous academic publications (which, I might add as a trained historian, are technically and intellectually way above average): "We have written for our academic peers. . . ."101 They are still writing "for" them – as their agents – in *The Search for Christian America*. They are also writing to them, at least in part.

Again, they reject the claim that New England's civil order was truly Christian. This is a very strange argument, given their assertion that only church members were allowed to vote in Puritan New England.<sup>102</sup> (This assertion, by the way, is questionable; town residents were allowed to vote in town elections if they were property holders but not church members, but let us pass over this historical problem.) Would they also try to argue that Iran's civil order is not Muslim because only Muslims are allowed to vote? I doubt it.

### *Pitying the Almost Noble Savages*

Furthermore, there is that other great, intolerable evil of the New England Puritans: the Puritans took land away from the "native Americans." 103 YOU know, the Indians. (Liberals have adopted the phrase "native Americans" in recent years. They never, ever say "American natives," since this is only one step away from "American savages," which is precisely what most of those demon-worshipping,

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101. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Negro slave-holding, frequently land-polluting people <sup>104</sup> were, but just about no scholar other than former University of Colorado anthropologist John Greenway has had the courage to say so in print for over a generation. <sup>105</sup> What liberal academics are also equally unwilling to attack root and branch is the society-destroying system of socialistic, federal bureaucracy-run Indian reservations, the first and longest American experiment in socialism and clearly this nation's most time-tested social failure. ) This was one of the great sins in American life, they say: "the stealing of Indian lands."<sup>106</sup> In fact, because this is one of the few civic sins our trio can point to in the history of New England, other than their adoption of Old Testament law, it constitutes the bulwark of their moral case for New England as not being truly Christian. <sup>107</sup> This theme has been picked up by other "principled pluralists ."<sup>108</sup>

As mentioned previously, this theme, too, can be traced back to Roger Williams. In 1633, citizen Williams, in his typical authoritative manner, sent a letter to the governor and council of nearby

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104. This has been denied, with considerable evidence, regarding the New England Indians in the seventeenth century: William Cronin, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983), ch. 3.

105. John Greenway, "Will the Indians Get Whitey?" *National Review* (March 11, 1969); "The Indian at Home," in Greenway (ed.), *Folklore of the Great West* (Palo Alto, California: American West Publishing Co., 1969), ch. 3.

106. *The Search*, p. 19.

107. That a million savages had a legitimate legal claim on the whole of North America north of Mexico is the unstated assumption of such critics. They never ask the question: From whom did the Indians of early colonial America get the land? They also never ask the even more pertinent question: Was the advent of the European in North America a righteous historical judgment of God against the Indians? On the contrary, our three authors ridicule the Puritans for having suggested that the Indians were the moral and covenantal equivalent of the Canaanites (p. 33). In fact, if ever a continent of covenant-breakers deserved this attribution, the "native Americans" did. On the estimate of a million Indians in 1492, see William Peterson, *Population* (2nd ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 359; estimates by Kroeber (1939), Rosenblat (1945), and Steward (1949). The urbanized Pueblo Indians in 1600 may have totaled 100,000: D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America, 2 vols.* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1986), II, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800*, p. 16. He judiciously avoids any national estimate of the Indian population. See especially pp. 205-13, where he discusses the European-Indian encounter as of 1750. He speaks of a "catastrophic depopulation" of Indians on the Eastern seaboard, but offers no figures (p. 208). What we do know is that on the Eastern seaboard, tiny colonies of white settlers survived Indian attacks, 1610-1650, and grew to some three million by 1750, indicating that there had not been very many Indians.

108. Cf. Gary Scott Smith, Introduction, Smith (ed.), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), p. 4.

Plymouth, protesting that their title to the land was faulty. The King may have granted them this land, but this title was illegitimate; only by purchase of land from the Indians could their claim be defended. Obviously, this was as much an attack on the Massachusetts Bay as it was on Plymouth.

The rulers of the Massachusetts Bay then ordered him to court for a proposed censure for asserting that the King had lied. Their second charge against him rings down through the ages to rest at the door of our trio: the court also threatened to censure him for his having accused the King and others of blasphemy “for calling Europe Christendom, or the Christian world; . . .”<sup>109</sup> Then he backed down, apologizing to everyone. This became his familiar, lifelong tactic: launching a series of full-scale frontal assaults on the very legal foundations of New England, and then, when he faced public censure, offering abject apologies. He did this repeatedly until they were about to banish him, whereupon he fled to the wilderness of Rhode Island, where he was joined the following year by Mrs. Hutchinson and the antinomians, who had also challenged the foundations of New England.<sup>110</sup> And then, once safely outside the borders of Massachusetts, his language against the Massachusetts’ concept of a biblical civil covenant grew ever-more outrageous: “My end is to discover and proclaim the drying and horrible guilt of the bloody doctrine, one of the most seditious, destructive, blasphemous, and bloodiest in any or in all the nations of the world. . . .”<sup>111</sup> It was safe to say this in Rhode Island.

### *The New Rhode Island*

The modern Christian academic world still lives metaphorically and judicially in Rhode Island, surrounded by antinomians. A distinct school of historical interpretation has grown up in recent years, which I like to refer to as the Rhode Island wilderness school of his-

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109. *Winthrop’s Journal: “History of New England, 1630-1649*, edited by James K. Hosmer, 2 vols. (New York: Barnes & Noble, [1908] 1966), I, p. 117.

110. Emery Battis, *Saints and Sectaries: Anne Hutchinson and the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Virginia, 1962).

111. Williams, *The Bloody Tenant Yet More Bloody (1614)*, extract in Theodore P. Greene (ed.), *Roger Williams and the Massachusetts Magistrates* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1964), p. 14.

toriography.<sup>112</sup> *The Search for Christian America* is a typical document of this school. Its inherent working alliance with secular humanism is sometimes hidden by its members' unstated commitment to the vague and loosely defined categories of natural law and natural reason. Roger Williams defended natural law theory and political pluralism as the civil alternative to Puritanism's commitment to biblical law.<sup>113</sup> What do our modern critics of New England Puritanism offer as an alternative? They are less forthright than Williams. They simply do not reply to the question: "If not biblical law, then what?" Like some insane Dutchman who insists that the dikes of Holland be blown up, but systematically refuses to suggest an alternative for keeping out the North Sea, so are today's evangelical critics of biblical law. There is this distinction, however: nobody would pay any attention to the nutty Dutchman, except possibly to lock him up for his own (and everyone else's) safety. We allow the antinomian Christian pluralists to teach our children in tenured and subsidized safety from free market forces, not to mention Church censure.

Our trio's one other bit of supposed evidence of this lack of a truly Christian culture is the lack of widespread church membership,<sup>114</sup> which they dare not emphasize too heavily, since they all know about Edmund S. Morgan's *Visible Saints*, which they wisely do not cite, even in their book's extensive annotated bibliography. At least one of the trio, George Marsden, began his doctoral studies at Yale University under Morgan in the same year that *Visible Saints* was published, so they know what Morgan discovered. His book shows that the Puritans' extra-biblical requirement for church membership of a special conversion experience was at the heart of the second generation's refusal to join local churches, and was also the reason why New England's second-generation Puritan theologians invented the theology of the halfway covenant.<sup>115</sup> Historian Robert Middlekauff com-

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112. Another example of this school of thought's influence in Christian circles is Gary Scott Smith's book, *The Seeds of Secularization: Calvinism, Culture and Pluralism in America, 1870-1915* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian University Press, a subdivision of William B. Eerdmans, 1985). The most self-conscious defender of this tradition is anarchist economist Murray N. Rothbard in his four-volume history of colonial America, *Conceived in Liberty* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1975-79).

113. E. L. Hebden Taylor, *The Christian Philosophy of Law, Politics and the State* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1966), pp. 511-21.

114. *The Search*, p. 53.

115. See above, Chapter 3: "Halfway Covenant Ethics."

ments regarding this requirement of a conversion experience, "It may seem curious that the Puritans of the Bay carried the search for purity farther than the Puritans of Plymouth."<sup>116</sup> To admit this, however, the trio would be compelled to identify the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay as even more rigorous in intent about their Christianity than *The Search* admits, so they do not mention it.

The authors have completely, utterly misrepresented the Puritan political experiment as somehow not being truly Christian, when it was probably the most self-conscious experiment in building a comprehensive Christian civil order in the midst of a wilderness that any group has come close to achieving in history. Why did these professional historians so completely misrepresent Puritanism? The answer is clear: they reject, above all, the idea of a biblically mandated civil covenant. Nothing is allowed to stand in the way of their diatribe against the whole idea of a biblical civil covenant. I think that this was the number-one purpose of their book, both from their point of view and the publishers. In rejecting the idea of a biblical civil covenant, they lead their readers into the swamp of relativism. "[T]he idea of a 'Christian nation' is a very ambiguous concept. . . ."<sup>117</sup> It is not surprising, then, that they appeal here for academic support to one of the modern apostles of relativism, H. Richard Niebuhr — not someone who can be regarded as an unimpeachable source.<sup>118</sup>

### Thomas Jefferson, Prophet ?

The authors try to persuade the reader of a second unusual hypothesis. Their first hypothesis is that the Puritans, being systematic covenant theologians, could therefore not be "truly" Christian in their worldview, because they believed that the civil covenant under God is still a valid concept. Second, they argue that the Constitution's Framers, who were at best nominal Christians, invented a pluralist civil covenant which is supposedly the universal standard for a Christian society. Thus, the most self-conscious Christians in history (New England Puritans) were not truly Christians in their political views, while a group of essentially non-Christian pluralist politicians in 1787 devised the only legitimate civil foundation for American Christians to accept, now and forever more, amen.

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<sup>116</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 48-49.

<sup>117</sup> *The Search*, p. 17.

<sup>118</sup> See Appendix A: "The Authority of H. Richard Niebuhr."

We have examined their arguments regarding the Puritans. Let us now look at their arguments regarding the worldview of the “Founding Fathers” (the Framers of the Constitution), which I accept as historically valid, based on my own reading of their works and the debates at Philadelphia in 1787.<sup>119</sup> They write: “It is difficult for modern Americans to recapture the religious spirit of the country’s great early leaders — George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and their colleagues. The difficulty arises because these brilliant leaders, surely the most capable generation of statesmen ever to appear in America, were at once genuinely religious but not specifically Christian. Virtually all these great men had a profound belief in ‘the Supreme Judge of the world’ and in ‘the protection of Divine Providence,’ to use the words of the Declaration of Independence. Yet only a few believed in the orthodox teachings of traditional Christianity — that, for example, Christ’s death atoned for sin, that the Bible was a unique revelation from God, or that the miracles recorded in the Scripture actually happened.”<sup>120</sup> They do list a few exceptions — John Witherspoon, Patrick Henry (who “smelled a rat” in Philadelphia and who, opposed the ratification of the Constitution), and John Jay — but the major figures were not Trinitarians. This is certainly true of Jefferson, John Adams, Franklin, and Madison. It is probably true of Washington.<sup>121</sup>

All of this should provide a major red flag with respect to the soundness of the Constitutional settlement from a biblical point of view. On the contrary, our trio of historians conclude that the apostates were correct and the Puritans were wrong. So correct were the Framers that we must never attempt to change the rules back to a Puritan vision of the civil covenant. We return to the statement with which I began this essay:

What of the place of the Bible, then, as a basis for political action? Should we not bring the nation and its legislation back to the Bible? Here we have to make a careful distinction. Christians’ own political decisions should be informed by biblical principles. This is an important point not to miss. Nevertheless, when bringing these decisions to bear on civic debate and legislation we must agree to the rules of the civic game, which under the American constitution are pluralistic. That means that no matter how

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119. See Part 3.

120. *The Search*, p. 72.

121. Paul F. Boiler, Jr., *George Washington & Religion* (Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963).



strongly the Bible or other revelation informs our political views, *for the purposes of civic debate and legislation we will not appeal simply to religious authority.*<sup>122</sup>

This statement appears in their section, "A Middle Way." A middle way to where? Or what?

I think it is safe to say that *The Search for Christian America*, if examined critically, turns out to be a second-rate piece of historiography in search of a third-rate thesis: the theology of pluralism as the highest political goal of the Christian. Such shoddy scholarship from a group of previously competent scholars testifies to a deep and abiding intellectual schizophrenia on their part, as well as a task too difficult for the best available minds. They found it impossible to be true to both Jefferson and the Old Testament in matters civil, so they sided with Jefferson in the name of "true" Christianity. This is the basis of their rejection of what they disparagingly refer to as "the myth of America's 'Christian' origins." <sup>123</sup>

Frankly, I am not impressed.

#### Pluralism: Moral Deception and Judicial Deferral

Our authors write: "The complexity and irony of history blast all our cherished notions and our pet theories."<sup>124</sup> Indeed? I should have thought that God's sanctions in history are what blast them. These historical sanctions certainly have blasted the self-confidence of American political liberalism during the last quarter century. No one seriously proclaims "the end of ideology" the way that sociologist Daniel Bell did before Kennedy and Camelot disappeared, to be replaced by Johnson and Vietnam.<sup>125</sup> But if ideology has not ended, then what is the future of political pluralism? If ideology escalates, what is pluralism's future? Nell, Hatch, and Marsden have bet their pooled reputations on a first-place finish by Common Sense Plural-

122. *The Search*, p. 134.

123. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

125. Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (rev. ed.; New York: Free Press, 1962). By 1968, the thesis was passé: Chaim I. Waxman (ed.), *The End of Ideology Debate* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968). The second book was dedicated to the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr., which seems appropriate: the ideological debates had escalated sharply. This symposium appeared seven years after Bell's first edition (1961). Usually such symposia appear shortly thereafter, not seven years. The whole world had changed, 1964-65. On this era as a watershed period, see Gary North, *Unholy Spirits: Occultism and New Age Humanism* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1986), Introduction. Cf. pp. 22-25.

ism in the Civil Compact Derby, an aged, winded nag that has already begun to fade in the stretch.

They insist that "The American political system is very frankly a system of compromises."<sup>126</sup> It surely was deeply compromised in 1789 with respect to the institution of chattel slavery, and all the political pluralism in the world could not have made that compromise any less morally repugnant. The inherent conflict escalated; it had to. The Civil War was an irrepressible conflict, given the unwillingness of the South to honor the New Testament's annulment of Israel's jubilee land tenure and its permanent slave system. What this nation needed after 1800 with respect to chattel slavery was not more pluralism but less. It needed a Constitutional settlement that announced at long last a closed door to the religion, ideology, economics, and civilization of chattel slavery. The world needed to close that open door from the day that Jesus announced His fulfillment of the jubilee year.<sup>127</sup>

The American Civil War stands as a visible testimony to the failure of political pluralism. Bullets replaced ballots. The North's view of Constitutional law triumphed over the South's, not in political caucuses but on battlefields. Why do our authors refer again and again to the evils of American chattel slavery, if they also think that political pluralism provides anything like permanent peaceful solutions to what are clearly inescapable moral conflicts? Why do they want to avoid getting fundamental moral issues solved politically, and in terms of biblical revelation? I perceive that they are of the opinion that the moral issues raised exclusively or primarily by Christian theology are of far less importance morally and especially judicially than common-ground (i.e., Unitarian-dominated) abolitionism was, and so these Christian issues must be adjudicated in religiously 'neutral' civil courts. This leads to the following outlook: "The issue of slavery dealt with by the *Dred Scott* case was too important an issue to be left to the Supreme Court to decide; *Roe u. Wade*, on the other hand, is not equally crucial, so Christians must abide by it."

In Britain, the slave issue was solved by democratic coercion; the slave-owners did not have the votes after 1832. Not so in the U.S. Slaves were kept in chains here for an additional three decades, and

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126. *The Search*, p. 133.

127. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), pp. 228-30.

then a civil war settled the issue. (This is bad news for Richard John Neuhaus' theory that "Democratic persuasion, not emptiness, is the alternative to coercion." <sup>128</sup> For American slaves, the alternative was a form of emptiness for thirty extra years, and then coercion: of their masters.) This is always the fate of pluralism: someone eventually says, "Oh, no, you won't," his opponent says, "Oh, yes, I will," and the fight begins. At that point, the question always is: What is really worth fighting over? This question cannot be forever deferred politically, with or without the polytheistic religion of political pluralism. At best, *pluralism is a political cease-fire until one side is ready to resume the fight to the death*— which the Bible teaches is humanism's death.

When the fight resumes in earnest, there will be few pluralists to be found on the divisive issue in question. Like those who promote an unspecific, hypothetical, and not-yet-published middle way between abortion and anti-abortion, pluralists will have few constituents once the religious conflict escalates. Like pacifists the day after a shooting war breaks out, pluralists will vanish from the arena of public discourse. What had formerly been perceived as a timeless political philosophy will be at long last recognized for what it inevitably is: a short-term propaganda campaign for a temporary political cease-fire. While it is certainly legitimate for Christians to call for such a cease-fire from time to time, in order to prepare for the next phase of the battle, it is naive for Christianity's intellectual leaders to treat this cease-fire as if it were a permanent arrangement, let alone the basis of a universally valid political philosophy. But they do. For the time being.

#### *Pluralism and Moral Confusion*

A generation ago, left-wing sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote an indictment of American pluralism, *The Power Elite*. Though critics have shown that his analysis was anything but detached, and his data were not always conclusive, his basic argument was correct: there are elites in American life. <sup>129</sup> A permanent elite which maintains power irrespective of the attempted negative sanctions of those represented by it is the covenant-breaker's version of covenantal hi-

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<sup>128</sup> Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 121.

<sup>129</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957). Cf. Philip H. Burch, Jr., *Elites in American History*, 3 vols (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981).

erarchy. There must be representation in history; the question is: In what way are historical sanctions brought against the representatives?

Mills correctly identified the nature of today's illusion: political pluralism's philosophy of balanced moral and economic interests. Political life is far more ruthless than this. He also identified the source of this belief eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, which undergirded free market economics and the Framers' pluralist political philosophy.<sup>130</sup> (Scottish Enlightenment philosophy was a secularized version of Scottish common sense realism, which was the basic philosophy of American Protestant academic theology until at least the end of the nineteenth century, and really until after World War I. Mark Noll is a specialist in this field,<sup>131</sup> and one wonders if he has ever abandoned its overall outlook, Van Til's demolition of it notwithstanding.)

Mills argued forcefully that this view of American political institutions is mythical, that power is not parcelled out in the way that the pluralists say it is. Ultimately, Mills insisted, *the political struggle is in fact a conflict over moral values*. The failure of Americans to understand this, he said, is the heart of the modern political crisis:

The moral uneasiness of our time results from the fact that older values and codes of uprightness no longer grip the men and women of the corporate era, nor have they been replaced by new values and codes which would lend moral meaning and sanction to the corporate routines they must follow. It is not that the mass public has explicitly rejected received codes; it is rather that to many of the members these codes have become hollow. No moral terms of acceptance are available, but neither are any moral terms of rejection. As individuals, they are morally defenseless; as groups, they are politically indifferent. It is this generalized lack of commitment that is meant when it is said that 'the public' is morally confused.<sup>132</sup>

Such moral confusion regarding public issues is the inevitable product of a philosophy which teaches that irreconcilable moral conflicts are not inherently religious, and therefore perhaps not inherently irreconcilable. In such a pluralist political order, there must be no public political appeal to ultimate, God-given moral standards.

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130. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

131. Mark A. Noll (ed.), *The Princeton Theology 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1983). His footnotes in the introductions to each chapter lead the student into the background of Scottish realist philosophy.

132. Mills, *Power Elite*, p. 344.

To cite our trio once again, “when bringing these decisions to bear on civic debate and legislation we must agree to the rules of the civic game, which under the American constitution are pluralistic. That means that no matter how strongly the Bible or other revelation informs our political views, *for the purposes of civic debate and legislation we will not appeal simply to religious authority.*”<sup>133</sup>

This is the widely held view of most voters today. Why, then, should we be surprised to discover that Christians in the electorate do not know where to turn for righteous solutions to the problems of the day? Their scholarly leaders to whom they have entrusted the training of their children have told them Christians have a moral and political obligation to shut their Bibles when they enter the public arena. Today’s Christian voters have faith in no authoritative judicial standards by which moral and political order can be restored in the midst of the real and now widely perceived moral dissolution of our era. Thus, political solutions to crises come only when some *secular humanist moral scene is coercively imposed by a power elite to solve the problem.* There is only one politically acceptable alternative to this process: moral conflicts are deferred for a season by political or bureaucratic tinkering, plus an additional infusion of government money.

#### *Tactic or Permanent Philosophy?*

Once we understand that political pluralism is a *process of public moral deception and judicial deferral*, the only reasonable defense of this philosophy becomes pure pragmatism: *to reduce visible conflicts temporarily.* One can of course attempt to defend pluralism as a permanent philosophy by arguing that Christianity in politics tends to promote violent conflict, so let us choose pluralism for the sake of social peace. This is exactly what the authors argue. “In political life, if every party is certain its position is backed by the sure authority of God, the likelihood of violence increases vastly.”<sup>134</sup> They are obviously worried about the terrors of ideological politics, a fear shared by other liberal historians.<sup>135</sup> So, they conclude, let us choose instead pluralism. But for how long?

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133. *The Search*, p. 134.

134. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

135. Marian J. Morton, *The Terrors of Ideological Politics: Liberal Historians in a Conservative Mood* (Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University, 1972). Included in this survey is a chapter on Marsden’s teacher, Edmund S. Morgan.

The hopes and dreams of the pluralists are being smashed by the realities of the late twentieth century. The looming moral crisis cannot be indefinitely deferred. This also means that the covenantal connection between law and God's historical sanctions cannot be deferred. Our political system, based on pluralism, is falling apart. It has become irrational. The government cannot deal with huge government-created problems that threaten the very fabric of the American social order. It cannot even discuss some of them publicly (e.g., the inevitable bankruptcy of the Social Security "retirement" program). David Kettler is correct: "It is not enough to remark that the American political order is biased and not, as ideological Pluralists contend, the neutral arbiter among equal contestants or the willing instrument of shifting temporary majorities; it is also necessary to see that the bias tends to produce irrational policies and actions."<sup>136</sup>

#### How Accurate Is Dr. Marsden?

George Marsden is by far the best known and most respected of our three historians, although he is not known primarily as an historian of colonial American religion, but more for his more recent work on twentieth-century American fundamentalism and evangelicalism. He was the dominant author of the sections of *The Search* devoted to the praise of pluralism, since the arguments are the same as what he had written the year before in his essay in the Paul Woolley *festschrift*. In the one-volume *Eerdman's Handbook to Christianity in America*, edited by Nell Hatch, Marsden, David F. Wells, and John D. Woodbridge, Marsden asks: Were America's Origins 'Christian'?"<sup>137</sup> He has a tough time answering this one negatively, since most of the facts are against him. He admits that "The view that the colonies were significantly Christian has a good bit to recommend it. Two of the most influential settlements, New England and Pennsylvania, were founded explicitly on Christian principles. Each was a remarkable attempt to establish a holy commonwealth."<sup>138</sup> (Yes, reader, this is the very same man who co-authored *The Search*.) But other colonies, he says, were "more nominally Christian."

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136. David Kettler, "The Politics of Social Change: The Relevance of Democratic Approaches," in William E. Connolly (ed.), *The Bias of Pluralism* (New York: Aldine-Atherton, 1969), p. 214.

137. *Eerdman's Handbook to Christianity in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983).

138. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

What does he mean, “more nominally Christian”? With the exception of Rhode Island, they were legally, covenantally Christian governments. They were chartered under the King and Parliament. Blasphemy was still a major crime in England in the late seventeenth century. In half the colonies, colony-level civil magistrates had to take a Trinitarian oath in order to hold office, and this was true up until the American Revolution and in some cases beyond. <sup>139</sup>

### Virginia

In 1610-11, Gen. Thomas Gates began his colonial laws with a call to men’s duty to God, to whom men owe “highest and supreme duty. . . .”<sup>140</sup> He required all captains and officers to have morning and evening prayer. The death penalty was to be imposed on anyone speaking impiously regarding any Person of the Trinity.<sup>141</sup> “No man shall speak any word or do any act which may tend to the derision or despite of God’s holy word, upon pain of death; nor shall any man unworthily demean himself unto any preacher or minister of the same, but generally hold them in all reverent regard and dutiful entreat y; otherwise he the offender shall be openly whipped three times and ask public forgiveness in the assembly of the congregation three several Sabbath days.”<sup>142</sup> Sodomy, rape (including the rape of an Indian), and adultery were specified as capital crimes. Sacrilege – theft of church property – was a capital crime. <sup>143</sup>

Later laws were less theologically rigorous. The laws of 1619 required weekly church attendance, and fines were imposed on violators. <sup>144</sup> The church remained extremely important in Virginia’s history. At the time of the Great Awakening in the mid-1700’s, the issue of church establishment flared up politically, indicating that Christian issues were still basic to the disputes of colonial era Virginia. <sup>145</sup>

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139. See Part 3.

140. “Articles, Laws, and Orders, Divine, Politic, and Martial for the Colony in Virginia, 1610-1611,” in *Foundations of Colonial America: A Documentary History*, edited by W. Keith Kavenaugh, 3 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1973), III, p. 1869.

141. *Ibid.*, III, p. 1870.

142. *Idem.*

143. *Ibid.*, III, p. 1871.

144. *Ibid.*, III, p. 1888.

145. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982), Pt. II.

*Pennsylvania*

Pennsylvania is an interesting case. It was founded by William Penn, a Quaker who had once been imprisoned for blasphemy.<sup>146</sup> Penn was very sensitive to this topic. He wanted no persecution of religious groups. He began his Charter of Liberties of 1682 by citing the origin of civil government: Adam's fall. Then he cited I Timothy 1:9-10: the law was not made for the righteous but the disobedient and ungodly. Then he cited Remans 13:1-5 on the magistrate as God's minister of terror to evil.<sup>147</sup> The Charter prohibited any molesting of "all persons living in this province who confess and acknowledge the one almighty and eternal God to be the creator, upholder, and ruler of the world. . . ."<sup>148</sup> They were not to be compelled to attend church or pay compulsory tithes. But Penn made it clear in his 1701 update of the charter that such theological latitude was only for common citizens. Civil magistrates were under Trinitarian theocratic restrictions. To serve as a civil magistrate, a person had to "also profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world. . . ."<sup>149</sup> Magistrates had to take this oath:

And I, A. B., profess faith in God the Father and in Jesus Christ his eternal son, the true God, and in the Holy Spirit, one God blessed for evermore; and do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.<sup>150</sup>

And finally, in good Quaker fashion, every member of the Assembly had to pay the clerk of the Assembly five pence to record this declaration in the official roll book. (Waste not, want not, and there are no free lunches. )

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146. In 1668-69, Penn had spent eight months imprisoned in the Tower of London during the Privy Council's extended "investigation" of his theological views. The Privy Council could not convict anyone; it could, however, permanently imprison someone during its investigation. Penn, only one year a Quaker, had written *Sandy Foundations Shaken* in 1668, an attack on the Trinity. He was persuaded to retract his views by the King's chaplain, Edward Stillingfleet. Penn later admitted only Sabellian views: the three Persons of the Trinity as aspects of God. But he affirmed the divinity of Jesus. Leonard W. Levy, *Treason Against God: A History of the Offense of Blasphemy* (New York: Schocken, 1981), pp. 308-11.

147. "Charter of Liberties and Frame of Government of Pennsylvania" (1682); reprinted in *Foundations*, II, p. 1134.

148. *Ibid.*, II, p. 1144.

149. "Charter of Privileges by William Penn" (1710); *ibid.*, II, p. 1161.

150. *Ibid.*, II, p. 1169.



## Carolina

Carolina was “liberal.” The 1662/3 Charter of Carolina did allow those who could not in good conscience take a public oath or “conform to the publick exercise of religion, according to the liturgy, form and ceremonies of the church of England” to be exempted from doing so. A large majority of the inhabitants were nonconforming Protestants, although the Anglican Church was the established church, and its pastors were supported by compulsory taxes. There were only two Anglican churches in South Carolina — the major Carolina colony — as late as 1700.<sup>151</sup> The authority to grant such a special dispensation was given to the original founders and their heirs. Such a grant of toleration was tightly restricted: the exempted citizen had to declare repeated loyalty to the King and his heirs, “and be subject and obedient to all the other laws, ordinances, constitutions of the said province, in all matters whatsoever, as well ecclesiastical as civil, and do not in any wise disturb the peace and safety thereof, or scandalize or reproach the said liturgy, forms and ceremonies, or anything relating thereunto, or any person or persons whatsoever, for or in respect of his or their use or exercise thereof, or his or their obedience and conformity, thereunto.”<sup>152</sup> The 1669/70 “Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina,” written by John Locke, 153 was an attempt by one proprietor, Lord Ashley, to liberalize and formalize the earlier charter. He never succeeded in imposing it legally on the colony, although it did become a judicial model.<sup>154</sup> In this document, we discover: “No man shall be permitted to be a freeman of Carolina or to have any estate or habitation within it that does not acknowledge a god; and that god is publicly and solemnly worshipped.”<sup>155</sup> In the English colonies of North America in 1670, that meant Christianity. In 1721, the Assembly passed an act limiting the franchise to free white men, 21 years of age or greater, residing in the state for a year or more, and “professing the christian religion. . . .”<sup>156</sup> Church wardens were to manage the actual elections.<sup>157</sup>

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151. Curtis P. Nettels, *The Roots of American Civilization: A History of American Colonial Life* (2nd ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), p. 188.

152. “Charter of Carolina” (March 24, 1662/63); reprinted in *Foundations*, III, p. 1747.

153. Nettels, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

154. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

155. Provision 95, *Foundations*, III, p. 1772.

156. *Ibid.*, III, p. 1981.

157. *Idem.*

In 1704, the lords proprietors declared that only communicant members in good standing in the Church of England could lawfully hold office in the Assembly.<sup>158</sup> Another declaration in 1704 established the Church of England as the religion of the colony. A protest to Parliament from seventeen inhabitants persuaded both Parliament and the Queen that the law was contrary to reason and therefore null and void.<sup>159</sup>

But no one protested to Parliament regarding the strong anti-blaspemy law enacted the year before by the Assembly in Carolina, which made it illegal for anyone, once having publicly professed Christianity, in any public manner thenceforth to “deny any one of the persons of the Holy Trinity to be God,” or “assert or maintain there are more Gods than one,” or “deny the Christian religion to be true, or the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority. . . .” Any person so convicted for the first offense lost the right to serve in any public office, or be employed by the State, including the military. If at the time of conviction, he held such office or employment, he immediately forfeited it. The second conviction resulted in the person’s loss of the civil right to sue, prosecute, plead, “or use any action or information in any court of law or equity, or to be guardian of any child, or executor or administrator of any person, or capable of any legacy or deed of gift, or bear any office . . . forever, within this part of the province; and shall suffer imprisonment for the space of three years, without bail. . . .”<sup>160</sup> So much for the “more minimally Christian” resident of the Carolinas!

### *New Jersey*

The “Fundamental Constitution for the Province of East New Jersey” (1683) was adamant: religious liberty had to be upheld. In fact, every civil magistrate was required by law to affirm this. He had to swear to it. To whom was this binding oath sworn? To Jesus Christ.<sup>161</sup> Immediately following this requirement, we read: “Nor by this article is it intended that any under the notion of liberty shall allow themselves to avow atheism, irreligiousness, or to practice cursing, swearing, drunkenness, profaneness, whoring, adultery,

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158. *Ibid.*, III, pp. 2276-79.

159. *Ibid.*, III, pp. 2291-96.

160. “Act for the More Effectual Suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness” (1703); in *ibid.*, III, p. 2275.

161. *Ibid.*, II, p. 1107.

murdering, or any kind of violence, or indulging themselves in stage plays, masks, revels, or such like abuses; . . .”<sup>162</sup> This was not what you could accurately describe as a model colony for the American Civil Liberties Union.

*The “Nominally Christian” Colonies*

New York did not impose oaths on its magistrates, but it did have a state church, Anglicanism, up until the Constitution of 1777. But it was careful about immigrants. An Act for Naturalizing All Those of Foreign Nations was passed in 1683. The problem, began the Act, was that “Forasmuch as several persons of diverse foreign nations professing Christianity now and for diverse years past” have settled in the colony. So, the Governor, Council, and representatives declared that such residents, “professing Christianity,” could become citizens by taking an oath of allegiance to the state government.<sup>163</sup>

Georgia, the southernmost colony, was established as a trusteeship in 1733. It seems to have had no Trinitarian standards for voting or office-holding, as far as I can determine from the records in my library. Not many colonists lived in Georgia, however. James Oglethorpe’s 1733 ‘Account of the Designs of the Trustees’ did say that “Christianity will be extended by the execution of this design. . . .”<sup>164</sup> The fact that Oglethorpe, the founder of the colony, was a Freemason<sup>165</sup> may have had something to do with the absence of colony-wide Trinitarian standards.

If I had a readily available set of J. N. Thorpe’s *Federal and State Constitutions*, and if I had more time, I could continue this game of ‘find the document.’ I think this is unnecessary. The point is, Marsden’s evidence for his rejection of Christian colonial America is remarkably weak. (I have not referred to the New England charters, to Maryland’s, and to Delaware’s, which I cover in Part 3.) The average reader would never guess from reading *The Search* that one of the major issues leading to the American Revolution was the question of whether the Church of England should send a bishop to the colonies, rather than leaving the Bishop of London as the presiding bishop.<sup>166</sup> This issue would hardly promote a political revolution today.

162. *Idem.*

163. *Ibid.*, II, p. 1195.

164. *Ibid.*, III, p. 1834.

165. J. Hugo Tatsch, *Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies* (New York: Macoy, 1929), p. 11.

166. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

*Thomas Morton*

Marsden does not mention any of this. Instead, he points to Thomas Morton (1620's) as a more representative colonial American. This is an outrageous assertion, the product of Marsden's ideology rather than any detailed research on his part (or anyone else's).

You probably have never heard of Thomas Morton. He is known only to specialists in colonial history. That Dr. Marsden refers to him in a brief essay in a one-volume general encyclopedia is simply astounding. What is even more astounding is that he thinks Morton is representative of colonial life. In the first decade of New England, Morton immigrated, set up a little community outside the normal jurisdiction of Plymouth colony, sold guns to the Indians, denounced Christianity, and erected (the correct verb) a maypole.<sup>167</sup> This practice had been condemned as a survival of paganism by Puritan Philip Stubbes half a century earlier.<sup>168</sup> Miles Standish was immediately sent by the authorities at Plymouth to arrest Morton, which he did, and the authorities deported Morton back to England.<sup>169</sup> Historian Charles M. Andrews described him thusly: "Morton was a, bohemian, a humorist, a scoffer, and a libertine, with no moral standards of thought or conduct."<sup>170</sup> Morton later returned to Massachusetts, where he remained in intermittent conflict with the authorities. Marsden neglects to mention any of this, and then concludes: "In the colonies as a whole, the Thomas Mortons probably were always more numerous than the strict Calvinists. They are just as legitimately part of the American heritage."<sup>171</sup>

Interesting. Yet it raises this question: Which historical records indicate that those holding to Mr. Morton's theology, let alone imitators of his maypole activities, were more widespread in the colonies than Christians or even "strict Puritans," from 1624 until, say,

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167. Dancing around a maypole, a phallic symbol, is commonly practiced in May. Wherever this custom is found," writes Eliade, "the 'Maypole' gives an occasion for general jollity ending with a dance round the pole. The chief part is usually played by young people or children. It is a feast of spring but, like all such manifestations, can turn into something of an orgy." Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958), p. 310.

168. *Idem.* The work was *Anatomic of Abuses* (1583).

169. Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, [1934] 1964), I, p. 362.

170. *Ibid.*, I, p. 333.

171. *Idem.*

1787 ? They are few and far between. But this dearth of documentary evidence is neither here nor there for Dr. Marsden. He resorts instead to rhetoric, which is a safe tactic only if one's intended audience is utterly ignorant of even the most cursory facts of one's own academic discipline. This is grossly unfair to the victimized reader, who thinks he is reading a history book rather than a political tract.

We can honestly trace the history of American pluralism "From Morton to Marsden." That Dr. Marsden would select Thomas Morton, a highly unrepresentative figure in colonial American history, as "probably" more representative of most colonists than the "strict" Puritans, is clear testimony to Dr. Marsden's personal war against any civil manifestation of Christian civilization. Morton was a deviant both sexually and religiously, and those few humanistic textbook writers who have bothered to mention this otherwise peripheral figure have done so only because he was *the* representative example of what New England was not. But not Dr. Marsden; he singles out Morton as a representative of what most colonists "probably" were in their anti-prayer closets.

To present Thomas Morton as a more representative figure than the "strict" Puritans in American colonial history is the equivalent of selecting Benedict Arnold as a representative figure in colonial military history, or Aaron Burr as a representative American political figure. It would make as much sense to select Shimei as a representative political figure in Davidic Israel (II Sam. 16:5-14; I Ki. 2:8-10, 36-46). In fact, Dr. Marsden can be accurately described as the dean of the Shimei school of historiography.

What Marsden's statement regarding Morton indicates is that he, in his academic life, has reverted back to something reminiscent of the secular humanist worldview of Vernon L. Barrington and the Progressive historians, but without doing any new primary source research. It was they who regarded New England's theocratic experiment as an aberration. Having moved to post-Civil War American religious history as his preferred specialty, Marsden briefly returned to colonial religious history in 1983 as if Perry Miller and Edmund Morgan had never appeared on the academic scene. It was Miller who understood the Puritan doctrine of the covenant as foundational to the development of American political theory, with the doctrine of natural rights a secularized derivative;<sup>172</sup> it was Barrington who

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172. Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," in *The Shaping of American Religion*, 4 vols., edited by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), I, pp. 322-68.

dismissed Puritan political philosophy as “the philosophy of natural rights whittled down to a covenant between God and man .”<sup>173</sup> So powerful is Marsden’s ideological commitment to political pluralism that by 1983, he had simply scrapped the intellectual results of the first two decades of his academic training and writings in pre-Civil War American religious history. This is the man who began his first book in 1970 – a reworked doctoral dissertation – with these words: “For many years American historiography was marked by a quiet prejudice against evangelical Protestantism in nineteenth-century American life. Historians during the early twentieth century, in the midst of their own emancipation from Protestant intellectual and moral dogmatism, emphasized the tolerant and the progressive in America’s national tradition. Evangelicalism, which in the opening decades of this century was usually masked in the robes of militant fundamentalism, appeared retrograde and obscurantist. Its heritage seemed best forgotten. . . . Protestant intellectual and theological developments, except those taking place in the immediate vicinity of Boston, were virtually ignored.”<sup>174</sup> Thirteen years later, he had become a defender of the colonial legacy of Thomas Morton and his maypole follies. Vernon L. Barrington, you were a piker!

### Historians Need Good Memories

Our three historians have presented a case for a non-Christian America which is difficult to defend, given what all three of them have written in the past. All three of them were apparently struck by collective amnesia around 1979. Not one of them remembers his own past writings or the writings of his two colleagues, an intellectual affliction which I have designated as *Orwellus bibliographus*. What we have in *The Search for Christian America* is one of the most remarkable cases of multiple amnesia in academic history.

#### Nell

Nell’s first book was titled *Christians in the American Revolution*.<sup>175</sup> The book’s concluding chapter notes that ‘While the ideas and ac-

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173. Barrington *Colonial Mind*, I, p. 49.

174. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970), p. ix.

175. Mark A. Nell, *Christians in the American Revolution* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian University Press, 1977).

tions of Christians at the time of the American Revolution did not lock succeeding generations into the patterns of the Revolutionary generation, they did exert a profound influence on the subsequent religious life of the independent United States .<sup>176</sup> Nell immediately summarizes this legacy:

In the first and most important place, Christians in America continued to assume that God had singled out the American nation for special privileges and responsibilities. Even before the Revolution, the assumption that God favored the English nation and its American colonies was widespread, but this conviction was reforged with new intensity in the violent crucible of events that saw the United States break its ties with the mother country. The growing belief that Europe had entered a period of decadence led to a corresponding conviction that God's children were concentrated particularly in America. When the events of the Revolution seemed to bear out this assumption, when it became clear, in Moses Mather's words, "that it is God that fighteth for us," belief in America's special place in God's esteem took even firmer hold on the masses of Christian Americans. Against all odds, God had prospered the valiant efforts of his colonial children as they struggled to throw off the immoral tyranny of their despotic masters.

The elaborate system of covenantal thought which had undergirded earlier expressions concerning God's care for the colonies was largely abandoned during the second half of the eighteenth century, but the essential dogma of the covenantal system – that the colonies stood in a special relationship to God — survived as an article of faith throughout the denominational spectrum. By 1800 the assertion that God dealt with the United States in a unique way was a commonplace. 177

I need to remind the reader that it is this covenantal and providential idea of America that Nell, Hatch, and Marsden take such pains to deny in their book, as do their neo-evangelical colleagues in the Wheaton-Calvin-Gordon College alliance. So, we need to note the difference between their view of America and the views of the colonial period. We need to note it in order to prepare ourselves for the bait-and-switch procedure of our trio: their reading of modern views of political pluralism back into the widely held political philosophy of eighteenth-century America.

The American Revolution was a product of a particular eschatology: postmillennialism. Our three authors reject such a view of his-

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176. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

177. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

tory, but they know it was the most common view in early America. There is no doubt that they also understand its impact in American history. 178 Nell writes:

Millennial overtones have also persisted in the course of America's history, due at least in part to the thorough millennialism that marked such a large part of the religious reaction to the Revolution. The way in which America's ideals of freedom and justice have been championed in public discourse has encouraged the idea that perfect freedom and perfect justice might be obtainable through the concentrated efforts of those upon whom God has already bestowed a foretaste of these blessings. During the Revolution, Christians felt that a successful completion of the war might be the prelude to the visible appearance of the Kingdom of God on earth. In later American history the millennial vision lost its sharp theological definition, but nevertheless lived on. 179

The literature on the postmillennial vision in American history was voluminous when Nell wrote this, and it has grown larger subsequently.<sup>180</sup>

Nell correctly argues that the Revolution was a product of both English libertarian or Whig thought and Christian orthodoxy.<sup>181</sup> There is no question that this Whig political tradition was not inherently Trinitarian, although Trinitarians (especially the nonconformist sects) had adopted it.<sup>182</sup> Any attempt to downplay this fact has led and will continue to lead to inaccurate historiography. But there is also equally little doubt that among the broad masses of the colonists, on both sides of the Revolutionary struggle, most people were Christians, not secret Socinian (proto-Unitarian) Whigs.<sup>183</sup> Virtually

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178. See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, pp. 27, 86-88, 136.

179. Nell, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

180. Edward McNall Burns, *The American Idea of Mission: Concepts of National Destiny and Purpose* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Conrad Cherry (ed.), *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Cushing Strout, *The New Heavens and New Earth: Political Religion in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

181. Noll, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-53.

182. Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959).

183. Some important leaders were secret and not-so-secret Socinian Whigs, however: Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin.



all eighteenth-century colonial Christians had adopted a Newtonian vision of cause and effect, fusing this view with the remnants of medieval natural law theory. They did not recognize the enormous threat to their worldview that any such reliance on Newtonian theory presented<sup>184</sup> – nor do most Christians recognize this today. Apologetics is still conducted as if Kant's revolution and Darwin's revolution had not taken place.<sup>185</sup>

By 1983, Nell had toned down his language considerably. Thus, we read in the book co-edited by Nell, Hatch, Marsden, David Wells, and John Woodbridge that "It is occasionally said that the United States was founded on 'Christian principles.' While that is not true in any specific political sense, it is true that certain themes from the Puritan past contributed to Revolutionary thought. In particular the Puritan idea of the covenant lent force to some Real Whig ideas. Puritans had believed that settlers in the New World sustained a special relationship with God. This conviction gave a moral overtone to all of life."<sup>186</sup> Notice the shift since 1977. Here he speaks only of the "moral overtone" of Christian ideas; "Real Whiggery" is the main issue.

Listen to him on the subject of colonial eschatology; he inserts the historian's weasel phrase, "to the extent that ."<sup>187</sup> "To the extent that colonists in 1776 still believed in the divine mission of British North America, they were ready to interpret Parliament's administrative errors as assaults upon God and his people."<sup>188</sup> In 1977, he had made it clear that few ideas were more prominent in 1776 — and long after — than the idea of the divine mission of British North America. Then, over thirty pages later, he admits as much: "Judged by the number of sermons and books addressing prophetic themes, the first generation of United States citizens may have lived in the shadow of Christ's second coming more intensely than any generation since."<sup>189</sup> Both premillennialism and postmillennialism were preached.<sup>190</sup>

184. James Ward Smith, "Religion and Science in American Philosophy," in Smith and Jamison (eds.), *Shaping of American Religion*, I, pp. 402-42.

185. Van Til devoted his entire career to exposing and refuting this traditional apologetic approach.

186. Nell, in Nell, *et al.* (eds.), *Eerdman's Handbook*, p. 134.

187. This is the historian's version of the economist's weasel phrase "other things remaining equal ."

188. *Idem.*

189. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

190. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-70.

There is no doubt that eschatology was a major idea in the Revolutionary period, and this was a Christian concern.

Nell is forced to admit what should be obvious to any historian of the Revolutionary era: the beliefs of the common people who fought the war were not the same as the political tracts written by the leaders, especially when those tracts were aimed at each other. Nell knows this. "The first three elected Presidents of the United States – Washington, Adams, and Jefferson – all advocated a form of reasonable religion that drained the supernatural from religion and valued piety primarily for its civic utility. Although this form of enlightened religion never came to command the allegiance of most common people, it did enjoy great popularity among educated Americans and was quite the intellectual rage among college students in the last two decades of the eighteenth century."<sup>191</sup> An intellectual fad among a tiny handful of college-educated people was not the religion which produced the American Revolution, let alone the Great Awakening that preceded it.

Nell correctly observes that "By 1776 America was well on the way to becoming a pluralistic Protestant country."<sup>192</sup> Notice that the nation was *not* pluralistic, meaning a system in which every religion was equal; it was unquestionably *Protestant*, and within this broad Trinitarian category, there were many opinions. But this is not good enough to salvage our trio's thesis: that they just cannot seem to find evidence of a Christian America. Protestant pluralism is a far cry — indeed, a Civil War battle cry — away from the political pluralism promoted by our trio in *The Search of Christian America*. Nell fully understands this. He admits that "Religious points of view which strayed from that nationalistic center would have to wait until the twentieth century to be recognized as significant factors in the culture of American religion."<sup>193</sup> This highly damaging admission appeared in 1983, the same year that *The Search* was published. Nell is a historian with a very short memory. He cannot seem to remember what he has written in the manuscript on the other side of his desk.

During the early 1980's, Nell and his two colleagues began to re-write American colonial history in terms of their preference for some modern version of eighteenth-century Real Whiggery. To use Nell's phrase, they (like most of their academic peers) had adopted h-eli-

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191. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65.

192. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

193. *Idem.*

gious points of view which strayed from America's nationalistic center." They became determined to break the spell of both judicial covenantalism and postmillennialism in the thinking of evangelical Christians, as did their forebears: the Real Whigs of the Constitutional Convention.<sup>194</sup> (This raises an important question, which I will try to answer at the end of this section: Why did the trio decide to take up this challenge? What event or events persuaded them that there had been a shift in the thinking of American Christians away from pietism toward judicial covenantalism and away from passive eschatologies toward postmillennialism?) They have been stymied in this self-appointed task so far only by their inability to locate a previously ignored cache of eighteenth-century baptismal records presenting formulas along these lines: "I baptize this child in the name of James Barrington, John Trenchard, and Adam Smith." But their search for a Whig America nonetheless continues.

Why, then, such strong objections in 1983 to the idea of the Christian origins of America?<sup>195</sup> Where is the evidence that America was anything but a Christian nation at its founding? Perhaps the anti-oath clause of the U.S. Constitution (Article VI, Clause 111).<sup>196</sup> But this piece of evidence points to a very controversial possibility, one which neither our trio nor the defenders of the Christian history of the Constitution wish to discuss seriously: that the Constitution was the product of a *coup d'état* by the Socinian Virginia dynasty and their allies from other colonies. This is too conspiratorial a thesis for our trio to accept, and too unpatriotic for their opponents to accept.<sup>197</sup>

Nell's comment in a 1988 book describes their dilemma: they must explain how the Constitution was less influenced by Christian preaching yet far better for Christianity. Nell's words are significant. He admits that his conclusions appear paradoxical. "Such a conclusion brings us back to the apparent paradox. When Christian involvement was intense — during the Revolution — Christianity suffered. When Christian involvement was much less intense — during the writing of the Constitution — the results were far better for the

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194. See Part 3

195. Our trio is correct in warning against an overly naive view of the Founding Fathers as Christians, a warning I am re-issuing in spades in Part 3. We must distinguish between pre-Revolution and post-Revolution America.

196. See Part 3.

197. See Appendix B: "Rushdoony on the Constitution."

faith.”<sup>198</sup> This suggests that Christians should keep their mouths shut, argue publicly only in terms of the prevailing covenant-breaking social theory, never mention Old Testament law or God’s historical sanctions, and pay their taxes dutifully. Better a pen name of “Publius” than “Josiah.” Why? Simple. *People who take the Old Testament case laws seriously as a judicially binding guide for modern legislation usually vote conservative.* This disturbs our trio. And if such a view of the Old Testament is ever adopted by American political conservatives, they will start voting theocratic. This disturbs our trio even more.

### Hatch

Nathan Hatch made his academic reputation with his first book, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (1977). This was fortunate for him, since it remains his only book.<sup>199</sup> There is still the lingering scent of doctoral dissertation about the book, but it is nonetheless an excellent study. It is subtitled, *Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England*. It argues, not surprisingly, that the theological topic of eschatology was important in the pre-Revolutionary colonial era.

This raises an obvious question. If America was never a Christian nation, then why in the name of autonomous man did questions of biblical eschatology have any impact whatsoever on pre-Revolutionary New England? And why on earth did Hatch begin his book with a quotation from Levi Hart (1775)? Hart wrote:

Indeed, the sacred cause of liberty hath been, and ever will be venerable in every part of the world where knowledge, and learning flourish, and men suffered to think and speak for themselves. Yea, it must be added, that Heaven hath appeared in the cause of liberty, and that in the most open and decisive manner: For this, the Son of God was manifest in the flesh, that he might destroy the tyranny of sin and satan, assert and maintain the equal government of his Father, redeem the guilty slaves from their more than Egyptian bondage, and cause the oppressed to go free.<sup>200</sup>

I call your attention to the title of Chapter 3 of Hatch’s book: “The Demand for a Republic of Christian Virtue: The Critical

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198. Mark A. Nell, *One Nation Under God: Christian Faith and Political Action in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 72. Notice how he has now “escaped the Christian ghetto” and moved into the world of humanist book publishing. Why write for lowly Zondervan Books (owned by Rupert Murdoch) when you can write for Harper & Row (also owned by Rupert Murdoch)?

199. I do not count edited books and co-authored books.

200. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977), page facing page 1.

Period and the Moral Roots of New England Federalism.” I could go on, but why bother? You get the point.

In 1979, a book by Hatch, Nell, and a third pluralist historian, John D. Woodbridge, was published by Zondervan, *The Gospel in America*. In this book, we learn that “The watershed of the American sense of mission and destiny can be traced to Puritan England. Recent studies have emphasized the intense sense of religious patriotism that dominated seventeenth-century England – and particularly those of Puritan persuasion. . . . The Puritans who came to establish New England were even more intense in their conviction that God had chosen them. The theme that crossing the Atlantic was the Exodus for God’s ‘New English Israel’ runs throughout the early sermons of Massachusetts.”<sup>201</sup>

They also say that “During the colonial period the strongest attack on the idea that America was a city on a hill came from the lips of Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island and spiritual father of American Baptists.”<sup>202</sup> Do they then go on to demonstrate that Williams’ opinion became dominant during the eighteenth century? On the contrary:

In the years prior to American independence, the dissenting voice of Roger Williams gave way to an ever stronger chorus that America was unique — and providentially so. In New England ministers continued to apply to their own colonies Old Testament texts addressed to Israel; they began also to address the Puritan founders by such names as Moses, Aaron, and Joshua. If other Americans considered Yankees a bit provincial because of this, they were soon relieved to find that in the aftermath of the Great Awakening (a revival ignited throughout the colonies) that Jonathan Edwards announced that not just New England but all of America would be the center of Christ’s millennial kingdom. And as the Americans took up arms against the French in the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763), many agreed with the evangelical Presbyterian Samuel Davies from Virginia that defeating Catholic France would wound Antichrist sufficiently to bring on that long-awaited reign.<sup>203</sup>

There was one important shift in perspective, however: the reason offered for this millennial triumph. It was America’s civil liberty which was the basis of God’s favor.<sup>204</sup>

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201. John D. Woodbridge, Mark A. Noll, and Nathan O. Hatch, *The Gospel In America: Themes in the Story of America’s Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1979), p. 212.

202. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

203. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

204. *Idem.*

After the Revolution, they say, America went through “the low ebb of religious vitality in the nation’s history. Yet in contrast to the downward state of religion, millennial expectancy during these years rose to unparalleled heights.”<sup>205</sup> They then ask a reasonable question, but their answer is remarkable, given the subsequent thesis of *The Search*. “But how could ministers rejoice in the success of the kingdom while their own churches lay devastated by the enemy? Their answer was that God, in their view, had shifted his primary base of operations to the arena of nations. In the ringing success of the American republic, they witnessed a model for the coming age: . . . ”<sup>206</sup>

How’s that again? The ministers in the late eighteenth century believed that God was dealing with *nations* as His base of operations. He was dealing with the United States in this way. They therefore still rejected Roger Williams’ view of a pluralistic, non-covenantal nation. Then how, in the name of covenant sanctions, can it be that America was never – our trio’s 1983 thesis – a Christian nation?

Given the thesis of *The Search for Christian America*, consider also this statement: “Evangelical have not always been a beleaguered minority in American society. In fact, their attempt to Christianize American society in the nineteenth century is a remarkable success story.” In the entire period, only the Revolutionary era was a period of “declining fortunes,” and it was reversed by 1800, they say, so much so that “historians are led to describe that period of American history as an ‘Evangelical Empire.’ ”<sup>207</sup>

The safest way to deny the evidence of Christian America is to ignore the evidence. But this requires a two-step strategy: one set of books for your peers and another book for your victims. Because your

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205. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

206. *Idem.*

207. *Ibid.*, p. 216. I do not want to praise this book as a work of scholarship. It is just a somewhat more intelligent tract than *The Search*. It is significant that in its discussion of the twentieth-century revival of evangelical Christianity, it made no mention of the creationist movement. The authors praised Bernard Ramm’s 1954 book promoting a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1-10, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (p. 86), but they did not mention Henry Morris’ *Genesis Flood* (1961). That Ramm drifted out of orthodoxy and toward Barthianism in the 1970’s is not surprising, given his anti-creationist views of 1954. He simply followed the logic of his presuppositions. Ramm may have impressed a handful of neo-evangelicals in the 1950’s, but his influence outside of the Wheaton College classroom was minimal. That they could discuss Ramm and ignore Morris, and that they did not even mention the rise of the independent Christian school movement after 1960, reveals that they were engaged in rewriting the history of American Christianity according to *Christianity Today*.

covenant-breaking academic peers know the primary sources, you had better be wise enough not to argue that there was never any such thing as Christian America. But when writing for neo-evangelicals, you do not have to be equally careful. They are unfamiliar with the evidence, and are ready to assume that the writer is intellectually honest. They will not check the footnotes; thus, they can be easily fooled.

### *Marsden*

George Marsden's first major academic publication was his 1970 *Church History* review article on Harvard historian (actually, an English professor) Perry Miller. Miller had been the acknowledged master of the worldview of American Puritanism. What Marsden demonstrated in what has become a widely cited historiographical essay is that Miller had been remarkably ignorant of the voluminous writings of John Calvin, especially Calvin's commentaries on the Bible, yet the Puritans were self-consciously the heirs of Calvin. Not fully understanding Calvin's covenant theology, Miller mistakenly emphasized differences between the Puritans and Calvin – differences that really did not exist. Miller was also ignorant of the Bible, and so he did not see the biblical basis of many of the Puritans' beliefs. He paid insufficient attention to their creeds. Marsden then made a telling observation: "The lack of emphasis on the place of Scripture and doctrine suggests that Miller realized that the Puritans could not be rehabilitated in the mid-twentieth century unless they were dissociated as far as possible from their exclusively Christian emphases."<sup>209</sup> Miller *ignored* the person and work of Christ in their system of theology and philosophy. "At least, one hardly comes away from any of Miller's accounts with the feeling that Christ was even theoretically central in the Puritan system. Yet Miller makes no apologies for this omission."<sup>210</sup>

To which I add: *neither does Marsden in his post-1980 treatments of Christian colonial America!* Miller, however, may simply have been ignorant of the Bible; Marsden, the son of a minister and a graduate of Calvinistic Westminster Theological Seminary, is not equally ignorant of Scripture. He stands condemned by his own words:

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<sup>208</sup> I had hoped to write a similar essay, but Marsden beat me to it. I probably would not have gotten around to it anyway; it obviously took a lot of work.

<sup>209</sup> Marsden, "Perry Miller's Rehabilitation of the Puritans: A Critique," *Church History* (March 1970), p. 95.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

By minimizing Scripture, systematic doctrine, and the role of Christ, Miller in effect seems to be engaging in a kind of demythologizing, or more properly “de-Christianizing,” of Puritanism. This process is not by any means a fully developed thesis, but it is an undeniable subtle tendency.<sup>211</sup>

In Marsden’s case, this de-Christianizing of colonial American history is a fully developed thesis, and there is nothing subtle about it.

He accused Miller of de-emphasizing basic religious doctrines that the Puritans held dear. “When he interprets Puritan thought for his contemporary audience, concepts which the Puritans themselves considered most essential are lost among the riches of the comments of the twentieth century observer.”<sup>212</sup> When Marsden interprets colonial American thought for his contemporary Christian audience, he does the same thing. But there is this difference: Miller was writing for covenant-breakers, and chose not to assault their theological sensitivities by emphasizing the Christocentric worldview of the Puritans; Marsden, in contrast, co-authored this book for use by covenant-keepers who might have a soft spot in their hearts for the idea of a Christian society, an idea which utterly repels Marsden. For Miller’s peers, theocracy was an antiquarian relic; for Marsden’s intended audience — though not his academic peers — theocracy is an idea which might be worth considering. Marsden is far more willing to discuss the Christian roots of America with his de-sensitized academic peers than with the Christians who might conceivably read *The Search*.

Here is how he ended his critique of Miller: “The quality of Miller’s rehabilitation of the Puritan image should not be taken lightly either. His work was a revision, and like all revisions errs somewhat in the other extreme. Certainly Miller played fewer historical tricks on the Puritans than did his American predecessors. His contribution to both understanding and appreciating Puritanism is invaluable. He does, however, restore the Puritan image at the expense of important aspects of Puritan theology and religion. When we remember, as Miller has demonstrated, that the Puritans were tough-minded men of the Renaissance, let us recall also that they were uncompromising Christians and (in the twentieth century view) bigoted Calvinists. As for the thesis that the covenant of grace represented a revision of Calvinism, Miller has created a myth that

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<sup>211</sup>. *Idem*.

<sup>212</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 104.



has been so elegantly presented and widely repeated that it will be difficult to destroy."<sup>213</sup>

Having castigated Perry Miller for his systematic de-Christianizing of the Puritans, Marsden warns his Christian readers of the failure of the New England Puritans. New England had "some serious shortcomings," he says. "Paradoxically" – paradoxically for the pluralist historian – "perhaps the most serious were related to the very idea under discussion – that they thought of themselves as an [sic] uniquely Christian society. The Puritans supposed that they stood in the same relation to God as had Old Testament Israel. They thought that God had chosen them to play a special role in the history of the New World, to be a new Israel. They even put some of the Old Testament legislation into their law books."<sup>214</sup> Here is the heart of the matter for the pluralist: Old Testament law, meaning *Old Testament capital sanctions*. The Puritans of Massachusetts put a dozen of them into their constitution, the Body of Liberties, in 1641, even citing the Old Testament Scripture passages.<sup>215</sup> This is what the pluralists cannot accept: the idea that God holds modern men and modern societies responsible to Him covenantally, which means they are under His Bible-revealed covenant sanctions in history. On this point, modern fundamentalists, modern "Calvinistic" pluralists, and modern secular humanists agree completely. Marsden speaks representatively for the whole era in which we live.

God, have mercy on us, miserable offenders.

Yet by 1983, Marsden had begun to play his own tricks, not simply on the Puritans, but on those contemporary Christians who might take seriously the civilization which they built on the foundation of Old Testament civil law. In the final analysis, who has been more faithful to the Puritans as Christians, Marsden or Miller? Miller stressed their view of the covenant and its relation to everything they did, including politics and law-making. Marsden stresses their Calvinism and rejects as non-Christian their law-making. I think the answer is clear who has been the truer witness: Miller the pagan, not Marsden the seminary graduate.

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213. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

214. *Eerdmans' Handbook*, p. 151.

215. Section 94, "Capital Laws," Body of Liberties (1641); in David Hawke (ed.), *U.S. Colonial History: Readings and Documents* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), pp. 127-28.

Miller may have had an academic axe to grind; Marsden has a political one. Political conservatives make him very nervous, for good reason, and the Puritans were surely conservatives. He fears a revival of Puritanism, also for good reason. Their very presence in American history stands as a testimony against the liberal mess of pottage — or pot of message — that our trio of historians thought more worthy than their theological birthright as Christians.

Should we be surprised to learn that George Marsden in 1981 volunteered to testify against the creationists in the landmark Arkansas school case, *McLean u. Arkansas*? The Arkansas legislature had passed a “balanced treatment” law requiring the presentation of a stripped-down version of six-day creationism — neither the Bible nor God was to be mentioned in class<sup>216</sup> — whenever evolutionism was presented in a public school classroom or textbook. When the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) went to court to protest this law, Dr. Marsden journeyed to Arkansas to testify on behalf of the ACLU-led forces. Explaining the zeal of the creationist forces, Marsden compared them to nineteenth-century fundamentalists. “Literal defense of the Bible,” he was quoted as saying, “is the first defense against modern thought.”<sup>217</sup> Clearly, no one could fairly accuse George Marsden of being a nineteenth-century fundamentalist! <sup>218</sup> (Predictably, the creationists lost the case.)

### *The Election of Ronald Reagan*

I suggest that the cause of our trio’s collective amnesia regarding so much of what they had written prior to 1980 was the election in 1980 of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States. This was done with the vociferous support of a clear majority of the fundamentalist and evangelical community. The almost universal political passivism and neutralism of American fundamentalism, which Marsden had chronicled in 1980,<sup>219</sup> disappeared almost overnight.

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216. This is the compromised creationism promoted by John N. Moore in his book, *How to Teach Origins (Without ACLU Interference)* (Milford, Michigan: Mott Media, 1983). This view assumes that the public school system is morally and biblically legitimate, and that you can discuss creationism in such schools without any reference to the Bible or the Creator. I challenge this view in Appendix B of *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988): “The End of Illusions: ‘Creationism’ in the Public Schools.”

217. James German, “Judgment Day for Creationism,” *Discover* (Feb. 1982), p. 17.

218. He was the commencement speaker at Westminster Seminary (East) in 1989.

219. George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

The leaders of American fundamentalism had publicly linked up with the political technicians of the New Right at the National Affairs Briefing Conference in Dallas in the late summer of 1980. The language of "reforming America according to Christian principles" was spreading rapidly in the early 1980's, and our trio sensed the liberalism-threatening nature of this shift.<sup>220</sup> And let there be no doubt about it: our trio is politically liberal.

For almost three generations, the Social Gospel liberals had challenged fundamentalists to "put their Christianity into action," which to the Social Gospel liberal meant voting for legislation proposed by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. When the fundamentalists at last began showing signs of getting politically involved, they voted for Reagan. The liberals were appalled. They challenged this as a misguided baptizing of "secular conservative politics" with the gospel. It was clearly a misuse of religion. "There are no biblical blueprints," they shouted. They started counting votes — the liberal's version of holy communion — and the votes for Reagan were far greater than the votes for Carter. "No more talk about a uniquely Christian politics," they proclaimed. "This sounds like theocracy to us, and you know what we think of theocracy!" (In their lexicon, theocracy is defined as an immoral, tyrannical political system in which Christian conservatives get elected.) What was therefore needed was a book aimed at the intelligent Christian community proving that there are neither historical nor judicial grounds for regarding the United States as a Christian nation. These people's dreams of exercising political authority had to be de-fused, and fast.

And so our trio wrote *The Search for Christian America*.

### A Hidden Agenda

Marsden has stated that "Love is the Christian's central obligation, and understanding is an essential ingredient in love."<sup>221</sup> If so, then *The Search for Christian America* is an example of hate literature.

What is the problem with *The Search for Christian America*? It is an astonishingly shoddy piece of historiography. It is more of a lawyer's

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220. Writes Nell: "A further stimulus to the idea of Christian America has been the effective political lobbying of activist theological conservatives, often styled the New Right, or the New Christian Right." *One Nation Under God*, p. 6,

221. Marsden, "A Christian Perspective for the Teaching of History," in George Marsden and Frank Roberts (eds.), *A Christian View of History?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 32.

briefly than a serious history book. The question is: Why? Why did three professional historians who on other occasions have produced excellent academic work fail so miserably in this book? Because in this book they at last put their presuppositional cards on the table for all to see: both their academic peers and their victims, namely, historically ignorant Christian readers. The trio wanted to prove to their colleagues – especially their neo-evangelical, Ph. D.-holding colleagues – that they are still inside the camp of the humanist-certified academic guild. They had not broken covenant with academic Egypt.

To prove this, they were forced to betray the unskilled reader, who naively thinks that this book is a work of Christian historiography rather than an exercise in disinformation. The layman does not realize what is going on, or whose interests are being faithfully served. He becomes the sacrificial lamb on the altar of academic respectability. He is being asked to give up his search for Christian America in the documents of the past, so *that he will not gain a vision of re-establishing Christian civilization in the present*. The authors well understand the threat facing Canaanites throughout history: covenant-keepers who dwell longingly on the promises given to Abraham may begin to think seriously about the possibility of conquering Canaan. This disturbs the Canaanites, as well as their officially certified representatives within the covenant community.

*The Search for Christian America* is the product of an attitude of hatred. These men hate God's Old Testament law. They have built their shared worldview on the denial of the visible sanctions of God's covenant law in history, for if God's sanctions appear in history, then Christians are responsible for obeying him. They are responsible for re-conquering Canaan.

#### *Wholly Revealed by Being Wholly Hidden*

Like all political pluralists, Nell, Hatch, and Marsden begin their analysis with a presupposition: men cannot look at the events of history and perceive the actions of God. Why not? Because the events of history are silent with respect to God's promised covenant sanctions. Marsden made this quite clear in an earlier essay: "Biblical history records not only *that* God acts, but often tells us explicitly *how* and *why* God acts. Non-biblical historical records lack these latter qualities. At best we know only the most general principles of how God is working in historical developments. We must therefore exercise the utmost caution in our interpretations, lest we appear to

be claiming special prophetic insights into the workings of God. Finally, as Professor Charles J. Miller has pointed out, any attempt to apply the patterns of Old Testament history to the era since the coming of Christ confuses the character of the two eras. In the Old Testament, God's care for his people involved direct material blessings as well as spiritual blessings. The New Testament age, on the other hand, is the age of the Spirit, when Christians are not told that they should expect to prosper in this world, but rather that they should expect to be the poor and suffering."<sup>222</sup> What a moving and humble sentiment, especially from any tenured college professor pulling down \$45,000 or more for teaching nine hours a week (and maybe even twelve), eight months a year! Conclusion: "We therefore cannot presume to correlate the judgments of God with a nation's apparent good deeds or bad deeds."<sup>223</sup>

This may be called Christian scholarship, but it is pluralism, pure and simple. It is an applied version of Meredith Kline's theology of an inscrutable God — a theology which allows Christians to make up their philosophy and their ethical rules as they go through life: "And meanwhile it [the common grace order] must run its course within the uncertainties of the mutually conditioning principles of common grace and common curse, prosperity and adversity being experienced in a manner largely unpredictable because of the inscrutable sovereignty of the divine will that dispenses them in mysterious ways."<sup>224</sup>

There is a syllogism which secretly undergirds this view of history. It is this:

No covenant sanctions in New Covenant history, so no covenant law in New Covenant history; no covenant law in New Covenant history, so no covenant responsibility in New Covenant history.

In short, Christians may vote either liberal or conservative, Democratic or Republican, but they must not vote biblical. Most important, they must not seek to infiltrate and then capture all political organizations in the name of a covenant God who has established His judicially binding blueprints in His Bible-revealed law.

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222. Marsden, "Teaching of History," *Christian View of History?*, pp. 39-40.

223. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

224. Meredith G. Kline, "Comments on an Old-New Error," *Westminster Theological Journal*, XLI (Fall 1978), p. 184.

Because God's covenant sanctions are supposedly not revealed in New Covenant history, although He swore that He would enforce them in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, Christians today therefore have no justification in seeking to impose the civil government's sanctions as set forth by God, and as Moses and Joshua imposed them.

Marsden has made his position clear: ". . . national distinctions are no longer the basis for God's blessings and curses as in the Old Testament."<sup>225</sup> Therefore, there can be no national covenant. Therefore, there can be no Christian nation. Therefore, *The Search for Christian America* did not find a Christian America. Surprise, surprise! Will wonders never cease?

*Is the Ballot Box Really Sovereign?*

Pluralism presents itself publicly as a political philosophy of strictly formal procedures. It carefully distinguishes these formal procedures from any particular moral or substantive goal (i. e., ethics). Its philosophical defense is based on the logic of a certain form of eighteenth-century, Anglo-Saxon, liberal Enlightenment humanism: the liberty of the autonomous individual citizen. This defense has usually been connected with arguments relating to the freedom of conscience. Pluralism is officially supposed to avoid being drawn into debates over the ethical content of legislation. Ethically speaking, as far as the official philosophy of pluralism is concerned, *anything goes*, just so long as the State's formal procedural requirements are adhered to. I offer as evidence "abortion on demand" in the U. S., a law which was declared retroactively by the U.S. Supreme Court, not by any state or federal legislature. "The Supreme Court has ruled," we are told by smirking, sanctimonious defenders of convenient mass murder. "But abortion is immoral!" Christians reply. Reply: "Nevertheless, the Court has ruled. It's the law." To which the perceptive Christian may choose to answer: "Then let's test the law . . . if necessary, 20,000 times a year in the courts." And if the outraged pluralist replies, "That's not playing fair; that would destroy the court system," the Christian may choose to remain silent, a Constitutional guarantee.

The problem of pluralism is far deeper than just its vulnerability to principled court-jamming. Who or what is to say that a formal judicial structure is ethically (substantively) sacrosanct? Who or what

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225. Marsden, "Teaching of History," *op. cit.*, p. 40.

is to say that people who adhere to its requirements precisely cannot subsequently change (i. e., *amend*) these requirements? Who is to say that the voters may not vote in a system that forbids further amendments? Who is to say that the suicide of pluralism is illegal? To deny that such a procedurally correct abandonment of pluralism is fully legitimate in terms of the rules of the political game, defenders of a pluralistic political order can do so successfully only by an appeal to some supposedly higher sovereignty that has declared pluralism's judicial formalism as mankind's highest ethical goal. The procedural sovereignty of the pluralist political order must then be defended by an appeal to a higher sovereignty. What I am saying is that the god of pluralism is not in fact the god who reveals himself solely through the secret ballot; it is the god who reveals himself all too publicly in the humanist-accredited classrooms of America's colleges and universities.

Pluralism is said to be the law of the land. To which I reply: "For now, my friend, for now. This need not be a permanent condition ." To which the pluralist implicitly replies: "I will appeal my case to a higher power."

#### *Intellectual Schizophrenia*

This appeal to a "higher power," I contend, is implicitly what professors Nell, Hatch, and Marsden have done. They do not tell us what this higher sovereignty is. They imply that it must be the God of the Bible, yet the language of their presentation indicates that their unnamed proposed sovereignty is that well-known amorphous divinity, *the People of 1788*. In any case, they have been either exceedingly clever in concealing this hidden Sovereign from their readers or else they are themselves unaware of what their concealed presupposition really is: *the absolute sovereign of late-eighteenth-century, Anglo-Saxon, Enlightenment judicial formalism*.<sup>226</sup> In short, they appeal

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<sup>226</sup> Writes Forrest McDonald: "Inside the Anglo-Saxon scheme of things, the sum total of governmental power that was regarded as legitimate was virtually boundless, being subject to only two limitations. One was the contract, public or private. The other was tradition, largely as embodied in the common law, which was in essence a set of personal rights in the form of procedures that governed the exercise of power. Together they placed life, liberty, and property morally beyond the caprice of kings, lords, and majorities. But these two theoretically unbreakable limitations were the only restrictions on otherwise unlimited power." McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776-1790* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, [1965] 1979), p. 310. The Civil War in principle destroyed the former limitation, and Darwinism destroyed the latter.

to one of two conveniently speechless divinities: 1) the People, or 2) the god announced by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence: "Nature and Nature's God." But our three professors also publicly profess Christ. Thus, they are forced to imply (though they never attempt to prove) that the God of the Bible has spoken definitively in the political realm for all the ages through Thomas Jefferson or the Constitution. 227 It is an odd position for Christians to hold.

The political problem which we face today is this: most Christians in the pews and voting booths do not yet understand that any pluralism-induced lull in the political war between God's kingdom and Satan's is merely a temporary cease-fire. They have forgotten the Bible's long-term judicial strategy: the suppression of biblically defined public evil in every area of life, by every covenant institution, each in its own God-authorized sphere of responsibility. They have forgotten about covenant law and covenant sanctions. Such a view clearly sets limits on the extension of political pluralism.

There is an additional God-revealed limitation on the modern pluralist order, however, one which today's pluralists refuse to acknowledge: *civil government must not collect as much as 10 percent of its citizens' annual net income to use in its various assignments (I Sam. 8)*. This tax limitation keeps the State small, which is not what today's Christian pluralists, so dominated intellectually and institutionally by Darwinian State-worshippers, want to accept as a governing principle. They have forgotten Samuel's warning regarding State power. They have forgotten Deuteronomy 17's warnings to the kings of Israel. This is not random amnesia. *Covenantal forgetfulness is always the price which pluralism exacts from those who do not recognize its temporary tactical nature.*

### *Check Kiting*

Our trio has been passing bad epistemological checks for the past decade. The fact that, as individuals, they wrote checks on accounts with cash in them prior to 1980 does not offset the fact that they are a trio of check-kiters today. They write from one account to the other, with each check ever-larger, in the vain hope that their kite can keep flying. They also write checks to each other's accounts, drawing on their own empty accounts. Nell writes something that supports

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227. The book's index refers to Jefferson on pages 72-75, 86, 92, 97, 99, 109, 129-30, 160, 169. They refer to Benjamin Franklin on pages 14, 30, 41, 51, 72-73, 107, 109, 113, 117, 156.



Marsden's conclusions; Marsden writes something that seems to support NoII. Hatch closed his only account the year he opened it, in 1977, but still dutifully co-signs the other man's checks, and also runs the checks back and forth between their banks. When things get really desperate, they call in Woodbridge to cover a check or two. To the outsider who has never had an accounting course, they all look rich. After all, they all drive nice cars and have credit cards from three dozen oil companies.

Eventually, all check kiting schemes collapse. Then all the checks are returned, marked "insufficient funds." My offense in all this is to expose the scheme by calling on all their readers to demand payment in cash. Let us hope that their next co-operative endeavor will not be counterfeiting.

### *Slow Learners*

I write in this book's Conclusion that Christians seem to learn more slowly than their opponents during the "waking up phase" of any era. While our enemies are "sealing the tomb" to prevent us from faking the resurrection which they fear above all (Matt. 27:62-66), we Christians are fleeing from the scene of judgment in confusion. Christ's power-holding enemies need not fear our efforts ! The only thing that saves Christians is that God does direct every event in history, and the progressive manifestation of God's kingdom in history does take place. The first stages of this "resurrection" of Christian society take place without the awareness by Christians, let alone their public approval. Eventually, however, a minority of Christians will wake up, re-group, and begin the work of comprehensive dominion anew. We have seen this again and again in history, most notably during the Protestant Reformation — a fact of history which nearly gags Protestant leaders today, especially college-level historians.

These newly awakened Christians do not receive moral support from the Church's intellectual leaders of the sleeping phase; the latter have too much of their personal and intellectual capital invested in the dying world of the sealed tomb. Like the Hebrew assistants to the Egyptian taskmasters, or like the slave "trustees" of the Southern plantation system, those who bear the tenured whip in the name of the slave-masters resent any signs of God's deliverance in history. Such deliverance calls both their certification and their source of income into question. They prefer that their fellow-slaves content

themselves with hymn-singing on Sunday. In our day, only the humanists are officially authorized to sing ‘We shall overcome.’ Postmillennialism is supposedly a valid earthly eschatology only for covenant-breakers.

### Conclusion

Christian political pluralist Gordon Spykman rests his case for pluralism not on the Bible but on history, since “confessional diversity or religious heterogeneity is a historical reality.” He insists that we must recognize “the dialectic that exists in history because of sin and the counter-acting effect of God’s grace; a conflict is occurring between the city of God and the city of the world, between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.”<sup>228</sup> He is quite correct, and this same tension and war existed in Old Testament Israel, in which political pluralism was forbidden by God’s revealed law. Strangers in the gate did not serve as civil judges. T. M. Moore, commenting on Spykman’s presentation, remarks that “his belief that history provides ultimate norms — creational norms — which should direct our interpretation of the Bible. Yet such an approach exalts the analytical powers of man’s mind above the plain words of the text of Scripture and ignores the supremacy of God’s revelation over mere human interpretations (cf. Isa. 55: 8-9; 2 Pet. 1: 20-21 ).”<sup>229</sup> The truth of this accusation applies equally well to *The Search for Christian America*.

I argue in this chapter that *The Search for Christian America* is not a serious piece of historical scholarship. Yet I also admit that our trio as individuals had previously written academically reputable books. In those earlier books and essays, the authors presented evidence that America was from the beginning a Christian nation, and that any attempt to deny these origins is comparable to Marsden’s charge against Perry Miller: an attempt to de-Christianize a self-consciously Christian people. By the time these men (like myself) reached graduate school, secular historians had done too much research showing the Christian roots of the United States. It was no longer academically respectable to promote a pure, unvarnished Progressivist version of

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<sup>228</sup> Gordon Spykman, “The Principled Pluralist Major Response,” in Gary Scott Smith (ed.), *God and Politics*, p. 248.

<sup>229</sup> T. M. Moore, “The Christian America Response to Principled Pluralism,” *ibid.*, p. 110.

history. Vernon L. Barrington was out of fashion; Perry Miller was "in." In fact, a good way for a young scholar to make his mark was to out-Miller Perry Miller's view of the Puritans, which is what Marsden did.

In short, the historical profession in the 1970's knew their primary source documents, or at least knew the story second-hand from Miller and Edmund Morgan. It was no longer possible to fool them with a tale of a humanist, pluralist America, at least up to the ratification of the Constitution. But it is quite possible to fool Christians, who are usually the products of inane public school textbooks, and whose knowledge of the primary sources is negligible. Therefore, our trio spotted an opportunity: to write a pluralist tract for the Christians, in the hope that few secular historians would ever criticize it publicly, since one does not criticize American political pluralism on today's campus, even though any historian knowledgeable regarding the sources would spot the misleading nature of this tract's thesis. What they did not count on was me.

At the beginning of this book's Introduction, I listed five problems with the philosophy of political pluralism. Let me list a sixth: *pluralism seems to lead to what can politely be termed be the "cognitive dysfunction" of its Christian defenders. When you devote your intellectual career to defending a political philosophy based on rival principles from those you espouse on Sunday morning, it turns your thought processes into the equivalent of Silly Putty.*

#### *The Forbidden Guide*

"We must be careful," our trio warns us, 'not uncritically to accept generically Christian tradition as a social-political guide. Such tradition is always mixed with other heritages and influences, so we must always test it in the refiner's fire.'<sup>230</sup> Wait a minute. What are they really saying here? What do they mean, "guide"? What other guide — what other *blueprint* — should Christians use? Why should Christians use any guide other than the guide set forth in the Bible? Why, in the name of Darwin, should we accept political pluralism as our guide?

Why should we avoid adopting a theocentric guide — a "generically Christian tradition" — as a guide to the future? So what if during the last century and a half there was a "mixed multitude" in American politics? This tells us something about the Constitution, but it tells us nothing about the covenantal foundation of America before 1788.

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230. *The Search*, p.138.

Our three historians have looked at the political results of the American melting pot without clearly identifying the Trinitarian flavor of the stew in the eighteenth century. They take an ideal of biblical law, and then they say that America never measured up. They except only the Puritans, who, we are assured, did not establish a truly Christian commonwealth. Well, so what? Neither did Israel measure up. Neither did Judah. Does this mean that neither Israel nor Judah was judged in history by God? On the contrary, *the very fact of God's historic judgments testifies to the reality of the covenant.*

The United States is still a Christian nation. It is under the covenant sanctions of God, positive and negative. It may be a Christian nation in the sense that Israel was a covenanted nation just before the Assyrians invaded, or as Judah was when Nebuchadnezzar's forces had surrounded the city, but this does not deny the covenant. These three men have looked at the evidence and have rejected it. Yet the very imperfection of the American people's subsequent commitment to this historic covenant is what now threatens us: *a broken covenant is nonetheless a covenant when it comes to the question of God's negative sanctions in history.* It is this that our three scholars have devoted their careers to denying.

#### *Broken Covenants*

A man who publicly denies his baptismal vows is surely under the negative sanctions of that covenant, even though he is no longer a Christian. He no longer has legal access to the communion table, which is a blessing removed from him. A husband who commits adultery and is subsequently divorced by his wife is surely under the negative sanctions of the original marriage covenant, even though he is no longer married. He no longer has legal access to her bed, which is a blessing removed from him. Presumably, our trio admits this. But then it comes to the civil covenant, and they call, "King's X." They mean King Man. No covenant here! No negative sanctions here! Pluralist man gets endless access to the land, a blessing of the covenant, only now this no longer has anything to do with positive covenantal sanctions. Access to the land is said to be covenantally *neutral*, or covenantally irrelevant, which is the same thing.

And so, to use the analogy of the marriage covenant, they call their fellow Christians to continue to commit political adultery as a way of life — in fact, the only legitimate way of life. Don't worry about God's negative sanctions in history, they assure us. He doesn't do any of that "Old Testament stuff" any more.

Yet men worry about nuclear war. "We could blow up the whole world !" Indeed, we could. King Man can commit the crime of attempted regicide. More to the point strategically, the Soviet Union could blow us up with little (and daily declining) threat of effective military retaliation. 231 Man's negative sanctions are a real threat to man these days. Man worries about man's sanctions. To which Jesus replied: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). And how do we know that such a final negative sanction is possible? Because we are given preliminary sanctions: "And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God" (Deut. 8:19-20).

The Canaanites did not inherit the land of Israel; the Roman Empire did, and then the Christians, and then the Arabs. God will not "give America back to the Indians," either. He may give it to the Communists, and then to someone else. God is not mocked.

#### *A Time for Historical Revisionism*

I agree with our trio's viewpoint regarding the American Christian political tradition after 1789. By law (Article VI, Clause 3), it has been formally based on political pluralism at the national level (see Part 3: "Apostate Covenantalism"). Political pluralism has progressively become the traditional political philosophy in most Christian circles. I also agree that a mythical view of the Christianity of the Constitution's primary promoters must not be uncritically accepted any longer. And surely it is our responsibility to test the story of the Constitution "in the refiner's fire." But this is where I part company with our trio. We disagree over the nature of this fire. What is this refiner's fire? *Biblical law*.

If not biblical law, then what?

I know. The ethical insights of H. Richard Niebuhr.<sup>232</sup> Forgive me if I adopt a different blueprint, for I am not a member of either the Rhode Island wilderness school of American historiography or the Shimei school.

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<sup>231</sup> Arthur Robinson and Gary North, *Fighting Chance: Ten Feet to Survival* (Ft. Worth, Texas: American Bureau of *Economic* Research, 1986).

<sup>232</sup> See Appendix A: "The Authority of H. Richard Niebuhr."

Through the maze of dialectic with which the covenant theologians rephrased conventional tenets runs one consistent purpose: they were endeavoring to mark off an area of human behavior from the general realm of nature, and within it to substitute for the rule of necessity a rule of freedom. They were striving to push as far into the background as possible the order of things that exists by inevitable equilibrium, that is fulfilled by unconscious and aimless motions, that is determined by inertia and inexorable law, and in its place to set up an order founded upon voluntary choice, upon the deliberate assumption of obligation, upon unconstrained pacts, upon the sovereign determinations of free wills. They were struggling to extricate man from the relentless primordial mechanism, from the chains of instinct and fear, to set him upon his own feet, to endow him with a knowledge of utility and purpose, with the faculties to implement his knowledge, so that he might rationally choose and not be driven from pillar to post by fate or circumstance. They were inspired, even though but half conscious of their motive, with a desire to transform the concept of duty from something imposed brutally and irrationally by an ultimate datum into something to which man himself rationally and willingly consented. Obedience was no longer to be wrung from subjects by might, but accepted as a spontaneous token; a man was to be good or bad, not because he could never have been otherwise, but because he whole-heartedly preferred his course. Certainty in human affairs was to rest not upon inexplicable decrees but upon the seal that attested the sworn covenant and insured the fulfillment of covenant terms.

Perry Miller (1939)”

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\*Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, [1939] 1954), p. 398,

## CONCLUSION, PART 2

*The Christian is to resist the spirit of the world. But when we say this, we must understand that the world-spirit does not always take the same form. So the Christian must resist the spirit of the world in the form it takes in his own generation. If he does not do this, he is not resisting the spirit of the world at all. This is especially so for our generation, as the forces at work against us are of such a total nature.*

*Francis Schaeffer (1968)1*

The spirit of this world has for almost two millennia clouded Christian philosophy by means of the doctrine of natural law. The Church has adopted variations of an intensely pagan philosophy based on neutrality, universal categories of reason, and the Greek idea of salvation through knowledge: “know thyself.” It has overlaid these doctrines on top of Paul’s discussion of universal categories of *ethics* in the human heart:

For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel (Rom. 2:11-16).

What Paul taught was this: all men have been given sufficient internal revelation of God — the image of God in man — to condemn

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1. *The God Who Is There (1968)*; in *The Complete Works of Francis A Schaefer*, 5 vols. (Westchester, Illinois: Westchester, 1982), I, p. 11.

them eternally. "Know thyself" gets you into hell, not heaven. This light of internal revelation, through God's restraining grace ("common grace"), enables human society to function in history. God does not allow men to become totally consistent with their own covenant-breaking presuppositions.<sup>2</sup> But to the extent that men become consistent with their covenant-breaking religions, they depart from this testimony of God's ethical standards. Thus, natural law theory as a concept separated from biblical revelation is like every other doctrine separated from biblical revelation: wrong. The outline of autonomous law is wrong; the judicial content is also wrong.

Darwinism destroyed natural law theory. Secular scholars very seldom take seriously the tradition of natural rights. (A handful of libertarian **anarcho-capitalists** do.) Only in the twentieth century have we seen a few systematic efforts by Calvinistic Christians to abandon natural law and "natural rights theories. But they have not "gone the distance" in abandoning natural law, for to do so automatically and necessarily delivers society into either judicial chaos or theocracy. Christians do not want either alternative. Thus, they are given larger and larger doses of moral chaos, interspersed with periods of arbitrary tyranny. This is all that the philosophy of autonomous man has ever been able to deliver in theory, and what it is now delivering in practice.

We have seen in the writings of Van Til, Schaeffer, and the trio of historians – Nell, Hatch, and Marsden – variations of the same theme: the illegitimacy of at least three and probably four points of the biblical civil covenant. They do not explain the details of biblical civil hierarchy: the mutual representation of God and His covenant people – God before men and men before God – by civil magistrates. They reject the Old Testament-revealed civil law-order, the historical sanctions attached to this law-order, and the postmillennial implications of these historic sanctions. What is then left of the idea of the biblical covenant in civil government? Nothing concrete. Not biblical law, not natural law (our Calvinist scholars are too sophisticated epistemologically for that), not Newtonian law, not existentialist law — nothing. The category of civil law is open-ended.

This is a denial of covenant theology. Nothing is ethically open-ended in history. All of man's history is under the ethical terms of the

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2. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 6.



three God-ordained covenants. Van Til and Schaeffer knew this; their commitment to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms made it impossible for them to evade the covenantal implications of their faith. Van Til systematically and steadfastly refused to comment on the judicial and civil implications of his complete demolishing of the supposedly neutral reasoning abilities of self-professed autonomous man. Schaeffer was unwilling to follow Van Til in this absolute rejection of the reasoning of covenant-breaking man. He repeatedly returned to the natural law-natural rights language of the American Constitutional settlement. He went searching for a self-attesting, common-ground “true rationality.”<sup>3</sup> He did not find it. Neither did his son nor C. Everett Koop.

Van Til and Schaeffer forgot the key rule: *there is no neutrality*. They also forgot the other rule: “You can’t beat something with nothing.”

Conservative American Christians in recent years have tried to overcome their obvious judicial dilemma — neither theocracy nor humanist law — by appealing back to the original U.S. Constitution. We need to examine in detail the success or failure of such an appeal.

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3. Schaeffer, *Complete Works*, I, p. 123.

**Part 3**  
**APOSTATE**  
**COVENANTALISM**

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD. Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not. And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye setup altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble (Jer. 11:1-15).

## INTRODUCTION, PART 3

*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces 'all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD (Ex.19:4-8).*

In the fall of 1965, I took a graduate seminar on the American Revolution. The instructor was a visiting professor from a nearby college, Douglass Adair. I had not heard of him when I began that seminar; I have heard about him many times ever since. That seminar was a marvelous academic experience in a world of infrequent marvelous experiences. The most memorable aspect of it was the day he asked a pair of questions that have been in the back of my mind — and occasionally at the front — ever since. The first question was: Who taught the tutors of the members of the Virginia dynasty? And the second question was like unto it: What books did the members of that dynasty read?

He did not answer these questions in great detail, but the general answers he suggested were these: the tutors, more often than not, were taught in some Scottish university, and the books they assigned to their students were the books of the Scottish Enlightenment. Right or wrong, these are the sorts of questions that historians ought to be asking.

### Who Were the “Founders”?

But there is a more fundamental question, one that I am asking here: Who were these, and what, exactly, did they found?

Two covenantal institutions today are characterized by this question: Church and State. In clan societies, the family also must answer this question, but there are few clan societies remaining in the West. To ask this question regarding the founders is to ask a distinctly covenantal question. And a covenantal question always has five essential and inescapable parts in relation to founding:

1. On whose authority did the Founder act?
2. What kind of authority did the Founder impose?
3. What were the boundaries that he established?
4. What kind of sanctions does his institution impose?
5. What are the connecting links between him and us?

In a church, the answer to the first question is clear: on God's authority. Second, the Founder imposed a church hierarchy. Third, the church has boundaries, which are theological and legal. Fourth, most churches have membership lists, and therefore sanctions. The church's primary sanction is excommunication: cutting off a deviant member from access to the Lord's Supper (communion). Churches with open communion and no membership roles adopt other, less visible and less clear forms of sanctions, but there are always positive and negative sanctions in any organization. Finally, the question of membership. The link between the Founder and today's member may be confessional (in creedal churches), emotional, liturgical, or legal (membership), or any mixture thereof. In the case of immigrant churches, it may be linguistic or racial.

Nations have an analogous set of questions. First, in whose name did the Founder act? His own (the charismatic leader)? His family's (patriarchal-traditional)? The Party's (ideological)? God's (theological)? Nature's (rational)? Someone had to authorize it. There had to be an *author*.

Second, what is the nature of the national organization's hierarchy? What is the basis of obedience? Personal allegiance (military-patriarchal)? Theocratic investiture (theocracy)? Public investiture (democracy)? The leader's office (bureaucracy)?

Third, what are the boundaries of political authority? Boundaries are both geographical and legal. In other words, what are the limits of political authority?

Fourth, what are the positive and negative sanctions of government? Are they essentially negative (limited government)? Positive (welfare State)? A mixture? The basic question is this: In what ways

do leaders encourage *self-government*, since the consent of the governed is always necessary.

Finally, the question of succession or continuity. This is the question of rulership and citizenship. What is the legal basis of transition, ruler to ruler, citizen to citizen? Birth? Legal adoption? Election? Naturalization? People are born and they die. They move. They change allegiances. Societies and civil governments must deal with these facts of life and death. To do so, they create judicially binding public events, events that are best understood as acts of covenant renewal. An election is an act of covenant renewal. So is swearing an oath of office. *Especially* swearing an oath of office, for the oath explicitly or implicitly calls down the negative sanctions of the covenant, should the swearer break the legal terms of the covenant.

### Covenantalism: An Inescapable Concept

This section of *Political Polytheism* deals primarily with the political and judicial implications of point four of the biblical covenant model: oaths/sanctions. This is not to say that none of the other points is involved. A covenant is presented to men as a unit, and it is either accepted or rejected as a unit. When we deal with any of God's covenant institutions, we must consider all five aspects of the biblical covenant model. Following Ray Sutton's model, <sup>1</sup>I divide up the covenant into these five points:

Transcendence (sovereignty), yet immanence (presence)  
 Hierarchy/authority/representation  
 Ethics/law/dominion  
 Oath/judgment/sanctions (blessings, cursings)  
 Succession/continuity/inheritance

All three of the authorized corporate covenant institutions – Church government, family government, and civil government – must bear the institutional marks of these five points. There is no escape. All five are basic to each of the covenant institutions. The covenant may identify a god different from the God of the Bible, but the covenant structure itself is inescapable. There can be no government apart from this structure. The covenant is an inescapable concept. It is never a question of “covenant vs. no covenant .” It is

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1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

always a question of *which* covenant. More to the point, it is a question of *which sovereign master*.

Because Western Protestantism ever since the late seventeenth century has cooperated with the forces of rationalism in abandoning the original covenantal foundations of Western civilization, we still face a 300-year-old dilemma. It is most acute in the United States, where vestiges of the older covenantal Christianity still remain, and where the conflict between covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers has visibly escalated since about 1975. American Church historian Sidney Mead stated the nature of the intellectual problem, which has now begun to assert itself as a cultural and political problem – an ancient one in American history. Writing in 1953, he observed:

But the great item of unfinished intellectual business confronting the Protestant denominations was and is the problem of religious freedom. And here the situation is almost as desperate as increasingly it becomes clear that the problem cannot be solved simply by maligning the character of those who question the American practice.

Is it not passing strange that American Protestantism has never developed any sound theoretical justification of or theological orientation for its most distinctive practice? Today we should probably have to agree with the writer of 1876 who said that “we seem to have made no advance whatever in harmonizing (on a theoretical level) the relations of religious sects among themselves, or in defining their common relation to the Civil power.”<sup>2</sup>

Part 3 of *Political Polytheism* asks the question: To what extent is the U.S. Constitution a covenant document? If I can show that it is a covenant document, then a second question arises: What kind of covenant, Christian or secular humanist? To answer these two questions, I shall present a considerable quantity of historical material, much of it unfamiliar even to professional historians unless they are specialists in colonial American history and eighteenth-century religious controversies. I was trained professionally in the former field, yet what I discuss in this section was never mentioned in any graduate seminar I ever took or any book I ever read in the 1960's. The

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2. Sidney E. Mead, “American Protestantism During the Revolutionary Epoch,” *Church History*, XXII (1953); reprinted in *Religion in American History: Interpretive Essays*, edited by John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 175; citing J. L. Diman, “Religion in America, 1776 -1876,” *North American Review*, CXXII (Jan. 1876), p. 42. Mead also cites the views of Wilhelm Pauck, “Theology in the Life of Contemporary American Protestantism,” *Shane Quarterly*, XIII (April 1952), pp. 37-50.

source materials, both primary and secondary, did exist, but they had been long forgotten.

In this section, I argue that the Constitution's Framers were not the nation's Founding Fathers. Though I do not develop the theme extensively, it is my view that Gov. John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony rather than George Washington deserves the title of Founding Father. So, however, does Roger Williams, for because of Williams, George Washington and the Framers became politically possible. I argue that the Constitution, like the charter of colonial Rhode Island, is a substitute covenant. This is not the standard textbook account of the Constitution, or a standard anything account. But it is a true account, assuming that the Bible is true. I assume that it is.

Warren Burger, the former Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, has offered his opinion that "The United States, as a true nation, was conceived in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, but it was not yet born until the document was ratified."<sup>3</sup> This sentence summarizes what I call the myth of the Constitution as the sole covenantal basis of the nation we call the United States of America. I contend that this myth is the legacy of a humanist conspiracy — a conspiracy which may be about to be escalated once again.

The Declaration of Independence of the United States against Great Britain in 1776 was a formal declaration of political independence. It was the first step in a more important Declaration of Independence: a covenantal declaration of independence from the God of the Bible. That latter declaration is the document we know as the U. S. Constitution. To prove my point, I have written Part 3.

I focus on the crucial but much-neglected section of the Constitution, the one prohibiting religious test oath's: "The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all the executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States" (Article 111, Clause 3). This seemingly innocuous provision was and is far more important than the First Amendment in establishing the religious character of the

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3. Warren E. Burger, Foreword, Patrick T. Conley and John P. Kaminski (eds.), *The Constitution and the States: The Role of the Original Thirteen in the Framing and Adoption of the Federal Constitution* (Madison, Wisconsin: Madison House, 1988), p. vii.



American nation, yet it is seldom discussed, even by specialists in Constitutional theory. The quiet revolution which this provision accomplished is still equally quiet, two centuries after the revolution began. As **Garet Garrett** said, speaking of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930's and early 1940's, "the revolution was."

### Historiography

There is no neutrality. One's presuppositions about the nature of God, man, law, and time<sup>4</sup> shape one's interpretation of all facts. There is no brute **factuality**, as **Van Til** always insisted; there is only interpreted **factuality**.

The history of the origins of the U.S. Constitution in the twentieth century has been a debate between the old Whig view — an instrument written by men who sought to increase human liberty — and the **economic-Marxist-Beardian** view: a document written by a particular economic class of men who were seeking economic advantage. There has also been a modified Tory view, represented by the "imperial" histories written by men like **Charles M. Andrews** and **Lawrence H. Gipson**, who argue that things really were not so bad, 1763-75, and that the disputes could have been worked out between the colonies and Great Britain within the framework of the imperial system. The Whig view, however, has predominated. This view goes back to the very era of the Constitution itself, to South Carolinian **David Ramsey**. There have been wide variations within this tradition, reflecting the divisions within the Constitutional Convention: big government (**Hamiltonian Federalist**), limited government (**Jeffersonian republican**), and states' rights. To put it bluntly, the winners write the history books, and even the losers (e. g., **Alexander H. Stephens**' *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States*) wind up siding with some faction within the camp of earlier winners.

This study of the Constitution is an exception to the rule. I am writing from the perspective of the real losers, the ones whose case is virtually never even considered, let alone defended. I am arguing the case from the point of view of the Founders of America, the Puritan's. It was they who steadily lost the battle, beginning with the restoration of **Charles II** to the throne in 1660. It took over a century for this defeat to be consummated by the ratification of the U.S.

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4. **Gary North**, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* (3rd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), Part 1.

Constitution. They had basically lost the war by 1684, marked by the revocation of the Massachusetts charter under Charles II, who died in 1685. After the Glorious Revolution against James II — a Whig revolution — of 1688-89, Massachusetts was granted a new royal charter (1691), but one which was no longer Puritan in origin. Voting henceforth was regulated strictly in terms of property ownership, not religion. Covenantally speaking, the lawyers and the merchants inherited the Puritan commonwealth.

### The Rhode Island Experiment

Theologically and even covenantally, this was not the beginning of the battle; this was the beginning of the end. The first skirmish in the struggle to create the modern world was in the winter of 1636, when Roger Williams fled Massachusetts and headed into the wilderness of what was to become Rhode Island. Williams successfully created a new colony, but it was far more than a new colony; it was a new concept of civil government. It was a concept that has become dominant today — the very distinguishing mark of modernism. He founded a colony that was openly secular; there would be no Church-State connection, or even a religion-State connection.

In 1642, the General Court of Rhode Island organized a new government. It required an oath of office from magistrates to “walk faithfully” and taken “in the presence of God.”<sup>5</sup> There was no other mention of religion. The colony’s civil government was formally recognized as “a democracy, or popular government .”<sup>6</sup> In March of 1644 (old calendar, 1643), Charles I granted a charter to the Providence Plantations. In response, in 1647, acts and orders were agreed upon. The colony was again identified as “democratical,” meaning “a government held by the free and voluntary consent of all, or the greater part of the free inhabitants.”<sup>7</sup> It admitted the existence of “our different consciences touching the truth as it is in Jesus,” and affirmed “each man’s peaceable and quiet enjoyment of his lawful right and liberty. . . .”<sup>8</sup> They enacted civil laws and sanctions for various crimes, including murder, rebellion, misbehavior, witch-

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5. “Organization of the Government of Rhode Island, March 16-19, 1641/42,” in W. Keith Kavenaugh (ed.), *Foundations of Colonial America: A Documental History*, 3 vols. (New York: Chelsea House, 1973), I, p. 343.

6. *Idem.*

7. *Ibid.*, I, p. 347.

8. *Idem.*

craft, adultery, fornication, perjury, kidnapping, whoremongering, etc. They did not, as had been done in Massachusetts, identify these crimes as crimes listed in the Old Testament, with passages cited (e.g., Massachusetts' Body of Liberties, 1641). Instead, they made this statement:

These are the laws that concern all men, and these are the penalties for transgression thereof, which, by common assent, and ratified and established throughout the whole colony; and otherwise than thus what is herein forbidden, all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, everyone in the name of his god. And let the saints of the most high walk in this colony without molestation in the name of Jehovah, their God for ever and ever, etc., etc. <sup>8</sup>

This meant, however, that non-saints had the same civil powers and immunities, that they, too, could walk in the colony without molestation, and more to the point covenantally, vote in all colonial elections, "everyone in the name of his god," or lack thereof.

In 1663, Charles II, as a self-identified Christian monarch, granted to them in the name of "the true Christian ffaith," a special dispensation: they would not have to worship God according to the Church of England, "or take or subscribe the oaths and articles made and established in that behalfe; . . ." The charter then adopted language that was to be repeated again and again in the next hundred years of charter-granting and constitution-making: ". . . noe person within the sayd colonye, at any tyme hereafter, shall bee any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called into question, for any differences in opinione in matters of religion, and doe not actually disturb the civill peace of our sayd colony: . . ." <sup>10</sup> This he called a "hopefull undertakeinge."<sup>11</sup> The charter mentioned "the good Providence of God, from whome the Plantations have taken their name,"<sup>12</sup> but that was a mere formality; the heart of the experiment was judicial. What is remarkable in retrospect — and what has become standard fare in making the case for modern Christian pluralism — was the King's express hope that by severing the colony's civil government from religion, the settlers "may bee in the better capacity to defend them-

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9. *Ibid.*, I, p. 349.

10. "Charter of Rhode Island and the Providence Plantation, July 8, 1663," *ibid.*, I, p. 121.

11. *Ibid.*, I, p. 120.

12. *Idem.*

selves, in their just rights and liberties against all the enemies of the Christian faith, and others, in all respects .“<sup>13</sup>

On August 8, 1989, the legacy of Roger Williams' experiment in civil religious neutrality came to consistent fruition. The State Division of Taxation of the state of Rhode Island granted tax exemption to the religion of witchcraft. All covens in the state must henceforth be treated for tax purposes as any other legitimate church.

### Conclusion

It is my contention – argued, many will say, contentiously– that the experiment in political pluralism in the Rhode Island wilderness set the standard for all modern political developments. It was the first civil order in the West to break with the concept of Trinitarian civil covenantalism. This tiny colony, established self-consciously as an alternative to the theocracy of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was the birthplace of modern political pluralism. More than this, I contend that the major arguments in defense of Christian political pluralism invariably sound like those used by Williams to justify his opposition to, and departure from, Massachusetts.

The political history of the United States after 1689 has essentially been the extension of Roger Williams' view of civil government, as opposed to John Winthrop's.<sup>14</sup> The defenders of democracy have not often quoted either man, but they have quoted Williams more often. Williams and his colleagues laid the covenantal foundations for modern democracy, but they have not been given sufficient credit for their pioneering effort. Modern defenders of democracy prefer to avoid naming Jesus in their defenses of political pluralism. They are therefore far more consistent in their understanding of the theology of pluralism. It is mainly Christian defenders of political pluralism who are drawn to Williams these days.

But if Rhode Island was not the explicit political-theological representative model in eighteenth-century colonial America, what was? We must begin therefore with the question: What were the religious and intellectual roots of the U.S. Constitution?

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13. *Ibid.*, I, p. 121.

14. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958).

It is only against the background of the Old World Enlightenment that we can appreciate the political achievements of the men who were to be immortalized as Founding Fathers of the new Republic, their resourcefulness, their ingenuity, their wisdom, their sagacity, their virtue. Where most of the philosopher of the Old World were recruited from Naturalists and doctors and ecclesiastics — how the Abbé's disported themselves in the pages of the Encyclopedia! — in America most of them were students of the law. Law was the common denominator of Jefferson and Madison, of George Mason who wrote Virginia's famous Bill of Rights and George Wythe who presided over her highest court, of Alexander Hamilton and of John Jay, of John Adams who was the chief justice of his state (he never took office, to be sure) and Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut, and the American Blackstone, James Wilson, and his fellow commentator on the Constitution, Nathaniel Chipman of Vermont, and the two brilliant Pinckneys of South Carolina, and even of the educator and lexicographer Noah Webster. And even those who were not trained to the law, like Franklin, Dr. Rush, and Tom Paine, were more than lawyers, they were political philosophers. It was the lawyers who had written the Declaration of Independence and the Northwest Ordinance — and it was mostly lawyers who drafted the Constitutions of the States and of the new United States. For forty years every President of the new nation, with the exception of Washington himself, and every Vice-President and Secretary of State, without exception, was a lawyer. In America politics was the universal preoccupation, legislation the universal resource, and Constitutions the universal panacea.

Henry Steele Commager (1977)\*

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\* Commager, *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 176-77.

THE THEOLOGICAL ORIGINS  
OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

*As has been noted, many men use words which to others imply a religious view not held by the speaker or writer without an awareness either of the divergence of meaning or the mixed presuppositions. Witness, for example, Rev. John Witherspoon (1722-X794), Presbyterian leader who in 1768 assumed the presidency of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University). Witherspoon taught many who later played an active role in American life. His own belief in sound money, mixed government and a division of powers was pronounced. An orthodox Calvinist, Witherspoon, without any sense of contradiction, also followed the philosophy of Thomas Reid (1710-1796), Scottish realism, using this questionable tool against Hume, Deism and French philosophers. In his Lectures on Moral Philosophy, he spoke the language of rights and reason, combining with this man-centered emphasis his own theocentric faith.*

*R. J. Rushdoony (1964)*<sup>1</sup>

Men know of Harvard and Yale, but Princeton seems to be a newcomer to the ranks of the Big Three. Not so, or at least not quite so. Princeton has had its ups and downs over the centuries, but Princeton, even before it was called Princeton, served a crucial role in American history: the transmission belt of rationalism and political liberalism into Presbyterianism. According to recent monographs on the school's history, whenever it failed to do this, it fell into a period of decline and insignificance, i.e., fell under the control by men who really did believe in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Princeton has had more well-known presidents than any school in

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1. R. J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic: Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1964] 1978), p. 3.

American history: Jonathan Edwards,<sup>2</sup> John Witherspoon, and Virginian Woodrow Wilson. Two other less famous presidents played important roles in transforming the Presbyterians: Virginian Samuel Davies, a leader in the Great Awakenings who succeeded Edwards briefly until his death, and the Scottish defender of natural law who brought "Christian" evolutionism to young Presbyterian gentlemen in the late nineteenth century, James McCosh.<sup>4</sup> If we count William Tennent's "Log College" as the predecessor of the College of New Jersey, then we should add his name to the list. Every Presbyterian clergyman except one who was prominent in the Great Awakening was a Log College man.<sup>5</sup>

I begin my discussion of apostate covenantalism where Rushdoony began his discussion of what he regards as covenantally Christian America: with Rev. John Witherspoon. He was the teacher of the man who is often called the Father of the Constitution, James Madison.<sup>6</sup> He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, the only minister of the gospel to do so.

Witherspoon serves as perhaps the best example in the history of the Christian Church as a man who defended a halfway covenant philosophy and subsequently pressed for an apostate national covenant. He was the most prominent clergyman in the colonies during the Revolutionary War. He was hated by the British. When British troops captured Rev. John Rosborough, they bayoneted him on the spot, thinking that they had captured Witherspoon.<sup>7</sup> He was there-

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2. Aaron Burr was Edwards' son-in-law; Burr's father had been president of Princeton, where Burr graduated. He requested and received permission to be buried in the cemetery plot of the presidents of Princeton, although for the first twenty years, the grave went unmarked. Milton Lomask, Aaron Burr: *The Conspiracy and Years of Exile, 1805-1836* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), pp. 404-5.

3. It was during a college fund-raising tour in England with Gilbert Tennent in 1755 that Davies presented his civil case for religious toleration of dissenting churches in Virginia, which Davies won. This subsequently increased the degree of toleration for colonial dissenters generally. This was probably the most significant college fund-raising program in American history. See the entry for Davies in *Dictionary of American Religious Biography*, edited by Henry Warren Bowden (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977).

4. J. David Hoeveler, Jr., *James McCosh and the Scottish Intellectual Tradition: From Glasgow to Princeton* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981). After he retired, McCosh wrote a biography of Witherspoon (1890).

5. *Dictionary*, entry under William Tennent, p. 459.

6. For example, Neal Riemer, *James Madison: Creating the American Constitution* (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1986).

7. James Hastings Nichols, "John Witherspoon on Church and State," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, XLVII (Sept. 1964), pp. 166-67.

fore *the* representative of the Church in that era. He did not merely sign the Declaration of Independence; he symbolically signed his brightest student's 200-year (or more) jail sentence for the American Church.

Witherspoon, in the name of Calvin's God, substituted Locke's compact theory of civil government for biblical covenantalism: society as contractual, not covenantal. He did not distinguish society from the State. "Society I would define to be an association or compact of any number of persons, to deliver up or abridge some part of their natural rights, in order to have the strength of the united body, to protect the remaining, and to bestow others."<sup>8</sup> Sovereign men agree with each other to set up a hierarchy, to pass and enforce laws, and to bestow rights on others in the future. Here is the Lockean covenant in all its autonomous grandeur. Society is a "voluntary compact" among equals. <sup>9</sup>Most important, his discussion of oaths was limited strictly to contracts (person to person) and vows: personal promises between God and an individual. Oaths, he says, "are appendages to all lawful contracts; . . ." <sup>10</sup> He did not discuss covenants as oath-bound contracts among men in which God is the enforcing party. Had he done so, he would have had to abandon Locke and the whole Whig tradition.

Witherspoon made the assumption that there is a common sense logical realism that links the logical processes of all men, Christians and non-Christians. He appealed to this common sense realism in his defense of the Christian faith. This was the heritage of eighteenth-century Scottish rationalism, the birthplace of the right wing of the Enlightenment.

Because he believed that there is such a realm of neutral human reason, it was easy for Witherspoon to fall into the trap of believing in common principles of political philosophy. After all, this was the common error of a generation of level-headed Scots who were in the

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8. John Witherspoon, *An Annotated Edition of Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, edited by Jack Scott (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982), Lecture 10, p. 123.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 124. Slavery was a problem for him, and he took the view that original slavery is only valid for those captured in war or lawfully punished as criminals (pp. 125-26). Here we see the Old Testament's influence, not Locke's. But we are not obligated to release them, once we find them in slavery. Here we see everyone else's influence in the history of man except the Quakers after 1770, not the New Testament's. See Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 4: "A Biblical Theology of Slavery."

10. *Ibid.*, Lecture 16: "Of Oaths and Vows," p. 177.



process of reshaping the intellectual heritage of Western civilization. It was the most common cultural error of eighteenth-century English-speaking Protestantism. It was also the most devastating; it led to the transfer of political and judicial authority to the humanists. Yet Rushdoony adds this cryptic evaluation: "This confusion, however, was slight in contrast to other phenomena of the American scene ." On the contrary, this was the heart of that confusion, a confusion which led to the public breaking of the civil covenants of the first century and a half of American political life. That Rushdoony did not see how devastating the results of this confusion were points to an almost equally great confusion on Rushdoony's part. (See Appendix B.)

Without citing his source, Rushdoony says that Witherspoon trained many of the future leaders of the new nation. They included a president (James Madison), a Vice President (Aaron Burr), 10 cabinet officers, 21 U.S. Senators, 39 congressmen, and 12 governors. He could have added that six served in the Continental Congress and 56 served in state legislatures. Furthermore, of the 25 college graduates at the Constitutional Convention, nine were Princetonians and six had Witherspoon's signature on their diplomas.<sup>11</sup> The magnitude of what these men did — breaking the civil covenants of the original colonial settlement — testifies to the catastrophic confusion in Witherspoon's system.

Madison, after remaining in New Jersey to study with Witherspoon for an extra year, returned to Virginia and vowed to devote his life to overturning the religious oaths required to hold public office in Virginia, a task that he and Jefferson achieved in early 1786. He was not in revolt against his teacher; he was applying what he had been taught, as he continued to do for the remainder of his career.<sup>12</sup> The next year, he did much better (or worse) than this: he made illegal any such oath at the national level. Yet it was Witherspoon who had introduced him to the writings of the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers through his syllabus on "Moral Philosophy": David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Thomas Reid, Lord Kames, and Adam Ferguson. It was these writings, he later said, that had brought him to his views on civil and religious liberty,<sup>13</sup> i.e., apostate covenantalism.

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11. Varnum Lansing Collins, *President Witherspoon*, 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press, [1925] 1969), II, p. 229.

12. James H. Smylie, "Madison and Witherspoon: Theological Roots of American Political Thought," *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, XXII (Spring 1961).

13. Douglass Adair, "James Madison," in Willard Thorpe (ed.), *The Lives of Eighteen from Princeton* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 141-42.

### Who Taught the Lawyers?

William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* was published in 1765. Almost immediately, it became the standard textbook for apprentices in law in the American colonies. It is occasionally referred to in American history textbooks, but it is seldom read today.

In retrospect, it seems strange that we should identify him as the teacher of American colonial lawyers. He was a staunch defender of the absolute judicial sovereignty of Parliament; any law that was physically possible for Parliament to enforce was valid law, he insisted. In short, he denied his other operating presupposition: the binding authority of natural law. Americans paid less and less attention to this aspect of Blackstone's theories as the Revolution approached and then broke out. They took what they liked from his system and ignored the rest.

To answer the question, "In whose authority did the Framers act?" we need first to go to Blackstone. The *Commentaries* provide an official answer, yet one which hides a far more important clue as to the nature of the Constitutional covenant and its true author. In one of the few passages comprehensible to readers who are not intimately familiar with the intricacies of the English common law up to 1765, Blackstone wrote:

This law of nature, being co-eval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times: no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this; and such of them as are valid derive all their force, and all their authority, mediately or immediately, from this original.

But in order to apply this to the particular exigencies of each individual, it is still necessary to have recourse to reason; whose office it is to discover, as was before observed, what the law of nature directs in every circumstance of life; by considering, what method will tend the most effectually to our own substantial happiness.<sup>14</sup>

Blackstone said that he believed in a literal ethical fall of a literal man. The fall of man had corrupted human reason. "And if our reason were always, as in our first ancestor before his transgression,

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14. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1765] 1979), 1, *The Rights of Persons*, p. 41. This is a facsimile reproduction of the first edition. This set was first printed in the American colonies in 1771.

clear and perfect, unruffled by passions, unclouded by prejudice, unimpaired by disease or intemperance, the task would be pleasant and easy; we should need no other guide but this. But every man now finds the contrary in his own experience; that his reason is corrupt, and his understanding full of ignorance and error.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, God gave us revelation regarding His law in the Bible. “The doctrines thus delivered we call the revealed or divine law, and they are to be found only in the holy scriptures.”<sup>16</sup>

He went so far as to argue that “the revealed law is (humanly speaking) of infinitely more authority than what we generally call the natural law.” He based this conclusion on the weakness of human reason to understand the natural law. Revealed law is more certain. “If we could be as certain of the latter as we are of the former, both would have an equal authority; but, till then, they can never be put in any competition together.”<sup>17</sup>

#### *Undermining Biblical Law*

Having said this, he then spent four volumes describing English common law with only a few footnote references to the Bible. In the first three volumes, running almost 500 pages each, each has one footnote reference to the Bible. The fourth volume, on criminal law (*Public Wrongs*), has ten references. Not one of them was taken by Blackstone as authoritative for civil law; they were seen merely as historical examples. There is not a single reference to “Bible,” “Moses,” or “Revelation” in the set’s index.

How could this be if he was persuaded that biblical law and natural law are the same, but with biblical law so much clearer to us? Blackstone’s preliminary remarks were commonplaces for the era. Englishmen commonly tipped the brims of their epistemological caps to God and the Bible, but they did not take off their caps in the presence of God. They pursued their academic specialties just as Christians do today: with no systematic study of what biblical law specifically reveals regarding those disciplines. It was considered sufficient for Blackstone to have formally equated biblical law with natural law. Having done so, he could then safely ignore biblical law.

This common equation of biblical law with natural law faced two monumental problems in the eighteenth century: ‘1) the continuing

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15. *Idem.*

16. *Ibid.*, I, p. 42.

17. *Idem.*

negative legacy of the English Civil War, 1640-60, in which the various Christian churches and sects had failed to agree on much of anything, a social and political experiment which ended with the restoration of Charles II; 2) the intellectual legacy of Isaac Newton, which had created a blinding illusion of the near-perfectibility of reason's ability to discern the perfect laws of nature in the physical world, and which therefore held out hope that this could also be accomplished in the moral and social realms.<sup>18</sup> This dual legacy indicated that biblical revelation — or at least men's understanding of that revelation — was far less certain as a guide to human action than unaided, unregenerate reason. Biblical higher criticism was a century old in English religious thought and *politics* by the time Blackstone wrote his *Commentaries*.<sup>19</sup> Thus, by the time that the *Commentaries* appeared, the foundation of his defense of the superiority of biblical law to natural law — the greater clarity of biblical revelation compared to reason's perception of natural law — was not believed by most men who called themselves educated.

This raises another question: Was Blackstone in fact deliberately lying? In a perceptive essay by David Berman, we learn of a strategy that had been in use for over almost a century: combatting a position by supporting it with arguments that are so weak that they in fact prove the opposite. This was a tactic used by those who did not believe in immortality to promote their skepticism. Berman makes a very shrewd observation regarding academic historians and scholars: "Most of us do not like liars or lying; nor are we inclined to accept conspiracy theories or explanations that postulate secret codes or cabals. These aversions may explain why the art of theological lying has been so generally ignored. . . . "2° There is at least reasonable suspicion that Blackstone was lying; if he was not, then he was naive beyond description, for his lame defense of biblical revelation greatly assisted the political triumph of the enemies of Christianity in the American colonies.

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18. Louis I. Bredvold, *The Brave New World of the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

19. Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, [1980] 1984; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). This neglected book is a gold mine of information on English political philosophy through the mid-eighteenth century.

20. David Berman, "Deism, Immortality, and the Art of Theological Lying," in J. A. Leo Lemay (ed.), *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1987), p. 61.

By 1765, the Newtonian view of the authority of universal reason had long-since transformed English political thought.<sup>21</sup> In this chapter, we will explore the background of this monumental intellectual and moral transformation. This survey is necessary, in order to answer this question:

### The U.S. Constitution: Christian or Secular?

The Constitution of the United States is a unique document. It has served as the integrating legal framework for the United States for two centuries. People around the world give lip service to its greatness, although no other nation operates in terms of a constitution modeled after the U.S. Constitution. The conservative columnist Richard Grenier is correct: "It has never occurred to most Americans that their Republic – the first democratic state on a national scale — adopted a Constitution that has been taken seriously as an enduring model by nobody. I said, nobody."<sup>22</sup> While other nations have sometimes attempted to rewrite their national governments in terms of it, some *coup* comes, or some revolution, and sweeps away any traces of the imported document. The Constitution apparently cannot be successfully exported. It was the product of a unique set of historical circumstances that cannot be duplicated, circumstances so fundamental to the coming of the Constitution that without them, the document cannot operate successfully.

It is not surprising that many present-day religious and political groups in the United States want to take credit for it. Over a century ago, in the midst of the Civil War, B. F. Morris wrote his massive (but unfortunately unfootnoted) *Christian Life and Character of the Civil Institutions of the United States* (1864). He made a cogent case for the Christian foundations of American Constitutional history. A similar theme has been pursued by Verna Hall and Rosalie Slater in their *Christian History of the Constitution* series of reprinted primary source documents and extracts from uncopyrighted late nineteenth-century politically conservative humanist history textbooks.

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21. I am not arguing that Englishmen trusted a *priori* reason as the sole guide to human institutions; they also placed great weight on historical experience. My point is only that they placed almost zero practical weight on Old Testament law and experience, and when they cited the Old Testament, they did so because it was merely one historical source among many.

22. Richard Grenier, "A system out of balance?" *Washington Times* (July 13, 1987). I do not agree with Grenier's opening lines: "I'm tired of the U.S. Constitution. What has it done for me lately?"

*Jerusalem or Mythological Rome?*

Yet this view of the Constitution has always had its challengers, for good reasons. There was little mention of theology and ecclesiastical influences in the common textbook histories of America until the late 1930's. This change came about largely as a result of Harvard's Perry Miller and his student Edmund Morgan, who taught history at Yale. Miller rehabilitated the Puritans and early American Protestant religious ideas, beginning in the 1930's, and Morgan carried on this tradition.

The fact remains, however, that John Locke, who was a cautious Trinitarian, made no mention of Christianity in presenting the case for political liberty in his *Second Treatise of Government* (published in 1690; written around 1682).<sup>23</sup> It was to the *Second Treatise* that literate defenders of English liberties in the American colonies (but only rarely in Whig England)<sup>24</sup> appealed in the mid-eighteenth century, not to his *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*, which were non-political,<sup>25</sup> or his book, written in the last years of his life, when he returned openly to Christianity, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695).<sup>26</sup>

We find few references to the Christian religion in *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig*, the anticlerical<sup>27</sup> and libertarian English newspapers of the 1720's that became popular reading in the colonies in the 1770's, according to John Adams<sup>28</sup> and patriot historian David Ramsey.<sup>29</sup> At best, the biblical element in "Whig" political theory

23. The standard edition is Peter Laslett's: Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963; Mentor, 1965).

24. Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 85. Whigs are revolutionaries before the success of their revolutions; not afterwards. This was as true after 1789 as after 1689.

25. These manuscripts were published posthumously in 1704-7, and have been ignored by historians: *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* (5th ed.; London, 1751). Locke, in discussing chapter 2 of Galatians, affirms both God's revelation to Paul and the miracles Paul performed (p. 10, note 2). He speaks of the Holy Ghost and His bestowal of the office of apostle on Peter and Paul, 'whereby they were enabled to do Miracles for the Confirmation of their Doctrine' (p. 14, note 8).

26. For a detailed analysis of Locke's epistemology, theology, and political theory, see Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, pp. 243-85.

27. On the anticlericalism of *The Independent Whig*, see Reventlow, *ibid.*, pp. 330-31.

28. David L. Jacobson (ed.), *The English Libertarian Heritage* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965). Adams' remark is reproduced in the Introduction, p. xvii.

29. David Ramsey, *History of the United States (1816)*, I; extract in Verna M. Hall (ed.), *The Christian History of the American Revolution: Consider and Ponder* (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1976), p. 435.

during the American Revolution is unclear. 30 If one were to trace the political thought of John Adams back to anyone, it would have to be James Barrington, the author of *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), a secular, aristocratic document that is concerned with questions of property and political power, not covenants and dominion. 31 Barrington himself was essentially a pantheist. 32 He explained the Puritan conflict of the English Civil War of the 1640's in terms of social forces, not religion, a secular tradition of historiography to which Marxist historian Christopher Hill appeals. 33 The textbook histories of the American Revolution from the earliest days have been far closer to Barrington's view of historical causation than to R. J. Rushdoony's.<sup>34</sup>

We do not find authoritative references to the Bible or Church history in either *The Federalist Papers* or the Antifederalist tracts. Adrienne Koch's compilation of primary source documents, *The American Enlightenment*, is not mythological, even though it is self-consciously selective. 35 There was an American Enlightenment, though subdued in its hostility to Christianity. 36 Jefferson, after all, kept hidden his cut-up, re-pasted New Testament, purged of the miraculous and supernatural; he knew what his constituents would have thought of such a theology.<sup>37</sup> He refused to publish this book, he told his friend, Christian physician Benjamin Rush, because he was "averse to the communication of my religious tenets to the pub-

30. Mark A. Nell, "The Bible in Revolutionary America," in James Turner Johnson (ed.), *The Bible in American Law, Politics, and Political Rhetoric* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 43-48.

31. Zoltan Harasti, *John Adams and the Prophets of Progress* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, [1952] 1964), pp. 34-35.

32. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 80, citing W. C. Diamond, "Natural Philosophy in Barrington's Political Thought," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, XVI (1978), pp. 387-98.

33. Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (New York: Sechocken, [1958] 1964), p. 5.

34. For my critique of Rushdoony's view of the U. S. Constitution, see Appendix B: "Rushdoony on the Constitution."

35. Adrienne Koch (ed.), *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society* (New York: Braziller, 1965). See also Koch, *Power, Morals, and the Founding Fathers: Essays in the Interpretation of the American Enlightenment* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1961).

36. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

37. *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth Extracted textually from the Gospels*. Reprinted as *An American Christian Bible Extracted by Thomas Jefferson* (Rochester, Washington: Sovereign Press, 1982). .

lie, because it would countenance the presumption of those who have endeavored to draw them before that tribunal, and to seduce public opinion to erect itself into that inquest over the rights of conscience, which the laws have so justly proscribed.”<sup>38</sup> That is, if word got out to the American voters, who were overwhelmingly Christian in their views, regarding what he really believed about religion, he and his party might lose the next election, despite a generation of systematic planning by him and his Deistic Virginia associates to get Christianity removed from the political arena in both Virginia and in national elections. 39 (The book was not made public until 1902. In 1904, the 57th Congress reprinted 9,000 copies, 3,000 for use by Senators and 6,000 for the House. 40 It was a very different America in 1904.)

The Framers rhetorically appealed back to Roman law and classical political models in their defense of the Constitution. Madison, Jay, and Hamilton used the Roman name “Publius” in signing the *Federalist Papers*, and Publius was a prominent founder of the Roman Republic. The Antifederalists responded with pseudo-Roman names. Yet both groups were heavily dependent on late seventeenth-century political philosophy, as well as on early eighteenth-century Whig republicanism – although perhaps not so dependent as was thought in the 1960’s and 1970’s.<sup>41</sup> They shared a common universe of political discourse, and Trinitarian Christianity was what both sides were attempting to downplay. The political discourse of the age was dominated by classical allusions, not by Hebraic ones. The curricula of the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge had always been grounded on the ideal of thorough knowledge of the pagan classics, and even the Puritans, while always officially skeptical about such training, and always filled with fear and trembling about its threat to the soul, were forced to submit their ministerial candidates and the sons of the gentry and merchants to the classroom rigors of the humanists, generation after generation.<sup>42</sup> They did not succeed in

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38. Cited by Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (LaSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1974), pp. 342-43.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 343.

40. Introduction, *American Christian Bible*, p. 4.

41. Other important themes are liberalism, individualism, and capitalism. See Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and the New Social Order* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Robert E. Shalhope, “Republicanism and Early American Historiography,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXXIX (April 1982), pp. 334-56.

42. John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).



changing the curricula of the universities during the Puritan Revolution, and after that, Puritans had no possibility of doing so.

The classical educational model of Oxford and Cambridge did its steady work of secularization in the English-speaking world, even in Puritan Harvard and Yale. Decade by decade, the two universities moved toward epistemological Unitarianism, and in the early nineteenth century, official Unitarianism triumphed.<sup>43</sup> But this commitment to the classics was steadily tempered, not by Christianity, but by Newtonian science. "In the second half of the seventeenth century," writes Morgan, 'as the impact of Hobbes, Locke, and Newton illustrates, men were seeking knowledge of a new fixity in their lives and in the world around them.'<sup>44</sup> In the eighteenth, this quest for fixity accelerated. The college curricula did not change, but the spirit and motivation of educated men did. What we must understand is that the U.S. Constitution is in large part a product of a rhetorical Enlightenment appeal back to the Greco-Roman world, yet it was in fact something quite modern: specifically, a reaction against the Puritanism of both seventeenth-century American colonialism and the Puritanism of the Cromwellian revolution of 1640-60.

The question raised by Professor Pangle is legitimate: To what extent was this verbal appeal back to Rome rhetorical? He believes, as I do, that the Framers were essentially "moderns" rather than "ancients." They were far more influenced by late seventeenth-century social thought than by the events of Roman history, let alone classical political philosophy, which had little impact on them except in a negative sense. "Generally speaking, the ancients, in contrast to the American Founders, appear to place considerably less emphasis on protecting individuals and their 'rights' – rights to private property and family safety, to property, to freedom of religion, and to the 'pursuit of happiness.'<sup>45</sup> Also, he argues – I believe correctly – that the classical philosophers put virtue above fraternity and liberty.<sup>46</sup> The Framers, while they discussed the need for virtue and religion – always carefully undefined – did so as defenders of political and eco-

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43. Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, [1970] 1988).

44. Morgan, *Godly Learning*, p. 308.

45. Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founding Fathers and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 53.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

conomic freedom. Virtue was therefore *instrumental* for them — a means of achieving social stability and progress, liberty and security. 47

I contend in this book that this was also their view of religion. In this, the y were not fundamentally different in principle from Robespierre, who established a formal civic religion of nature and reason in the midst of the Terror in 1794. De-Christianization was morally debilitating, Robespierre concluded; it had to be followed by the establishment of a new civic religion. 48 He knew that men needed to believe in God's sanctions in order to keep them obedient. Talmon identifies this impulse as "cosmic pragmatism."<sup>49</sup> The major figures among the Framers were wiser men than Robespierre, more influenced by traditional Christianity, but they were Enlightenment men to the core; their veneer and their constituencies were different from those of the French Revolutionaries, but not their theology. Their religion was civic religion. The difference is, they saw civic religion as a decentralized, individual matter rather than as a State affair; it was to aid the national government but not be part of the national government. Unitarian John Adams wrote in his autobiography, presumably for himself and not the electorate:

One great advantage of the Christian religion is that it brings the great principle of the law of nature and nations, Love your neighbour as yourself, and do to others as you would that others should do to you, to the knowledge, belief and veneration of the whole people. Children, servants, women and men are all professors in the science of public as well as private morality. No other institution for education, no kind of political discipline, could diffuse this kind of necessary information, so universally among all ranks and descriptions of citizens. The duties and rights of the man and the citizen are thus taught, from early infancy to every creature. The sanctions of a future life are thus added to the observance of civil and political as well as domestic and private duties. Prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, are thus taught to be the means and conditions of future as well as present happiness.<sup>50</sup>

Not a word about the atonement; not a word about the sacraments. The whole passage is geared to the needs of public morality. The

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47. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

48. R. R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 323-26.

49. J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: Praeger, 1960), p. 148.

50. L. H. Butterfield, *et al.*, (eds.), *The Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), III, pp. 240-41.

churches are viewed as effective educational institutions; no other institution could accomplish this task more effectively. Hence, Christianity is a good thing socially. The whole perspective is civic: what is good for the churches is good for the nation. Adams' view is with us still; Robespierre's did not survive 1794.

### The Right Wing of the Enlightenment

In my view, it is Rushdoony's greatest single historiographical error that he has always downplayed the Enlightenment influence on eighteenth-century American history.<sup>51</sup> At the heart of the Enlightenment's right-wing branch philosophically (the Scottish Enlightenment)<sup>52</sup> and also its left-wing branch (the French *philosophes*, but above all Rousseau) were the doctrines of natural law and natural rights. This commitment to natural law, in fact, was what made both branches part of the same movement. Their main differences were historical: different enemies. It would not be far from wrong to summarize the origins of the two wings as follows:

The Scottish Enlightenment philosophy was developed by Presbyterians who had abandoned Christian orthodoxy, but who maintained certain outward forms of belief by substituting a new humanistic theory of contracts for the Calvinistic theory of covenants.<sup>53</sup> Continental Enlightenment philosophy was developed by graduates of Roman Catholic institutions who had abandoned Christianity altogether, and who substituted the State for the Church as the agency of social salvation.<sup>54</sup>

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51. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, p. 4. See Appendix B: "Rushdoony on the Constitution," below.

52. I would call the early seventeenth-century Anglican-Whig movement conservative, but it did not develop a systematic moral philosophy and political philosophy comparable in interpretive power to that produced by the Scottish Enlightenment.

53. Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), a founder of the Scottish Enlightenment tradition, and a close friend of skeptic David Hume, was also an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland and had been chaplain to the Black Watch regiment. He taught natural philosophy (science) at the University of Edinburgh, and later moral philosophy, a chair he resigned in 1785, to be replaced by Dugald Stewart. His last words were: "There is another world." *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 1921-22), vol. 6, pp. 1200-4. F. A. Hayek regards his work as crucial to his own economic worldview.

54. The best example is Adam Weishaupt, founder of the Bavarian Illuminate, who was for a time professor of canon law at the University of Ingolstadt. Another example is Robespierre, who had been a prize-winning student at Louis-le-Grand college of the University of Paris. Otto Scott, *Robespierre: The Voice of Virtue* (New York: Mason/Charter, 1974), pp. 18-19. Distributed by Ross House Books, Vallejo, California.

The former were closet heretics; the latter were open apostates. The former were philosophical nominalist; the latter were philosophical realists. The former were methodological individualists; the latter were methodological collectivists. The former saw the “natural” development of society as the unplanned, evolutionary outcome of voluntary legal contracts among men, contracts capable of revision; the latter saw society as a voluntary metaphysical contract that cannot subsequently be broken after consummation, and which is incarnate in the State. Both groups sought to establish a new order of the ages by substituting their respective forms of the covenant for the biblical forms.

### *The Commonwealthmen*

Bailyn traces the ideological origins of the American Revolution to five sources: classical antiquity, especially Rome; the writings of Enlightenment rationalism – Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Grotius, Montesquieu, Vattel, Pufendorf, Baccaria; English common law; Puritan covenant theology; and most important, the “Old Whigs” of the early eighteenth century.<sup>55</sup> These were the “Commonwealthmen,” the intellectual heirs of those dissenting religious and humanist groups that first made their appearance during the English Civil War of 1640-60.<sup>56</sup>

The Commonwealthmen appealed back to the tradition of religious toleration that had been established by Oliver Cromwell during the Puritan Revolution. His New Model Army was filled with dissenters, and Cromwell gave them what they wanted.<sup>57</sup> He created a Trinitarian civil government in which all Protestant churches would have equal access politically, and the state would be guided by “the common light of Christianity.”<sup>58</sup> (I call this “Athana-

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55. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), ch. 2.

56. A detailed study of their movement is found in Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959).

57. Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1972).

58. Nichols, “John Witherspoon,” *op. cit.*, p. 172. He argues that this was Witherspoon’s view, not Roger Williams’ secularized version. There is nothing in the writings or life of Witherspoon that I have seen that would persuade me of Nichols’ thesis. Witherspoon echoed Locke, and Locke’s theory was basically Williams’ theory with Deistic modifications: a natural-law based political polytheism in the name of an undefined Divine Agent. He did not refer to Cromwell.

sian pluralism .")<sup>59</sup> This outraged the Presbyterians, who met in the mid-1640's to hammer out the Westminster Confession of Faith and its catechisms. It outraged Presbyterian Thomas Edwards, whose 60-page treatise tells the story: *Grangraena; or, a Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errors, Heresies, Blasphemies, and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this Time (1645)*. His list included 16 heretical sects: Independents, Brownists (i. e., Pilgrims), Millenaries, antinomians, Anabaptists, Arminians, libertines, familists, enthusiasts, seekers, perfectionists, socinians, Arians, antitrinitarians, antiscripturists, and skeptics.<sup>60</sup>

The spiritual heirs of these groups became the Whig Commonwealthmen. For the most part, their most prominent figures were non-Trinitarian in their theology, uninterested in questions of theology and ecclesiology except insofar as these questions in any way interfered with political liberty as they saw it. Their influence in the colonies was all-pervasive. Writes Bailyn: "The colonists identified themselves with these seventeenth-century heroes of liberty: but they felt closer to the early eighteenth-century writers who modified and enlarged this earlier body of ideas, fused it into a whole with other, contemporary strains of thought, and, above all, applied it to the problems of eighteenth-century English politics. . . . But more than any other single group of writers they shaped the mind of the American Revolutionary generation."<sup>61</sup> Some were liberal ("latitudinarian") Anglicans; some were non-religious; most were members of nonconformist churches. Their leaders included Joseph Priestley, the chemist and theologian, and his friend Richard Price, the economist and theologian, who were both hostile to Trinitarianism. Their influence in America increased as anti-English activities escalated after 1770. These were the radical republicans. Their intellectual roots can be traced back to Barrington. New Left historian Staughton Lynd summarizes the Dissenters' views:

Participation in radical Protestant church life critically influenced the Dissenters' ideas. Further, their refusal to swear prescribed religious oaths excluded them from political office and university employment. . . . From 1750 through the American Revolution the Dissenters poured forth books

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59. See Chapter 12.

60. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, [1877] 1977), I, p. 797n.

61. Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 35.

and pamphlets which cited one another profusely . . . and cumulatively expounded a common doctrine. This was the doctrine of natural law, made by God, evident to every man, consonant with the best parts of the traditional law of England but superior to any law or government which was arbitrary or unjust. When, on the brink of open rebellion, Americans needed an intellectual resource more potent than the rights of Englishmen to justify actions so obviously seditious as the Boston Tea Party, they turned to the rights-of-man teaching of their staunchest English supporters. [Writes Clinton Rossiter:] "Not until the argument shifted substantially away from English rights and over to natural justice did Price and Priestley influence American minds."<sup>62</sup>

This hostility to religious oaths as a requirement of holding political office was basic to the Dissenters and Protestant nonconformists generally, who faced an oath of allegiance to the Church of England and not just to the Trinity.<sup>63</sup> This same hostility later flared up at the Constitutional Convention, as we shall see.

The intellectual basis of the crucial alliance in 1787 between dissenting Protestantism and incipient Unitarianism was the shared faith in natural law. Where did this faith come from? It should be clear that it did not come from Thomas Aquinas or medieval scholasticism generally. The Framers did not read the scholastics, nor did many other Protestant thinkers of the eighteenth century. They were far more likely to read René Descartes, or summaries of his thought .

### *The Lure of Geometry*

Descartes' vision of a logical, geometrical universe fascinated political thinkers throughout the seventeenth century. Thomas Hobbes' defense of the State's near-absolute sovereignty in *Leviathan* (1651) was surely governed by his Cartesian worldview: a political world analyzed in terms of mathematical precision. This goal of mathematical precision in the affairs of men long remained a basic tenet of Continental Enlightenment thought, especially in France.<sup>64</sup>

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62, Staughton Lynd, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. 25.

63. The University of London was founded in 1828 for nonconforming church members. Oxford and Cambridge were closed to them.

64. Bredvold, *Brave New World of the Enlightenment*; Margaret C. Jacob, *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), ch. 2.

Nevertheless, more was needed than Descartes' mere theoretical assertions in order to make this mathematical vision a part of all educated Englishmen's thinking. French speculation was not sufficient to persuade these 'practical men of affairs.' What was needed was a practical and seemingly irrefutable demonstration of the inescapable relationship between man's rigorous mathematical speculations and the physical operations of the external world. This was what Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia* gave to mankind in 1687. His work was part of a one-generation shift in worldview that transformed European thinking. This era was the beginning of both rationalism and romanticism, the eighteenth century's incarnation of two sides of autonomous man's thinking: rationalism and irrationalism.<sup>65</sup>

In philosophy, the reaction was pantheism, especially in the works of Spinoza. In Trinitarian religion, a dual reaction was evident within a decade of Newton's death: the rise of Arminian Methodism in England and the revivalism of the Great Awakening in the colonies. In the colonial case, the authority of the established churches over the thinking of the laity, especially in politics, received a mortal wound from which it has yet to recover, especially in Puritan New England.<sup>66</sup>

#### Isaac Newton: The Trojan Horse

It was with Isaac Newton that we can mark the overwhelming triumph of Enlightenment faith in the English-speaking world. From 1690 to 1790, we can date a major and nearly self-contained intellectual era that laid the philosophical and cultural foundations of modern atheism.<sup>67</sup> Because of what was done during that century — begun by Newton and ended by the French Revolution — and also because of what Darwin did in 1859, we live in a culture in which,

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65. Paul Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680-1715* (New York: Meridian, [1935] 1964). See Margaret C. Jacob, "The crisis of the European mind: Hazard revisited," in *Politics and Culture in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of H. G. Koenigsberger*, edited by Phyllis Mack and Margaret C. JoCob (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 251-71. She emphasizes the growth of pantheism and mysticism as a side-effect of rational Newtonianism, an irrational side of Newtonianism that Hazard did not clearly recognize.

66. Cf. Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), Parts 4 and 5.

67. James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), ch. 2.

for the first time in mankind's history, belief in God is optional, a world in which "The option of not believing has eradicated God as a shared basis of thought and experience and retired him to a private or at best subcultural role. The bulk of modern thought has simply dispensed with God."<sup>68</sup> It began with Newton, of whom Alexander Pope wrote:

Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid in Night.  
God said, *Let Newton be!* and All was Light.

It was American Christians who consented, step by step, to the transformation of this nation into a theologically pluralistic republic. It began with natural law. The Puritans had been compromised to some degree by natural law doctrine from the beginning, and this influence increased after the magisterial successes of Isaac Newton in the field of natural philosophy. They did not know that he had abandoned Trinitarian Christianity and had become an Arian, though a very private and cautious one, at least a decade before the *Principia* was published.<sup>69</sup> They also were unaware of another side of Newton, a side which was suppressed by his followers immediately after his death, and which was then forgotten for two centuries (and is known only to highly specialized historians today): his occultism.

#### *Newton the Alchemist*

Newton's rejection of the Trinitarian faith had taken place in the early 1670's, a decade and a half before the *Principia* was published.<sup>70</sup> That he was also an alchemist is a fact that was deliberately concealed from the public for at least two centuries by those who had access to his private papers, and is still never found in textbooks, although the detailed biographies of Newton do discuss the fact. Only with the purchase at an auction of Newton's papers by that modern economic alchemist, John Maynard Keynes – who sought, as Mises said, to turn stones into bread through inflation<sup>71</sup> — did the academic world

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68. *Ibid.*, p. xii.

69. Gale E. Christiansen, *In the Presence of the Creator: Isaac Newton and His Times* (New York: Free Press, 1984), pp. 470,564. Newton's hand-picked successor at Oxford, William Whiston, adopted Newton's opinions, published his Arian ideas, and was fired from the faculty. *Ibid.*, p. 471.

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-54.

71. Ludwig von Mises, "Stones Into Bread: The Keynesian Miracle" (1948), in Henry Hazlitt (ed.), *Critics of Keynesian Economics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1960), pp. 305-15.



learn the truth. Keynes identified Newton as “the last of the magicians, the last of the Babylonians and Sumerians. . . .”<sup>72</sup> “Why did he call him this? “Because he looked on the whole universe and all that is in it as a *riddle*, as a secret which could be read by applying pure thought to certain evidence, certain mystic clues which God had hid from the world to allow a sort of philosopher’s treasure hunt to the esoteric brotherhood.”<sup>73</sup>

Day and night, Newton would pursue his alchemical experiments, sometimes without eating. <sup>74</sup> His experiments on alchemy were as rigorous and as detailed as his other scientific experiments. <sup>75</sup> Writes Frances Yates, the remarkable historian of early modern occultism: “. . . Newton attached equal, or greater importance to his alchemical studies than to his work in mathematics.”<sup>76</sup> He actually believed that in discovering the law of gravity, he was rediscovering an ancient secret truth which had been known by Pythagoras. <sup>77</sup>

It is remarkable that so many of those few intellectual historians of Newton and the Newtonian Enlightenment who acknowledge his alchemical experiments seem to dismiss the epistemological importance of his secret alchemical experiments. <sup>78</sup> They downplay alchemy’s importance in his life and thought. They still see him more in terms of the rationalistic picture painted by his immediate successors. They do not understand, or choose to ignore, the deeply

72. John Maynard Keynes, “Newton the Man,” in *Newton Tercentenary Celebrations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 27; cited in Christiansen, *Presence of the Creator*, p. 205.

73. Christiansen, *idem*. Christiansen has well titled this chapter, “The Treasures of Darkness.” Christiansen downplays the magical side of all this, saying that Newton was driven by a “Puritan sense of mission” (p. 223), but why would Newton have written a million words of private notes on alchemy (p. 203) if it was not something he was immersed in, body and soul?

74. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

75. See Betty J. T. Dobbs, *The Foundations of Newton’s Alchemy: Or, ‘The Hunting of the Green Lyon?’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

76. Frances A. Yates, *Collected Essays*, vol. 3, *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 121. For more extensive documentation of her assessment, see J. E. McGuire and P. M. Rattansi, “Newton and the Pipes of Pan,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, XXI (1966), pp. 108-43.

77. Yates, *ibid.*, 3, p. 269.

78. Newton’s alchemy is mentioned briefly by Lynn Thorndike in his eight-volume set, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), VII, p. 8; VIII, p. 240. In a study this size, concerning a man so important, on the very topic the study is supposed to be dealing with, such an omission is not accidental; it is systematic.

mystical and magical goal of alchemy: *the self-transcendence of the alchemist*. The alchemist, by a manipulation of the elements, seeks to achieve a leap of being, what today would be called an evolutionary leap. The familiar legend of the philosopher's stone – the alchemical means of transforming base metals into gold – neglects the real goal which this transformation merely symbolizes: the transformation of the alchemist, and by implication and representation, of humanity.<sup>79</sup> “Gold, we repeat, is the symbol of immortality.”<sup>80</sup> To dabble in alchemy, even for intellectual and technical reasons, is to come very close to the messianic impulse of the deification of man. It is like dabbling in magic; it has consequences.

One of the consequences was the French Revolution. Margaret Jacob's *Radical Enlightenment* is clear about the spread of pantheistic versions of Newtonianism into France through the Netherlands and Freemasonry. With it came a proclivity for the old neoplatonic Renaissance view of man and society. This view is analogous to alchemy's view of man. They both begin with the presupposition of magic and hermeticism: “AS above, so below.”<sup>81</sup> There is an *ontological* relationship between man and the cosmos, a chain of being. Molnar put it this way: “. . . it means that there is an absolute although hidden concordance between the lower and the higher worlds, the key of which lends to the magus incalculable powers.”<sup>82</sup> Thus, by manipulating the cosmos, the initiate can change the nature of man (e. g., environmental determinism). On the other hand, by manipulating something near at hand, he can affect something far away<sup>83</sup> (e. g., both voodoo and modern scientific chaos theory).<sup>4</sup> One manipulates the external elements in order to change

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79. Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, [1956] 1971). See especially chapter 13: ‘Alchemy and Initiation.’ For a detailed bibliography on alchemy, see Alan Pritchard, *Alchemy: A bibliography of English-language writings* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

80. Eliade, *ibid.*, p. 151.

81. Hermeticism is named after the mythical Hermes Trismegistus, who enunciated this above-below principle. Molnar quite properly makes this the theme of his discussion of modern subjectivist philosophy and revolutionary politics. Thomas Molnar, *God and the Knowledge of Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

82. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

84. In contemporary chaos theory, the so-called butterfly effect teaches that tiny disturbances at one end of the environment (the butterfly in California) can produce large-scale effects on the other side of the environment (the storm in New York). See James Gleik, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987), ch. 1.

the nature of man. One also changes the nature of individual men in order to transform the environment. E. M. Butler describes the goal of magic; it is also the goal of social engineering: "The fundamental aim of all magic is to impose the human will on nature, on man or on the supersensual world in order to master them."<sup>85</sup>

Alchemy involves initiation — access to secrets not known to common men.<sup>86</sup> The alchemist uses his chemicals in a kind of self-initiation process. The virtue of the alchemist is crucial to the outcome of the experiment<sup>87</sup> — a radically different conception from modern chemistry. Alchemical literature is filled with the theme of death and rebirth.<sup>88</sup> Man is viewed as co-creator with God.<sup>89</sup>

The alchemist's procedures are seemingly similar to, yet radically different from, the chemist's procedures. He mixes his chemicals in exactly the same way, again and again, waiting for a transformation. The chemist, in contrast, alters his procedure slightly if the experimental results repeatedly do not conform to his hypothesis. The main difference procedurally between alchemy and chemistry is in the techniques of cause and effect. The chemist publicly verifies the validity of his experiment by specifying the conditions under which he conducted the experiment, so that others can duplicate the experiment's results. The alchemist, on the contrary, seeks to keep his procedures secret, as Newton did, and he expects most of these repetitions to produce no change. Then, after many attempts, after an unspecified series of repetitions of the mixing of the elements, there will be a discontinuous leap of being. The alchemist transcends himself, symbolized and verified by the transformation of the elements.

This view of man and change has inevitable social implications. The alchemist sees himself as the first man of a new race, the representative in the present of a new people. It is an elitist view of social transformation. Rushdoony's summary is correct: "The purpose of the alchemist was to create the conditions of chaos in order to further the leap ahead in evolution. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that in the Enlightenment alchemists were closely allied to and central to the forces of revolution. *Revolution is simply the theory of social alchemy.*"<sup>90</sup>

85. E. M. Butler, *Ritual Magic* (San Bernardino, California: Borgo Press, [1949] 1980), p. 1.

86. Eliade, *Forge and Crucible*, ch. 13.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 161.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

90. Rushdoony, *Law and Liberty* ([Nutley, New Jersey]: Craig Press, 1971), p. 46.

In one sense, the intermediate goal of the alchemist is the same as the practical goal of the chemist: greater power over the environment through specialized experimental techniques. A detailed knowledge of mathematics is basic to both; a knowledge of the characteristics of normally inert substances is basic to both. The alchemist wants to transform man's very being; the chemist wants to transform man's environment and quality of life. "Better living through chemistry," said Monsanto Chemical Co. in the 1950's, a slogan imitated in irony by the devotees of LSD and chemical illumination in the late 1960's. Either approach can and has become power-seeking and messianic.

### Rationalism and Irrationalism

It was the rigid mathematical rationalism of the *official* Newtonian faith which led, step by step, to the bloody irrationalism of eighteenth-century French rationalism. The French Revolution was the culmination of this Enlightenment dualism between the rational and the irrational. The French Revolution was prepared by a seven-decade intellectual assault on the Christian religion and its institutions, but it was triggered by the King's fiscal crisis in 1788, the year of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. The King had to call the *estates-general*—not called in a century and a half—to authorize new taxes. This fiscal crisis was a visible sign of his weakness. This bourgeois assembly rapidly escalated its demands to the proclamation of the rights of man. It peaked with the reign of the lawyers<sup>91</sup> by means of Dr. Guillotines remarkably efficient technology. The Terror was the political application of the doctrine of the necessity of human sacrifice as a means of regenerating sin-filled society, i.e., the religion of revolution. (That legacy is with us still in Marxism.)<sup>92</sup> The revolutionary process ended in a military dictatorship.

While it is true, as Margaret Jacob demonstrates, that there were two versions of Newtonianism — the official, Anglican, hierarchical providential Newtonianism, and the mystical, pantheistic, republican, and ultimately revolutionary Newtonianism — her rational/irrational division is cut too sharply between the Moderate Whigs and the Radical Whigs. She makes it appear as though the irration-

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91. Scott, *Robespierre: The Voice of Virtue*.

92. Gary North, *Marx's Religion of Revolution: Regeneration Through Chaos* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1968] 1989).

alism and nature mysticism of the Radical Whig pantheists who subsequently claimed to be followers of Newton were not inherent in his original system. However, Newton's supposed mere flirtation with alchemy points to a very different conclusion. The official, publicized side of his scientific system was rationalist in the transcendent, Deistic sense, but there was a "dark and troubled" side of his own beliefs and practices that led him back into experiments that had originally been grounded in the pantheism of Renaissance neoplatonism.

Newton's system was not intellectually self-sustaining on the basis of its formal scientific categories. Newton had to appeal to a providential, transcendent god, which he publicly identified with the God of the Bible, in order to sustain his system metaphysically. But it was equally easy for the pantheists of the radical Enlightenment to appeal to a god inherent in nature. Such an appeal was an intellectual necessity. "Absolutely central to the Radical Enlightenment," Jacob writes, "is the search for the philosophical foundations of a new religion."<sup>93</sup> Finally, the debate ceased after 1859; Darwinism made the hypothesis of any god unnecessary — an appendage with no further scientific usefulness. Because Christians in the late seventeenth century had tied their defense of Christianity to Newton's natural theology, Darwin successfully destroyed this "foundation of Christianit y."<sup>94</sup>

### *Providentialism*

Newton was a providentialist. He believed in God's creation of the universe out of nothing, its inevitable running down, and the need for God occasionally to intervene in nature to keep the cosmic clock running in good order.<sup>95</sup> In his *General Scholium*, which he added to Part III of the *Principia* — "The System of the World" — in 1713, a quarter century after the *Principia* first appeared, he insists that "The six primary planets are revolved about th'e sun in circles concentric with the sun. . . ."<sup>96</sup> Notice his use of the passive voice: are *revolved*.

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93. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 176.

94. Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 16.

95. Stanley Jaki, *Science and Creation: From eternal cycles to an oscillating universe* (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, [1974] 1980), p. 287. Jaki takes very seriously Newton's Scholium, which he added to the 1713 edition of the *Principia*.

96. Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, vol. 34 of *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., [1934] 1952), p. 369.

In other words, *revolved by something or someone*. He immediately tells us that it is someone: "This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being."<sup>97</sup> He then formally rejects all pantheism: "This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called *Lord God*. . . ." <sup>98</sup> The phrase, "soul of the world," is pantheistic. "He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present."<sup>99</sup> Motion is therefore imposed on matter by spiritual forces not innate to it. The laws of nature are *imposed* laws, not inherent in nature, as it was in the Stoic conception of the laws of nature. <sup>100</sup> This is what links Newtonianism to the nominalism of William of Ockham, who also grounded natural law on the will of God. <sup>101</sup> This is the *voluntarist* tradition, the tradition of contractualism. On first glance, it is close to Puritan covenantalism — the "ordinary providence of God"<sup>102</sup> — but it is surely Cartesian. <sup>103</sup>

What must be understood is that Newton's system of natural causation is Deistic. It demands belief in an inherently impersonal God who reveals Himself only in nature. This God can be known only through His attributes in nature; there is no mention of His revelation in Scripture. "We know him only by his most wise and excellent contrivances of things, and final causes; we admire him for his perfections; but we reverence and adore him on account of his dominion: for we adore him as his servants; and a god without dominion, providence, and final causes, is nothing else but Fate and Nature."<sup>104</sup>

### *Metaphysical Architecture*

This Newtonian god exercises dominion, but his system gives us no warrant for believing that men can know him ethically through written revelation; we can only know him metaphysically and in-

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97. *Idem*.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

99. *Idem*.

100. Francis Oakfey, "Christian Theology and the Newtonian Science: The Rise of the Concept of the Laws of Nature," *Church History*, XXX (1961), p. 437.

101. *Ibid.*, p. 439.

102. *Ibid.*, p. 448.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

104. Newton, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

directly through his creation. We know him only through his manifestation physically and mathematically. Geometry was seen as the common language among men. "If God was to be discerned in the creation at all," write Baigent and Leigh, "it was not in the multiplicity of forms, but in the unifying principles running through those forms and underlying them. In other words, God was to be discerned in the principles of shape — determined ultimately by the degrees in an angle — and by number. It was through shape and number, not by representation of diverse forms, that God's glory was held to be manifest. And it was in edifices based on shape and number, rather than on representational embellishment, that the divine presence was to be housed."<sup>105</sup> This is one reason why Newton was so fascinated with the dimensions of the Temple built by Solomon.<sup>106</sup> The Temple was seen as a *metaphysical* representation of God's cosmos, not as the place where the tablets of the law of God resided in the Ark of the Covenant, and where His glory cloud resided. The Temple was seen more as a talisman than as a place of ethical worship.<sup>107</sup>

The origins of this geometrical religion can be traced back to the ancient world. It was kept alive in the West by both rabbinic Judaism and Islam:

The synthesis of shape and number is, of course, geometry. Through geometry, and the regular recurrence of geometric patterns, the synthesis of shape and number is actualized. Through the study of geometry, therefore, certain absolute laws appeared to become legible — laws which attested to an underlying order, an underlying design, an underlying coherence. This master plan was apparently infallible, immutable, omnipresent; and by virtue of those very qualities, it could be construed, easily enough, as something of divine origin — a visible manifestation of the divine power, the divine will, the divine craftsmanship. And thus geometry, in both Judaism and Islam, came to assume sacred proportions, becoming invested with a character of transcendent and immanent mystery.<sup>108</sup>

The Roman architect Vitruvius recommended the establishment of *collegia* of builders. "Let the altars look to the east," he said.<sup>109</sup> The

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105. Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Temple and the Lodge* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), p. 132.

106. Frank E. Manuel, *Isaac Newton, Historian* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), plate facing page 148.

107. See North, *Tools of Dominion*, p. 888.

108. Baigent and Leigh, *Temple and Lodge*, p. 132.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

architect is to become in effect a species of magus. Geometry was at the heart of this position. "In this respect, too, Judaism and Islam were to converge with classical thought. For was not architecture the supreme application and actualization of geometry. . . . Was it not in architecture that geometry in effect became incarnate?" <sup>110</sup> (That Roman architecture has dominated government buildings in the U.S. and in Europe is no accident.) "It was thus in structures based on geometry, with no embellishment to distract or deflect the mind, that God's presence was to be accommodated and worshiped. The synagogue and the mosque, therefore, were both based not on decoration, but on geometric principles, on abstract mathematical relationships. And the only ornamentation allowed in them was of an abstract geometrical kind — the maze, for example, the arabesque, the chessboard, the arch, the pillar or column and other such 'pure' embodiments of symmetry, regularity, balance and proportion ." <sup>111</sup> There was a revival of scholarly interest in Vitruvius during the Renaissance. <sup>112</sup>

This vision of the architect as magus goes back to Plato's *Timaeus* (53c to 62c). The creator god is equated with the Architect of the Universe. The *tekton* is the craftsman; the *arche-tekton* is the master craftsman. This arche-tekton created the universe by means of geometry. <sup>113</sup> There is little doubt that geometry, and specifically Pythagorean geometry, was basic to Plato's teachings. Philosopher Karl Popper has identified Plato as the founder of the geometrical theory of the world. <sup>114</sup> While the designer of the Cheops pyramid seems to possess a better claim on this title, <sup>115</sup> surely Plato has been the more influential historically. He saw the mastery of geometry as fundamental to the philosopher-king's creation of a politically centralized social order and his control over the affairs of mankind. So have his spiritual heirs.

Baigent and Leigh argue that such a neoplatonic and hermetic theology was of necessity occult – hidden – during the Middle Ages.

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110. *Idem.*

111. *Idem.*

112. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 11. On John Adams' fascination with Vitruvius, see pp. 382-83, below.

113. Baigent and Leigh, *Temple and Lodge*, p. 138.

114. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 2 vols. (4th ed.; Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), I, p. 335.

115. Peter Tompkins, *Secrets of the Great Pyramid* (New York: Harper Colophon, [1971] 1978).



It could be transmitted safely only within a secret fraternity. The stonemasons were one such fraternity. Here were the seeds of the later “speculative” Freemasonry. <sup>116</sup>

This Newtonian impulse is basic to understanding the close association of Newton’s followers in the Royal Society and the spread of reconstituted Freemasonry after 1717. Freemasonry worshiped geometry, even as the *Principia* had relied on geometry to prove its case.

There was another aspect of this theology of geometry: the search for God in history. God’s transcendence was manifested by geometry, but this was not sufficient; God had to make Himself manifest to man. Again, geometry was the key. This was the reason for the fascination with Solomon’s Temple. Write Baigent and Leigh:

Within this ‘esoteric’ tradition of ‘initiated’ masters, sacred geometry was of paramount importance — a manifestation, as we have seen, of the divine. For such masters, a cathedral was more than a ‘house of God’. It was something akin to a musical instrument, an instrument tuned to a particular and exalted spiritual pitch, like a harp. If the instrument were tuned correctly, God Himself would resonate through it, and His immanence would be felt by all who entered. But how *did* one tune it correctly? How and where did God specify His design requirements? Sacred geometry provided the general principles, the underlying laws. <sup>117</sup>

Geometry was not enough. Music was not enough. There must be intellectual content to this immanence. There must be ethical content, including the assurance of personal salvation, itself defined as presence with God in eternity. This is what scientific Newtonianism could not provide. The creation of ‘speculative Freemasonry — a guild open to men without any connection to stonemasonry — was a major theological and institutional attempt to provide this assurance, but within the geometrical worldview of Newtonian science.

#### *A Distant God*

The god of Newton was not the God of the Bible; it was the god of the Deists. It was the cosmic clockmaker rather than the Sovereign Judge of all men, in history and in eternity. It was this concept of God which swept Europe in the eighteenth century. Any attempt to

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116. *Temple and Lodge*, p. 134.

117. *Idem*. Cf. J. E. McGuire and P. M. Rattansi, ‘Newton and the Pipes of Pan,’ *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, XXI (1966), pp. 108-43.

argue that this god was not the biblical God was doomed to failure. Before Darwin, this false connection left men under the social and political dominion of those who had rejected the Bible as the final voice of earthly authority; after Darwin, it left men under the dominion of men who were not even willing to acknowledge the existence of the stripped-down god of Newtonianism.

The Newtonian system, being Unitarian-Socinian<sup>118</sup> theologically and mathematical epistemologically, left mankind without a personal, covenantal God who intervenes in history in order to meet the needs of mankind. At best, He intervenes to meet the needs of a disjointed universe. This Newtonian god really was the distant, transcendent god of older high school textbook accounts of Deism. There was insufficient presence of this Newtonian god with his people. He was all system and no sanctions. The quest for an immanent god led a segment of the Newtonian movement back into pantheism's mystical paths. Any segment of Newtonianism that did not go down these paths eventually headed out to the far shore of atheism. Newton's god of gravity – influence at a distance but without physical connection — was too little for the pantheists and too much for the atheists.<sup>119</sup>

This god of gravity became even too much for Newton to bear as time went on. Like a dog returning to its vomit, in the second edition of *Opticks* (1717), he once again returned to his experimentally untenable theory of the "ether" that fills all intermediary spaces. He had to find a physical means of explaining attraction at a distance. 120 He had offered this theory in an early paper to the Royal Society (1675), a paper which had been cogently attacked by Robert Hooke.<sup>121</sup> Newton had defended this ethereal theory in Book IV of the 1693 manuscript *Opticks*, but his experiments later concluded that the ex-

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118. Socinianism is named after Fausto Paolo Sozzini, who lived in the late sixteenth century. He proclaimed the doctrine of an omnipotent God. He denied the atoning nature of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' influence is primarily moral. It was essentially a Unitarian faith. See "Socinianism," James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 12 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), XI, pp. 650-54.

119. For a study of Newton's religious perspective on the origin of gravity, see J. E. McGuire, "Force, Active Principles, and Newton's Invisible Realm," *Ambix*, XV (1968), pp. 154-208. *Ambix* is a scholarly journal devoted to the history of alchemy.

120. Edwin Arthur Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1925] 1954), p. 266.

121. Christiansen, *Presence of the Creator*, pp. 189, 447.

istence of the ether could not be verified, so he did not publish this section in the first edition of 1704. He capitulated in 1717, however, disinterring it from its resting place in the quiet graveyard of unverifiable hypotheses, thereby converting his system into what could later stand alone as a purely mechanistic theory.<sup>122</sup> Christiansen calls this problem of the ether Newton's "thirty-year nightmare."<sup>123</sup> Friction in this hypothetical ethereal universe made it necessary for Newton to hypothesize the need for God to intervene periodically to restore this insufficiently harmonious system to full harmony.<sup>124</sup> Burttt describes this view of God: the cosmic plumber.<sup>125</sup> Newton could have concluded instead that the universe would simply run down over time, but this "entropic" worldview did not appear until the mid-nineteenth-century.<sup>126</sup> That was the price of pure materialism, which Samuel Clarke had predicted would lead to atheism in his "Final Reply,"<sup>127</sup> a price the nineteenth century atheists willingly paid. That, however, was a century and a half in the future. Koyré concludes: 'At the end of the century Newton's victory was complete. The Newtonian God reigned supreme in the infinite void of absolute space in which the force of universal attraction linked together the atomically structured bodies of the immense universe and made them move around in accordance with strict mathematical laws.'<sup>128</sup> Mechanism, atheism, and entropy came later, after the Christians had hitched their epistemological wagon to Newton's bright shooting star.

#### *The Return of Pantheism*

Van Til writes of Platonic thought that its Deism and its pantheism were correlative. "In all of Plato's methods he took for granted that all things are at bottom one. Even when he seemed to be abstracting the Ideal world from the sense world so far that they seemed to have nothing to do with one another, Plato was not denying the assumption of an underlying unity of all reality. In his most

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122. Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, p. 338.

123. Christiansen, *Presence of the Creator*, p. 447

124. Jaki, *Science and Creation*, p. 287.

125. Burttt, *Metaphysical Foundation*, p. 298.

126. Cf. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), ch. 2.

127. Alexander Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins Press, [1957] 1970), p. 238.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

deistic flights, Plato was pantheistic still. Deism and Pantheism are at bottom one”<sup>129</sup> The same was true of Newtonianism.

Newtonianism was officially Deistic. The “establishment” Newtonians, including Newton, had no use for pantheism. They did not want a revival of Giordano Bruno’s magic or his speculations regarding a world soul. Nevertheless, pantheism could not be successfully overcome by the Newtonian moderate Whigs, given the reality of Newton’s heavy Socinian emphasis on the absolute transcendence of God. The unsolved theological problem for Newton was immanence. Where is God’s *personal* presence in this world?

The Puritans possessed a consistent answer to this problem based on the doctrine of the Trinity. First and foremost, God is transcendentally in control of all things — the doctrine of covenantal providence.<sup>130</sup> This same God is also present with His people in the Person of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of regenerate men and who enables both regenerate and unregenerate to perform good works.<sup>131</sup> He gives His people new hearts. “Those who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them: . . .”<sup>132</sup> God interacts with mankind in history, for He had been a man in history, and in His perfect manhood, He now sits at the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:3).<sup>133</sup> God is present representatively in the Bible, the revealed Word of God in history, and also in His Church.

In contrast to the Puritans’ concept of cosmic *personalism* stands Newton’s cosmic impersonalism. His was a halfway covenant cosmology: relying on the intellectual residue of Puritanism, he denied the power thereof. Newton was not a Trinitarian. His cosmology did not allow for much interaction between God and man, and even his peers resented his discussion of God’s cosmic interventions to shore up the rusting clock.<sup>134</sup>

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129. Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, vol. 2 of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (den Dulk Foundation, 1969), pp. 54-55. Cf. pp. 42-43,

130. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, V, “Providence.”

131. *Ibid.*, XVI, “Of Good Works.”

132. *Ibid.*, XIII:1, “Sanctification.”

133. *Ibid.*, VIII: 4, “Christ the Mediator.”

134. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 59-60.

The writings of Deistic Newtonian such as Voltaire <sup>135</sup> were far more visible and influential in French intellectual circles than the literature of the pantheistic Newtonian, yet in the final analysis, the pantheists triumphed in the Terror. In Newtonian rationalism, Van Til would say, there lay hidden a Newtonian irrationalism, as is true of every form of rationalism. Pantheism simply made this implicit irrationalism more visible to a handful of Masonic initiates; Newton's Socinian providentialism ultimately contained the seeds of its own destruction. It could not resolve the problem of the one and the many, structure and change, mathematics and matter. It could not explain why mathematics, an artful creation of man's intellect, should have such a close correlation with the operations of the external world. Newtonianism was, in the words of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Eugene Wigner, an unreasonable faith. <sup>136</sup>

Pantheism led a furtive, underground existence in English thought during the eighteenth century. This did not mean that pantheists were irrelevant to events; it just meant that they were not open in their intellectual defenses of the system. Jacob's studies indicate that mechanistic pantheism spread from England to the Netherlands and from there into France. <sup>137</sup> On the Continent, this became part of the occult underground that eventually produced the French Revolution.

The atheists clearly won the battle after Darwin. But during the twentieth century, there has been a successful boring from within at the very heart of the secular Newtonian temple: quantum mechanics. <sup>138</sup> This has sent a signal to the pantheists that the atheists in the temple can no longer defend the outskirts of their empire. Since about 1965, the pantheists and mystics have begun to make a serious assault on the fringes of atheism's institutional empire. <sup>139</sup> That

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135. "Once in England, Voltaire embraced Newton's system of the world and natural philosophy like a religious convert embraces a new faith. Indeed, throughout his life that cosmic system possessed an almost religious intensity; it lay at the foundations of Voltaire's understanding of the world." Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 105.

136. Eugene Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," *Communications on Pure and Applied Mathematics*, XIII (1960), pp. 1-14.

137. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*.

138. Nick Herbert, *Quantum Reality: Beyond the New Physics* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1985).

139. Cf. Lyle Watson, *Sups-nature: A Natural History of the Supernatural* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973); Thelma Moss, *The Probability of the Impossible: Scientific Discoveries and Exploration in the Psychic World* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1974); Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (2nd ed.; Boulder, Colorado: Shambala, 1983).

Frances Yates could find a market for her revisionist study of the pantheistic magic of Giordano Bruno had a great deal to do with the paradigm shift that began in the mid-1960's.<sup>140</sup> But none of this was suspected in the early eighteenth century, or even in the early twentieth century. Men seldom recognize the fact that Van Til observed throughout his career: there is a secret treaty between rationalists and irrationalists against the God of the Bible.<sup>141</sup> Or as he said more graphically, they support themselves by taking in each other's washing.

### Newtonianism for Christian Intellectuals

Reventlow's summary of the impact of Newtonian thought is crucially important in understanding the nature of eighteenth-century science, religion, and social theory:

In practice, in the long run the Newtonians only played into the hands of the Deists, against whom they wanted to fight, and the Atheists (who at that time were more a chimaera than a real danger, though their time came in the second half of the century). The Arianism widespread among them (which was accepted e.g. by Newton himself, [Samuel] Clarke, and most naturally by [William] Whiston) is an indubitable sign that the view of God held by these people was primarily oriented on the 'book of his works'. Above all, however, moralistic ethics, already a living legacy of humanistic theology, gained an additional foundation in the 'new philosophy', which made it increasingly independent of the Bible and thus more and more independent of theology generally.<sup>142</sup>

Richard Westfall is even more specific: "Natural religion was supposed to be the sure defender. Yet in the end the defender turned out to be the enemy in the gates."<sup>143</sup>

None of this was suspected by the literate Christian public in the early eighteenth century. Surely it was not suspected by the Rev. Cotton Mather, whose *A Christian Philosopher* (1721) is a long tract praising Newton's system. It was not suspected by John Wither-  
spoon when he began his first lecture on moral philosophy in 1768:

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140. Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (New York: Vintage, [1964] 1969),

141. Cornelius Van Til, *Apologetics* (Syllabus, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1961), p. 81.

142. Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, p. 341.

143. Richard Westfall, *Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1973), p. 106.

“Dr. Clarke was one of the greatest champions for the law of nature; but it is only since his time that the shrewd opposers of it have appeared.”<sup>144</sup> Or when he said, “Yet perhaps a time may come when men, treating moral philosophy as Newton and his successors have done natural [philosophy], may arrive at greater precision.”<sup>145</sup> Yates is correct about the cover-up of Newton’s alchemy: “Modern science, beginning its victorious career, had blotted out the immediate past.”<sup>146</sup> By the early eighteenth century, natural law doctrines were universal accepted by all educated men in the colonies.<sup>147</sup> It was by means of the twin doctrines of natural law and the autonomy of man’s reason that the Enlightenment’s intellectual conquest of America took place. Historian Keith Thomas is correct: “The triumph of the mechanical philosophy meant the end of the animistic conception of the universe which had constituted the basic rationale for magical thinking.”<sup>148</sup>

This inherently mechanical Newtonian worldview also in principle meant the end of the Christian conception of the universe, with its doctrine of cosmic personalism — providence with miracles.<sup>149</sup> Again, citing Thomas: “The mechanical philosophy of the later seventeenth century was to subject the doctrine of special providences to a good deal of strain. Under its influence many writers tended to speak as if God’s providence consisted solely in the original act of creation and that thereafter the world had been left to be governed mechanically by the wheels which the Creator had set in motion”<sup>150</sup> This, of course, is the outlook of English Deism, which also was steadily adopted by liberal Arminian Anglicans. They became its promoters, as did many of the dissenters. Writes Margaret Jacob:

Eventually the more ingenious clergy, largely of Protestant Europe, realized that it would be necessary to construct a new Christian religiosity based in large measure on mechanical assumptions. That was precisely the synthesis developed by moderate Anglicans, who had been forced under the

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144. Witherspoon, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, Lecture 1, p. 65.

145. *Ibid.*, Recapitulation, p. 186.

146. Yates, *Collected Essays*, III, p. 121,

147. Witherspoon, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, Lecture 13: “On the Law of Nature and Nations.” He asserts: “If there are natural rights of men, there are natural rights of nations” (p. 150).

148. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner’s, 1971), p. 644.

149. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 1: “Cosmic Personalism.”

150. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 80.

impact of the English Revolution to rethink the relationship between natural order, society, and religion. Eventually all progressive European Christians, from the German philosopher Leibniz to the Cartesian priest Melabranche, would be forced to restructure the philosophical foundations of Christianity to conform to one or another version of the new science. It is hardly surprising that liberal Anglicanism, wedded as it was by the 1690s to Newtonian science, took the lead in this enterprise.<sup>51</sup>

Earlier, she had written: "The linkage they forged between liberal Protestantism and early Newtonianism was never entirely broken during the eighteenth century. . . . The latitudinarian proponents of early Newtonianism had succeeded in resting their social ideology on the model provided by the Newtonian universe."<sup>52</sup> There is great irony here, she says, given the humanistic society that emerged as a result of their worldview. "The society that the latitudinarians wished to create was to be Christian and godly in the biblical sense of those terms. Their vision of history had been conditioned by the Reformation, and they believed themselves to be preparing Englishmen for the millennial paradise."<sup>53</sup> These were not strictly Enlightenment men; they were transitional figures, 1680-1720.<sup>54</sup>

As time passed, the differences separating liberal Anglicans from the Whig Commonwealthmen became political rather than theological. A new common ground theologically became possible because of the new science. Arminians, Calvinists, and dissenting Socinians all could agree on the nature of the relationship between the Creator and the heavens. That relationship was Newtonian. But Newtonianism was inherently Deistic.

### *Deism and Christianity*

We are wise to mark the growth of Deism with the triumph of the Newtonian worldview. Russell Kirk's summary of Deism is accurate: "Deism was neither a Christian schism nor a systematic philosophy, but rather a way of looking at the human condition; the men called Deists differed among themselves on many points. (Thomas Paine often was called an atheist, but is more accurately described as a rather radical Deist.) Deism was an outgrowth of

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151. Jacob, *Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution*, p. 111.

152. Jacob, *The Newtonian*, p. 19.

153. *Idem.*

154. *Ibid.*, p. 20.



seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific speculation. The Deists professed belief in a single Supreme Being, but rejected a large part of Christian doctrine. Follow Nature, said the Deists (as the Stoics had said before them), not Revelation: all things must be tested by private rational judgment. The Deists relied especially upon mathematical approaches to reality, influenced in this by the thought of Sir Isaac Newton.”<sup>155</sup>

The Deistic implications of the Newtonian system were first fully developed by the third Earl of Shaftesbury in his multi-volume *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (6th edition, 1738). He was the grandson of the enormously popular Whig opponent of Charles II and James II and defender of Parliamentary rights.<sup>156</sup> The grandson was a close friend of John Locke; he regarded himself as Locke's friend and foster-son,<sup>157</sup> but he abandoned his Lockeanism late in life and returned to faith in Greek philosophy, especially Xenophon.<sup>158</sup> (It was Xenophon who was assigned by president John Witherspoon to the sophomore class at the College of New Jersey.)<sup>159</sup> Shaftesbury set the tone of the age of mild (non-revolutionary) skepticism regarding Christianity. He rejected the Bible as a source of ethics, preached a god subordinate to independent ethical principles, and relied on Newton's worldview to defend his system. The Bible in the late seventeenth century, even in the liberal Protestant camp, was a principle of formal authority. Not so with the Deists. Beginning with Shaftesbury, they proclaimed the autonomy of ethics. Shaftesbury, says Reventlow, connected ethics “with the idea of a harmony within the world as established by Newton,” and then “he showed that the revelation contained in the Bible and handed down by historical tradition could be dispensed with.”<sup>160</sup> Men could henceforth rely on reason and tradition to achieve their goals.

It was this Newtonian view of the universe that influenced most of the leaders who organized the Constitutional Convention in 1787. But why did the voters accept the Deistic work of the Convention?

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155. Kirk, *Roots of American Order*, p. 338.

156. K. D. H. Halley, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

157. J. Aronson, “Shaftesbury on Locke,” *American Political Science Review*, LIII (Dec. 1959), p. 1103.

158. Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, pp. 25, 37.

159. Collins, *President Witherspoon*, II, p. 216.

160. Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, p. 318.

Deism in the colonies as a separate religious movement was virtually nonexistent in the colonies prior to the ratification of the Constitution; Ethan Allen and Thomas Paine are the only famous Deists (if, in fact, Paine was a Deist rather than an atheist) in that era.<sup>161</sup> Also, why were church members who attended the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and those who later voted to ratify the Constitution willing to accept a document that was clearly the theological product of Deism? Christian historians have adopted three approaches to these questions: first, ignore the fact that the Constitution is Deistic (the strategy of self-deception); second, argue that the religious presuppositions of the Constitution can be equally agreed to by Deists, Christians, and just about every other rational person of good will “ (the strategy of common-ground philosophy); third, argue that the Constitution is essentially Christian, but Deists, by the grace of God, not only can accept it, but they actually wrote it “God’s way (the strategy of providential schizophrenia).<sup>162</sup>

The second strategy seems most common today. Christian students of the Constitution insist that the Constitution is in conformity with commonly shared judicial principles, on *the implicit or explicit assumption of the validity of some version of natural law theory*. They begin with the misleading presupposition of the commonality of “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ,” just as the Framers did, and from this they conclude that political polytheism is valid. It does not even occur to them that the phrase “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” does not mean the same thing in a Christian theory of God-created reality as it does in a non-Christian theory of evolutionary reality. It does not occur to them that without the presupposition of the Trinitarian God of the Bible, it takes a gigantic leap of faith to conclude that “ $2 + 2 = 4$ .”<sup>163</sup> They still think in terms of eighteenth-century Newtonianism rather than either six-day creationism or modern quantum physics and chaos theory. They have not yet come to grips with Immanuel Kant, let alone Werner Heisenberg.

Newtonianism had long been diffused through the English-speaking world in the name of natural theology. Christians had not

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161. G. Adolf Koch, *Religion of the American Enlightenment* (New York: Crowell, [1933] 1968). What the book shows is that there were almost no Deists prior to 1789, although this was not its intent.

162. The question is: Were the Deists at the Convention the intellectual schizophrenics or the Christians who today defend the Constitution by an appeal to its “hidden” or “ultimate” biblical principles?

163. Vern S. Poythress, “A Biblical View of Mathematics,” in Gary North (cd.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976), ch. 9.

studied Newton's *Principia*, any more than modern humanists have studied Einstein's original essays on the photoeffect, Brownian motion, and general relativity. They were not familiar with the book's technical details. But they had accepted Newton's vision of a mechanical, orderly universe, a view officially undergirded by a god (Unitarian) who has made himself known primarily through mathematics and astronomy — a world whose operations can be studied and discovered by all scientifically trained men, irrespective of their theological views. Almost everyone accepted this worldview in the eighteenth century. Writes Thomas: "It did not matter that the majority of the population of eighteenth-century England had possibly never heard of Boyle or Newton and certainly could not have explained the nature of their discoveries. At all times most men accept their basic assumptions on the authority of others. New techniques and attitudes are always more readily diffused than their underlying scientific rationale."<sup>164</sup>

Eighteenth-century Christians were not ready to see what the Newtonian worldview of impersonal mechanical causation ultimately implied: the abolition of God's presence with and His direct intervention into His world. "Yet most of those who conceived of the universe as a great clock were in practice slow to face up to the full implications of their analogy."<sup>165</sup> Not until Charles Darwin in 1859 at last destroyed the necessity or even scientific acceptability of natural theology — by removing the need of a Divine Clockmaker or cosmic purposefulness in explaining the orderliness of nature — and not until Van Til and a handful of other Christian philosophers at last understood clearly what Kant's dualism<sup>166</sup> and Darwin's monism<sup>167</sup> had accomplished, did this naive attitude regarding natural law and its empire begin to change. (Slowly, ever so slowly.)

### *The Newtonian Dynamic*

There is one additional aspect of Newtonianism that needs to be dealt with. Newton's nearly impersonal god is a Tory kind of God — distant, hierarchical, and preserving. His days of creating are over;

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164. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 646-47.

165. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

166. Richard Kroner, *Kant's Weltanschauung* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1914] 1956).

167. Loren Eiseley, *Darwin's Century: Evolution and the Men Who Discovered It* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958), ch. 11: "Wallace and the Brain."

he now is a preserver and repairer of cosmic order. This was a transitional concept of God.<sup>168</sup> Hume's skepticism undermined faith in this Tory god from man's perspective, and advancing science systematically found ways of removing the need for this god by finding ways of autonomously shoring up nature's friction-bound autonomous order. Nevertheless, the idea of an orderly system of nature under the rule of mathematics remained (and remains) a powerful motivating idea for men in their quest to master nature — including man's own nature and society — by means of rigorous investigation and the application of practical science to the environment. Like the doctrine of predestination, faith in which supposedly should make fatalists and passivists out of Calvinists, who subsequently turn out to be a dynamic social force, so was Newtonian mathematical law. It delivered practical knowledge to man, and in doing so, offered him the possibility of dominion and power.

What was needed to infuse Newtonianism with power was a new dynamic. What was needed was a view of the possibility of man's ethical transformation, which could then produce social transformation. What was needed was a doctrine of *the new man*. Rousseau provided one version of this doctrine of human transformation; the American revivalists provided another. Both views rested on a doctrine of man as being more than — transcendent to — the mechanical laws of matter in motion. Both views therefore rested on a program of personal and social change that was beyond the boundaries of reason.

### The Great Awakening

The shift from rationalism to emotionalism in the life of colonial America can best be seen in the writings of Jonathan Edwards. He began with his youthful speculations on science: ". . . it is self-evident I believe to every man, that Space is necessary, eternal, infinite and omnipresent. But I had as good speak plain: I have already said as much as, that Space is God. And it is indeed clear to me, that all the Space there is, not proper to the body, all the Space there is without the bounds of Creation, all the Space there was before the Creation, is God himself; . . ." <sup>169</sup> Yet he was to write that lengthy defense of "sweet" emotionalism, the *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections*

168. Burt, *Metaphysical Foundations*, pp. 301-2.

169. "Notes on Natural Science. Of Being." Cited by Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, p. 6.

(1746). René Descartes was the intellectual godfather of the youthful Edwards – God as Space was clearly not Newtonian – but Newton was surely the intellectual godfather of the Edwards of the Great Awakening. Men needed confidence that God’s millennial judgments on the world would not melt the predictable order of the universe. Newtonianism gave them this confidence. Men needed assurance that in abandoning the “legalism” of the older covenantal Puritanism that there would be something to replace the shattered civil foundations. Lockeanism and its derivatives gave them this assurance.

“At the heart of the evangelical ethic,” write Heimert and Miller, two master historians of the era, “was the hope of human betterment, the vision of a community in which men, instinctively as it were, would seek the general welfare.”<sup>170</sup> But Calvinists knew better: in a world in which men are totally depraved, it takes more than instinct to persuade men to seek the common welfare. It takes civil law to restrain them. But the eighteenth-century Christians had no specific system of civil law to recommend in the name of God. So, they recommended other law-orders and other sources than the Old Testament. (Conditions have not changed since then, either.)

#### *Experience vs. Creeds*

The heart of the theological problem with the Great Awakening was its abandonment of the biblical doctrine of the covenant. This led to an institutional crisis. When push came to shove, the proponents of the Great Awakening wanted a new Christian community based on warm, fuzzy feelings rather than creedal orthodoxy. They wanted emotionalism. The halfway covenant theology of New England was a complex theological invention to deal with the unforeseen outcome of requiring a prospective church member to relate his experience of conversion as one basis of acceptance into the church. Halfway covenant theology was abandoned by the revivalists because they abandoned Puritan covenant theology altogether. They decided to abandon any test other than the conversion experience as the ultimate standard of church fellowship. Every other test was secondary, at least in actual practice. The experience of ecstatic rapture steadily replaced the historic creeds of the Church as the basis of

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170. Alan Heimert and Perry Miller, Introduction, in Heimert and Miller (eds.), *The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), p. lviii.

men's church communion in the thinking of the Calvinist revivalists. Their Arminian colleagues agreed. This opened the door to Arminianism and then, when the fires cooled, to Deism and rationalism. It established "hot gospeling" as the basis of evangelism. The least-common-denominator principle took hold, until people fell to their knees and barked like dogs for Jesus. In the next century, "Old School" Calvinist Charles Hedge referred to this as "the leaven of enthusiasm." As he said, such outbursts were opposed by Jonathan Edwards, the Boston clergy, by Gilbert Tennent, and others (though initially, not by George Whitefield).<sup>171</sup> Hedge defended the Presbyterian Church's disciplinary structure and its essentially judicial, covenantal theology in opposing such antinomian outbursts of revivalism. Hedge spoke for the orthodox, hierarchical Church" of all ages against antinomian lawlessness when he wrote:

Those under its influence pretended to a power of discerning spirits, of deciding at once who was and who was not converted; they professed a perfect assurance of the favour of God, founded not upon scriptural evidence, but inward suggestion. It is plain that when men thus give themselves up to the guidance of secret impressions, and attribute divine authority to suggestions, impulses, and casual occurrences, there is no extreme of error or folly to which they may not be led. They are beyond the control of reason or the word of God.<sup>172</sup>

He clearly had in mind Presbyterian revivalist Gilbert Tennent, a founder of the Log College, which became the College of New Jersey, and finally became Princeton College in the late nineteenth century, who wrote *The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry* (1741). He accused his creed-proclaiming, jurisdiction-protecting fellow Presbyterians of being reprobates and "Old Pharisee-Teachers."<sup>173</sup> They had "exerted the Craft of Foxes," and had displayed "the Cruelty of Wolves."<sup>174</sup> "The old Pharisees, for all their long Prayers and other

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171. Charles Hedge, *The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1851), II, p. 82.

172. *Ibid.*, II, p. 83.

173. Gilbert Tennent, "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry" (1741), in Heimert & Miller, *Great A Wakening*, p. 73.

174. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

pious Pretences, had their Eyes, with *Judas*, fixed upon the bag."<sup>175</sup> Judas' ministry was also "partly legal."<sup>176</sup> Tennent invoked the language of the senses, as Edwards also did: "Their Conversion bath nothing of the Savour of Christ, neither is it perfum'd with the Spices of Heaven ." <sup>177</sup>(Years later, he apologized publicly for his intemperate language, long after the damage had been done and the fires of enthusiasm had burned across the colonies. )

This is taste-bud theology and aromatic creedalism, however loudly its proponent claimed that he was defending Calvinism. It is also self-consciously anticlerical. This anticlericalism was a common outlook among the itinerant preachers, many of them unordained men, who willfully invaded the territories of local churches throughout the colonies, justifying this challenge to local church authority on the pretence that the local pastors had failed to preach a pure gospel. Worse, as Tennent's tirade shows, they accused pastors of not being converted men. They made few attempts to bring formal charges against these supposed apostate pastors in their respective denominations; they simply conducted nondenominational, non-worship public meetings in the local communities. The anticlericalism, anti-denominationalism, and anti-creedalism of the Great Awakening became progressively more self-conscious as the movement spread intermittently across the colonies for more than two decades.

The problem, Hedge said a century later, was that "They paid more attention to inward impressions than on the word of God." <sup>178</sup> The individualistic inwardness led to an institutional inclusivism based on experience rather than the Bible, creeds, and Church sanctions. They screened their ranks in terms of outward signs of enthusiasm rather than profession of faith. "If an honest man doubted his conversion, he was declared unconverted. If any one was filled with great joy, he was pronounced a child of God. . . . If they did not feel a minister's preaching, they maintained he was unconverted, or legal."<sup>179</sup> Or legal. This was *the* problem, in their eyes. The revival-

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175. *Ibid.*, p. 75. This was a reference to John 12:4-6: "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

176. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

177. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

178. Hedge, *Constitutional History*, II, p. 83.

179. *Idem.*

ists were voluntarists, individualists, and inclusivists; they were offended by the rules and procedures of organized churches. This analysis was made a century later by a critic, but Hedge's criticism was based on his knowledge of the historical sources within the denomination, such as minutes of the presbyteries, and on his knowledge of other historical studies of the era. He understood the revivalists' assault on the Church.

Tennent was ejected from the denomination in 1741. The emotionalists and the creedalists (nationalists," as their opponents called them) could tolerate communion no longer; the Presbyterian Church split in 1741: Philadelphia Synod (Old Side) and New York Synod (New Side). The New Side (semi-creedalists) and the Old Side (rigorous creedalists) did not reunite until 1758, and the result was the erosion of creedalism, culminating in the revision of the Westminster Confession in 1787. (A parallel split [1838] and reunion [1869] took place in the next century— New School vs. Old School— with the same long-term result: the spread of semi-creedalism after 1870, the rise of Arminianism after 1893, the triumph of liberalism in 1925, the expulsion of the Calvinists in 1936, and the complete revision of the creed in 1967.) What happened to the Presbyterians during the Great Awakening was repeated in Congregationalism (Old Lights vs. New Lights).<sup>180</sup>

Tennent was not alone. Heimert has noted Edwards' rationalistic aesthetics: 'Edwards turned to nature, not for refuge from the still, sad music of humanity, but because he believed that God had devised a world of natural beauty — where 'one thing sweetly harmonizes with another.' . . ."181 That view was widely shared in the colonies. Indeed, even Voltaire would have agreed. Where did Edwards get such an idea? From Newton, the master theologian of not quite perfectly harmonious nature. What Newtonianism did for American civil polity, experientialism eventually did for American ecclesiastical polity: create a new judicial basis for communion and confederation. Unitarian rationalism and non-creedal Christian irrationalism joined forces in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the result was a new nation, conceived in neutrality, and dedicated to the proposition that all church creeds are created equal.

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180. Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 2.

181. *Ibid.*, p. 103.



If anything other than verbal profession of faith and outward walk according to God's Bible-revealed law is suggested as a substitute requirement for Church membership, the result is the creation of a distinction in membership based on this added requirement. If the added requirement is experience, then someone in the church will not meet this inherently undefinable standard. If experience becomes in any way a formal basis of membership, detailed creeds will then be seen as inherently divisive within the church, and the defenders of such creeds will be seen as narrow bigots. The supplemental standard will become the primary screening device in the eyes of those who believe that it is more than supplemental. This is what happened during the Great Awakening and its aftermath in the 1760's. The Great Awakening restructured Church government as surely as it restructured civil government.<sup>182</sup>

Samuel Davies, a leader in Virginia Presbyterian circles and who succeeded Jonathan Edwards as president of the College of New Jersey, began in the late 1750's to urge a "*unity of affection and design*" among all of Virginia's dissenters, Baptists and Presbyterians. He argued that this unity would not be based on doctrine or logic, but on "experimental and *practical Religion*."<sup>183</sup> In the revival of 1763, this was the basis of another call to Christian union; Christians were to be "one in *heart*, one in affection" in attending to "the same great concern," which was the Work of Redemption.<sup>184</sup> Contrary to Heimert's assertion that "the essentials of Calvinism" were "the New Birth and experimental religion,"<sup>185</sup> there was nothing explicitly or even implicitly Calvinistic about these concerns. There was clearly nothing Puritan. The Great Awakening was creating a new basis of Christian unity: experientialism and a least-common-denominator creedalism.

This unity could not be maintained ecclesiastically. Baptists were Baptists; Presbyterians were Presbyterians (and separated from their brethren until 1758). Where, then, was this hoped-for unity to be manifested? In civic religion. This would require a common "view of civil law to match the ever-leaner creedal confessions and the ever-less covenantal conception of Christian society. This was reflected in the Presbyterians' steady acceptance of a practice they had never been comfortable with, public fast days. These days were a celebration of God's common moral law among nations:

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182. See Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee*.

183. Cited in Heimert, *Religion*, p. 142.

184. *Idem*.

185. *Idem*.

By the 1770's the notion of God's moral government of the nations had been fully translated by the Calvinist mind into its own interpretation of the course of empire. . . . By the late years of the Revolution Calvinists were urging thanksgivings in terms of "the common laws of society" that obliged all men to join in expressions of gratitude for the felicity of "communities, as collective bodies." . . . Over the course of thirty years they had moved from a disenchantment with the course of colonial history to a celebration of the fact that the saints, having engaged themselves in political affairs, had seemingly succeeded in imposing their moral law on American society.<sup>186</sup>

On the contrary, the Unitarians had imposed their view of the revelation-free moral law on the Calvinists and everyone else. The non-creedal Great Awakening, followed by the national spirit of the Revolution against a common political enemy, had destroyed all traces of the Puritan holy commonwealth ideal. It had virtually destroyed its original internationalism — the city on a hill — and had seriously damaged its civil localism. Common-ground, minimal-creed religious experientialism had combined with common-ground Newtonian rationalism to produce the national civil religion.

There was a spirit of rebellion at the heart of the Great Awakening: against Church authority and against State authority. It tore up the churches and it tore up the last remnant of the Trinitarian holy commonwealth ideal in New England. The individualists had organized against the particularism of the creeds. It unleashed the same forces that the revolution in England had unleashed a century earlier. This time, however, the wave of anti-creedalism could not be stopped, short of the restructuring of civil government in New England. The spirit of Spirit-filled individualism — so similar in effects to the spirit of pantheistic autonomy — coupled with the inevitable quest for some basis of fellowship outside the organized churches, even if this period lasted only for a year or two in a man's life, transformed men's thinking. They were never again willing to fight for Trinitarian oaths as the foundation of citizenship. The Great Awakening's one-generation spirit of rebellion washed away the biblical covenant ideal along with the last political remnants of that ideal. It has yet to be restored. 1s7

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186. *Ibid.*, pp. 296, 297.

187. It is significant that Rushdoony's *Chalcedon Report* in July of 1989 began a series of articles defending the revivalists of the Great Awakening against the Church authorities of that day. The spirit of independency, when unchecked by Church authority and the sacraments, has an innate tendency to triumph over men's formally professed creeds. Creeds without formal sanctions cannot survive. This is always the threat of Whiggery, whether ecclesiastical or political: it hates ecclesiastical sanctions, and it hates creeds if they are enforced by sanctions. Because it hates creeds and sanctions, Whiggery eventually comes to terms with the myth of neutrality.

*New Theology; New Ecclesiology*

The revivalists in 1740-60 did not ask themselves a crucial question: What would remain when the honeymoon fires of the revival cooled, and theological strangers found themselves in ecclesiastical beds together?<sup>188</sup> The answer was a new theology, a civil theology, which would be common to all vaguely defined and vaguely disciplined Christians. Rushdoony has noted that there was a shift in the character of preaching as Puritanism declined. Colonial election sermons “shifted from an attempt to preserve the integrity of the *church* to an attempt to preserve the integrity of civil government. The holy commonwealth was now increasingly *civil government and Christianity* rather than church and state, or civil and ecclesiastical governments.”<sup>189</sup> This process of secularization accelerated, especially during the Revolution. Some scholars believe that the Great Awakening made the Revolution possible.<sup>190</sup>

This process of heating and cooling did take place. The fires of the Great Awakening spread across the face of the land from 1735 until the mid-1750's. But when the fires of revival went out, and the shattered ecclesiastical structures lay divided across the American landscape and soulscape, what other institutional structure could offer men the sense of fellowship, fraternity, and commonality that the churches no longer seemed able to provide? The quest for such a fraternity has been a neglected story – indeed, *the* neglected story – of the transformation of the American covenant. It is the story of the rise of Freemasonry.

## Ancients and Moderns

What eighteenth-century men believed that Newton had accomplished for the physical universe – explaining the physical cosmos without any appeal to the details of Christian theology — they also believed the human mind could do to the political universe. They believed that a well-crafted contractual document could produce the

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188. And regular beds. The combination of antinomianism, emotionalism, and a breakdown of local church authority was potent. The era of the Great Awakening was an era of rampant sexuality. In Bristol, Rhode Island, in the period 1720-40, the number of new marriages with a child born in the eighth month was 10 %. In the 1740-60 period, it was 49%. In 1760-80, it dropped slightly to 44%. John Demos, “Families in Colonial Bristol, Rhode Island: An Exercise in Historical Demography,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXV (Jan. 1968), p. 56.

189. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, p. 106.

190. Heimert, *Religion*.

blessings of liberty and the reduction of the influence of political factions, as Madison asserted in *Federalist 51*. Hamilton had framed the question of questions in *Federalist 1*: “. . . whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on accident and force.”<sup>191</sup> What the Federalists needed, politically speaking, was a crisis, a looming discontinuity — or better yet, the appearance of a looming discontinuity — so that they could persuade voters to adopt the Constitution rather than drift along with the existing political order. Thus, said Hamilton, “the crisis, at which we are arrived, may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; . . .”<sup>192</sup> Here was the great opportunity: to impose a new system of national civil government on the thirteen mostly independent colonies. But what kind of order would this new order be? It would not be Christian. There is no doubt that after the Revolution, the focus of the civil government became one of protecting individual liberty rather than protecting Christian society (e. g., sexual morality), even in once-Puritan Massachusetts. 193

Michael Lienesch’s superb summary of the Framers’ outlook demonstrates that they held a “modern” view of politics — a view of politics analogous to Newtonian astronomy. While they referred to Roman history, their minds were governed by a very different paradigm, especially when they sought to defend the work of the Constitutional Convention. The following extract from Lienesch’s book must be read carefully.

With this new form of political science, Federalists sought to create a timeless form of politics. Transcending any need for the lessons of the past, preventing any possibility of declension in the future, the American Constitution existed entirely in a theoretically perfect present. The discoveries of modern science had made it possible to bring the principles of the political realm into complete conformity with the laws of the natural world. Written in “the language of reason and truth,” based on principles “as fixed and unchangeable as the laws which operate in the natural world,” the Constitu-

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191. Hamilton, *Federalist 1*, in *The Federalist*, edited by Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 3.

192. *Idem*.

193. William E. Nelson, *The Americanization of the Common Law: The Impact of Legal Change on Massachusetts Society, 1760-1830* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 89-110.

tion was intended to be a perfect system, “as infallible as any mathematical calculations.”<sup>194</sup> Secure in their scientific faith, Federalists waxed euphoric on the superiority of the new Constitution; it was, as one said, the “best form of government that has ever been offered to the world.”<sup>195</sup> Whereas other schemes had fallen into corruption and decline, a perpetually balanced federal Constitution seemed capable of continuing forever. With it, predicted an admiring Robert Davidson, the American states “shall resemble, the Solar System, where every obedient planet moves on its proper path, — never seeking to fly from, nor even approaching the great attractive orb, than the wise author of nature intended.”<sup>196</sup> The federal Constitution was created to apply equally to every age, never running down, wearing out, or falling into disrepair. As far as these Federalist writers were concerned, the new republic could continue in this perfect state forever — “a system,” Barlow rhapsodized, “which will stand the test of ages.”<sup>197</sup>

Throughout the debates, Federalists would continue to argue that the Constitution was a theoretically perfect instrument. As the state conventions drew on, however, they came to admit the cold hard truth so often propounded by the Antifederalists — that the Constitution, however excellent in theory, might well be flawed in practice. Equally important, they realized that the case for ratification could be strengthened by embracing the Antifederalist demand for an amendment procedure. Thus, in Federalist rhetoric, “experience” began to undergo one final change, from experience as scientific truth to experience as scientific experimentation.<sup>198</sup>

This appeal to experience was no deviation from Newtonianism. Newton had admitted that God must occasionally reimpose His will on a declining, friction-bound cosmic order. The universe is not a perfect autonomous cosmic clock. Thus, the revised view of those who defended this “modern” view of the Constitution was really consistent with Newtonianism. Lienesch does not make this clear in his

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194. The Friends of Union and Just Government, *An Address to the Citizens of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: n. p., [1789]; Elizur Goodrich, D. D., *The Principles of Civil Union and Happiness considered and Recommended. A Sermon . . .* (Hartford, Corm.: Hudson and Goodwin, 1787), p. 8; Hamilton, address to the New York Convention, 28 June 1788, in [Elliot's] *Debates*, II, p. 366.

195. Simeon Baldwin, *An Oration Pronounced Before the Citizens of New-Haven. July 4, 1788 . . .* (New Haven, Corm.: J. Meigs, 1788), p. 13.

196. Robert Davidson, D. D., *An Oration on the Independence of the United States of America . . .* (Carlisle, Pa.: Kline and Reynolds [1787]), p. 15.

197. Joel Barlow, *An Oration, Delivered in the North Church in Hartford . July 4, 1787 . . .* (Hartford, Corm.: Hudson and Goodwin, [1787]), p. 19.

198. Michael Lienesch, *New Order of the Ages: Time, the Constitution, and the Making of Modern American Political Thought* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 134-35.

study. He does correctly point out that eighteenth-century science accepted a dual view of science: theoretical permanence and practical improvement.<sup>199</sup>

### *A Familiar Story*

This dualism between theoretical permanence and historical change is equally true of every philosophical system. There has to be a system of permanence which undergirds and gives meaning to all change — if nothing else, then at least a communications system based on grammar (fixed rules, yet with allowance for change through usage). With regularity there had to be a way to deal with human experience. The Framers were well aware of this dilemma, and they devoted considerable time and effort to studying the experience of political orders in the past, especially classical politics. This was also a heritage of the Whig tradition.<sup>200</sup>

This dilemma is the continuation of the ancient philosophical problem of law vs. flux, logic vs. history, or as Van Til liked to put it, the static ice block philosophy of Parmenides vs. the fluctuating flowing river of Heraclitus. It is the fundamental antinomy of all humanist thought. Plato tried to reconcile the two, Van Til said, but failed. “Plato could not stop his ice cubes from becoming water unless he would freeze all the water into ice.”<sup>201</sup> This dualism between law and historical change cannot be reconciled apart from the doctrines of the Trinity, the creation out of nothing, and God’s absolute providence over history in terms of His sovereign decree and plan.<sup>202</sup> Once men abandon the Bible as God’s only permanent Word in history, they are caught between the false, tyrannical permanence of man’s word and the chaotic flux of history.

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199. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

200. H. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Beginnings of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965). See especially J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), Pt. 3. Pangle’s warning is legitimate: we can easily overlook the modernist impulse of the Whig tradition if we take too seriously the rhetorical references to the ancient classics in the writings of these “Machiavellian” republicans. Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, ch. 4.

201. Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, p. 43.

202. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4). Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (II Tim. 1:9).

Thus, the fundamental problems of the political philosophy of the ‘ancients’ reappear in the political philosophy of the “moderns.” Both of these humanist viewpoints are anti-Tnitarian and anti-biblical covenant. There was no Constitutional solution to the problems of political philosophy in either Federalist Whig Newtonian republicanism or Antifederalist Whig Newtonian republicanism. The sought-for Constitutional balance of the one and the many, apart from the Bible and the Old Testament case laws, is unattainable. Like Newton’s universe, apart from God’s constant, active providence, the ‘balanced Constitution’ will inevitably move toward centralized tyranny (the fear of the Antifederalists) or toward dissolution (the fear of the Federalists). Both movements took place in 1861-65. The centralists won the intellectual battle of political philosophy on the military battlefields of the U.S. Civil War. (So did the bankers.)<sup>203</sup> The federal bureaucracy began to expand as never before after 1860, although it appears small in retrospect in today’s bureaucratic world. Contrary to Madison’s vision, but consistent with Madison’s system after the Fourteenth Amendment had made legally possible the increasing centralization of the nation, these new bureaucracies were geared to special interests in a diversifying economy.<sup>204</sup>

What the Framers needed was a model: a fixed governmental system that would deal with man as he is, yet encourage him to act in ways that are best for him. The Framers were almost messianic; they believed that such a constitution had never before been devised. The republics of Greece and Italy had failed, Hamilton said, for they had oscillated between tyranny and anarchy<sup>205</sup> – the perpetual problem of the one and the many.<sup>206</sup> But there is hope: “The science of politics, however, like most other sciences has received great improvement. The efficacy of various principles is now well understood, which were either not known at all, or imperfectly known to the ancients.”<sup>207</sup> Were this not the case, pessimism alone would be

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203. Gary North, “Greenback Dollars and Federal Sovereignty, 1861 -1865,” in Hans F. Sennholz (ed.), *Gold Is Money* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1975), pp. 122-56.

204. James Q. Wilson, “The Rise of the Bureaucratic State,” *Public Interest* (Fall 1975), p. 88.

205. Hamilton, Federalist 9, *Federalist*, p. 50.

206. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1971] 1978).

207. Hamilton, Federalist 9, *Federalist*, p. 51.

appropriate regarding republics, that is, “If it had been found impracticable, to have devised models of a more perfect structure. . . .”<sup>208</sup> But *The Federalist* is a defense of a new day, a new way, a new model, a new order of the ages.

And this order would be judicially non-Christian.

These men saw themselves as architects of a new nation and a new order of the ages: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*. This identification with architecture was not a random development. Constitution-building was, in their minds, analogous to the work of a Great Architect. It was a new creation. It was a break from the past — a specifically Christian past. Yet there was a sufficient legacy from that past, including a millennial aspect, 209 to persuade them that such an experiment would succeed.

To make possible this hypothetically disinterested examination of politics, the Constitution removed Christian religious tests as the judicial requirement of the judges and officers of the new national government. That, in and of itself, delivered the republic into the hands of the humanists. Nothing else was necessary after that. From that point on, the secularization of America was a mopping-up operation.

### Neglecting the Newtonian-Great Awakening Connection

Jonathan Edwards is sometimes viewed as the last of the Puritans. This is a mistake. He was not among the “Calvinist ancients.” He is better described as the first of the “Calvinist moderns.” Edwards’ theology of experientialism helped to destroy Calvinist covenant theology in America, which is one reason why virtually all modern scholars praise him as the greatest theologian in American history: he abandoned “legalism.”<sup>210</sup> He took predestination, humanistic rationalism, postmillennialism, and emotionalism, and he fused them into a non-covenantal theology. His theology was antinomian.<sup>211</sup>

208. *Idem*.

209. Lienesch, *New Order*, ch. 8. Cf. Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, [1985] 1988), chaps. 5, 6.

210. Writes William Frankena: Edwards was “perhaps the best philosopher Calvinism ever produced. . . .” Frankena, Foreword, Edwards, *The True Nature of Virtue* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. vi.

211. Biblical law is nowhere even mentioned by Edwards in his study, *The True Nature of Virtue* (1755); instead, Edwards discussed such topics as “Concerning the Secondary and Inferior Kind of Beauty” (Chapter 3), “Of Natural Conscience and the Moral Sense” (Chapter 5), and “In What Respects Virtue or Moral Good Is Founded in Sentiment; and How Far It Is Founded in the Reason and Nature of Things” (Chapter 8). Here is pre-Kantian ethical dualism by a Calvinist.



But the biblical covenant model depends on the presence of God's Bible-revealed stipulations. Heimert is correct; Edwards repudiated the covenant as a meaningful concept.<sup>212</sup> His itinerant Arminian imitators did not even begin with the older covenant model, let alone repudiate it implicitly, as he did. Their spiritual heirs in the next generation were even more adrift covenantally in a new nation and new society. Thus, by the 1780's, the nation was without a covenantal rudder. This vacuum was filled by a new covenant theology, Unitarian in content and political in application (as Unitarian theology generally is).<sup>213</sup>

From the Puritan founders and their requirement for experience as a mark of true conversion and church membership until the Synod of 1662 and the halfway covenant – baptism but no Lord's Supper for grandchildren of members – was thirty years. From that Synod to Solomon Stoddard's theology of open communion as a means of conversion was another forty-five years. From Stoddard to his grandson Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening, it took thirty more years.<sup>214</sup> By then, Calvinist covenant theology was dead or terminally ill. Experientialism had mortally wounded it in the 1630's and had buried it in the 1740's.<sup>215</sup> From Edwards' death in 1758 – the year of Presbyterian reunion – to the ratification of the Constitution was another thirty years.

Men need a covenant. The question is: Which covenant? Part 3 of *Political Polytheism* is basically a Trinitarian and covenantal development of the brief insight made by E. S. Corwin in 1929, generally regarded as the most influential student of the Constitution in this century.<sup>216</sup> Corwin's original 1928-29 essays in the *Harvard Law Review* were published as *The "Higher Law" Background of American Constitutional Law* (1955).<sup>217</sup> He traced the Constitutional ideal of the ordered political universe back to Newton and Grotius, a "2 + 2 = 4" view of man's world.<sup>218</sup> Corwin got the idea from Carl

212. Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, p. 126.

213. The best definition of Unitarian theology I have ever heard was offered by philosopher David Harrah: "There is, at the most, one God."

214. James Carse, *Jonathan Edwards and the Visibility of God* (New York: Scribners, 1967), p. 24.

215. David Chilton once told me that he planned to write a book called *Revival: Its Causes and Cure*.

216. He held sway from the 1920's through the 1940's; after his death, there were too many contenders for the title for any one of them to match his influence.

217. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

218. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

Becker. zlg Becker had traced the idea in part back to a 1728 book, *The Newtonian System of the World the Best Model of Government*, an *Allegorical Poem*, published the year after Newton's death and written by J. T. Desaguliers. Becker unfortunately did not identify Desaguliers, who is one of the most important "forgotten men" in eighteenth-century Anglo-American history. He was Newton's hand-picked popularizer of his scientific system, the first paid scientific lecturer in modern history, and the founder, along with James Anderson, of modern Freemasonry. (See Chapter 9.)

This view of the Constitution has not gone unchallenged. Philosopher Morton White rejects it in his *Philosophy of the American Revolution*.<sup>220</sup> But there are other ways of avoiding the Corwin-Becker thesis. The most effective way to do this is to adopt a strategy of silence regarding Newton, and then reproduce detailed citations from lesser subsequent figures who were influenced heavily by Newton, a fact one seldom mentions or considers. For example, there is little doubt in my mind that the most informed historian of the origins of the U.S. Constitution is Forrest McDonald. Yet in his *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution (1985)*, he mentions Isaac Newton only once, and then only in a list of names of people cited in one colonial oration.<sup>221</sup> McDonald goes into great detail, as my teacher Douglass Adair used to do, regarding the influence of Coke, Bolingbroke, Montesquieu, Hume, Blackstone, Locke, Grotius, Vattel, and dozens of other long-forgotten figures. Yet the towering intellectual figure of the age – indeed, the towering intellectual figure of the modern world, whose *Principia* dates the advent of this world — the man who set the foundational paradigm of all modern scientific thought, is not even discussed. (Adair was equally guilty of this neglect.) It was Isaac Newton who more than any other figure made possible the culture-wide ideological shift of the West from Trinitarianism to Deism, and from thence to atheism. It was Isaac Newton who, in his meticulous, geometrical, guarded way, turned the world upside down — ether or no ether.

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219. Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (New York: Vintage, [1922] 1942), ch. 2.

220. His argument against this Newtonian vision of the Framers' thinking is basically negative: Corwin did not prove his case. This was not a persuasive argument in 1978, and today, after Margaret Jacob's books, it is woefully out of date. Morton White, *The Philosophy of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 157-60.

221. Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 69.

McDonald is representative of the best of the humanist historians of the origins of the American Revolution and the Constitution. His mastery of the facts of the 1780's is impressive; for example, he has read every colonial newspaper of the era. His mistake is in asking subordinate questions of subordinate figures. He ignores the source of the modern West's paradigm shift — Isaac Newton — and concentrates instead on its diligent developers in the limited field of political theory. He does not discuss the origin of the politics of the 1780's in the laboratories of the 1680's. The story of the American Revolution does not begin in 1688 with the Glorious Revolution; it begins in 1687 with the *Principia*, or in 1660 with the restoration of Charles II and his incorporation in 1661 of the Royal Society. When the Invisible College became visible, the revolution was. 222

### Conclusion

McDonald's neglect of Newton is matched by his far less well-informed equivalents in the Christian academic community. For well over a century, a handful of Christian conservatives have attempted to place the American Revolution within the context of Christian thought and culture, despite the steady expiration of both explicitly Christian thought (moral casuistry) and culture in the early eighteenth century. This approach can be somewhat successful with respect to certain intellectual defenses of the American Revolution itself, especially by an appeal to patriotic sermons, though not without considerable qualification and a clear recognition of the crippling effects of Newtonian natural law philosophy on the defenses of the best Christian political apologists. 223 On the other hand, such an attempt is utterly fruitless with respect to the ideological origins of the U.S. Constitution. Nell, Hatch, and Marsden recognize this, and they have successfully defeated their traditional conservative Christian rivals in the field of intellectual battle. Their political ideal is Newtonian, and they can demonstrate that their preference is incarnated in the Constitutional settlement. (Being Newtonian, however, such an ideal is without epistemological foundation today, thereby making it possible for neo-evangelicals to "go with the flow" of evolu-

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222. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.

223. Archie P. Jones, 'The Christian Roots of the War for Independence,' *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (1976), pp. 6-51.; M. E. Bradford, 'And God Defend the Right: The American Revolution and the Limits of Christian Obedience,' *Christianity and Civilization*, 2 (1983), pp. 233-41.

tionary secular humanism about 80% of the time, which is exactly what they want to do. They cling to the remaining 20 % in order to justify their claim – to themselves and to their ecclesiastical superiors — that they are really different in spirit from their tenured, God-hating, academic peers.)

Unfortunately, we have had a dedicated movement of Christian non-historians, would-be historians, and lawyers pretending to be historians who think that historical revisionism applied to the prevailing humanist textbook account of the Constitution is called for, not to show the truly conspiratorial basis of that judicial revolution, which the humanists prudently ignore, but in order to show that somehow, if we just look closely enough, we will see traces of Christianity in the Constitution. To which I say: let us cut our losses now. It is time to scrap this particular revisionist effort, It has produced nothing but confusion in the minds of Christians and ridicule from the humanists who have the footnotes on their side in this confrontation.

What we need to do in the future is to examine the records of the Constitutional convention and its intellectual *and institutional* background. This will begin to open a long-closed book. This procedure must be done by Christian scholars in terms of a biblical presupposition: that the quest for permanent political pluralism is inherently a demonic quest. This presupposition has been rejected by both sides, Christian and non-Christian. So, we have yet to be presented with a serious study of the historical and theological origins of the U.S. Constitution. Part 3 of *Political Polytheism* is little more than an outline of the work that needs to be done by several generations of presuppositionally sound Christian researchers.

What I am arguing in this chapter, and indeed in this book, is that Cromwell's version of Trinitarian political pluralism is the one which is derived from the Bible. Roger Williams secularized this position, and universalized it by means of natural law theory. This is the theological foundation of modern political polytheism. James Madison and the Framers put forth a new national covenant based on Williams' model in 1787, and the voters' representatives ratified it in 1788. We live under its jurisdiction still. We will not live under it forever.

Madison could not pause to rest. His dominant role in drafting the Constitution and forcing the First Amendment upon a reluctant Congress in 1789 is well known. In the light of history, it would have been an irony had any other man performed the task – certainly no one in the House of Representatives or Senate could match his record as a fighter for religious freedom. Some thirty years later Madison was still as concerned about the need for separation of church and state as he had been in 1774. Around 1832 he wrote a retrospective memorandum on the scenes of public life he had witnessed and also set down a few of his fears. Among the latter was a feeling that “the danger of silent accumulations & encroachments, by Ecclesiastical Bodies have not sufficiently engaged attention in the U. S.”. . .

Warming to the issue, Madison called on the errant states to build an impenetrable wall separating the church and state and thus “make the example of your Country as pure & compleat, in what relates to the freedom of the mind and its allegiance to its maker, as in what belongs to the legitimate objects of political and civil institutions”. . .

With Madison the line between church and state had to be drawn with absolute firmness. “The establishment of the chaplainship to Congs is a palpable violation of equal rights, as well as of Constitutional principles.” And what about presidential proclamations involving religious feast days and fasts? Even though they come as “recommendations only, they imply a religious agency” and are therefore suspect. On balance, Madison reasoned, even these proclamations are not a good idea, and he appears to have regretted those issued during his presidency. “They seem to imply and certainly nourish the erroneous idea of a *national* religion,” he explained. “During the administration of Mr. Jefferson no religious proclamation was issued.” Looking back, Madison wished he had followed the same rule.

Robert A. Rutland (1983)\*

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\*Rutland, “James Madison’s Dream: A Secular Republic,” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 1983), p. 11.

## RENEWED COVENANT OR BROKEN COVENANT?

*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again (Matt.7:2).*

*In every country where an oath of office is required, as is required in the United States by the Constitution, the oath has reference to swearing by almighty God to abide by His covenant, invoking the cursings and blessings of God for obedience and disobedience.*

*R. J. Rushdoony (1983)<sup>1</sup>*

*The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all the executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.*

*Article VI, Clause 3, U.S. Constitution*

The fourth point of the biblical covenant relates to the oath and the sanctions attached to it. The individual swears an oath to God, who in turn promises to bless the individual for covenantal faithfulness or curse him for disobedience. It is the cursing aspect of an oath that establishes it as a covenant oath, as distinguished from a mere contract, for the curses establish it as a *self-maledictory oath*. It is the oath that ratifies the covenantal bond between the sovereign and the subordinate.

God, the covenantal Sovereign, rules in history through a covenant-bound trio of hierarchies: Church, State, and family. The head of

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1. R. J. Rushdoony, *The "Atheism" of the Early Church* (Blackheath, New South Wales: Logos Foundation, 1983), p. 77.

each covenantal organization is required to take an oath before God to preserve and defend the organization and its members. Those beneath the oath-taker in the hierarchy are under the covenant's law-order through the oath-taking representative agent. Until she says "I do," the woman is not a wife; once she does, she is bound legally to God through her husband and to her husband under God. The same is true in a church. Similarly, when a citizen agrees to remain under the jurisdiction of the civil government, he has implicitly taken an oath to defend it and obey its authorized representatives.

The oath invokes negative covenant sanctions; once invoked, there is no escape: "And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD" (Ex. 19:7-8). He was *their* representative agent. When they promised to obey, they took an oath for themselves *and their posterity*. The oath has continuity over generations. So *do its stipulations*. Only the sovereign who establishes the oath can change the stipulations or the oath. The ability to change the stipulations or the oath is therefore a mark of ultimate sovereignty.

With this in mind, we begin our discussion of the U.S. Constitution as a covenant document.

### A Civil Covenant

The U.S. Constitution reveals its covenant structure in its five divisions:

- Sovereignty: Preamble
- Law: Legislation (Congress: Article I)
- Sanctions: Enforcement (Executive: Article II)
- Hierarchy: Appeals (Judicial: Articles III, IV)
- Succession: Amendments (Article V)

The five points do not appear in the same order that they do in the biblical covenant model, but all five are present. In this sense, the Constitution is surely a covenant document – one that is far more visibly covenantal in structure than is the case in other constitutions.

The Constitution begins with a declaration of sovereignty, point one of the covenant model: "We the People of the United States . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." This Preamble could not be clearer. The Framers pres-

ented the document for ratification in such a form that the entire population acting corporately through the states would gain formal credit for the document. Warren Burger, who served as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, says that these are the document's most important words. <sup>2</sup> As he wrote to me when I questioned him about the meaning of his statement, "They are the key words *conceptually*."<sup>3</sup>

The "suzerain" of this covenant is the People. We have here an echo of classical Roman political philosophy, enunciated by Cicero, who was one of the favorites of the Framers: *vox populi, vox dei*. The voice of the people is the voice of God. Professor Clark is correct: *vox populi, vox dei* is a divine-right slogan.<sup>4</sup> The divine-right doctrine teaches that no earthly appeal beyond the specified sovereign agent or agency is legitimate. Nothing lawfully separates the authority of the divine-right agency from God. If there is no personal God in the system, then this agency takes the place of God in society. This phrase announces in principle the genius of the people. <sup>5</sup> We should not forget that genius in pre-imperial Rome meant the divinity of the city of Rome and its people (in the *Dea Roma* cult), and later became an attribute of the Emperor's divinity. <sup>6</sup>

This raises an inescapable problem for politics: Who speaks for the sovereign? In no covenantal system does God speak continually and directly to those under the authority of the covenant. The debate in the West until the twentieth century was between those who defended the king or executive branch and those who defended the legislature. It was the question of "the enforcer vs. the declarer." As I will show later on in this chapter, in twentieth-century America, the locus of final earthly sovereignty has shifted: the judicial branch in the U.S. government has become the sovereign's exclusive voice, its sole authorized interpreter. <sup>7</sup>

2. *Orlando Sentinel* (Sept. 8, 1988), p. A-2.

3. Letter to author: Sept. 26, 1988. Emphasis his.

4. George Clark, *The Seventeenth Century* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, [1947] 1961), p. 223.

5. Charles L. Mee, Jr., *The Genius of the People* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

6. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1971] 1978), p. 93.

7. The courts have gained a potent rival from a wholly new source: executive bureaucracy. The untouchable administrative agencies of civil government have nearly triumphed all over the world in this century. The rise of administrative law is in fact a true revolution, one which threatens the very fabric of freedom in the West. On this point, see Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), Introduction. I regard this Introduction as one of the most important academic discussions of my generation.



### People, King, and Parliament

“We the People” can also be interpreted in a more Protestant fashion. The anti-monarchical *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannis*, by “Lucius Junius Brutus,” published in 1579, offered a biblical and covenantal justification for political rebellion. It was translated into English and published in the year following the Glorious Revolution of 1688. This book became a familiar reference during the American Revolution. It asserted the sovereignty of the people above the sovereignty of kings. One of the sections of “The Third Question” announces: “The whole body of the people is above the king.”<sup>8</sup> So common were these ideas among Protestants in the late sixteenth century that even Richard Hooker appealed to the *Vindiciae* in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594) in his defense of the divine right of the kings of England.<sup>9</sup> He said that the representatives of the “people’s majesty” crown the king.<sup>10</sup> The king rules by God through the people. He rules by law, meaning *natural law*, which is the same as God’s revealed law in the Bible. Hooker began his study with a discussion of natural law, which remained the hypothetical law structure that supposedly serves autonomous man as a legitimate substitute for biblical law.

#### *The Stuart Kings*

Within half a decade after the death of Hooker, James I came to the throne. A pagan Renaissance monarch to the ‘core,’<sup>11</sup> James I asserted the divine right of kings far more forcefully than Hooker had. He viewed kingship as directly under God, without any reference to the sovereignty of the people. “It is atheisme and blasphemic to dispute what God can doe, so it is presumption and high contempt in a subject, to dispute what a King can doe. . . .”<sup>12</sup> This arrogance did not go without a challenge. In a document published by the House of Commons in 1604, *An Apology*, the argument appears that

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8. *A Defence of Liberty Against Tyrants*, Introduction by Harold J. Laski (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 124.

9. Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book VIII, Ch. 2, Sect. 7; in *The Works of Mr. Richard Hooker*, arranged by Rev. John Keble, 3 vols. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1865), III, pp. 347n, 348n.

10. *Ibid.*, III, p. 348.

11. Otto Scott, *James I* (New York: Mason/Charter, 1976). This is now distributed by Ross House Books, Vallecito, California 95251.

12. Cited by C. Northcote Parkinson, *The Evolution of Political Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 80.

the rights of Englishmen areas old as the monarchy, especially property rights. "The voice of the *people* is said to be as the voice of God."<sup>13</sup> In response, James suspended Commons. The theoretical and institutional battle between Stuart kings and Parliament began. It ended only with the Revolution of 1688.

In the Puritan Revolution of the 1640's, Parliament conducted its revolt against James I's son Charles I in the name of both God and the people. Obviously, the Jacobite concept of the divine right of kings had to be jettisoned. But jettisoned in the name of what earthly agent? The divine-right doctrine always meant that the named agent would be the final earthly court of appeal. The person of the king had been that sole agent, Charles I's father had maintained. Not so, said Parliament. They reasserted the older Protestant view of the sovereignty of God as delegated to all civil governments through the people.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, during the Restoration period, 1660-1688, the views of James I resurfaced. In an 1681 address to Charles II by the University of Cambridge, we read:

We will still believe and maintain that our kings derive not their title from the people but from God; that to him only they are accountable; that it belongs not to subjects, either to create or censure but to honour and obey their sovereign, who comes to be so by a fundamental hereditary right of succession, which no religion, no law, no fault of forfeiture can alter or diminish.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Triumph of Parliament*

These sentiments did not last long. Parliament overthrew Charles II's son James II in 1688. Nevertheless, the problem of sovereignty still remained: someone must speak for the People-Deity in the People's corporate political capacity. The Parliament asserted that Parliament's sovereignty is unbounded. In this political theorists were following Sir Edward Coke ["Cook"], who had drawn James I's ire for his defense of absolute Parliamentary sovereignty.

This view of Parliamentary sovereignty was carried down in William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765) to the era immediately preceding the American Revolution. As we have

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13. Cited by Scott, *James Z.*, p. 285.

14. Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereign in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 56.

15. Quoted by John N. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings* (2nd ed.; 1914; reprinted by Peter Smith, Gloucester, Massachusetts), p. 6.

seen in Chapter 6, Blackstone was a defender of natural law, which he formally equated with God's law.<sup>16</sup> "This law of nature, being co-eval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times; no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this.' . . ."<sup>17</sup> Yet he also defended the absolute sovereignty of Parliament, indicating that he believed that Parliament always and inevitably adhered to the dictates of natural law. Blackstone began his defense of Parliamentary sovereignty by citing Coke. "Sir Edward Coke says: The power and jurisdiction of Parliament is so transcendent and absolute, that it cannot be confined, either for causes and persons, within any bounds." Blackstone continued in this vein: "It can, in short, do everything that is not naturally impossible; and therefore some have not scrupled to call its power, by a figure rather too bold, the omnipotence of Parliament. True it is, that what the Parliament cloth, no authority on earth can undo."<sup>18</sup> Blackstone was wrong: beginning eleven years later, the American colonies undid a lot of what Parliament had done.

### *The American Revolution*

The American Revolution was a revolt against Blackstone's view of Parliamentary sovereignty. This revolt was conducted after 1774 in the name of the legitimate legislative sovereignty of the colonial parliaments, i.e., the state assemblies. During the Revolutionary War, the state legislatures transferred specified portions of their own limited sovereignty to Congress. Late in the war, they transferred limited sovereignty again to the central government in the Articles of Confederation (1781). This transfer was then challenged by the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and by the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1788. But the fundamental intellectual question of the Revolution, as historian Bernard Bailyn has maintained, was the question of sovereignty. "Representation and consent, constitution and rights — these were basic problems, consideration of which led to shifts in thought that helped shape the character of American

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16. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (reprint of first edition, University of Chicago Press, [1765] 1979), I, p. 41. This was first printed in the American colonies in 1771.

17. *Idem*. See the introductory section of Chapter 6, above.

18. Cited by A. V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (8th ed.; Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Classics, [1915] 1982), p. 5.

radicalism. But of all the intellectual problems the colonists faced, one was absolutely crucial: in the last analysis it was over this issue that the Revolution was fought.”<sup>19</sup>

The solution to this intellectual problem was settled in a preliminary way in 1788, with the ratification of the Constitution; it was settled more decisively on the battlefields of 1861-65. But it is still not settled in the United States. It will not be settled historically in any nation until the whole world formally affirms the crown rights of King Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

What I assume in this section of *Political Polytheism* is that the Articles of Confederation served as a halfway national covenant. This chapter is about the Constitution, but the Constitution was the covenantal successor of the Articles. The Articles did not explicitly deny that the God of the Bible is Lord over all governments, nor did they affirm it. Several of the state constitutions did affirm this. Thus, the national civil government was a covenantal mixture, for the national government prior to 1788 was a confederation, not a unitary state. It was a halfway covenant. As we shall see, the U.S. Constitution is far more consistent. What the Articles did not positively affirm, the Constitution positively denies: the legitimacy of religious test oaths as a screening device for officers of the national civil government. It is this shift that marks the transition from the older Trinitarian state covenants to what became, over decades, apostate state covenants. This transition at the national level did not occur overnight; there was an intermediary step: the Articles of Confederation. Yet when the next-to-the last step was taken — the Constitutional Convention — those who took it ignored the original by-laws of the Articles and appealed forward to the People. The Framers publicly ignored the Declaration of Independence, which had formally incorporated the national government, for they were interested in upholding the myth of the sovereign People, and the Declaration had repeatedly mentioned God. Thus, the Declaration and the Articles both disappeared from the American judicial tradition and its system of legal precedents, and the Articles disappeared from American political thought. Two things were retained, however: the national name es-

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19. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 198.

20. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987); Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for Government* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

established by the Articles — the United States of America — and the seal of the nation that had been formally incorporated on July 4, 1776.

### The Articles of Confederation

What was wrong with the Articles? According to Madison and the critics, it was the absence of sanctions. There was no power to tax and compel payment. Also, there was no executive who could enforce sanctions. In his letter to George Washington (April 16, 1787), Madison insisted: “A National Executive must also be provided. . . . In like manner the right of coercion should be expressly declared.”<sup>21</sup> In that same month, a month before the convening of the Convention, Madison had noted his objections to the Articles in his unpublished “Vices of the Political System of the United States.” He included this momentous criticism: “A sanction is essential to the idea of law, as coercion is to that of Government. The federal system being destitute of both, wants the great vital principles of a Political Constitution. Under the form of such a constitution, it is in fact nothing more than a treaty of amity of commerce and of alliance, between independent and Sovereign States .”<sup>22</sup>

He wanted more than a treaty. He wanted a national government. But this, he knew, had been achieved in the past only through an agreement regarding a common god that sanctioned the creation of civil government. Without such a god to sanction the civil government, the government could not legitimately impose sanctions on those under its jurisdiction. The sanction on the people could only be justified in terms of the ultimate sanctioning power of the agreed-upon god of the covenant. What Madison and the Framers proposed was a revolutionary break from the history of mankind’s governments, with only one glaring exception: the state of Rhode Island — the number-one obstructionist state that had produced the paralysis of the Confederation. But instead of abandoning the covenantal legacy of Rhode Island, the Framers adopted it as the judicial foundation of the proposed national government. The leaven of neutrality would now leaven the whole lump.

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21. Marvin Meyers (ed.), *The Mind of the Founder Sources of the Political Thought of James Madison* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 97.

22. Madison, “Vices of the Political System of the United States,” *ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

### The Structure of National Sovereignty

The Constitution officially divides national judicial spokespersonship into three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. Each of these is a separate juridical sphere. Each has its own section in the document itself. For a law (piece of legislation) to be binding, all three branches must agree.

Originally, this was not clear to the Framers. They believed that the agreement of the executive and the legislature would be sufficient. They divided the legislative branch into two sections, House of Representatives and Senate. Very little was said of the judicial branch. It was assumed that it would be by far the weakest of the three. Alexander Hamilton went so far as to say that “the judiciary is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power,” and assured his readers that “it can never attack with success either of the other two; and that all possible care is requisite to enable it to defend itself against their attacks.”<sup>23</sup> The Framers did not recognize that *he who interprets the law authoritatively is in fact the true voice of sovereign majesty*. They also did not fully understand that the implicitly vast powers of political centralization that the Constitution created on a national level would lead to the creation of a new hierarchy. The federal (national) government would steadily swallow up subordinate jurisdictions. Why? Because in any covenant, there must be a hierarchy, and the pinnacle of that hierarchy is the agent who possesses the authority to announce the law and therefore sanctify the law’s sanctions.

So, there was initial confusion over hierarchy and representation, point two of the biblical covenant model. This had been the great political debate immediately prior to the Revolution: Which body had legitimate legislative sovereignty in the colonies, the English Parliament or the colonial legislatures? This was also the heart of the political debate over the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution. The voters, as represented by state ratifying conventions in 1788, had insisted on retaining numerous powers in the states. Any power not expressly transferred to the central government automatically resides in the states (Amendment 10). Thus, the debate became one of states’ rights vs. national power.

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<sup>23</sup> Hamilton, Federalist No. 78: *The Federalist*, edited by Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 523.

*John Adams, Architect*

The major intellectual influence in the actual structuring of the U.S. Constitution was probably John Adams rather than Madison. In December of 1787, the final volume appeared of Adams' famous three-volume study of the state constitutions, *A Defense of the Constitutions of the Government of the United States*. The first volume had appeared while the Convention was assembling. This study was a defense of the idea of the separation of powers, a theme that he had written about earlier. Adams had been the primary architect of the 1780 Massachusetts constitution. Thus, his blunt speaking was both representative of the new worldview and authoritative nationally. He viewed their earlier constitution-writing actions as unique in history: the creation of a republic founded on the sovereignty of the people, with only a brief peripheral mention of Christianity. Notice carefully his reference to Vitruvius, the Roman architect; this fascination with Vitruvius had been basic to European humanism since the Renaissance. 24

It was the general opinion of ancient nations that the Divinity alone was adequate to the important office of giving laws to men. . . . The United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature; and if men are now sufficiently enlightened to disabuse themselves of artifice, imposture, hypocrisy, and superstition, they will consider this event as an era in their history. . . . It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service had interviews with the gods or were in any degree under the inspiration of Heaven, more than those at work upon ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture; it will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses, . . . Neither the people nor their conventions, committees, or subcommittees considered legislation in any other light than as ordinary arts and sciences, only more important. Called without expectation and compelled without previous inclination, though undoubtedly at the best period of time, both for England and America, suddenly to erect new systems of laws for their future government, they adopted the method of a wise architect in erecting a new palace for the residence of his sovereign. They determined to consult Vitruvius, Palladio, and all other writers of reputation in the art; to examine the most celebrated buildings, whether they remain entire or in ruins; to compare these with the principles of writers; and to enquire how

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24. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 11. See above, pp. 342-43.

far both the theories and models were founded in nature or created by fancy; . . . Thirteen governments thus founded on the natural authority of the people alone, without a pretense of miracle or mystery, . . .<sup>25</sup>

Adams' fascination with the example of Vitruvius, who had become a magician in the writings of Renaissance neoplatonists, is ignored by modern historians. Adams was not speaking of building physical structures; he was speaking of constructing civil covenants. He used the analogy of looking at the records of ancient buildings when he really meant a close examination of ancient constitutions. He saw himself as the chief architect of new civil governments for a new age. Although he was in England at the time, the great architectural work was in progress when his first volume appeared. He knew that it would be.

Adams briefly mentioned Christianity: "The experiment is made and has completely succeeded; it can no longer be called in question whether authority in magistrates and obedience of citizens can be grounded on reason, morality, and the Christian religion, without the monkery of priests or the knavery of politicians."<sup>26</sup> In short, a state constitution can be architecturally constructed without benefit of clergy or elected politicians. This is exactly what the delegates at Philadelphia intended to prove at the national level. The architects were about to rebuild the structure of American government on a foundation that would have been unrecognizable to the Founding Fathers of the seventeenth century, with one exception: Roger Williams.

### Before the Constitution

The Framers knew that religious test oaths were required for testifying in local and state courts. The word "test" in both cases — test oath and testify — refers back to the biblical language of the covenant, i.e., *testament*. It refers judicially to a witness who testifies in a court. The Framers knew that religious oaths were sometimes required for exercising the franchise in state elections. But they made it clear: *federal jurisdiction is to be governed by another covenant, and therefore by another god*. It is therefore a rival system of hierarchy. It is not a complementary system of courts; it is rival system, *for an oath to the God of the Bible is prohibited by law in one of these hierarchies*.

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25. John Adams, "Defense of the Constitutions," in *The Political Writings of John Adams*, edited by George A. Peek, Jr. (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, [1954] 1980), pp. 116-18.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 118.



To serve in Congress under the Articles, a man had to be appointed by his state legislature. He could be recalled at any time. He could serve in only three years out of every six. He was under public scrutiny continually. And to exercise the authority entrusted to him by his state legislature, he had to take an oath. These oaths in most states were both political and religious. The officer of the state had to swear allegiance to the state constitution and also allegiance to God. Consider Delaware's required oath:

*Art. 22.* Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust, before taking his seat, or entering upon the execution of his office, shall take the following oath, or affirmation, if conscientiously scrupulous of taking an oath, to wit:

"I, A B, will bear true allegiance to the Delaware State, submit to its constitution and laws, and do no act wittingly whereby the freedom thereof may be prejudiced."

And also make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit:

"I, A B, do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration."

And all officers shall also take an oath of office. <sup>27</sup>

The Constitution of Vermont in 1777 was not much different:

Section IX. A quorum of the house of representatives shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of members elected and having met and chosen their speaker, shall, each of them, before they proceed to business, take and subscribe, as well the oath of fidelity and allegiance herein after directed, as the following oath or affirmation, viz.

*I \_\_\_\_\_ do solemnly swear, by the ever living God, (or, I do solemnly affirm in the Presence of Almighty God) that as a member of this assembly, I will not Propose or assent to any bill, vote, or resolution, which shall appear to me injurious to the people; nor do or consent to any act or thing whatever, that shall have a tendency to lessen or abridge their rights and privileges, as declared in the Constitution of this State; but will, in all things, conduct myself as a faithful, honest representative and guardian of the people, according to the best of my judgment and abilities.*

And each member, before he takes his seat, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, viz.

*I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, the rewarder of*

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<sup>27</sup> Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner (eds.), *The Founders' Constitution*, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), V, p. 634.

the good and punisher of the wicked. And I do acknowledge the scriptures of the old and new testament to be given by divine inspiration, and own and profess the protestant religion.

And no further or other religious test shall ever, hereafter, be required of any civil officer or magistrate in this State. <sup>28</sup>

Notice the language: no *further or other* religious test shall ever be required. There could be only one kind of oath: to the Trinitarian God of the Bible. This made Trinitarianism the permanent judicial foundation of the state.

In order to break this Trinitarian monopoly, the Framers had to undermine the states' oaths.

### A New Covenant Oath

I began this chapter with Article VI of the Constitution, which prohibits religious oaths as a requirement for holding federal office. This is not one of the better known sections of the Constitution. It is seldom discussed by historians. <sup>29</sup> Typical is Saul K. Padover's clause-by-clause recapitulation of the debates at the Convention. When he comes to Article VI, he does not even mention Clause 3; he summarizes only the debate over the oath of allegiance to the Constitution. <sup>30</sup> Even more amazing is the near-silence of Edwin S. Corwin, acknowledged as the twentieth-century master of the Constitution: one brief, undistinguished paragraph out of ten pages devoted to Article VI. <sup>31</sup>

Everyone today assumes automatically that no religious test should be administered as a requirement for holding public office. Everyone also assumes that office-holders should swear allegiance to the Constitution. Yet in 1787, the reverse was true. There was considerable debate at the Constitutional Convention regarding the propriety of requiring state office-holders to swear allegiance to the Constitution. Furthermore, the states had religious tests of various kinds for office holders. A great reversal in the legal structure of the nation took place when the Constitution was ratified, and this is re-

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28. *Idem.*

29. An exception was Church historian Philip Schaff who, a century ago, began his discussion of the Constitution with a two-page discussion of test oaths. Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Arno, [1888] 1972), pp. 20-22.

30. Saul K. Padover, *To Secure These Blessings* (New York: Washington Square/Ridge Press, 1962), pp. 80-82.

31. Edwin S. Corwin, *The Constitution and what it means today* (12th ed.; Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, [1920] 1958), pp. 177-87.

vealed by the alteration of the oaths required to hold representative (hierarchical) office. A great change in public thinking also took place subsequent to ratification.

The ratification of the Constitution was in fact simultaneously a covenant-breaking and covenant-making act. As with all covenant acts, this one involved the acknowledgment of legitimacy. When the voters sent the first representatives to the Congress in Philadelphia in 1789, the legitimacy of the new government was secured.<sup>32</sup> The theological and judicial terms of the new covenant began to be imitated at the state level until the resistance of the South called a halt to this process. The Civil War and the Fourteenth Amendment revived it.

Article VI, Clause 3, established the third covenantal pillar of what is one of the three keys to a proper understanding of the nature of the Constitutional covenant. The first pillar is *the locus of authorizing sovereignty*: the People. This is the designated creator of the covenant. This appears as the Constitution's Preamble. The second pillar is *the nature of political participation*: the authorizing electorate. Who is a citizen? This establishes the nature of, and legal access to, formal acts of covenant renewal in a republican system of government. This was not definitively settled until the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868. The third pillar is *the nature of public oaths by federal officers*. This is the authorized representative's act of formal covenant affirmation of, and subordination to, the terms of the covenant.

An officer is the person who is charged with the assignment of enforcing the covenant's sanctions (point four of the biblical covenant). He must therefore swear allegiance to the covenant – subordination (point two) – and also to its stipulations (point three). He agrees to obey the law. In the biblical covenant, this agent must also swear allegiance to the Sovereign Himself God. This last requirement is dealt with in Article VI. Article VI represents the Constitution's definitive break with the previous American political tradition except Rhode Island's, and with all previous civil covenants except Rhode Island's.

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all the executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath

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32. Steven R. Boyd, *The Politics of Opposition: Antifederalists and the Acceptance of the Constitution* (Milwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1979), ch. 7: "The Capstone of Legitimacy: The First Federal Elections."

or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

The basic principle of any covenant is that all *those under the covenant's sanctions are to be governed by its statutes and provisions*. The public mark of being under the sovereign is the taking of an oath. Public officers must take the oath verbally. They are to enforce the law of the covenant by imposing the sanctions of the covenant. If they do not swear to uphold it, they are not legally entitled to define, interpret, or enforce its sanctions. State officers have to swear allegiance to the Constitution. The final prohibition by the federal government on the states with regard to religious test oaths came in 1961.<sup>33</sup>

The weak link in the oath system was the U. S. Senate. A Senator was an indirectly appointed officer. The state legislatures elected Senators. Thus, a preliminary screening based on a religious test oath was still likely because the legislatures presumably would elect men from their own ranks. In some states, Senators would already have taken such an oath. This problem did not definitively end until 1913, the year the Constitution was amended to require the direct election of Senators. (That was also the year of the supposed ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment, the income tax, which was ratified as illegally as the Fourteenth Amendment was.<sup>34</sup> The other major national judicial event of 1913 was the passage of the Federal Reserve Act, which created the nation's quasi-private central bank.)

### The Convention's Judicial Revolution

At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Edmund Randolph defended this national oath of allegiance. He said that the officers of the states were already bound by oath to the states. "To preserve a due impartiality they ought to be equally bound by the Natl. Govt. The Natl. needs every support we can give it. The Executive &

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33. *Torcaso u. Watkins* (1961). A Maryland notary public, the lowest level state officer in America, had been denied his office because he refused to say that he believed in God. The Court overturned this state law as unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, *The Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 935.

34. Bill Benson and M. J. "Red" Beckman, *The Law That Never Was* (South Holland, Illinois: Constitutional Research, 1985).

Judiciary of the States, notwithstanding their national independence on the State Legislatures are in fact, so dependent on them, that unless they be brought under some tie to the Natl. system, they will always lean too much to the State systems, whenever a contest arises between the two."<sup>35</sup> He added this comment as debate progressed: We are erecting a supreme national government; ought it not be supported, and can we give it too many sinews?"<sup>36</sup>

*Hamilton and Rousseau*<sup>37</sup>

It is to Hamilton's explanation on the need for this loyalty oath that we must turn in order to see what was really involved. He was the most eloquent defender of the strongest possible national government. In *Federalist 27*, he stated plainly what was being done by means of this required oath. A new judicial relationship was being created by the Constitution: a *direct covenant between the new national civil government with the individual citizen, without any intermediary civil government*. (This alteration is generally regarded by legal theorists as the most important single innovation that the Constitution imposed. They are wrong; the prohibition of religious test oaths was its most innovative breakthrough: one nation, under the god of the People, indivisible, with a civil war to prove it.)

The lack of intermediate governments, social and civil, between the individual and the national civil government, was the heart of Rousseau's concept of the General Will, meaning the heart of Rousseau's totalitarianism, as Robert Nisbet and many other scholars have argued. Because the colonial political and social traditions were Christian, and therefore decentralist and *institutionally* pluralist (though not ethically and confessionally pluralist), the Constitution would not have been ratified by the existing Congress. The Philadelphia conspirators fully understood this. They were ready to abandon the colonial Christian tradition of decentralized power. Hamilton made it clear that the Constitution, when ratified, would take a major step forward in the direction of Rousseau's General Will ideal of weakening intermediary civil governments. He wrote:

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35. Max Farrand (ed.), *Records of the Federal Convention*, I, p. 203; extract in *Founders' Constitution*, IV, p. 637.

36. *Records*, I, p. 207; *idem*.

37. See Chapter 9, subsection on "Madison and Rousseau," pp. 450-52.

38. Robert A. Nisbet, *Tradition and Revolt: Historical and Sociological Essays* (New York: Random House, 1968), ch. 1: "Rousseau and the Political Community." J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: Praeger, 1960).

The plan reported by the Convention, by extending the authority of the foederal head to the individual citizens of the several States, will enable the government to employ the ordinary magistracy of each in the execution of its laws. It is easy to perceive that this will tend to destroy, in the common apprehension, all distinction between the sources from which they might proceed; and will give the Foederal Government the same advantage for securing a due obedience to its authority, which is enjoyed by the government of each State; in addition to the influence on public opinion, which will result from the important consideration of its having power to call to its assistance and support the resources of the whole Union. It merits particular attention in this place, that the laws of the confederacy, as to the *enumerated* and *legitimate* objects of its jurisdiction, will become the SUPREME LAW of the land; to the observance of which, all officers legislative, executive and judicial in each State, will be bound by the sanctity of an oath. Thus the Legislatures, Courts and Magistrates of the respective members will be incorporated into the operations of the national government, as *far as its just and constitutional authority extends*; and will be rendered auxiliary to the enforcement of its laws. 39

Hamilton did not consider the loyalty oath irrelevant. He understood very well the important role it would play judicially and also in public opinion.

Objections to this national loyalty oath were raised at the Convention. James Wilson of Virginia said "A good Govt. did not need them, and a bad one could not or ought not to be supported."<sup>40</sup> His objection was voted down. The delegates to the Convention knew the importance of oaths, public and secret.

### *Religious Tests*

Now we come to the second part of Article VI'S provisions on a religious loyalty oath. That meant, in the context of the required state oaths, a *Christian* loyalty oath. At this point, the arguments for and against oaths were reversed. There is no need for such an oath, most of the Convention's delegates concluded. Echoing Wilson's comments on the uselessness of a federal oath, Madison later wrote to Edmund Pendleton: "Is not a religious test as far as it is necessary, or would be operate, involved in the oath itself? If the person swearing believes in the supreme Being who is invoked, and in the penal con-

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39. Hamilton, Federalist 27, *The Federalist*, pp. 174-75; extract in *Founders' Constitution*, IV, p. 641.

40. *Records*, II, p. 87; in *ibid.*, IV, p. 638.

sequences of offending him, either in this or a future world or both, he will be under the same restraint from perjury as if he had previously subscribed to a test requiring this belief. If the person in question be an unbeliever in these points and would notwithstanding take an oath, a previous test could have no effect. He would subscribe to it as he would take the oath, without any principle that could be affected by either."<sup>41</sup> In short, a believer already believes; a liar will subscribe; so why bother with an oath? This argument was used by other defenders of the abolition of a religious test oath. 42

But the argument misses a key point: What about *honest* Deists and Unitarians who would not want to betray their principles by taking a false oath to a Trinitarian God? A Christian oath would bar them from serving as covenantal agents of the ultimate sovereign, the God of the Bible. By removing the requirement of the oath, the Convention's delegates were in fact opening up the door to federal office-holding that would otherwise be closed to *honest* non-Christians, a point observed by some of the defenders of the removal of the religious test. <sup>43</sup> It would also open up offices of authority to men *who had taken other binding oaths that were hostile to Christianity — men who had taken these rival oaths in goodfaith*. That possibility was never openly discussed, but it was a possibility which lay silently in the background of the closed Convention in Philadelphia. By closing the literal doors in Philadelphia, the delegates were opening the judicial door to a new group of officials. They were therefore closing the judicial door to the original authorizing Sovereign Agent under whom almost all officials had been serving from the very beginning of the country. The proposal was submitted by Charles Pinckney of South Carolina. After debate, it was accepted overwhelmingly. North Carolina opposed it; Maryland was divided. 44

Those hostile to Article VI, Clause 3 suspected what might happen: ". . . if there be no religious test required, pagans, deists, and Mahometans might obtain offices among us, and that the senators

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41. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 639. Cf. Mr. Spencer, North Carolina ratifying convention, in Jonathan Elliot (cd.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, [1836] 1907), IV, p. 200.

42. Cf. Mr. Shute in the debate in Massachusetts' ratifying convention: *ibid.*, IV, p. 642; Mr. Iredell of North Carolina: Elliot, *Debates*, IV, p. 193.

43. Trench Coxe, Oliver Ellsworth, Mr. Shute, Edmund Randolph: *Founders' Constitution*, IV, pp. 639, 643, 644.

44. Farrand, *Records*, II, pp. 461, 468.

and representatives might all be pagans."<sup>45</sup> A prophetic voice, indeed! It was not heeded. But this objection was more distinctively political and practical. The more important issue was covenantal, but the opponents of the Constitution did not fully understand this. (Surely today's textbook commentators do not.) The officers of the U.S. government are not to be subjected to a religious test for holding office.

We must understand what this means. It means that *civil officers* are *not under an oath to the God of the Bible*. It means that in the exercise of their various offices, civil magistrates are bound by an oath to a different god. That god is the American People, considered as an autonomous sovereign who possesses original *and final* earthly jurisdiction. This view of the sovereign People is radically different from anything that had been formally stated or publicly assumed by previous Christian political philosophers. The People were no longer acting as God's delegated judicial agents but as their own agent. This same view of political sovereignty undergirded Rousseau's political theory, and also the various constitutions of the French Revolution. The ratification of the U. S. Constitution was therefore a formal covenantal step toward the left-wing Enlightenment and away from the halfway covenant political philosophy of Christianity combined with right-wing Scottish Enlightenment rationalism. <sup>46</sup> It would take the rise of Darwinism and the victory of the North in the Civil War to make clear the judicial nature of this definitive step toward Rousseau's unholy commonwealth. <sup>47</sup>

The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) brought the federal government's religious toleration to the states, a procedure originally denied to the federal government by the First Amendment, which

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45. Henry Abbot, North Carolina ratifying convention: Elliot's *Debates*, IV, p, 192.

46. This is not to say that Americans steadily abandoned Scottish common sense rationalism after 1787. They did not. It remained the dominant intellectual tradition in the U.S. until Darwinism broke its hold on men's thinking. But the major function of this school of thought was to preserve Newtonian rationalism and eighteenth-century natural law philosophy in the thinking of evangelical. See George M. Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind and the New School presbyterian Experience: A Case Study of Thought and Theology in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 231-33.

47. I am not arguing that this was a self-conscious step toward Rousseau. Rousseau's influence in colonial America was minimal, limited mainly to his educational theories in *Emile*. See Paul M. Spyrin, *Rousseau in America, 1760-1809* (University of Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969),



prohibited Congress from making laws regarding religion. In *Cantwell v. Connecticut* (1940), the Supreme Court declared: "The First Amendment declares that Congress shall make no laws respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The Fourteenth Amendment has rendered the legislatures of the states as incompetent as Congress to enact such laws ."<sup>48</sup> Finally, in 1961, the last state religious test oath was declared unconstitutional: in Maryland. Justice Black cited the conclusion of *Cantwell u. Connecticut* to overturn this last vestige of the pre-Constitutional oath-bound civil covenants .<sup>49</sup>

The heart, mind, and especially soul of the conflict within American political philosophy between states' rights and federal sovereignty is seen here, in Article VI of the U.S. Constitution. Yet this clause regarding religious tests is virtually never discussed in detail — or even mentioned, in some instances — by modern history textbooks, Constitutional law textbooks, or even the "Christian Constitutional" monographs and collections of old primary source documents. The neutral common-ground reasoning of the natural law tradition receives its mark of sovereignty here. Here is the soul of pre-Darwinian humanism. (Darwinism destroyed it, and has left historicism, existentialism, relativism, and Marxism as its evolving spiritual successors. ) Here is the juridical foundation of the American Civil Liberties Union's protests against all traces of religion in public places. Here is the baptismal font of the U.S. Department of Education. All that was needed was a centralization of judicial control through the federal (national) courts, and the extension of mandatory federal judicial atheism to the states. Both were provided by the Fourteenth Amendment.

#### The Fourteenth Amendment: Citizenship Without God

The culmination came with the Civil War (1861-65) and the unconstitutionally ratified Fourteenth Amendment (1868).<sup>50</sup> It is with the Fourteenth Amendment, as Harvard legal historian Raoul Berger has so conclusively demonstrated, that we find the origins of what he

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<sup>48</sup> *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, in John J. McGrath (cd.), *Church and State in American Law: Cases and Materials* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bruce, 1962), p. 281.

<sup>49</sup> In the case of *Torcaso v. Watkins*, *ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>50</sup> Walter J. Suthon, Jr., "The Dubious Origin of the Fourteenth Amendment," *Tulane Law Review*, XXVIII (1953), pp. 22-44.

calls government by judiciary.<sup>51</sup> I agree with Rushdoony's assessment of its impact: "The Canaan and refuge of pilgrims is becoming the house of bondage."<sup>52</sup>

We need to consider the Fourteenth Amendment in relation to citizenship. The first sentence of Clause 1 reads:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside.

This amendment was added in 1868 in the aftermath of the Civil War. Why so late? Because the Constitution had not previously defined "citizen." Citizenship was left to the individual states to define. After the Civil War, freed slaves needed protection. Thus, they were made citizens under the protection of the law. They had not been protected as citizens prior to the war. This was one reason why the Constitution had been silent regarding citizenship: to avoid a walk-out by Southern delegates to the Convention.

#### *Taking the Oath of Citizenship*

American citizens now take this inherently atheistic civil oath. They take it at birth. It is taken *implicitly* and *representatively*. They are citizens by birth. This concept — citizenship by physical birth and geography — is crucial in understanding the transformation of the American covenant. It made civil covenant membership dependent on an oath of strictly civil subordination rather than profession of religious faith, i.e., ecclesiastical and civil subordination.

In the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the seventeenth century, an adult male became a citizen by formal church covenant. Without formal church membership, he was merely a town resident, not a citizen. This system began to break down almost from the beginning; becoming a property holder made you eligible to vote in town elections, though not in colony-wide elections. Steadily, the possession of capital replaced the oath as the basis of political citizenship. Later, the formal development of this principle of civil contract

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51. Raoul Berger, *Government by Judiciary: The Transformation of the Fourteenth Amendment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977).

52. R. J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic: Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1964] 1978), p. 47.

became one of John Locke's intellectual legacies to political thought, if not the major one. 53

Nevertheless, there was always the oath taken in a civil court. God's name was brought into the proceedings. Locke was aware of the binding nature of an oath, and also its religious foundations. In his *Essay on Toleration (1685)*, he specifically exempted the atheist from the civil protection of toleration: "Lastly, those are not all to be tolerated who deny the being of God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all; besides also, those that by their atheism undermine and destroy all religion, can have no pretence of religion whereupon to challenge the privilege of toleration .<sup>54</sup>The oath to God reminded a citizen of the Sovereign who would impose sanctions on courtroom liars, so men were required to swear with one hand on a Bible and the other one raised toward heaven. Presidents still do this when they have the Constitutional oath administered to them. This rite is not required by law. It is an empty formal rite in the eyes of most people, yet rites are never entirely empty. There is always some mysterious element in a rite, some degree of foreboding if the proper traditional formulas are not observed. The outward shell of the original colonial civil covenants still perseveres, just as baptism and the Lord's Supper do in apostate churches.

### *The Triumph of the Federal Judiciary*

By default, the federal judiciary has triumphed, for it alone speaks the "true word" of the silent, amorphous sovereign. Professor Berger begins his book on government by judiciary with these

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53. I do not wish to overemphasize Locke's direct impact on American political thinking. An American edition of his *Treatise on Civil Government* did not appear until 1773. His influence was indirect through his popularizers, just as Newton's influence was. Of far greater direct influence were the writings of the 1720's by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig*. See Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, pp. 25-36, 43-45. Nevertheless, Locke's indirect influence, like Newton's, should not be underestimated. See Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Before the Revolution, colonists knew Locke more for his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* than for the *Treatise*: Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 38.

54. Locke, *Treatise of Civil Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, edited by Charles L. Sherman (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1937), pp. 212-13.

words: "The Fourteenth Amendment is the case study par excellence of what Justice Harlan described as the Supreme Court's 'exercise of the amending power,' its continuing revision of the Constitution under the guise of interpretation."<sup>55</sup> The Supreme Court or final court of appeal in any covenantal institution provides the day-to-day judicial continuity; only rarely are there fundamental, discontinuous revisions made in this process of judicial continuity. There is no escape from this aspect of temporal continuity. The primary question of covenantal sanctions is this one: Who authorizes the application of the covenant's sanctions? The answer: *the one who administers the covenant oath*. Therefore, we need to identify the character of the civil oath. The Constitution is clear: ". . . no religious Test shall ever be required as 'a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.'"

The second sentence of Clause 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment has been the wedge by which federal judicial sovereignty has split apart the original Constitutional federalism (although this was not fully apparent until the rise of Progressivism in the early twentieth century).<sup>56</sup>

No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Since the early 1940's, the Supreme Court has been unwilling to protect private property from any and all kinds of confiscation and control by local, state, and federal governments.<sup>57</sup> Post-Darwinian

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55. Berger, *Government by Judiciary*, p. 1.

56. Harold M. Hyman, *A More Perfect Union: The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on the Constitution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975). Hyman argues that the Civil War and Reconstruction did not radically or permanently centralize federal authority at the expense of state authority. Compared to what took place after 1900, and especially after 1913, he is correct with regard to the 1876-1900 era. But the Fourteenth Amendment made possible the political centralization that took a generation (1880-1920), under the influence of post-"Social Darwinism" Darwinism, to develop.

57. Bernard H. Siegan, *Economic Liberties and the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Siegan, "The Supreme Court: The Final Arbiter," in David Boaz and Edward Crane (eds.), *Beyond the Status Quo: Policy Proposals for America* (Washington, D. C.: Cato Institute, 1985). See also the symposium on Siegan's Constitutional studies published in the *Cato Journal*, IV (Winter 1985). For having taken this hard line, Professor Siegan's nomination to the United States Court of Appeals

liberalism won out over Lockean liberalism. In 1973, the Supreme Court determined that lives in the womb are not under this protection because of a Court-invented Constitutional guarantee of privacy: woman and physician. State civil sanctions could no longer be brought against this class of murderers who had successfully conspired to deprive another person of life. 58 Post-Darwinian liberalism won again. Human life can now be legally sacrificed on the altar of convenience. The hope of the Framers — to place judicial limits on the worst decisions of the legislature — did not succeed, although this fact took a century and a half to become clear to everyone. If anything, the Court, insulated from direct public opinion, proved in 1973 that it was the worse offender.

### *A Political Judiciary*

The procedural limits of the Constitution proved to be no safeguard from the substantive apostasy of the humanists who have dominated politics in the twentieth century. The Lockean liberals of 1787 designed a system that was neither substantively nor procedurally immune to the Darwinian liberals of the twentieth century. Whig liberalism won in 1788, and its spiritual heir is still winning today. Constitutional procedure has revealed itself to be as morally ‘neutral’ as humanism’s ethics is, i.e., not at all. 59 It sometimes takes longer for procedure to respond to the shifting moral and political winds, although in the case of the Warren Court, procedure shifted more rapidly than politics did. It was not, after all, the U.S. Congress that forced integration of the public schools of Topeka, Kansas, and therefore the nation, in 1954. 60

Darwinian jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who later served on the U.S. Supreme Court, began his 1881 lectures on the common law with this observation: “The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience. The felt necessities of the time, the prevalent

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by President Reagan was rejected in 1988, by a vote along party lines, 8 to 6, by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Of 340 previous nominations by President Reagan, only one had been successfully blocked by the Judiciary Committee; two others — both conservatives — had also been opposed by the committee, but the final vote went to the whole Senate, where one was defeated, Robert Bork. “Panel Rejects Reagan Court Nominee,” *New York Times* (July 15, 1988).

58. In the United States, the death penalty is exclusively a state sanction, except in the case of treason within the military.

59. See Appendix B: “Rushdoony on the Constitution.”

60. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954).

moral and political theories, intuitions of public policy, avowed or unconscious, even the prejudices which judges share with their fellow-men, have had a good deal more to do than the syllogism in determining the rules by which men should be governed.”<sup>61</sup> This was put less academically and more memorably by the fictional Mr. Dooley (humorist Finley Peter Dunne) in the early years of the twentieth century: “The Supreme Court follows the election returns.”

The ambivalence of eighteenth-century Scottish moral philosophy regarding the judiciary as a field independent from politics now has been answered: it is not “independent from politics; it is an arm of politics. Witherspoon had warned Madison about this, but Madison and his colleagues did not take the brief warning seriously enough.”<sup>62</sup>

This failure of procedural structure to match the speed of social change has become a familiar theme of liberalism. As an heir of both Madison and Holmes, Clinton Rossiter, known (incorrectly) as a conservative scholar, dismisses the Articles of Confederation:

Although handicapped in many ways in the battles of rhetoric and political maneuver with the fearful republicans, the nationalists had one advantage that, in the long run and therefore in the end, would prove decisive: they knew, as did many of their opponents, that the prescriptive course of nation-building in America had run beyond the Articles of Confederation to serve national needs. By 1787. . . the constitutional lag had become too exaggerated for men like Washington and Madison to bear patiently.<sup>63</sup>

This is the same criticism that we hear today regarding the Constitution, which is an ominous political indication of a constitutional crisis in the making.

### Locke’s Legacy: Life, Liberty, and Property

Locke’s “covenant formula” – life, liberty, and property – echoes down through the centuries in the Fourteenth Amendment. Jefferson’s insertion into the Declaration of Independence the phrase of

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61. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., *The Common Law* (Boston: Little, Brown, [1881], 1923), p. 1. My aging copy (undated) was listed as the 47th printing.

62. Witherspoon wrote: “Moral philosophy is divided into two great branches, Ethics and Politics, to this some add Jurisprudence, though this maybe considered as a part of politics.” John W itherspoon, *An Annotated Edition of Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, edited by Jack Scott (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982), Lecture 1, p. 65.

63. Clinton Rossiter, 1787: *The Grand Convention* (New York: Norton, [1966] 1987), p. 38.

“life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” was another similar echo, though deliberately distorted.

John Locke, the defender of universal natural rights through universal natural law, substituted the concept of the civil contract or civil compact for the biblical notion of civil *covenant*. So did Jean Jacques Rousseau. The rival political philosophies of the two wings of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, Scottish *a posteriori* (empirical) rationalism vs. French *a priori* (deductive) rationalism, developed out of these two rival conceptions of the civil contract. Locke’s compact offered three stated goals that provided legitimacy to any civil contract: life (i. e., self-preservation), liberty, and property. Rousseau’s had none: the General Will spoke through the State, and none could stay its hand. The French Revolutionaries, especially the Jacobins, picked up the slogan of French Grand Orient Masonry, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,”<sup>64</sup> and fused it with Rousseau’s General Will. Rousseau’s political theology was totalitarian; so was the French Revolution.<sup>65</sup>

### *The Two Revolutions*

One important difference that distinguishes the ideological defense of the American Revolution from that of the French Revolution can be seen in these rival Enlightenment concepts of civil contract. Locke’s version of the theory had something specific in history that could identify a valid civil compact: its defense of private property. He made this the touchstone of his political theory: “The great and *chief end*, therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is *the Preservation of their Property*.”<sup>66</sup> The French view of the social contract had no link between the transcendent sovereign will and history, except the voice of the political sovereign. Jefferson hesitated to use Locke’s *property* and substituted *pursuit of happiness*. It is not clear why he did this. He had personal faith in private property, including the right of owning slaves; he never freed his.<sup>67</sup> His economic thinking seems to have

64. Albert G. Mackey (cd.), *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, 2 vols. (New York: Masonic History Co., [1873] 1925), I, p. 445.

65. A. D. Lindsey, *The Modern Democratic State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 126-36. See also Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*.

66. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), paragraph 124. I am using Laslett’s edition (New York: Mentor, 1965), p. 395.

67. Thomas Flemming, *The Man from Monticello: An Intimate Life of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Morrow, 1969), pp. 369-70.

been shaped by Hume's free market thinking and, later, by Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776). But when he sought a substitute for the biblical concept of transcendent legitimacy, he turned away from history and adopted undefined, timeless categories: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Perhaps he was merely writing to please the *philosopher* and intellectuals in France, knowing well their preference for grand slogans devoid of historical content.<sup>68</sup> Or perhaps the reason may have been merely stylistic.<sup>69</sup>

There is also another factor, one recognized by British political philosopher A. D. Lindsey: "The American limitations on government were largely of Puritan origin and partly designed to secure freedom of the churches. But in France there was only one church, regarded in the minds of the upholders of the Revolution as an enemy of the state and therefore in their mind an institution to be attacked, not to be secured in its liberties. "" In short, it was the ecclesiastical pluralism of competing Trinitarian churches that made possible the Americans' confidence in the possibility of limited civil government. This acceptance of ecclesiastical pluralism *within the judicial framework of confessional Trinitarianism* then led to the public's naive acceptance of a radically different doctrine: *the religious Pluralism of a nation's moral and judicial foundations*. This same confusion of concepts — judicial blindness — is the foundation of modern Christian political pluralism.<sup>71</sup>

This distinction was not clearly understood by most Christian voters in 1788 when they voted for and against ratification. Most of them simply assumed that Trinitarianism was socially normative in America, and also that it would probably continue to be normative. The distinction between confessional pluralism and ecclesiastical pluralism under a common Trinitarian confession was understood, and well understood, by the intellectual leaders of the Constitutional Convention, as we shall see. Thus, Church historian Sidney Mead

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68. The appeal to French sensibilities was suggested by Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (New York: Vintage, [1922] 1942), p. 129.

69. This is the opinion of Adrienne Koch, *Jefferson and Madison: The Great Collaboration* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1950] 1964), pp. 78-80.

70. Lindsey, *Democratic State*, p. 128.

71. Gordon J. Spykman labels these views as structural pluralism — plural institutions under God, or "sphere sovereignty"— and confessional pluralism. He and his peers argue that the second necessarily requires the first. Spykman, "The Principled Pluralist Position," in Gary Scott Smith (ed.), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), p. 79. See also the introduction to this essay by Smith: p. 75.



has a valid point: ". . . the struggles for religious freedom during the last quarter of the eighteenth century provided the kind of practical issue on which rationalists and sectarian-pietists could and did unite, in spite of underlying theological differences, in opposition to 'right wing' traditionalists."<sup>72</sup> It was the political triumph of Deism and Unitarianism over Christianity; in our day, it is the triumph of atheism over all forms of rival public religious expression. Deism, Unitarianism, and atheism achieved political victory without ever having been more than tiny minority faiths.<sup>73</sup>

### *The Appeal to God*

John Witherspoon adopted a compact theory of the state, following Locke. He accepted as historically valid the legal fiction of the original state of nature.<sup>74</sup> Russell Kirk maybe correct that Hamilton and Madison, in devising their political theories, were disciples of Scottish skeptic David Hume rather than Locke.<sup>75</sup> Douglass Adair agrees.<sup>76</sup> This dependence on Hume vs. Locke is unclear. Anyone appealing to the insights of Hume brought into question any appeal to natural rights. Hume dismissed Locke's natural rights theory and natural law theory as emphatically as he dismissed the concept of physical cause and effect. Madison's political theory has also been attributed to his reading of the ancient classics, especially Thucydides.<sup>77</sup> But this only extends the problem: On what judicial basis was the Constitution to be made legitimate? The Framers appealed to the

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72. Mead, "American Protestantism" in John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson (eds.), *Religion in American History* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 165-66. Cf. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), ch. 3.

73. On the relatively small numbers of Deists in America in the early days of the Republic, see G. Adolph Koch, *Religion of the American Enlightenment* (New York: Crowell, [1933] 1968). On Unitarianism's influence, see Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1965] 1978), ch. 6: "The Religion of Humanity."

74. Witherspoon, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, Lecture 10: "Politics."

75. Russell Kirk, "Burke, Hume, Blackstone, and the Constitution of the United States," in *The John M. Olin Lectures on the Bicentennial of the U. S. Constitution* (Reston, Virginia: Young America's Foundation, 1987), p. 13.

76. Douglass Adair, "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science: David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth Federalist" (1957); reprinted in *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair*, edited by Trevor C. Colbourn (New York: Norton, 1974), pp. 93-106.

77. Ralph L. Ketcham, "James Madison and the Nature of Man," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIX (Jan. 1958), pp. 62-76.

will of the people. But could this be considered both necessary and sufficient in late eighteenth-century American life? Would there not also have to be an appeal to God?

There was no escape. There had to be an appeal to God. This was what Hume sensed, and he forthrightly rejected all traces of theism in his political theory. Locke had known better. At the end of his *Second Treatise*, he invoked the name of God. He did so when he raised the question of sanctions. We can see here his attempted fusion between Christianity and natural law theory. It was an attempted fusion that has dominated Christian political theory down to our own era. He raised the question of the right of political rebellion, the dissolution of the compact.

Here, it is like, the common question will be made: Who is to judge whether the prince or legislative act contrary to their trust? This, perhaps, ill-affected and factious men may spread among the people, when the prince only makes use of his due prerogative. To this I reply: the people shall be judge. . . . But further, this question, Who shall be the judge? cannot mean that there is no judge at all; for where there is no judicature on earth to decide controversies among men, God in heaven is Judge. He alone, it is true, is Judge of the right. But every man is judge for himself, as in all other cases, so in this, whether another has put himself into a state of war with him, and whether he should appeal to the Supreme Judge, as Jephthah did.”

So, there was some degree of transcendence in Locke's system. But he invoked the name of an undefined God rather than an earthly hierarchy in formal covenant with a specific God. He placed man as a sovereign agent acting directly under God. There is no hierarchical chain of command, no hierarchy of temporal appeal, no doctrine of *defined representation*, in Locke's concept — a limiting concept or convenient theoretical backdrop — of a theocratic covenant. How is God to enforce His transcendent covenant in the midst of history? Directly or mediatorially through specific judicial institutions? That was the question Locke needed to answer. He did not even attempt to do so.

#### *Rousseau and Darwin*

Rousseau's concept of political legitimacy was strictly immanent. In his system, there is no transcendent Sovereign who enforces the

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78. *Second Treatise*, paragraphs 240, 241. Here I am using Sherman's edition.

terms of His covenants in history. The sovereign is immanent: humanly. The political hierarchy is strictly political. All other loyalties are to be excluded, which is the heart of his totalitarianism.<sup>79</sup> The Constitution follows Rousseau. The laws are the product of exclusively human deliberation. The sanctions are exclusively historical, so the oath acknowledges only the authority of the document and, by implication, the amorphous sovereign People. Finally, succession is a matter of formal alterations of the civil contract. *Everything is self-consciously "immanentized"; the transcendent has been entirely removed.*

Then came Darwinism. The transcendent was erased from scientific cause and effect. God the Creator, Sustainer, and Judge was shoved unceremoniously out of the cosmos. The Darwinian worldview rapidly swept the field of law as surely as it swept every other academic field. This took less than a generation. Process philosophy fused with democratic theory to produce a concept of law completely divorced from the transcendent. The judicial result can be found in Oliver Wendell Holmes' *The Common Law (1881)*, a defense of unrestricted judicial sovereignty, but all in the name of the evolving preferences of the judges and the electorate.

#### Evolutionism: From Witherspoon to Holmes

The element of evolutionism was inherent in Scottish Enlightenment theory. The empiricism of Scottish common sense realism was inherently evolutionary. There is a connection between the judicial theory of Scottish empiricism and post-Darwinian theories of justice. Holmes announced: "The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience." Over a century earlier, Witherspoon had taught Madison and his other students that philosophers could not agree on the answer to the question: "What distinguishes man from the animals?"

The philosophers, Witherspoon said, had wanted to find one incommunicable characteristic in man, but they could not find one: reason, memory, laughter, religion, and a sense of ridicule.<sup>80</sup> Witherspoon was not sure what the difference between man and beast is. He appealed to "the beauty of his form, which the poet takes note of,"<sup>81</sup> an argument that no longer carries any weight in a world of

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<sup>79</sup> Nisbet, "Rousseau and the Political Community: *op. cit.*"; see also Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), ch. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Lecture 1, in *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

relativism, especially aesthetic relativism. He listed 'the knowledge of God and a future state,' another dead argument in the eyes of the secular humanist.<sup>82</sup> This was philosophically convenient in the eighteenth century. It is no longer even remotely convenient.

The Framers also could have appealed to this eschatological aspect of church teaching in their quest for public support of the national government, but Article VI, Clause 3 removed the idea as a covenantally serious factor. The civil oath of the nation was severed from any conception of God's sanctions in eternity. In fact, Wither- spoon could not, given his empiricism, locate a fixed, reliably incommunicable attribute in man that is acknowledged by autonomous man's philosophy. This was the unmistakable message of his *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*. He appealed to an undefined virtue,<sup>83</sup> but so did the Deists and Unitarians. So had the Renaissance atheists and Renaissance magicians.

What he and all eighteenth-century Protestant moral philosophers refused to appeal to was biblical law. He wanted something else — anything else or *everything* else — to serve as the transcript of God's moral nature: "The result of the whole is, that we ought to take the role of duty from conscience enlightened by reason, experience, and every way by which we can be supposed to learn the will of our Maker, and by intention in creating us such' as we are. And we ought to believe that it is as deeply founded as the nature of God himself, being a transcript of his moral excellence, and that it is productive of the greatest good."<sup>84</sup>

Without the biblical doctrine of creation and the doctrine of man as the image of God, there is no incommunicable attribute in man to separate him from the animals. When Darwin destroyed both the historic and biological barriers between man and animal, the restrained evolutionism of Locke and his successors in Scotland was transformed into the modern version. Only biblical covenantalism can negate evolutionism and its ethics of temporary power. It was biblical covenantalism that the Framers self-consciously abandoned.

### An Atheistic Covenant

There is no escape from this conclusion: *the United States Constitution is an atheistic, humanistic covenant*. The law governing the public

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82. *Idem*.

83. Lecture 4.

84. Lecture 4, *ibid.*, p. 87.

oath of office reveals this. Unfortunately, this oath is rarely discussed. Christians who do not analyze social and political institutions in terms of the biblical covenant model are not sufficiently alert to this crucial but neglected section of the Constitution. *The Constitution is not a Christian covenant document; it is a secular humanist covenant document.* While there have been many attempts over the years by Christians to evade this conclusion, they have all been unsupported with primary source documents; these attempts have also been obscurely argued. (That the phrase “Lord” appears in Article VII, “the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty Seven,” is not what I would call a persuasive argument for its Christian character.)<sup>85</sup> It has taken the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the last half century of Supreme Court interpretations to make the Constitution’s humanistic foundation obvious to everyone except a handful of Christian historians. (That the Fourteenth Amendment was never legally ratified is not mentioned in public school textbooks.<sup>86</sup> It was a post-war imposition.)

I realize that I am breaking with the fundamental thesis of the Rushdoony-Hall-Slater-Whitehead-CBN University interpretation of American Constitutional history. I am also breaking with C. Gregg Singer’s thesis of the “Deist Declaration” of Independence, and the idea of the Constitution as somewhat more Christian, somewhat more conservative. Singer proves more than he suspects when he says that “The basic philosophies of the two documents were not compatible.”<sup>87</sup> Both documents were humanistic, but the Constitution abandons natural rights philosophy. If anything, the Declaration was more Christian; Congress added two extra references to God.<sup>88</sup> Of course, that god was the undefined god of common civil ceremonies of the era, or perhaps more to the point, common Masonic ceremonies. While Harold O. J. Brown does not pursue the matter, he has put his finger on the problem: “America’s symbolism is not really theism at all, even of an Old Testament variety. The Seeing Eye is sometimes found in Christian art, but on the Great Seal of the

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85. This argument was offered seriously by a Christian legal scholar. I cannot find the original source, so I will politely refrain from mentioning his name.

86. Dan Smoot, “The Illegal Fourteenth,” *Review of the News* (May 17, 1972).

87. Singer, *A Theological interpretation of American History* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1964), p. 43.

88. David Hawke, *A Transaction of Free Men: The Birth and Course of the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Scribners, 1964), p. 198.

United States it, like the pyramid, reflects the vague 'Great Architect' deism of American Freemasonry rather than faith in the personal God of Christianity.<sup>89</sup>

That Brown should appeal to the reverse of the Great Seal, the all-seeing eye and the pyramid, is significant, though even Brown is unaware of just how significant. The Congress on July 4 appointed a committee to recommend designs for a seal of the U.S. The committee was made up of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin.<sup>90</sup> The obverse (front) of the Great Seal is the eagle. The reverse of the Great Seal is the all-seeing eye above a pyramid, a familiar Masonic symbol. There is an oddity here, one which is seldom mentioned: there is no reverse side of a corporate seal. A seal is used to produce an impression. It is either a one-piece seal for impressing wax, or a convex and concave matching pair for impressing a piece of paper. (This "reverse seal" was ignored by the government for a century and a half until Henry A. Wallace, Franklin Roosevelt's politically radical Secretary of Agriculture<sup>91</sup> and resident occult mystic, persuaded the Secretary of the Treasury to restore it to public view by placing it on the back of the one dollar bill, the most common currency unit. This was done in 1935, and remains with us still.)<sup>92</sup> We have returned symbolically in this century to the original national **halfway** covenant – the Declaration and the Articles of Confederation – that invoked the god of Masonry. Men need **symbolic** manifestations of ultimate sovereignty, and the eagle is no longer sufficient in a judicially secular age of confusion and despair. The eagle, the symbol on the national seal under the Declaration and the Articles, is no longer the sole national image that pops into Americans' minds.

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89. Harold O. J. Brown, "The Christian America Major Response," in *God and Politics*, p. 256.

90. Monroe E. Deutsch, "E Pluribus Unum," *Classical Journal*, XVIII (April 1923), p. 387.

91. It was under Wallace's Department of Agriculture, in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), that the first major Communist cell in the federal government was formed in 1933, the Ware group. See Allen Weinstein, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (New York: Knopf, 1978), ch. 4: "The Ware Group and the New Deal." Ware was the son of "Mother Bloor," one of the leaders of the U.S. Communist Party: *ibid.*, p. 5.

92. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), vol. 2 of *The Age of Roosevelt*, pp. 29-34. Wallace was later Roosevelt's Vice President, 1941-45. He was replaced as V.P. by Harry S. Truman in January of 1945, three months before Roosevelt's death; otherwise, Wallace would have become President.

*Deism and Unitarianism*

The fact is, the Declaration of Independence is a Deistic document. Three of the five-man committee that was responsible for writing it were Unitarians: Jefferson, Franklin, and John Adams.<sup>93</sup> Three were Masons: Roger Sherman,<sup>94</sup> Robert Livingston,<sup>95</sup> and Franklin. As David Hawke writes of Adams: 'He verged on deism in religion and found it no easier than Jefferson to admit his waywardness publicly. He respected the findings of natural philosophy and was inclined to extend those findings into the social and political world. He believed that natural law resembled the axioms of mathematics — 'Self-evident principles, that every man must assent to as soon as proposed.'"<sup>96</sup> In their old age, Adams and Jefferson renewed their friendship in a long correspondence, and their letters reveal that they were almost totally agreed on religion. They hated Christianity, especially Calvinism.<sup>97</sup> In Jefferson's April 11, 1823, letter to Adams, he announced that if anyone ever worshiped a false God, Calvin did. Calvin's religion, he said, was "Daemonianism," meaning blasphemy.<sup>98</sup> He knew that Adams was already in basic agreement with him in these opinions. After surveying their letters, Cushing Strout concludes: Whatever their political differences, Jefferson and Adams were virtually at one in their religion." He identifies the creed of this religion: Unitarianism.<sup>99</sup>

Jefferson was really systematic in his hatred of Trinitarian Christianity. In his old age, he sent a letter to James Smith, which he stressed was confidential, in which he expressed confidence that "the present generation will see Unitarianism become the general reli-

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93. The other two members were Roger Sherman, a Connecticut Calvinist Congregationalist, and Robert Livingston. For brief biographies and an account of the surrounding events, see Merle Sinclair and Annabel Douglas McArthur, *They Signed for Us* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1957).

94. Philip Roth says that Sherman was a Mason. Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of Our Government* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: by the author, 1927), p. 53. Heaton says there is no proof that he was a Mason, although he may have been. Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Masonic Service Association, [1965] 1988), pp. 100-1.

95. Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of Our Government*, p. 114.

96. Hawke, *Transaction*, pp. 81-82.

97. John Murray Allison, *Adams and Jefferson: The Story of a Friendship* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), pp. 267 (on Adams' rejection of the doctrine of predestination), 269-71, 294-97 (on their theological agreement).

98. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

99. Cushing Strout, *The New Heavens and the New Earth: Political Religion in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 81.

gion of the United States.”<sup>100</sup> In a letter to Benjamin Waterhouse that same year, he wrote: “I trust that there is not a young man now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian.”<sup>101</sup> The Bible is just another history book, he wrote to Peter Carr: “Read the Bible, then, as you would read Livy or Tacitus.”<sup>102</sup> What, then, becomes of the sanctions of religion that the Framers hoped would be out in the service of society? As Pangle asks: “Can belief in immortality of the soul or in providential interventions in this life be divorced from belief in miracles, and can one easily confine theological disputation once one encourages the belief in miracles? We search in vain for answers in Jefferson’s writings, public or private. . . .”<sup>103</sup> The same question must be posed regarding the other Framers’ views, and the same silence is ominous. Many of them based their hopes of social stability on a religion they had personally rejected. They drew large drafts on a Trinitarian cultural bank account into which they made few deposits in their lifetimes.

### *The Declaration of Independence*

The Declaration of Independence announced the creation of a new nation in 1776. The day it was approved, July 4, 1776, the Congress authorized a committee to create a national seal. A seal is an aspect of incorporation, just as baptism is. This is why we know that the Declaration was an incorporating document. The by-laws of the nation were agreed to in November of 1777, but they were not ratified until 1781: the Articles of Confederation. What very few people are ever told today is that this was not the full name of the Articles. The document was called, “Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union between the States. . . .” It then listed the 13 states by name. The words “perpetual Union” reveal the nature of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and the call for state ratifying conventions: an initially illegal revocation of the original by-laws of the nation, which was to have been a perpetual union.

This original union was legally dissolved in 1788 by the ratification of the Constitution. A new Deity was identified, “We the People.” The old Deity of the Declaration, the undefined god of

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100. Jefferson to Smith, Dec. 8, 1822; cited in Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, p. 83.

101. Jefferson to Waterhouse, June 26, 1822; *idem*.

102. Jefferson to Carr, Oct. 31, 1787; *ibid.*, p. 84.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 85.



nature, was not mentioned in the Constitution. This is why the Framers made no mention of the Declaration: it was this halfway covenant that was self-consciously being replaced. But the Framers knew that the new nation would need symbolic continuity to support the judicial discontinuity. First, the Articles' official designation of the Confederation as "the United States" was retained in the new by-laws in order to provide the illusion of judicial continuity: "We the people of the United States. . . ." (The same public relations strategy was used in 1945 when the name United Nations, which had been used to designate the Allied forces during World War II, was appropriated by the international organization known thereafter as the United Nations.) Second, they appropriated the other visible token of national continuity: the Great Seal.

(An analogous revolution can be seen in twentieth-century American churches. The apostates who control today's mainline churches have scrapped the creeds of the churches, but they still administer the sacraments. The churches have reduced the procedural signs of the original covenant oath to mere formalities, yet these formalities still convey a sense of legitimacy and continuity. They are the signs of continuity with the past, despite the fact that the church covenant has been broken, as the revisions of the creeds reveal, denomination by denomination, but especially the Presbyterians, who have been the most creedal church of all, with the most rigorous creed. <sup>104</sup>)

Two questions need to be answered. First, if the foundational documents of the American civil covenant are Deistic and humanistic, then why did Bible-believing Christians agree to define the Revolutionary War as Jefferson did in the Declaration of Independence? Second, why did Christians ratify the Constitution?

To answer the first question, we need to recognize that the Declaration was never directly ratified by the voters. They ratified it only representatively, through the officials sent to Congress by state revolutionary legislatures. Nobody in the colonial public paid much attention to the Declaration. It was not ratified by anyone outside the Assembly in 1776. It was signed in August. <sup>105</sup> The names of the signers were not released until January of 1777. <sup>106</sup> The Declaration

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104. The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (Northern) revised its creed in 1967

105. Hawke, *A Transaction*, p. 209.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

was primarily a foreign policy document aimed at France and Europe, although it was designed to unify those at home.<sup>107</sup> It expressed only commonplace sentiments in America. It did not become a well-known document of the history of the Revolution until decades later. It had not even been a part of Fourth of July ceremonies in the decade of the 1790's.<sup>108</sup> Until the Presidential election of 1796, when John Adams ran against Thomas Jefferson, the public had barely heard of the Declaration. Jefferson's supporters resurrected it as a symbol of their candidate's importance, much to the displeasure of Adams, who was one of the five men on the committee that was responsible for drafting it. The Federalist Party did its best to de-emphasize Jefferson's part in the Declaration's drafting.<sup>109</sup> But Adams could hardly deny that the language and concepts were mostly Jefferson's.<sup>110</sup>

John Witherspoon signed the Declaration and served in the wartime Congress. He therefore served as the new nation's baptizing agent for the American Whig churches. This was the public anointing that was covenantally needed in all Christian nations prior to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. This was, in short, the *sanctioning* of the new revolutionary constitutional order of 1776. This is why Witherspoon was so important in American history, and why the Whig churches ever since have praised his actions and designated him as *the* ecclesiastical figure in the Revolutionary War era, which he undoubtedly was, but not for the reasons listed today. He was not merely a political representative who happened to be an ordained Presbyterian minister; he was in effect the covenantal representative agent of the Whig-Patriot churches. The British recognized him as such, which is why the military immediately bayoneted the man they believed to be Witherspoon.<sup>111</sup> Witherspoon was crucial to the

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107. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

109. Philip F. Detweiler, "The Changing Reputation of the Declaration of Independence: The First Fifty Years," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser., XIX (1962), pp. 565-66.

110. For my views on the Declaration, see my essay, "The Declaration of Independence as a Conservative Document," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Summer 1976), pp. 94-115. I did not discuss the character of the Declaration as an incorporating document, however, an oversight common to historians and most lawyers. I was informed of this judicial character in 1985 by a retired president of an obscure and defunct conservative law school. This theme of the Declaration as an incorporating document is now taught at CBN University law school.

111. James Hastings Nichols, "John Witherspoon on Church and State," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, XLVII (Sept. 1964), pp. 166-67.

American cause because of his representative office. The churches saw him as “their man in Philadelphia.” What the textbooks seldom mention is that he was their representative in Philadelphia twice: in 1776 and in 1787-89.<sup>112</sup>

We still need to deal with the second question: the ratification of the Constitution. I have already mentioned the confusion in the minds of the voters regarding confessional pluralism vs. ecclesiastical pluralism under a Trinitarian oath.<sup>113</sup> I consider this question in greater detail in Chapter 9. Before we get to that question, however, we need to consider some neglected facts regarding the actual writing of the Constitution. Here, let the reader be warned, I break with just about everyone.

### Conclusion

Two features of the U.S. Constitution mark it unmistakably as a humanist covenant: the Preamble and the religious test oath clause of Article VI. While the famous phrase of Jefferson’s regarding “a wall of separation between church and State” in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptists<sup>114</sup> is not in the Constitution in this familiar form, it is nonetheless in the Constitution judicially. While the Preamble has received considerable attention, Article VI, Clause 3 has been almost universally ignored. Despite the silence of the commentators and historians, there is no single covenantal cause of the suppression of Christianity in America, and therefore in the modern world, that has had greater impact than the test oath clause. It is this clause that established judicially the anti-Christian nature of the Constitutional experiment. While “We the People” is viewed by some Constitutional scholars as having no legal impact, the oath clause is so sacrosanct that it receives little attention. Its legitimacy, its normality, is assumed by everyone who reads it. This was generally the case in 1789, too. This fact testifies to the impact of natural law philosophy in the history of Christendom. Ideas do have consequences — in this case, disastrous consequences. But few people recognize the cause of the disasters. Like the Israelites in Egypt, Christians would rather serve as slaves in the household of God’s enemies than serve those who profess biblical religion. The politics of Christian envy begins with Article VI, Clause 3.

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112. See the Conclusion to Part 3, p. 547.

113. See above, under “Locke’s Legacy: Life, Liberty, and Property,” p. 399.

114. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1984), p. 510.

I argued at the beginning of this chapter that “the oath has continuity over generations. So *do its stipulations*. Only the sovereign who establishes the oath can change the stipulations or the oath. The ability to change the stipulations or the oath is therefore a mark of ultimate sovereignty.” The U.S. Constitution can legally be amended. Doesn’t this indicate that the nation’s sovereign is the electorate rather than God? This is exactly what the amending process indicates under the present Constitution. This is why the Constitution is a broken covenant.

To preserve its judicial continuity, a national covenant must establish the Bible as the law of the land. The Bible is an permanent covenant document. Its stipulations do not change. A nation’s civil courts must therefore enforce the Bible’s civil laws. Any statute not in conformity to the Bible must be declared unconstitutional. An oath of allegiance to the national government is a promise to uphold the national constitution; this must automatically be an oath to uphold and enforce the Bible.

A national constitution is required by God to serve as the by-laws of the ultimate source of legitimate civil law, the Bible. A constitution’s Preamble is the appropriate place to declare this publicly. The Preamble should be a nation’s Declaration of Absolute Dependence on the Trinitarian God of the Bible. The Preamble should therefore declare the Bible as the unchanging law of the land. It should declare this law as being immune to any subsequent alteration. Thus, any public rejection of this judicial standard would be identifiable as a breaking of the national covenant.

The general Federal Convention that framed the Constitution at Philadelphia was a secret body; and the greatest pains were taken that no part of its proceedings should get to the public until the Constitution itself was reported to Congress. The Journals were confided to the care of Washington and were not made public until many years after our present Government was established. The framers of the Constitution ignored the purposes for which they were delegated; they acted without any authority whatever; and the document, which the warring factions finally evolved from their quarrels and dissensions, was revolutionary. This capital fact requires iteration, for it is essential to an understanding of the desperate struggle to secure the ratification of that then unpopular instrument.

“Not one legislature in the United States had the most distant idea when they first appointed members for a [Federal] convention, entirely commercial . . . that they would without any warrant from their constituents, presume on so bold and daring a stride,” truthfully writes the excitable Gerry of Massachusetts in his bombastic denunciation of “the fraudulent usurpation at Philadelphia.” The more reliable Melancton Smith of New York testifies that “previous to the meeting of the Convention the subject of a new form of government had been little thought of and scarcely written upon at all. . . . The idea of a government similar to” the Constitution “never entered the minds of the legislatures who appointed the Convention and of but very few of the members who composed it, until they had assembled and heard it proposed in that body.”

“Had the idea of a total change [from the Confederation] been started,” asserts the trustworthy Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, “probably no state would have appointed members to the Convention. . . . Probably not one man in ten thousand in the United States . . . had an idea that the old ship [Confederation] was to be destroyed. Pennsylvania appointed principally those men who are esteemed aristocratical. . . . Other States . . . chose men principally connected with commerce and the judicial department .” Even so, says Lee, “the non-attendance of eight or nine men” made the Constitution possible.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge (1916)”

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<sup>1</sup>Beveridge, *The Life of John Marshall*, 4 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), I, pp. 323-25.

## THE STRATEGY OF DECEPTION

*Before I arrived, a number of rules had been adopted to regulate the proceedings of the Convention, by one of which, seven states might proceed to business, and consequently four states, the majority of that number, might eventually have agreed upon a system which was to affect the whole Union. By another, the doors were to be shut, and the whole proceedings were to be kept secret; and so far did this rule extend, that we were thereby prevented from corresponding with gentlemen in the different states upon the subjects under our discussion – a circumstance, sir, which I confess I greatly regretted. I had no idea that all the wisdom, integrity, and virtue of this state [Maryland], or of the others, were centred in the Convention.*

*Luther Martin (1788)*'

The U.S. Constitution is a covenantal document that was drawn up by delegates to an historic Convention. This Convention had been authorized by Congress in February of 1787 “for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation, and reporting to Congress and the several legislatures such alterations and provisions therein as shall when agreed to in Congress, and confirmed by the states, render the federal Constitution adequate to the exigencies of government and the preservation of the Union.”<sup>2</sup> It was on this explicit legal basis alone that three of the state legislatures sent delegates to Philadelphia: Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Letter from Luther Martin, Attorney-General of Maryland, to Thomas C. Deye, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Maryland (Jan. 27, 1788); in Jonathan Elliot (ed.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, [1836] 1907), I, p. 345.

2. *Ibid.*, I, p. 120.

3. The wording of Congress – ‘for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation’ – was adopted by the formal authorization of the delegates from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 126-27. See also *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union of the American States*, edited by Charles C. Tansill (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1927), pp. 56-59.

Madison cites these provisions in *Federalist 40*, claiming that the Convention honored the first provision – suggesting alterations – while it legitimately violated the second: not reporting back to Congress. This was what Clinton Rossiter called the four-part “short-range bet” of the Framers: that they could get away with a four-step transgression of the rules under which the Convention had been authorized. <sup>4</sup>Therefore, men such as Rufus King and Sam Adams believed the Convention to be unconstitutional and dangerous. <sup>5</sup>

Virginia delegate George Mason had written a letter in late May stating that the “most prevalent idea I think at present is a total change in the federal system and instituting a great national council.”<sup>6</sup> From the opening of the Convention, no consideration was given to a mere revising of the Articles of Confederation. Governor Edmund Randolph of Virginia opened the main business of the Convention on May 29 by giving a speech on why a totally new government ought to be created, and he then submitted the fifteen-point “Virginia Plan” or large-states’ plan to restructure the national government. This had been drawn up by James Madison. <sup>7</sup>According to New York’s Chief Justice Yates, who became an opponent of the Constitution, and who made notes for his personal use (but not for publication): “He candidly confessed, that they were not intended for a federal government; he meant a strong, consolidated union, in which the idea of States should be nearly annihilated .”<sup>8</sup>

The Articles were completely scrapped by the delegates. There is little doubt that this had been the original intention of the small group of men who first promoted the idea of the Convention, beginning with the meeting held in the spring of 1785 at Washington’s home at

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4. The steps were the decisions of the delegates: 1) to become Framers of a new government; 2) to go beyond their instructions; 3) to designate special conventions to ratify the new document; and 4) to determine that the new government would come into existence when only nine of the state conventions ratified it. Clinton Rossiter, 1787: *The Grand Convention* (New York: Norton, [1966] 1987), p. 262.

5. Steven R. Boyd, *The Politics of Opposition: Antifederalists and the Acceptance of the Constitution* (Milwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1979), p. 4.

6. Mason to Arthur Lee, May 21, 1787: *The Papers of George Mason*, edited by Robert Rutland, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), III, p. 882; cited in *ibid.*, p. 6.

7. Irving Brandt, *The Bill of Rights: Its Origin and Meaning* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 16.

8. *Secret Proceedings and Debates of the Convention (1838)*, p. 101; reprinted by Omni Publications. Hawthorne, California, 1986. Reprinted also in *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union*, p. 747.

Mount Vernon. These men, in the words of Forrest McDonald, had been “chagrined by the impotence of Congress, the recalcitrance of state particularists and republican ideologues, and the seeming indifference of the population at large. . . .”<sup>9</sup> This phrase, “the seeming indifference of the population at large,” is highly significant. It testifies to a lack of concern and the absence of any sense of national crisis on the part of the public in the year of the great Convention. The sense of crisis was felt mainly by the nationalists at the Convention, the sense of crisis that they might “miss the moment,” or in contemporary terms, miss the “window of opportunity.”

### A Handful of Disgruntled Men

Americans think of the Philadelphia Convention as the place where all the giants of the Revolutionary War era met to settle the fate of the republican experiment. Some giants did show up; not all of them. In retrospect, historians have usually defined “giants” as those who did show up and did “stay with the program,” meaning Madison’s *coup*. (The victors write the textbooks.) Early Constitution history specialist Forrest McDonald’s description of the opening day of the Convention is far closer to the truth: some of the best men stayed away.

The list of distinguished Americans certain not to come was large. Only one of the great diplomats of the Revolution, Franklin, would be there; John Jay of New York and Henry Laurens of South Carolina had not been chosen, and Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were in Europe as ambassadors. Most of the great Republicans would likewise be missing. Thomas Paine (“Where liberty is not, Sir, there is my country”) was also in Europe, hoping to spread the gospel of republican revolution. Neither Sam Adams nor John Hancock of Massachusetts nor Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry of Virginia chose to come (Henry did not because, he said, “I smelt a rat”; the others offered no excuses).<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that Henry was a dedicated, Bible-believing Christian.<sup>11</sup> Sam Adams, who also refused to attend, was either a

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9. Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 172.

10. Forrest McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776-1790* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, [1965] 1979), pp. 259-60.

11. On Henry’s use of the Bible in his rhetoric, see Charles L. Cohen, “The ‘Liberty or Death’ Speech: A Note on Religion and Revolutionary Rhetoric,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXXVIII (Oct. 1981), pp. 702-17.



Calvinist or at least highly influenced by Calvinism.<sup>12</sup> (Hancock was a Freemason; Adams was not; Henry was not; and Richard Henry Lee also seems not to have been one.)<sup>13</sup> Henry was the primary opponent in the debate over ratification. For this, he has been relegated into the “outer darkness” by the historians. I agree entirely with M. E. Bradford’s amusing assessment of the modern historical guild’s treatment of Henry: “Our scholars, most of them rationalists and neo-Federalists, had a vested interest in producing Henry’s present reputation: that he was a simple-minded count-t-y politician turned demagogue, a Populist trimmer whose talents happened to serve his more far-sighted contemporaries when the Revolutionary crisis came. That Madison was the fellow to read, and Jefferson before him— or certain selected Boston radicals, as reprinted under the auspices of the Harvard University Press.”<sup>14</sup>

A handful of men had decided to take the new nation down a different path. It was not enough to amend the Articles by taking such steps as repealing all internal tariffs and establishing gold or silver coins as legal tender for a national currency.<sup>15</sup> They wanted a completely new system of national government. This would have to be achieved through a *coup*. Congress was unwilling and probably unable to undertake such a radical revision of the Articles in 1787. Yet the Articles of Confederation, as the legal by-laws of the national government, specified that all changes would have to be approved by Congress and then by all of the state legislatures: “And the Articles of this confederation shall be inviolably observed by every state, and the union shall be perpetual; nor shall any alteration at any time hereafter be made in any of them; unless such alteration be agreed to in a congress of the united states, and be afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every state” (Article XIII). Congress and the state legislatures would therefore have to be bypassed. This required some very special preparations.

It required, in short, a conspiracy.

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12. On Adams’ Calvinism, see William Appleman Williams, “Samuel Adams: Calvinist, Mercantilist, Revolutionary; *Studies on the Left*, I (1960), pp. 47-57.

13. Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Masonic Service Association, [1965] 1988), pp. 25, 110, 88, 92.

14. M. E. Bradford, *A Better Guide Than Reason: Studies in the American Revolution* (LaSalle, Illinois: Sherwood Sugden & Co., 1979), p. 107.

15. The Constitution did make gold and silver coins legal tender for the states, but said nothing about any such restriction on the national government. See Gerald T. Dunne, *Monetary Decisions of the Supreme Court* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1960), Preface.

*Sworn to Secrecy*

To conceal the nature of this attempted *coup* from the public, especially from any members of Congress who did not attend the Convention, the debates in Philadelphia were closed to the public. (Can you imagine the hue and cry of the press and news media if such a convention were closed to them today? No scoops for Pulitzer Prize-seeking reporters? No “details at eleven”?) So secretive were the attendees that Madison, who was the primary engineer of the *coup* and its unofficially designated scribe,<sup>16</sup> refused to allow his transcripts to be published until after his death. They did not become public until 1840.<sup>17</sup> This code of silence was mentioned by Warren Burger, shortly after he announced his resignation as Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court, who informed a national television audience: “I think one of the reasons of the success of the Constitution was the iron code of silence that bound all of the members who were there.”<sup>18</sup>

It was not just Madison who felt so bound. Robert Yates, who was at the time Chief Justice of the State of New York, attended the early days of the Convention. He left in disgust, convinced that the Convention served ill purposes. He had taken notes of the proceedings through July 5. Yet even this opponent of the Constitution refused to publish these notes. In a public transcript of them, published first in 1838, his anonymous biographer took great care to explain that Yates had not broken the Convention’s code of silence: “Chief Justice Yates, though often solicited, refused during his life, to permit his notes of those debates to be published, not only because they were originally not written for the public eye, but because he conceived himself under honorable obligations to withhold their publication. These notes, after his death, fell into the hands of his widow, who disposed of them, and they are thus become public.”<sup>19</sup>

So, the delegates were sworn to secrecy. Gentlemen obviously took oaths seriously back in 1787. Participants who soon opposed the whole procedure as illegal never revealed what had gone on inside

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16. Major William Jackson was voted the official secretary, and his signature appears on the Constitution as secretary.

17. The publication of these notes contributed to a period of vacillation over slavery questions in the courts; the abolitionists saw in the notes proof of the Framers’ compromise over slavery. Michael Kammen, *A Machine That Would Go of Itself: The Constitution in American Culture* (New York: Vantage, [1986] 1987), p. 97.

18. Transcript, CBS News Special, “The Burger Years,” June 9, 1986, p. 13.

19. Martin, *Secret Proceedings*, p. 333n.

those walls, not even in their old age. Why not? In a modern world filled with “leaks” to the press and everyone else, we can hardly imagine what it might have been that persuaded these men to keep their silence. I have read no history book that has even raised the question. But of this we can be confident: they all feared some kind of negative sanctions, either external or internal, for breaking this oath of secrecy.

When the Convention ended, they took the final step. They handed all the minutes over to George Washington to take back to Mount Vernon. They knew that no one in the nation would have the audacity to tell George Washington that he had to hand over the evidence of what was in fact a *coup*. Madison’s notes state specifically that “The president, having asked what the Convention meant should be done with the Journals, &c., whether copies were to be allowed to the members, if applied for, it was resolved, *nem. con.*, ‘that he retain the Journal and other papers, subject to the order of Congress, if ever formed under the Constitution.’”<sup>20</sup> In short, if the *coup* was successful, then the new Congress could gain access to the records. If not, no one would have any written evidence to prove anything except the untouchable General Washington.<sup>21</sup> On that basis, they signed.

Historian Jack Rakove argues that this element of secrecy was the result of years of near-secrecy by the Continental Congress itself. To this extent, he implies, it was a fitting end for the old Congress. This is a strange way to argue; nothing in Congress’ history rivaled the degree of secrecy in Philadelphia. Rakove is nevertheless correct: ‘For the most remarkable aspect of the Convention’s four-month inquiry was that it was conducted in virtually absolute secrecy, uninfluenced by external pressures of any kind. . . . Except for the occasional rumors — many of them inaccurate — that American newspapers published, the general public knew nothing of the Convention’s deliberations.’<sup>22</sup>

### *Bypassing Congress*

Instead of submitting the Constitution to Congress, as originally agreed to by all the delegates — so much for legal but politically in-

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20. Elliot, *Debates*, V, p. 558.

21. Wouldn’t Richard Nixon have appreciated such rules in 1974!

22. Jack N. Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 399.

convenient oaths — and as demanded by Congress, Article VII of the Constitution passed over the Congress and announced that ratification by nine state legislatures would suffice to abolish the Articles. This was a calculated gamble by the members of the convention.

*The Federalist Papers* were propaganda devices to persuade the voters retroactively to sanction the *coup* of 1787. The ratification process was in fact a plebiscite for or against the legitimacy of a *coup*. As historian Richard Buel, Jr., has pointed out: "Although the Constitution had been designed to remove the national government from the immediate reach of the populace, its power was still ultimately dependent on public opinion. . . ." <sup>23</sup> The public was allowed to ratify the *coup*; after that, the voters were to be kept farther at bay. This is why the nationalists had to submit to their opponents' demand for the Bill of Rights in 1789. The nationalists resented having to do this, but they had little choice, if the ratification of 1788 was to become a legitimizing event.

Once sanctioned by the ratification process, the original conspirators became, retroactively, Founding Fathers. The fact that it was a *coup* was concealed to the general public. The victors and their allies wrote the textbooks. The Antifederalists became in retrospect "men of little faith." <sup>24</sup> Only in recent years have the Antifederalists been taken seriously as political thinkers. 25

Biblically speaking, the appeal to the people to ratify the Constitution was either an act of *covenant renewal* or it was an act of *covenant creation*. There is no doubt which the Convention had in mind: the latter. This is clear from the debates in the Convention, the ratifying conventions, and *The Federalist*. They recognized that a new government was being established. To ratify the Constitution was an act of *discontinuity*. It was a revolt against existing judicial authority. Patterson of New Jersey admitted this in the Convention: "If the confederacy was radically wrong, let us return to our States, and obtain larger powers, not assume them for ourselves."<sup>26</sup>

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23. Richard Buel, J.-., *Securing the Revolution: Ideology and American Politics, 1789-1815* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. ix.

24. Cecelia Kenyon, "Men of Little Faith: The Anti-Federalists on the Nature of Representative Government," William and *Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XII (Jan. 1955), pp. 3-46.

25. Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). This is a paperback version of Volume 1 of Storing's collection of primary source documents, *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 7 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

26. June 16; Max Farrand (ed.), *Records of the Federal Convention*, I, p. 250. Cited in *The Founders' Constitution*, edited by Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), IV, p. 649.

### Were the Convention's Leaders Christians?

Were the leaders of the Convention Christians? After all, many of them belonged to churches. M. E. Bradford concludes that 50 of the 55 attendees were Christians, as determined by church membership.<sup>27</sup> The answer to the question, however, is not resolved simply by an appeal to church membership. As Margaret Jacob remarks regarding members of the subversive Knights of Jubilation, a freethinking, pantheistic Dutch secret society of the first half of the eighteenth century, its members maintained church membership in Calvinist Walloon<sup>28</sup> congregations throughout their lives. "The churches gave them a social identity and the hint of irreligion would have destroyed their reputations and probably their businesses."<sup>29</sup> We therefore need to examine in greater detail the religious opinions of three of the most famous of the Framers: Washington, Franklin, and Madison. 30

#### *George Washington*

Washington was a member of the Anglican Church all his life. Officially, he was a communicant member, but he never took communion, even though his wife did. He would rise and leave the church as soon as communion was about to be served. When challenged publicly about this by the rector of Christ Church in Philadelphia, Bishop William White, he later apologized indirectly by way of a U.S. Senator, and promised never again to attend the church on communion day, a promise that he apparently kept.<sup>31</sup> Dr. James Abercrombie had been assistant rector of Christ Church during Washington's Presidency, and he did not mince words in an 1831 statement: "That Washington was a professing Christian is evident from his regular attendance in our church; but, Sir, I cannot consider any man a real Christian who uniformly disregards an ordinance so solemnly enjoined by the divine Author of our holy religion, and considered as a challenge to divine grace."<sup>32</sup>

27. M. E. Bradford, *A Worthy Company: Brief Lives of the framers of the United States Constitution* (Marlborough, New Hampshire: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1982).

28. Southern Netherlands.

29. Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 162.

30. The fourth was Alexander Hamilton, whose religious opinions during his active political years were vague.

31. Paul F. Boiler, Jr., *George Washington & Religion* (Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963), p. 34.

32. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 18.

Here was the strange situation: George Washington was formally a communicant church member who systematically refused to take communion. The institutional problem here was the unwillingness of church authorities to apply formal church sanctions. Any church member who refuses to take communion has thereby excommunicated himself. A refusal to take communion or a prohibition against one's taking communion is what excommunication means. *Self-excommunication is excommunication, just as surely as suicide is first-degree murder.* Nevertheless, the churches to which Washington belonged did not take official action against him by either requiring him to take communion or by publicly excommunicating him. It was this disciplinary failure on the part of these churches that led to the public legitimizing of Washington as a Christian. This failure later indirectly legitimized the Constitution that he conspired to impose on the nation. Without Washington's support of the actions of the Convention, the Constitution would never have been ratified. But Washington was deemed either too powerful or too sacrosanct to bring under church discipline.

A failure of sanctions here, at the heart of the church's sanctioning process, the communion table, reveals the extent to which eighteenth-century Christianity had abandoned the very concept of sanctions. This ecclesiastical failure was reflected in the colonial political order throughout the period, but especially after the ratification of the Constitution. The churches were subsequently brought under a new kind of discipline: formal removal of Christianity from the national civil covenant by means of the Constitutional prohibition of religious test oaths. The churches reaped what they had sown. They had refused to impose God's negative ecclesiastical covenant sanctions; thus, God imposed His negative sanctions on them. This was the lesson of the Book of Judges, one repeated throughout church history. Jordan is correct: Where there is compromise with sin, the very sin becomes the means God uses to chastise His children. Our sins become our scourges.<sup>33</sup> The sin of our day, as he points out, is Baalistic pluralism.<sup>34</sup>

There is very little evidence in Washington's public communications that he accepted the doctrine of the Trinity. Boiler insists that not once in his voluminous letters does he actually mention the name

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33. James B. Jordan, *Judges: God's War Against Humanism* (Tyler, Texas: Geneva Ministries, 1985), p. 42.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

of Jesus Christ, 35 although announcing universal negatives is always risky. Washington refused to commit to public pronouncements any statement of his personal faith besides a commitment to divine Providence. Except during wartime, he only attended church once a month.<sup>36</sup> Thus, concludes Boiler, “if to believe in the divinity and resurrection of Christ and his atonement for the sins of man and to participate in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are requisites for the Christian faith, then Washington, on the evidence which we have examined, can hardly be considered a Christian, except in the most nominal sense.”<sup>37</sup>

The key to understanding Washington’s public religion is found on the page facing the title page of J. Hugo Tatsch’s book, *The Facts About George Washington as a Freemason*. There we find Williams’ 1794 painting of Washington in the regalia of Grand Master of a Masonic lodge. It was an official painting; his lodge at Alexandria paid \$50 to the painter. 3s Washington had served as Grand Master of the Alexandria lodge in 1788 and 1789. When he was inaugurated President of the U. S., he was therefore a Grand Master, the only Mason ever to be inaugurated President while serving as a Grand Master.<sup>39</sup>

Later, on September 18, 1793, President Washington, in full Masonic regalia, along with the Grand Master of the Alexandria Lodge 22 and the Grand Master *pro tern* of Maryland, laid the south-east cornerstone of the Capitol in Washington, D. C.<sup>40</sup>

President Washington proposed, and Congress authorized, the laying of 40 milestones to mark the boundaries of the city. Prior to 1846, Alexandria, Virginia was part of the Territory of Columbia. On April 15, 1791, the cornerstone of the city was laid at Jones Point, in Alexandria. It was laid by Lodge 22, Washington’s lodge.<sup>41</sup>

The White House – then called the President’s House – had its cornerstone laid on the south-west corner: Ott. 13, 1792.<sup>42</sup> The

35. Boiler, *Washington*, p. 75.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

38. J. Hugo Tatsch, *The Facts About George Washington as a Freemason* (New York: Macoy, 1931), p. 43.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-27. Cf. *Your Masonic Capital City* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Masonic Service Association, n.d., 1988?), pp. 1-4; Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Temple and the Lodge* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989), pp. 261-62.

41. *Your Masonic Capital City*, pp. 26-27.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. The report appeared in the Nov. 15, 1792 issue of the Charleston, South Carolina *City Gazette*. The designer of the Capitol and the President’s House, James Hoban, was a resident of Charleston at the time he submitted his designs.

Washington Monument looks like a Masonic project, and it was.<sup>43</sup> Subsequent Masonic-administered Capitol cornerstones were laid: Senate and House, July 4, 1851; Capitol, Sept. 18, 1932; Capitol, July 4, 1959.<sup>44</sup>

George Washington was initiated into the lodge at Fredericksburg on November 4, 1752.<sup>45</sup> In the 1780's, his name was proposed as Grand Master of a proposed United Grand Lodge of all military lodges, but the various state Grand Lodges refused to authorize the creation of such a lodge.<sup>46</sup> In fact, no national Grand Lodge ever came into existence. Carter's account of Washington's first inauguration as President is illuminating: "On April 30, 1789, Washington took the oath of office as President of the United States administered by Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York. General Jacob Morton, Worshipful Master of St. John's Lodge in New York City – the oldest lodge in the city – and Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of New York, was marshal of the inauguration. It was one of his duties to provide a Bible for the occasion. Morton brought from the altar of St. John's Lodge the Bible upon which Washington placed his hand while repeating the obligation to uphold the Constitution of the United States and then kissed the sacred volume to complete the ceremony."<sup>47</sup>

You will not read in the textbooks that 33 of Washington's generals were Masons.<sup>48</sup> You will also not read that LaFayette was not given command over any troops until after he agreed to be initiated into Union Lodge No. 1, at which ceremony Washington officiated as Master Mason. But such was the case.<sup>49</sup> Washington presided

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-26.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-12.

45. James D. Carter, *Masonry in Texas: Background, History, and Influence to 1846* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955), p. 26.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 144. Freemasons in attendance were Leonard Bleeker, Amos Doolittle, Pierpont Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Hinsdale, David Humphreys, Henry Knox, Morgan Lewis, Robert Livingston, William Malcom, Jacob Morton, Frederick Muhlenberg, James Nicholson, Arthur St. Clair, and Frederick William von Stueben. James R. Case, *Freemasons at the First Inauguration of George Washington* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Masonic Service Association, n.d., 1964?), pp. 25-29.

48. Heaton, *Masonic Membership*, p. xvi.

49. Bernard Fay, *Revolution and Freemason, 1680-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), pp. 249-50. He cites Philip A. Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of Our Government, 1761-1799* (by the Author, 1927), pp. 43-45. Roth was the Manager of the Masonic Service Bureau in Washington, D. C. Lafayette's statement that Washington never willingly gave senior command to non-Masons is repeated by Morse, *Freemasonry and the American Revolution*, p. ix.



over a procession in Philadelphia on December 27, 1778, after the evacuation of the British. Dressed in full Masonic attire, he marched through the city with three hundred other Masons, and then held a Masonic service at Christ Church, which became his congregation of preference during his Presidency. 50

As President, he received many honors from local lodges. His written replies to them were generous. He never wavered in his attachment to Masonry. In a letter to King David's Lodge No. 1 of Newport Rhode Island, written on Sunday, August 22, 1790, Washington wrote: "Being persuaded that a just application of the principles, on which the Masonic Fraternity is founded, must be promotive of private virtue and public prosperity, I shall always be happy to advance the interests of the Society, and to be considered by them as a deserving brother."<sup>51</sup> In several letters, he referred to God as the Supreme Architect. A representative example is his letter to Pennsylvania Masons (Dec. 27, 1791): "... I request you will be assured of my best wishes and earnest prayers for your happiness while you remain in this terrestrial Mansion, and that we may thereafter meet as brethren in the Eternal Temple of the Supreme Architect."<sup>52</sup>

John Eidsmoe, in his book-length attempt to defend the Constitution as a Christian document, takes seriously Washington's outright lie — it can be nothing else — in a letter to G. W. Snyder in 1798, that he had not been in a masonic lodge "more than once or twice in the last thirty years."<sup>53</sup> One does not become the Grand Master of a lodge by attending services once or twice over thirty years, but one can certainly fool two centuries of Christian critics by lying through one's wooden teeth about it. 54

That he may have been a Christian in private is possible, though his attitude toward the Church betrays a woeful misunderstanding of

50. *Ibid.*, p. 246; citing Roth, pp. 63-64, and Tatsch, *Freemason in the Thirteen Colonies*, pp. 206-11.

51. Tatsch, *Facts About Washington*, p. 14.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

53. John Eidsmoe, *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 125, citing John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799* (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931-44), vol. 34, p. 453.

54. Washington's false teeth, attributed to fellow Mason Paul Revere, were made by John Greenwood, who as a boy was a neighbor of Revere's during the period of Revere's brief, ill-fated or ill-fitting career as a dentist. Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and The World He Lived In* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, [1942] 1962), p. 133.

Christian responsibilities. He did possess a personal prayer book, written in his own hand, which he called Daily Sacrifice. It contained familiar formal set prayers, such as this one: "I beseech Thee, my sins, remove them from Thy presence, as far as the east is from the west, and accept of me for the merits of Thy Son Jesus Christ."<sup>55</sup> Similar Trinitarian prayers are published in the *Ahiman Rezon*, the constitutional handbook for Ancient Masons.<sup>56</sup> He perhaps was a "closet Trinitarian" in the way that John Locke was. Publicly, he was a Masonic Unitarian. Of him it can legitimately be said, as Mark Nell in fact says: "In short, the political figures who read the Bible in private rarely, if ever, betrayed that acquaintance to the public."<sup>57</sup>

In contrast to Washington's public silence stands the example of Patrick Henry. A member of the same Protestant Episcopal Church, he took regular communion. While he was governor of Virginia, he had printed at his own expense Soame Jenyns' *View of the Internal Evidence of Christianity* and an edition of Butler's *Analogy*. These books he gave to skeptics he would meet.<sup>58</sup> He never joined the Masonic fraternity. He wrote to his daughter in 1796: "Amongst other strange things said of me, I hear it said by the deists that I am one of their number; and, indeed, that some good people think I am no Christian. This thought gives me more pain than the appellation of Tory; . . ." <sup>59</sup>

### *Benjamin Franklin*

In order to modify the argument that Franklin was a Deist, Rushdoony cites Franklin's June 28 plea at the Constitutional Convention that they pray to God in order to resolve their differences. Then, speaking of Jefferson and Franklin, he writes: "That both these men

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55. Cited in Benjamin Hart, *Faith & Freedom: The Christian Roots of American Liberty* (Dallas, Texas: Lewis & Stanley, 1988), p. 274. Seven of these set prayers are reprinted in Tim LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1987), pp. 111-13. LaHaye cites W. Herbert Burk, *Washington's Prayers* (Norristown, Pennsylvania: Published for the Benefit of the Washington Memorial Chapel, 1907).

56. *Ahiman Rezon Abridged and Digested* (Philadelphia: Hall & Sellers, 1783), pp. 111-12.

57. Mark A. Nell, "The Bible in Revolutionary America," in James Turner Johnson (cd.), *The Bible in American Law, Politics, and Political Rhetoric* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 43.

58. Moses Coit Tyler, *Patrick Henry* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, [1887] 1975), pp. 392-95. Henry adopted this practice toward the end of his life. Henry Mayer, *A Son of Thunder: Patrick Henry and the American Republic* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1986), pp. 467-68.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 392.

were influenced by Deism, among other things, is certainly to be granted, but, unless one charges these statements off as the most ar-rant kind of hypocrisy, it becomes equally clear that even stronger colonial influences were at work. Here, in clear and forthright language from these men, is Calvinism's predestination and total providence, and, at the same time, the near Unitarian exclusion of Christ from the Godhead. God is not seen as an absentee landlord, and not only reason but more than reason is appealed to. It becomes clear that, in view of the mixed linguistic, religious and philosophical premises, no *facile classification can be ventured*.<sup>60</sup>

On the contrary, a very accurate "facile" classification can be ventured, the one which Rushdoony appeals to over and over in his discussion of the French Revolution: *the providentialism of the Masonic theological system*. Franklin became the Grand Master of the most influential Masonic lodge in France, the "Nine Sisters" (Nous Sours), in 1779.<sup>61</sup> He had been there when the lodge initiated Voltaire in 1778, four months before Voltaire died.<sup>62</sup>

First, Rushdoony and all those Christian authors who cite Franklin's famous prayer request should inform their readers that only three or four of the delegates voted to sustain it.<sup>63</sup> These prayers were never offered. This indicates the degree of the orthodox theological commitment of the Framers. Second, we do indeed need to ask: Was Franklin capable of hypocrisy? He surely was capable of looking the other way while treason was being committed under his nose. Throughout his tenure in France as the senior American representative in Paris, he hired known British spies to serve on his staff, despite repeated warnings that they were spies. Furthermore, in his work in Paris to negotiate the peace treaty between England and the colonies, he steadfastly objected to the insistence of his superiors that the colonies be granted formal independence by the treaty.<sup>64</sup>

When Professor Cecil Currey, who had devoted most of his academic career in studying Franklin, and who had previously been considered a well-informed Franklin scholar,<sup>65</sup> wrote his exposé of

60. R. J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic: Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1964] 1978), p. 6. Emphasis his.

61. Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Viking, 1938), p. 655.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 606.

63. Max Farrand (ed.), *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, 4 vols. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, [1913] 1966), I, p. 452n.

64. Cecil B. Currey, "The Franklin Legend," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Summer 1976), p. 136.

65. Cecil B. Currey, *Road to Revolution: Benjamin Franklin in England, 1765-1775* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1968).

Franklin's work in Paris, *Code Number 72: Ben Franklin - Patriot or Spy?* (1972),<sup>66</sup> the historical guild was generally hostile, as he related in an essay I asked him to write in 1976. (An exception was Forrest McDonald.)<sup>67</sup> He says that he received a letter from Thomas Fleming, Washington's biographer, who had attacked the book in print, and then wrote to the author: "I will state bluntly here that I have not read your book because the title speaks for itself. The question it raises is preposterous."<sup>68</sup> *Code Number 72* went out of print and has remained out of print. The dark side of Franklin's Paris career is ignored by tenured professional historians.

I deal with Franklin's theology in Chapter 9, "Franklin's Theology of Union." I also trace his early Masonic connections. He was the most prominent Freemason in the colonies from 1734 until Washington rose to fame.

### *James Madison*

Historian Robert Rutland is correct regarding James Madison's view of religion. The former student of Rev. John Witherspoon at the College of New Jersey had a dream. That dream was the creation of a secular republic.<sup>69</sup> He had spent an extra year in post-graduate study with Witherspoon studying Hebrew, ethics, and theology,<sup>70</sup> so he knew what Christianity is. He wanted no part of an explicitly Christian republic. (Neither did Witherspoon.) He worked hard to see to it that such a republic, which existed at the state level under the Articles of Confederation, would not survive. "He was a guiding force behind the Mount Vernon Conference (1785) and the subsequent Annapolis Convention (1786), where with other 'choice spirits' he planned out the set of maneuvers which finally led to the Great Convention in Philadelphia the following May."<sup>71</sup> (Bradford's reference to the Mount Vernon conference is one of the few I have come across. This meeting, where the *coup* first began to be planned, is simply ignored in most histories of the Convention. )

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66. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

67. McDonald, Review of *Code Number 72*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXI (Jan. 1974).

68. Cited by Currey, "Franklin Legend," p. 145.

69. Robert A. Rutland, "James Madison's Dream: A Secular Republic," *Free Inquiry* (Sept. 1983), pp. 8-11.

70. Bradford, *A Worthy Company*, p. 142.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

Madison was a dedicated man. As we shall see in Chapter 9, what had long motivated him was his commitment to remove the religious test oath from Virginia politics and then national politics. He achieved both of these goals within a three-year period, 1786-88.

Madison is often called the "Father of the Constitution." Intellectually speaking, it was John Adams, the American ambassador in England at the time of the Convention, who was an equally dominant figure at the Convention because of his detailed studies of the state constitutions, especially his pre-Convention, three-volume work, *Defense of the Constitutions of the Government of the United States*. His model of the "balanced constitution" was an important influence at Philadelphia.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, it was surely Madison who was the father of the Convention, with Washington sitting silently as the godfather. It was Madison who, more than any other man, broke the national covenant with God.

### Conspiracy

Arrant hypocrisy?, Rushdoony asks rhetorically. Not at all. Arrant *conspiracy*. These men were conspirators. The Articles of Confederation had stated clearly that "No two or more states shall enter into any treaty, confederation or alliance whatever between them, without the consent of the united states in congress assembled, specifying absolutely the purposes for which the same is to be entered into, and how long it shall continue" (Article VI). This is why the conspirators tried to surround the proposed Constitution with an air of legality by stating in the Preamble: ". . . in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice," etc. The specified time limit was perpetual: ". . . to secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity. . . ." But Congress had not authorized any such treaty, confederation or alliance. The conspirators knew it, especially the man who made the *coup* possible, George Washington. "More than most men," comments Garry Wills, "he showed an early and unblinking awareness that the Philadelphia convention would engage in acts not only 'irregular' or extralegal, but very likely illegal. John Jay had alerted him to this problem as early as January."<sup>73</sup> Jay's fears were

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72. Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History, published by the University of North Carolina Press, 1969), ch. 14.

73. Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1984), p. 154.

only partially allayed when in February, Congress authorized the Convention, but only to suggest amendments to Congress. On March 10, Washington wrote to Jay: "In strict propriety a Convention so holden may not be legal."<sup>74</sup> But they proceeded.

They knew the whole thing was illegal, a subversive act of revolution. They were lawyers, and they had read their Blackstone. 75 Blackstone had commented on the convention-parliament that had called William III to the throne in 1688-89. It had been legal, he said, only because James II had abdicated. (Blackstone failed to mention the less-than-voluntary circumstances of the king's departure.) Blackstone wrote: "The vacancy of the throne was precedent to their meeting without any royal summons, not a consequence of it. They did not assemble without writ, and then make the throne vacant; but the throne being previously vacant by the king's abdication, they assembled without writ, as they must do if they assembled at all. Had the throne been full, their meeting would not have been regular; but, as it was empty, such meeting became absolutely necessary."<sup>76</sup> The "throne" was occupied in 1787; Congress had not abdicated. The Convention had been issued writs; these writs expressly prohibited the substitution of a new constitutional document. Those who came to Philadelphia for any other purpose were conspirators. Yet most of those who came arrived in Philadelphia with the death sentence in their pockets against the existing Confederation and the authorizing Congress.

It was this well-organized conspiracy that had control over the institutional levers that made possible the events of the Revolutionary War era "that transformed the entire political and social structure of the thirteen colonies in less time than it now takes to send a First Amendment case from appeal to the Supreme Court."<sup>77</sup>

### The Masonic Connection

James D. Carter wrote his doctoral dissertation under Professor Walter Prescott Webb, one of the most distinguished American his-

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74. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

75. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 31; McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, p. xii.

76. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1765] 1979), vol. I, *Of the Rights of Persons*, p. 148.

77. Rutland, "James Madison's Dream," *op. cit.*, p. 9.

torians of the mid-twentieth century. The dissertation was later published by the University of Texas Press, *Masonry in Texas* in 1955. Webb was laudatory: "After reading Dr. Carter's book, no one can doubt that Freemasonry has exerted an influence on the nation and the state which cannot and should not be ignored."<sup>78</sup>

Carter began with the history of colonial lodges in the early eighteenth century. He includes an 80-page chapter on "Freemasonry and the American Revolution," and a 30-page chapter, "Freemasonry and United States Government." In many respects, he exaggerates the number of Masons involved in the formation of the Union, but his basic presumption is correct: they were very influential in this process.

Leaders on both sides of the Constitutional debate were members of Masonic lodges. There is a problem in knowing precisely how many. Lodge membership was not always flaunted by members, and historians have not paid much attention to the subject. Tatsch said that 18 of the 56 signers of the Declaration were Masons, and 18 of the 39 signers of the Constitutional Convention. 79 Roth reduced this to possibly a dozen signers of the Declaration. 80 Heaton placed it at nine.<sup>81</sup> Heaton says that 13 of the 39 signers of the Constitution were Masons: Bedford, Blair, Brearley, Broom, Carroll, Dayton, Dickenson, Franklin, Gilman, King, McHenry, Paterson, and Washington. 82 Of these, five had been or later became Grand

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78. Webb, flyleaf, James D. Carter, *Masonry in Texas*. I refer to the first edition of this book, which has all of the appendixes.

79. J. Hugo Tatsch, *The Facts About George Washington as a Freemason* (New York: Macoy, 1929), p. xiv.

80. Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of Our Government*, pp. 154-64.

81. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers*, p. xvi. Carter's study — which I find greatly exaggerated and insufficiently documented on this point — concludes that at least 32 of the signers of the Declaration were Masons, including Ben Franklin, Elbridge Gerry, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Roger Sherman, and John Witherspoon. *Masonry in Texas*, pp. 67-68. There is considerable doubt regarding the Masonic membership of most of these men. Carter incorrectly includes Sam Adams, who was not a Mason, although Adams cooperated with the Masons of the Green Dragon Tavern, and the following men whose membership cannot be documented: Gerry, Rush, Jefferson, Lee, Morris, Witherspoon, and Sherman. These men were probably not Masons. Heaton, pp. xvi-xxiii. See also Sidney Morse, *Freemasonry in the American Revolution* (Washington, D. C.: Masonic Service Association of the United States, 1924), pp. 44-45.

82. Heaton, p. xvi. Carter says that of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention, 33 were Masons. Carter, *Masonry in Texas*, p. 138.

Masters. 83 Edmund Randolph was also a major Masonic figure in Virginia and a major figure at the convention, but he did not sign the document because of doubts, although he later supported its ratification at the Virginia ratifying convention. He had been a former military Aide-de-Camp for Washington, and he had been the official who signed the charter documents that created Alexandria Lodge No. 39, later No. 22, when Washington, as its first or Charter Master, served as Grand Master. 84

Does lodge membership of several prominent nationalists prove my thesis regarding the Constitutional Convention as a Masonic *coup*? No, because men on both sides of the Constitutional debate were found in the lodges, just as evangelical Christians today are in the lodges, despite two centuries of protest from the historic Reformed churches and traditional dispensational leaders. 85 Daniel Shays seems to have been a Mason, yet it was his rebellion in Massachusetts that so frightened the nationalists. 86 What has to be considered in assessing the accuracy of my thesis regarding the Convention is the theological character of the Constitution itself. Was the Constitution a civil covenant modeled along the lines of Masonic theology? Was it closer to the Masonic ideal than the existing state constitutions were? In other words, were *the terms of judicial and political discourse shaped by the Masonic worldview*? It is my contention that Masonry did shape the terms of discourse, translating the near-impersonal mathematical providentialism of Newton's Creator into the language of the average man. The Mason's Grand Architect of the Universe was in fact the Newtonian Deity.

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83. Bedford (Delaware), Blair (Virginia), Brearley (New Jersey, but in 1806), Franklin (Pennsylvania), Washington (Virginia, but in 1788).

84. Heaton, *Masonic Membership*, pp. 56, 74.

85. Christian Reformed Church, "Report 37: Lodge and Church Membership," *Acts of Synod 1974* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1974), pp. 504-67; Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, *Masonry in the Light of the Bible* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 1964); Alva J. McLain, "Freemasonry and Christianity," reprinted in E. M. Storms, *Should a Christian Be a Mason?* (Fletcher, North Carolina: New Puritan Library, n.d.). From a Roman Catholic perspective, see Paul A. Fisher, *Behind the Lodge Door: Church, State and Freemasonry* (Washington, D. C.: Shield, 1988). A very easy to read yet well documented introduction to this topic is John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Christianity and the Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge: What Goes on Behind Closed Doors* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: John Ankerberg Evangelistic Association, 1989).

86. Carter, *Masonry in Texas*, p. 58.



### Why Ignore Colonial Masonry?

Carl Van Doren, in his popular biography of Franklin, writes: "Freemasonry in America had been social and local, with little influence in politics."<sup>87</sup> To the extent that any historian even mentions Masonry, which is infrequent, this is the standard view. Masonry was merely "clubbery."<sup>88</sup> But the nagging question remains: What other inter-colonial club had so many leaders during the American Revolution?

The textbooks ignore all this. Masonry is seldom discussed as a factor in American history; it appears only in chapters devoted to the Anti-Masonic political party of the 1820's and 1830's. This has annoyed Masonic historians.<sup>89</sup> It is a major missing link in early American historiography. More than this: it is *the* missing link. And not just in American historiography. Margaret Jacob has observed a similar lack of interest in the Masonic connections in English history. "Despite the importance of Freemasonry for the Enlightenment, of whatever variety, this originally British institution has received scant attention from British academic historians. . . . This is a particularly unfortunate gap in the historiography of the eighteenth century, not only for intellectual but also for political history."<sup>90</sup>

She is careful to distance herself from conspiracy theorists. She refers disparagingly to "Fäy's paranoid reading" of the Masonic connection, repeatedly misspelling Faÿ.<sup>91</sup> This is reminiscent of Crane Brinton's dismissal of Nesta Webster's voluminous researches on the French Revolution: ". . . frightened Tories like Mrs. Nesta Webster. . . ."92 She hastens to assure her readers that "We can now dispense with conspiracy theories and still show the survival throughout the first half of the eighteenth century of a social world that was often, but not necessarily, Masonic wherein some very dangerous ideas were in fact discussed and disseminated."<sup>93</sup> She qualifies her

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87. Van Doren, *Franklin*, p. 656.

88. Robert Micklus, "The Secret Fall of Freemasonry in Dr. Alexander Hamilton's *The History of the Tuesday Club*," in J. A. Leo Lemay (ed.), *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1987), pp. 127-28.

89. Cf. Morse, *Freemason in the American Revolution*, pp. 7-8.

90. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 121-22.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

92. Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Vintage, [1938] 1952), p. 56.

93. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 240-41.

book's thesis down to a bare minimum: Masonry as one *possible* source of several sources of revolutionary *ideas*. "It seems not unreasonable to suggest that this social circuit was international in scope while at the same time acknowledging that we still have a very imperfect account of the extent to which some Masonic lodges, under certain circumstances, would encourage a radical critique of the existing order."<sup>94</sup>

But she had already gone way too far, and her book's mild thesis, intelligently argued, was savagely ridiculed by one reviewer as a "farrago of pretentious and portentous moonshine."<sup>95</sup> Mention Masonry as an organization that spread the ideas of revolution, let alone that it provided the revolution's organizational backbone, and you risk losing your academic reputation. Historians know this, and they take great care to avoid transgressing this crucial professional boundary. Even great care is sometimes insufficient, as Dr. Jacob learned.

Forrest McDonald's three volumes on the origin of the Constitution have become nearly definitive. There is not a word in any of them on Masonry, despite the fact that *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (1985) is subtitled, *The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution*. Wilson Carey McWilliams' book, *The Idea of Fraternity in America*, almost 700 pages long, devotes only one brief paragraph to pre-Constitution Masonry, and then only as a social club made up of outsiders: "Its members were less comfortable in the established order than were the elites. . . ." <sup>96</sup> There are pages of paintings and sculptures of George Washington in Garry Wills' *Cincinnatus*, but not one example of him dressed in his Masonic garb, and not one reference to the "craft ."

Washington was the man who led the military Society of Cincinnati, and who had as his subordinate generals only those initiated into Masonry. This was the man who gave LaFayette a separate command only after the latter had been initiated personally by Washington. The army was the only functioning national civil hierarchy in the Patriot cause. It was an ideal recruiting ground, for Washington was the source of promotions (positive sanctions). He made sure his senior officers were Masons. This was the man who

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94. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

95. G. C. Gibbs, "The Radical Enlightenment," *British Journal of the History of Science*, XVII (1984), p. 75.

96. Wilson Carey McWilliams, *The Idea of Fraternity in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 205.

had at least ten military Masonic lodges in his army.<sup>97</sup> The textbooks are nonetheless silent.

How many people have ever heard of the Temple of Virtue? This was the building in Newburgh, New York, that was constructed on Washington's instructions for his headquarters and for a meeting place for the troop lodges. It was in this building that he warned the members of the Society of Cincinnati to be prudent in their demands, thus cutting short a potential military coup.<sup>98</sup> Scarcely a word on any of these Masonic connections is in the conventional monographs and biographies, let alone the more general textbooks.

### *The Boston Tea Party*

There is an occasional exception. Page Smith's multi-volume "people's history" of the Revolution, suggestively titled *A New Age Now Begins*, does mention that Joseph Warren and Paul Revere were Masons.<sup>99</sup> He also mentions something almost never seen in a textbook, that Boston's famous Green Dragon Tavern, which was the central meeting place of the patriots, had been chosen for a reason. "This tavern was doubtless chosen because patriot organizer Joseph Warren was also Grand Master of the Boston Masonic Lodge, and the Masons had their headquarters there."<sup>100</sup> Esther Forbes, in her well-received yet popular biography of Revere,<sup>101</sup> describes the background of the Boston Tea Party, where colonials dressed up as Indians and tossed into the harbor the taxed tea that had been brought to Boston on board British ships:

Two of Revere's clubs, the North Caucus and Saint Andrew's lodge, are known to have had a hand in it. The Masons had met the night the ships arrived, but their records read, 'Lodge adjourned on account of few Brothers present. N.B. Consignees of Tea took the Brethren's time.' This night the record is even briefer: 'Lodge closed on account of few members present.' Saint Andrew's had by this time bought the old 'Green Dragon.' This was a

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97. Morse, *Freemasonry in the American Revolution*, p. 17. A list of these lodges and a brief history of them is found in Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of Our Government*, pp. 138-48. For a list of the 34 lodges in the British military forces in 1775-77, see Baigent and Leigh, *Temple and Lodge*, Appendix 2.

98. Morse, *ibid.*, p. 131.

99. Page Smith, *A New Age Now Begins: A People's History of the American Revolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), I, p. 306.

100. *Ibid.*, I, p. 464.

101. This book was assigned to us by Douglass Adair in a 1965 graduate seminar on the American Revolution.

large, brick tavern standing on Union Street. . . . More Revolutionary eggs were hatched in this-dragon's nest than in any other spot in Boston. Other lodges and radical clubs were beginning to meet there, sheltered by the inviolable secrecy of the Masons. It was at the Green Dragon the plan to destroy the tea was perfected and either there or at Benjamin Edes' house Paul Revere and others put on their disguises.<sup>102</sup>

The immediate aftermath of the tea party in 1773 was the closing of Boston Harbor by the British— what soon became known as the Intolerable Acts. Sam Adams' Committees of Correspondence went to work. This led to an inter-colonial organized outrage. More than any other single event, this launched the Revolution. And who were these Boston men? In a specialized monograph on Boston politics during this era, we are treated to one brief, tantalizing reference: "At least eight of the twenty-one members also belonged to the North End Caucus, a private political club which met regularly in several Boston congregations, in both of Boston's Masonic lodges, the fire companies of several wards, as well as a variety of private clubs."<sup>103</sup> But that is all.

Even such brief references as these are few and far between. The average student of American history is never told that the Committees of Correspondence and Committees of Safety were very often headed by Masons, held their meetings in lodges or taverns that served as lodge headquarters, and became leaders of the Provincial assemblies.<sup>104</sup> In Philadelphia in 1775, where the first Continental Congress met, there were approximately one thousand Masons, although we do not know on which side they fell out initially.<sup>105</sup> As the war progressed, the "Ancient" lodges became dominant in Philadelphia.<sup>106</sup>

### Bernard Fay

The one major exception to this historical blackout by academic historians of the American Revolution is the French historian Bernard Fay. His book, *Revolution and Freemason (1935)*, does go into

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102. Forbes, *Paul Revere*, pp. 197-98.

103. Richard D. Brown, *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772-1774* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 60.

104. Morse, *Freemasonry and the American Revolution*, p. 58.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

106. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

many of these details. He alone reports that Franklin, as Deputy Postmaster General for the English Colonies in America, travelled extensively and joined together Masonic lodges. Franklin's American Philosophical Society, a colonial model of the Royal Society, founded in 1741, was made up mostly of Masons.<sup>107</sup> Perhaps most important, Franklin set up a number of Mason-owned newspapers around the colonies, including John Peter Zenger's *New York Journal* and Eden's *Boston Gazette*.<sup>108</sup>

Faÿ explains why it is that so many historians think that the Masons were politically irrelevant in this era. The lodges were enjoined on both sides of the Atlantic to avoid politics, but they could set up ancillary organizations that could get involved politically. "They were careful to keep politics as much as possible outside the regular meetings of the lodges. . . . But their political influence was based on the fact that in America a 'lodge' meant a tavern. All lodges met in alehouses, inns and taverns; most of them owned their meeting places or met in a building which was owned by a member of the lodge. The lodge itself held its ceremonies discreetly and formally in a back room, after which the members gathered informally and less directly in the main room to drink and, when the lodge was not in session, to speak and act without restraint."<sup>109</sup> Maybe even toss a bit of tea into the harbor!

Conventional historians do not consider such matters because few of them know anything about Masonry, and those who have heard anything about it view it primarily as a social club. They have never asked themselves the obvious question: What are the institutional connections that make possible a successful revolution? They have been taught by traditional historiography to look at political events or military events. They have been taught by Marx to examine class alignments, and by Charles Beard and his intellectual heirs to examine the personal economic self-interest of the participants. Historians in recent years are far more willing to consider the influence of religious ideas, but they have been trained to play down the "great man theory of history." They have been taught, above all, that serious, reputable scholars do not raise the question of conspir-

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107. Faÿ, *Freemasonry and Revolution*, p. 232.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

acies. Special-interest groups, yes; elites, yes;<sup>110</sup> just not conspiracies.

Why is this? I think the reason is theological. Conspiracies point too closely to personalism as the basis of historical change, and personalism points to a God who brings sanctions in' history.<sup>111</sup> Historians prefer to speak of historical forces and economic classes. So, only people such as Nesta Webster ask the forbidden questions, and for their indiscreet behavior, they are written off by professional historians. In Crane Brinton's bibliography, he acknowledged only Webster's less scholarly, less detailed book, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (1924). He conveniently ignored her masterpiece, *The French Revolution* (1919), which presents a far more detailed case for what he sneers at as "the 'plot' theory of revolution."<sup>112</sup> Brinton knew. His first published book was on the Jacobins, and he showed how closely they were associated with the Masonic lodges of France.<sup>113</sup> He *knew*. But he also knew enough to keep his mouth shut and his opinions conventional. "Just a bunch of local good old bourgeois boys looking for a few business deals, good food, and lively discussion." Offer a conspiracy theory of history, and you will probably find yourself at a professional dead end— in a profession that is mostly career dead ends anyway.<sup>114</sup>

### Nesta Webster's Blind Spot

Nesta Webster's influence on Rushdoony is very strong in *This Independent Republic*. He relies heavily on her book, *The French Revolution*, to explain those events. He also falls into the same trap that she did: he concentrated his exposé on the evils of French Grand Orient Masonry, but deliberately ignored the mild-mannered apostasy of Anglo-Saxon Masonry.

Rushdoony and Webster were not the first critics of Grand Orient Masonry to fall into this trap. So did John Robison, whose *Proofs of a Conspiracy* (1798), along with Abbé Baruel's study (1797),

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110. By far the most impressive study of American elites is the little-known set by Philip H. Burch, *Elites in American History*, 3 vols. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981).

111. See R. J. Rushdoony, *The Nature of the Amen"can System* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1965] 1978), ch. 8: "The Conspiracy View of History."

112. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

113. Crane Brinton, *The Jacobins: An Essay in the New History* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1930] 1961).

114. Gary North, *Conspiracy: A Biblical View* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1986), ch. 6: "Court Historians."

was an early source of the story of the connections between secret societies and the French Revolution. Robison's was the first book to gain wide attention on this subject in the colonies. It launched a major anti-French and anti-Masonic movement, especially among Federalists in New England.<sup>115</sup> In a Postscript to the book, Robison wrote disparagingly of the "frippery," profligacy, and impiety of Grand Orient Masonry. In contrast, he said, Masonry "has been retained in Britain in its original form, simple and unadorned, and the lodges have remained scenes of innocent merriment, or meetings of Charity and Beneficence."<sup>116</sup>

Webster echoed Robison: "... British Masonry, by taking its stand on patriotism and respect for religion, necessarily tends to unite men of all classes and therefore offers a formidable bulwark against the forces of revolution. Any attacks on British Masonry as at present constituted and directed are therefore absolutely opposed to the interests of the country."<sup>117</sup> This was also the attitude of virtually all the American Revolution's leaders regarding colonial Masonry. Naively, she wrote on the next page: "In the opinion of M. Copin Albancelli, the abolition of the oath would go far to prevent penetration of British Masonry by the secret societies."<sup>118</sup> This was equally true of Grand Orient Masonry.

What she failed to grasp is this: *the heart of Masonry is its oath*. It was Masonry's top-down hierarchical system of bureaucratic authority, coupled with its self-vaedictory oath of secrecy, obedience, and loyalty, that provided Adam Weishaupt and his Illuminist conspirators with the organizational system and source of infiltration that they had sought. Weishaupt saw Masonry as an organizational structure that paralleled the tightly knit Jesuit Order that had trained him. No one's writings have made clearer Weishaupt's strategy of subversion than Mrs. Webster's.<sup>119</sup> What Mrs. Webster, like the patriotic colonists of 1776, failed to recognize is that Anglo-Saxon Masonry's universalist led to the subversion of Christian civiliza-

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115. Vernon Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminate* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1918] 1967).

116. John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy* (4th ed.; New York: George Forman, 1798), p. 394.

117. Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (Hawthorne, California: Omni Press, [1924] 1964), p. 293.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

119. *Ibid.*, ch. 9. See also Webster, *World Revolution: The Plot Against Civilization* (Hawthorne, California: Omni, [1921] 1964), ch. 1.

tion; French Masonry's hostility to absolutism led to open revolution. Subversion by stealth is no less a threat than subversion by revolution. Stealth in fact calls less attention to itself.<sup>120</sup>

### Conclusion

Colonial Masonry was one of the major components of the American Revolution, and especially of the Constitutional settlement. On this point, Rushdoony has remained silent, almost as if he has been afraid to raise the question.<sup>121</sup> Were he to pursue it, he would find his thesis regarding the Christian roots of the Constitution seriously threatened.

I have called the Convention the first stage of a *coup*. I have argued that Masonic influence was important both in terms of the philosophy of the delegates and their membership in the lodges. If the entire nation had been Masonic, then this would not have been a *coup*. But very few colonists were Masons. Prior to the Revolutionary War, there were about two hundred lodges in the thirteen colonies.<sup>122</sup> Their combined membership was somewhere between 1,500 and 5,000. Yet the total population of the nation was about 2.5 million. By 1800, there were perhaps 16,000 members.<sup>123</sup> Thus, to argue that the Constitution was essentially Masonic is necessarily to argue for a conspiracy.

Christians ratified it. They must have been ignorant about the long-term effects of their actions. They must have been unaware of the covenantal implications of their decision. The defenders of the document were able to appeal to a common body of opinion regarding religious freedom and the supposed tyranny of Christian creeds.<sup>124</sup>

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120. Cf. Margaret Patricia McCarran, *Fabianism in the Political Life of Britain, 1919-1933* (2nd ed.; Chicago: Heritage Foundation, 1954); Rose L. Martin, *Fabian Freeway: High Road to Socialism in the U. S. A., 1884-1966* (Belmont, Massachusetts: Western Islands, 1966). This was a popular condensation of McCarran's suppressed manuscript, "The Fabian Transmission Belt."

121. I have often wondered what is in Rushdoony's 1965 manuscript, "The Strategy of Subversion," which he never completed, or at least never submitted for publication.

122. Morse, *Freemasonry in the American Revolution*, p. 28.

123. William Preston Vaughn, *The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States, 1826-1843* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), p. 11. Vaughn estimates that there were only a hundred lodges at the outbreak of the Revolution.

124. This anti-creedalism was a heritage of the pietism and revivalism of the middle third of the eighteenth century. See Mead, "American Protestantism," John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson (eds.), *Religion in American History* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 164-65, 173-74.



They presented to the electorate a supposedly creedless covenant — there are no creedless covenants — devoid of any explicit religious oath. The Christians failed to recognize the true nature of the inescapable implicit oath: the sovereignty of the People, meaning the official sovereignty of five Supreme Court judges and the real sovereignty of a massive, faceless, Civil-Service protected bureaucracy. The manifestation of both these new sovereigns appeared within a single generation: the decisions of Federalist Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall and the advent of the Federalist Party-dominated civil service. 125

The conspirators were successful. In retrospect, Americans call them the Founding Fathers. They were surely founders. They sought to give Americans a new inheritance. What they did was to appropriate an older inheritance in the name of a new family of man.

One man had understood this in 1788. We do not know his name. He signed his essay ‘David,’ one of the few instances of any author in the debate over the ratification of the Constitution who used a biblical pseudonym. He was a resident of Connecticut, and his comments appeared in the March 7, 1788 issue of the *Massachusetts Gazette*. He reminded his readers that throughout history, civil governments had called upon God to defend them. People had long understood the corporate threat of the negative sanctions of God: “. . . it has been generally if not always a fundamental article that moral offences would be punished by the Deity, even if they escaped the laws of human society, unless satisfaction was made to the sovereign of the universe for the violation of good order.”<sup>126</sup> He also reminded them that the states had always had fast days and other “frequent and publick acknowledgments of our dependence upon the Deity.”<sup>127</sup> Speaking of Connecticut, he insisted: “Never did any people possess a more ardent love of liberty than the people of this state; yet that very love of liberty has induced them to adopt a religious test, which requires all publick officers to be of some Christian, protestant persuasion, and to abjure all foreign authority. Thus religion secures our independence as a nation, and attaches the citizens to our own government.”<sup>128</sup>

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125. Carl E. Prince, *The Federalists and the Origins of the Civil Service* (New York: New York University Press, 1977).

126. “Letter by David,” in *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, IV, p. 247.

127. *Idem*.

128. *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 247-48.

The problem, in “David’s” view, was that the new nation was about to imitate the government of Rhode Island, or as he referred to that province, “our next neighbors. ” As editor Herbert J. Storing comments, “This is one of the rare statements in the Federalist – Anti-Federalist debate concerning the widely agreed-upon political excesses of Rhode Island and her religious toleration.”<sup>129</sup> “David” foresaw that if the new nation adopted as its civil model the anti-covenantal, anti-oath contractualism of Rhode Island’s political theory, it would eventually become like Rhode Island. This thought disturbed him: the result would be a national civil government based strictly on force:

We have now seen what have been the principles generally adopted by mankind, and to what degree they have been adopted in our own state. Before we decide in favour of our practice, let us see what has been the success of those who have made no publick provision for religion. Unluckily we have only to consult our next neighbors. In consequence of this publick inattention they derive the vast benefit of being able to do whatever they please without any compunction. Taught from their infancy to ridicule our formality as the effect of hypocrisy, they have no principles of restraint but laws of their own making; and from such laws may Heaven defend us. If this is the success that attends leaving religion to shift wholly for itself, we shall be at no loss to determine, that it is not more difficult to build an elegant house without tools to work with, than it is to establish a durable government without the publick protection of religion. What the system is which is most proper for our circumstances will not take long to determine. It must be that which has adopted the purest moral principles, and which is interwoven in the laws and constitution of our country, and upon which are founded the habits of our people. Upon this foundation we have established a government of influence and opinion, and therefore secured by the affections of the people; and when this foundation is removed, a government of mere force must arise.<sup>130</sup>

Like John the Baptist, “David” was a voice crying in the wilderness. Or more to the point, he was a voice crying in the promised land warning people against departing into the wilderness: the Rhode Island wilderness. They did not heed his warning.

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129. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 249.

130. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 248.

It was Madison who came up with the remedy that ultimately prevailed, the United States Constitution, though it did not take quite the form that he initially hoped for, as he and his contemporaries groped their way toward it at the great Constitutional Convention of 1787. That convention, which Madison was instrumental in bringing about, did not conform to the ideal prescription for simulating an exercise of constituent power by the people, for the members were chosen by the state legislatures, not directly by popular vote. But even before the convention met, Madison recognized that it could achieve the objectives he had in mind for it only by appealing to a popular sovereignty not hitherto fully recognized, to the people of the United States as a whole. They alone could be thought to stand superior to the people of any single state. And what Madison had most directly in view was to overcome the deficiencies of the locally oriented representatives who sat in the state legislatures. To that end he envisioned a genuine national government, resting for its authority, not on the state governments and not even on the peoples of the several states considered separately, but on an American people, a people who constituted a separate and superior entity, capable of conveying to a national government an authority that would necessarily impinge on the authority of the state governments.

The full implications of what he was going to propose were not at first apparent even to Madison himself. As the English House of Commons in the 1640s had invented a sovereign people to overcome a sovereign king, Madison was inventing a sovereign American people to overcome the sovereign states.

Edmund S. Morgan (1988)\*

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\*Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 267.

## FROM COUP TO REVOLUTION

*The conduct of every popular assembly acting on oath, the strongest of religious ties, proves that individuals join without remorse in acts, against which their consciences would revolt if proposed to them under the like sanction, separately in their closets. When indeed Religion is kindled into enthusiasm, its force like that of other passions, is increased by the sympathy of a multitude. But enthusiasm is only a temporary state of religion, and while it lasts will hardly be seen with pleasure at the helm of Government. Besides as religion in its coolest state is not infallible, it may become a motive to oppression as well as a restraint from injustice.*

*James Madison (1787)*'

James Madison was an angry young man in the spring of 1787. (He was 36 years old.) He had been angry for a long time. Everything he saw — in the Articles of Confederation, in the state legislatures, in the economy — made him angry. He was determined that there would soon be a change. This change would have to be political and national. He set down his private thoughts in the weeks before the great convention that he had organized, a convention that he had begun planning at the meeting at Mount Vernon two years earlier.

He was also determined to achieve his long-term goal of separating Christianity from civil government — not just separating Church from State, but Christianity from civil government. He knew what had to be done in order to accomplish this goal: the severing of the binding power of Trinitarian religious oaths that were required of state officers in several states. Those oaths had to be circumvented.

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1. James Madison, "Vices of the Political System of the United States" (April 1787); reprinted in Marvin Myers (ed.), *The Mind of the Founder: Sources of the Political Thought of James Madison* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 90.

Yet many of the members of Congress who had authorized the convention had taken such oaths. Thus, Congress itself had to be circumvented, and then overthrown.

It was a tribute to Madison's political genius that he came up with a five-point tactical solution — tactics that matched the five-point model of all covenantalism, point for point.

*First*, the convention would be authorized by a naive and trusting Congress to make minor adjustments in the Articles. The old national government had been the creation of the states. The new one would be the creation of the People.

*Second*, under cover of an implicit oath-bound secrecy, this convention would from the opening gavel violate the instructions of the superior legislative agency, Congress, and propose the abolition of the Articles. This would break the hierarchical chain of command. The convention replaced Congress as the voice of authority. It became the representative of the People. This is why it was a *convention*.

*Third*, the nation's entire legal order would be reconstituted, including the prohibition of religious oaths at the federal level. New judicial boundaries assessing relative state and national power would be created. New internal judicial boundaries – federalism – would be created for the national government, most notably a nationally elected executive, which the Articles had lacked.

*Fourth*, the convention would appeal to a new sanctioning agency, the People. The will of the People would be voiced judicially in state ratifying conventions that Madison expected the nationalists (a political faction) to dominate.

*Fifth*, the ratifying conventions would authorize a new covenant. What was to have been an act of national covenant renewal (revision of the Articles) would become the cutting of a new national covenant. Subsequent changes (renewals) would be by amendment by Congress and voting by state legislatures, but the door was left open for another Constitutional convention, called by the state legislatures or by Congress, with subsequent ratification by either state legislatures or by state conventions (Article V).

### The Meaning of "Convention"

Edmund Morgan has seen the revolutionary implications of calling the Constitutional Convention a convention. This word had been invoked during the two previous transfers of executive sovereignty in English history. These two conventions marked temporary

replacements of Parliament in order to award new kings their lawful executive authority: Charles II in 1660 and William III in 1689.<sup>2</sup> Writing of these two English precedents, he observes:

But the idea of an elected convention that would express enduring popular will in fundamental constitutions superior to government was a viable way of making popular creation and limitation of government believable. It was fictional, for it ascribed to one set of elected representatives meeting in convention a more popular character, and consequently a greater authority, than every subsequent set of representatives meeting as a legislature. But it was not too fictional to be believed and not so literal as to endanger the effectiveness of government. It never came into use in England, but it was reinvented in the American Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The term “convention” was also used by the revolutionaries in France in September of 1792 to launch the radical phase of the Revolution. R. R. Palmer writes: “It was called a convention from the precedent of constitutional conventions in the United States.”<sup>4</sup> Under this Convention four months later, Louis XVI was beheaded. This was surely a transfer, of executive power. It led to the rise of a new executive: Robespierre. The Convention then wrote a new constitution, later called the stillborn constitution of 1793.<sup>5</sup> The centralization of power in Paris escalated under this new constitution. To accomplish this, the Jacobins imitated Madison’s tactic: they had the constitution ratified by plebiscite.<sup>6</sup>

Madison planned an initial *coup* – the convention’s immediate scrapping of the Articles — to be followed by a plebiscite. The plebiscite, as the voice of the People, would consolidate and sanction the *coup*. Thus, a bloodless revolution could be achieved — a revolution in national sovereignty, testified to by a change in judicial oaths. Had there been no alteration of the oath structure, there would have been no revolution.

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2. Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 94-95, 107-21.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

4. R.R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 20-21.

5. Leo Gershoy, *The French Revolution and Napoleon* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1933), p. 258.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

## Deliberately Creating Religious Factions

It is well known that Madison's greatest fear was his fear of the triumph of any particular political faction. *Federalist 10* is devoted to this theme. What Madison wanted was political neutrality: a world of politically impotent factions, only as strong as necessary to cancel out each other. In the 1787 "Vices" essay, he inserted this conclusion immediately following the paragraph of state religious oaths: "The great desideratum in Government is such a modification of the sovereignty as will render it sufficiently neutral between the different interests and factions, to controul one part of the society from invading the rights of another, and at the same time sufficiently controlled itself, from setting up an interest adverse to that of the whole Society."<sup>7</sup> This was his argument against Montesquieu, who had argued that republics can only function in small nations. On the contrary, argued Madison in *Federalist 10*, republics can insulate themselves best from the effects of faction by becoming so large that the factions offset themselves. To control the power of any given faction, we must create lots of factions. That he was arguing against Montesquieu in *Federalist 10* is generally recognized by historians of the *Federalist Papers*.

What has not been emphasized sufficiently by scholars is the denominational context of Madison's concerns about faction. It was religious faction that was on his mind from the beginning, just as it had been on the minds of the English Whigs for a century. Like the eighteenth-century Whigs' anticlerical dissent against the Tory-controlled Anglican Church and its political alliance with the crown, so Madison hoped from the very outbreak of the Revolution to find some way to break up state-established churches. His tactic was to create mutually offsetting denominational factions. He wanted the discontinuity of "sects," not the continuity of state-supported churches. He said this explicitly in *Federalist 51*: "In a free government, this security for civil rights must be the same as for religious rights. It consists in the one case in the multiplicity of interests, and in the other, in the multiplicity of sects. The degree of security in both cases will depend on the number of interests and sects; and this

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7. *Mind of the Founder*, p. 91.

8. Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (London: SCM Press, [1980] 1984; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 321-31.

may be presumed to depend on the extent of country and number of people comprehended under the same government.”<sup>9</sup> Epstein is correct: “It is clear from Madison’s previous versions of *Federalist* 10’s arguments that religious factions were his primary concern among opinionated parties.”<sup>10</sup> Epstein unfortunately did not follow through on this cogent observation.

### *Madison’s Fear of Trinitarian Society*

Madison expressed his concern over consolidated churches in a letter to William Bradford of Philadelphia in 1774:

If the Church of England had been the established and general religion in all the northern colonies as it has been among us here, and uninterrupted tranquility had prevailed throughout the continent, it is clear to me that slavery and subjection might and would have been gradually insinuated among us. Union of religious sentiments begets a surprising confidence, and ecclesiastical establishments tend to great ignorance and corruption; all of which facilitate the execution of mischievous projects.

But away with politics ! <sup>11</sup>

Away with politics? It is clear that politics was the context of his discussion of churches. Madison was *judicially* unconcerned about religion as such; he was very concerned about politics. In this sense, he was a consistent secular humanist, and has been correctly identified as such. <sup>12</sup> He railed against the “pride, ignorance, and knavery among the priesthood, and vice and wickedness among the laity.” He then said, “I want again to breathe your free air.”<sup>13</sup> In these sentiments, he revealed himself as a true independent Whig dissenter.

Several states had created established churches. Pennsylvania was an exception in 1774 — ‘free air.’ Within any one state, a single denomination could gain special powers or favors. Rather than merely oppose compulsory state financing of churches, as he did in 1779 and 1785<sup>14</sup> — a worthy and legitimate political goal, biblically

9. *The Federalist*, edited by Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), pp. 351-52.

10. David F. Epstein, *The Political Theory of The Federalist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 76.

11. Madison to Bradford (Jan. 24, 1774), *Mind of the Founder*, p. 3.

12. Robert A. Rutland, “James Madison’s Dream: A Secular Republic,” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 1983).

13. *Mind of the Founder*, p. 4.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 8



speaking, in order to reduce the economic dependence of the Church on the State — Madison wanted to remove from civil government all sources of political dependence on Christianity. In his *Memorial and Remonstrance* of 1785, written against the move of Governor Patrick Henry and the legislature to provide limited state aid to churches (not to any one church), " he wrote: "During almost fifteen centuries, has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy; ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution." <sup>16</sup> He continued in this vein:

What influence in fact have ecclesiastical establishments had on Civil Society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of Civil authority; in many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny; in no instance have they been seen the guardians of the liberties of the people. Rulers who wished to subvert the public liberty, may have found an established clergy convenient auxiliaries. A just government, instituted to secure & perpetuate it, needs them not. <sup>17</sup>

What is interesting is his appeal to the biblical principle of sanctuary or asylum, but dressed in new secular garb: "Because the proposed establishment is a departure from that generous policy, which, offering an asylum to the persecuted and oppressed of every Nation and Religion, promised a lustre to our country, and an accession to the number of its citizens."<sup>18</sup> He equated asylum with a religiously neutral State, ignoring the truth of the Old Testament's example: it is only when a civil government is explicitly God-honoring, and when it screens those from public office who refuse to place themselves under God's covenant oath as His servants, that the sanctuary can be maintained.

#### *Nature's God or Nature Is God?*

Madison called all state-established religion an Inquisition in

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15. Robert Douthat Meade, *Patrick Henry: Practical Revolutionary* (New York: Lipincott, 1969), p. 280. Henry had opposed the pre-Revolutionary Anglican Church's position which prohibited the free exercise of worship by other Christian faiths. As a lawyer, he had opposed Edmund Pendleton's active civil persecution of non-conforming churches. Norine Dickson Campbell, *Patrick Henry: Patriot and Statesman* (Old Greenwich, Connecticut: Devin-Adair, 1969), pp. 100-1.

16. *Mind of the Founder*, p. 12.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

18. *Idem.*

principle.<sup>19</sup> He ended his plea with a prayer to the officially nonspecific “Supreme Lawgiver of the Universe.”<sup>20</sup> He made it clear who this Lawgiver is: nature *itself*

Because, finally, “the equal right of every citizen to the free exercise of his Religion according to the dictates of conscience” is held by the same tenure with all our other rights. If we recur to its origin, it is equally the gift of nature; . . .<sup>21</sup>

A year and a half before the Constitutional Convention, Madison and Jefferson combined forces to get passed into law the now-famous Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty. The Act began with a summary of late eighteenth-century Arminian and Deistic theology: Whereas Almighty God bath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy author of our religion. . . .<sup>22</sup> This preamble is the longest sentence I have ever seen in a piece of legislation: approximately 600 words without a period. It represents the literary triumph of the semicolon. It includes this openly Newtonian sentiment regarding civil liberties: “. . . our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry; . . .”<sup>23</sup> The Act ends with a statement that those passing it into civil law recognized that the legislature has no power to bind future legislatures, so that no piece of legislation is irrevocable. Nevertheless, they appealed to permanent natural rights: “. . . the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall hereafter be passed to repeal the present, or to narrow its operation, such act will be an infringement of natural right . . .”<sup>24</sup> A year and a half later, the Framers established this provision for the national government. This was the capstone of Madison’s 15-year war against religious test oaths.

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19. *Idem.*

20. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

22. “Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty” (Jan. 16, 1786), in Henry Steele Commager (ed.), *Documents of American History* (6th ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958), p. 125.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

24. *Idem.*

## Political Unitarianism: Rousseau With Factions

By centralizing judicial power under a national government that prohibited the use of religious oaths as a test for holding national office, Madison correctly believed that this would break up the ability of any single denomination to influence local policy permanently in any question under the national government's ultimate jurisdiction. The doctrine of judicial review — first consistently promoted in the *Federalist* 25 — coupled with the abolition of religious test oaths, guaranteed the long-term eradication of the pre-Revolutionary War's concept of oath-created civil covenants under God. One judicial body — the Supreme Court — could override the oath-bound "factionalism" of the various state courts. As it has turned out, the Supreme Court can also overturn the decisions of state legislatures and the federal legislature, although this was not fully understood by the authors of the *Federalist*.

Understand what Madison assumed throughout: that religious factions — indeed, all factions — are an essentially surface phenomenon; they disturb an underlying national unity. In other words, *there* is an *inherent unity in man's political affairs apart from factions*. All that is needed to allow this underlying political unity to flourish is to expand the geographical boundaries of government in order to absorb (and therefore offset) more and more factions. Implicitly, this is a one-world impulse, a view not shared by the nationalistic Framers.

*Madison and Rousseau*

Such an outlook regarding factions makes Madison an implicit follower of Rousseau. It is this assumption of a unitary reality behind factions that undergirds Rousseau's theory of the General Will.<sup>26</sup> I am not arguing that Madison was a strict follower of Rousseau. Rousseau thought of all of life as political. Intermediary institutions are to have no influence in society at all because all of life is political. Man is a citizen and *only* a citizen. Madison was not politicized to this extent. But the two men were agreed in those cases where the actual exercise of political power was concerned.

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25. Writes political theorist Gottfried Dietze: "The *Federalist's* creation of the doctrine of judicial review cannot be evaluated too highly." Dietze, *The Federalist: A Classic on Federalism and Free Government* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960), p. 331.

26. Robert A. Nisbet, *Tradition and Revolt: Historical and Sociological Essays* (New York: Random House, 1968), ch. 1: "Rousseau and the Political Community."

Rousseau sought the abolition of all institutional barriers to the expression of the General Will; Madison wanted total decentralization for the factions and national centralization in a large nation. Rousseau wanted no factions; Madison wanted the multiplication and political trivialization of factions. The goal in each case was the same: the unification of national policy apart from any meaningful special-interest group pressures. By creating a national government that could act judicially directly on its citizens, the Constitution achieved this Rousseauvian goal. 27

In *Federalist 51*, Madison described his goal for the creation of this new political order, one which would protect the rights of minorities and also create ethically just government decisions. The key is the diffusion of interests: "Different "interests necessarily exist in different classes of citizens. If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure. There are but two methods of providing against this evil: The one by creating a will in the community independent of the majority, that is, of the society itself; the other by comprehending in the society so many separate descriptions of citizens, as will render an unjust combination of a majority of the whole, very improbable, if not impracticable."<sup>28</sup> The first approach is monarchy; the second is the U.S. Constitution.

His assumption was that there is justice available, and politicians can discover it; they need only to escape the "noise" of the competing factions. This enables politicians to render just decisions, to escape the tyranny of the majority by finding out what the "just" interests of society are. This was Rousseau's goal, too. The technique is different: not the suppression of interests but the privatizing of them, making them politically irrelevant. Rousseau's goal was the politicization of private interests. But both men believed that there is justice attainable through the overcoming of factions.

In this sense, Madison was as utopian and as messianic as Rousseau was; the difference lies in his approach. He was a man of the Scottish Enlightenment, a man in revolt against Presbyterianism; Rousseau was a man in revolt against political authoritarianism and the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Each man's system resembled his enemy's system. Madison wanted to overcome Presbyterianism by making the world socially Congregational and politics Unitarian;

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27. See Chapter 7, above: "The Convention's Judicial Revolution: pp. 387-92.

28. Madison, *Federalist 51*, *The Federalist*, p. 351.

Rousseau wanted to overcome Roman Catholicism by making the world socially Unitarian and politics salvational.

Ancient Rome sought Madison's political goal by inviting all conquered cities of the Empire to send their local gods into the pantheon; Madison told the conquered cities of the republic to keep their gods home and multiply them. He then emptied the pantheon. This confidence in what should be described as a Unitarian political settlement was based on some version of Newtonian or Ciceronian natural law. It was also the worldview of Freemasonry. Masons believed that the religious "factions" or traditions — creeds, liturgies, and unique institutional histories — are peripheral to the true spiritual unity of the Brotherhood under the Supreme Architect.

### *Factions for Stability's Sake*

The Constitution had not yet been ratified when the Antifederalists began organizing to capture Congress under the new Constitution. 29 Political factions and parties had already sprung up during the Revolutionary War era. 30 They developed even further during the Confederation period. 31 They became entrenched after 1788.32 Madison's dream was shattered before sunrise. There is universal agreement among historians: this Madisonian faith in a world of offsetting political factions was utopian in 1788, just as it would be utopian today. What few scholars are willing to say forthrightly is that the very presence of such a faith marks Madison as the most rationalistic of political philosophers. He paid no attention to the realities of politics in constructing the rationale for the Constitutional blueprint. He believed that the Constitution would actually balance real-world politics into oblivion. Patrick Henry's assessment of the man was on target: "a man of great acquirements, but too theoretical as a politician."<sup>33</sup> Madison and his peers were totally naive on this point,

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29. Merrill Jensen and Robert A. Becker (eds.), *The Documental History of the First Federal Elections, 1788-1790*, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976).

30. Stephen E. Patterson, *Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973). I find it ironic that the publisher is located in a city called Madison.

31. Jackson Turner Main, *Political Parties before the Constitution* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute for Early American History and Culture, published by the University of North Carolina Press, 1973).

32. Richard Ho fstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

33. Quoted by Meade, *Patrick Henry*, p. 435.

all historians agree. The historians tend to ignore the origins of his utopian faith. Madison, alone among the Framers, had “gone the distance” with Newtonianism. In doing so, he became an implicit internationalist. In his political philosophy, the intellectual ideal of a political world of Newtonian mechanisms and the rhetoric of Ciceronian natural law had fused with the Masonic ideal of a creed-overcoming brotherhood to produce a political world immune to men’s passions and interests. It was a stillborn ideal by 1788.

### *Shopkeepers’ Millennium*

By the time of the Convention, the Framers had begun to think commercially. Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* had begun to move within educated republican circles. The defenders of republican liberties had begun to recognize that the old Roman republican virtues, while laudable, were untrustworthy for building a modern nation or maintaining an old one successfully. What was needed, they steadily concluded, was something like Adam Smith’s promised shopkeepers’ millennium. Commerce would bind men together in a common effort. 35 Men in their private efforts would produce a good society.<sup>36</sup>

There was a fundamental difference between the Framers’ understanding of their self-appointed task and the Scottish Enlightenment rationalists’ vision of the competitive market order. Adam Ferguson’s observation summarizes the view of the social framework of the Scots: “Nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design.”<sup>37</sup> This was a self-consciously evolutionary worldview. The Framers, in sharp contrast, were motivated by the vision of the Great Architect. They believed that they could sit down together and write an historically unique document that would accomplish for the political order what Smith’s minimal legislation free market

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34. Louis I. Bredvold, *The Brave New World of the Enlightenment* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

35. Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founding Fathers and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), ch. 9.

36. Michael Lienesch, *New Order of the Ages: Time, the Constitution, and the Making of Modern American Political Thought* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 172-73.

37. Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767)*; cited by F. A. Hayek, “The Results of Human Action but not of Human Design”; in Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 96n.

promised to accomplish: greater freedom for individuals, greater wealth for nations. Ferguson, as an ordained Presbyterian minister, at least had a liberal Presbyterian view of God to undergird his social evolutionism. Smith had a more Deistic view of God as the foundation of morality. He spoke of “the all-seeing Judge of the world, whose eye can never be deceived, and whose judgments can never be perverted.”<sup>38</sup> He believed in final judgment, including negative sanctions. <sup>39</sup> He did not appeal to religion merely as an instrumental value for national goals. The Framers were much less clear about such supernatural supports, except insofar as widespread belief in such a God would strengthen social order.

With their faith in God as the cosmic Architect of the moral world, by tying the operations of a competitive market order to God’s ultimate design, the Scottish rationalists could offer the suggestion that men can increase their wealth by trimming away most legislation. The world works better when politicians remove themselves from the market. The designing schemes of politicians are the source of the poverty of nations. While Jefferson may have believed in such an economic world — Hamilton surely did not — it took a leap of faith to believe that a Convention could revolutionize civil government by designing a totally new experiment in national government without falling into the trap that the Scots said that politicians always fall into: not seeing the long-term consequences of their actions. The Scots believed in a Grand Architect, but they were of the opinion that a wise politician will leave God’s handiwork alone. The Framers had a different opinion, at least regarding civil government.

In modern times, the collapse of faith in any underlying unity apart from either coalitions or the outright abolition of rival factions has destroyed the Madisonian paradigm. Political Unitarianism has been replaced by relativism and the consequent cacophony of single-issue politics. The physical world of Newton has been replaced by the world of Heisenberg, at least at the subatomic level. The social world of Newtonianism has been replaced by theories of pluralism. The individual gods of the pluralist universe are unwilling to take “no” for an answer. Anarchy — that great fear of the Framers — has once again reared its many heads. They had relied on a Trinitarian society to preserve their Unitarian settlement, and the

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<sup>38</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis: Indiana: Liberty Classics, [1759] 1976), p. 228.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280-81.

result has been a war between anarchy's polytheism and tyranny's monotheism. To control the central government is to control access to the voice of authority. The new rule of democracy, exhibited best in polytheistic tribal Africa, is simple: one man, one vote, once.<sup>40</sup>

### A *Coup*

The idea that the Constitutional Convention was a kind of *coup* is not new. It had its origins in the pamphlets of the Antifederalists who opposed the Constitution. It became popular again in the years immediately preceding World War I, when Charles A. Beard published his famous *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913). The *coup* thesis was modified by Merrill Jensen in 1940 – *The Articles of Confederation* — and again in 1950, when he published *The New Nation*. Jensen, unlike Beard, believed that the period of the Articles was not really that critical a period, that the basic economy and political structure of the nation was sound. I am not entirely persuaded by all this; there were tariffs between states, although the tariff wars had begun to fade by 1787. There were debtors such as Daniel Shays who wanted the states to issue more paper money, and states ready to issue it. There was no executive in charge of the armed forces. There was no taxation power at the national level. But Jensen's assessment of the political division is accurate:

Politically the dominating fact of the Confederation Period was the struggle between two groups of leaders to shape the character of the states and judicial branches subservient to them. The members of the colonial aristocracy who became the Patriots, and new men who gained economic power during the Revolution deplored this fact, but they were unable to alter the state constitutions during the 1780's. Meanwhile they tried persistently to strengthen the central government. These men were the nationalists of the 1780's.

On the other hand the men who were the true federalists believed that the greatest gain of the Revolution was the independence of the several states and the creation of a central government subservient to them. The leaders of this group from the Declaration of Independence to the Convention of 1787 were Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, George Clinton, James Warren, Samuel Bryan, George Bryan, Elbridge Gerry, George Mason and a host of less well known but no less important men in each of the states. Most of these men believed, as a result of their ex-

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40. Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), ch. 15: "Caliban's Kingdoms."



perience with Great Britain before 1776 and of their reading of history, that the states could be best governed without the intervention of a powerful central government. <sup>41</sup>

### The Nationalists

Who were the nationalists? Men such as Robert Morris, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, James Wilson, James Madison, and John Jay. Of them, Jensen wrote: "Most of these men were by temperament or economic interest believers in executive and judicial rather than legislative control of state and central governments. . . ." <sup>42</sup> This is the key: *judicial and executive control*. They feared the popular majority. They feared the mob. They wanted to put restraints on the voters. The traditional view of their intention focuses on the political and the economic. They sought power and money, it is said. Thus, say their critics, the Constitutional Convention was a *coup d'état*.

Perhaps the most interesting suggestion was made by a pair of social scientists whose 1961 article focused on *age differences* among the leaders of both camps. This essay was almost immediately reprinted by the American Historical Association as one of the publications of its Service Center for Teachers of History. The two discovered that the Antifederalist leaders listed by Jensen were on average 10 to 12 years older than the nationalist leaders. Of the nationalists, Washington was the oldest when the war broke out; he was 44. Six were under 35, and four were in their twenties. Almost half the nationalists had their careers launched during the Revolution. This was especially true of Madison and Hamilton. The careers of the Antifederalists were state-centered. Their careers had begun before the Revolution. The two authors conclude that the energy of the nationalists had much to do with their perception of a true national interest, where they had first reached the limelight. They had the ambition and drive to overcome the less organized efforts of the Antifederalists. <sup>43</sup>

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41. Merrill Jensen, *The New Nation: A History of the United States During the Confederation, 1781-1789* (New York: Vintage, [1950] 1965), p. 424.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 425.

43. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Founding Fathers: Young Men of the Revolution* (Washington, D. C.: Service Center for Teachers of History, [1961] 1962), pp. 22-27.

*Paradigm Shifts and Political Organization*

The question remains: How did they do it? How did they organize the Convention, gain Congress' grudging acceptance, and then defeat the Antifederalists in the state ratifying conventions? There is reasonable evidence that Antifederalist sentiments were held by at least an equal number of citizens in 1788 as those favoring ratification.<sup>44</sup> Was the victory of the Federalists due to better organization or a better case philosophically? In my view, it was both.

In a paradigm shift, those who are creating the new paradigm constantly call to the attention of everyone the fact that the existing paradigm cannot solve major empirical, factual, real-world problems. The defenders of the older paradigm cling to the old system, vainly trying to show that the empirical problems raised by the critics are really not so threatening and are best solved by using the familiar terms of the older system. But as the incongruities between the new facts – meaning either newly observed, recently re-discovered, or newly emphasized facts — and the old paradigm continue to grow, and as younger men tire of putting up with these anomalies, the next generation of leaders shifts its allegiance to the newer paradigm.<sup>45</sup>

The young men of the Revolution produced this paradigm shift in 1787. The older political paradigm of the Trinitarian colonial charters was very nearly dead in 1787. Biblical covenantalism at the colony level had steadily been replaced after 1776 by halfway covenantalism; halfway national covenantalism at the national level was then unable to survive the onslaught of apostate national covenantalism.<sup>46</sup> The Federalists successfully portrayed the problems of the late 1780's as being of crisis-level proportions, an argument denied

44. Jackson Turner Main, *The Anti-Federalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-88* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History and Culture, published by the University of North Carolina Press, 1961), Conclusion.

45. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

46. I expect an analogous replay of this 200-year-old "battle of the paradigms" between those younger Christian scholars and activists who see clearly what I am getting at in this book and those traditional Christian pietists and natural law defenders whose theologically compromised system visibly died with Darwin and the Fourteenth Amendment, but who still cling to the Constitutional paradigm as if it were not secular humanist to its core. Among the older men, only those, such as the Covenantors, who never accepted the theological legitimacy of the Constitutional settlement, are likely to accept my critique of that settlement, and probably not many of even the Covenantors. They will see how radical my rejection is, even though I am a strategic gradualist. Halfway covenant thinking is still a way of life for Christians.

by the defenders of the Articles from 1787 until the present (e.g., Merrill Jensen). In the summer of 1787, most people agreed with the Antifederalists; there was little sense of national crisis, let alone an unsolvable national crisis. 47 The Framers wanted to “seize the moment,” even if they had to invent it in order to seize it. (Beware of a media-heralded crisis when there are quiet plans being laid for a Constitutional convention; a moment suitable for seizing maybe in the process of creation.)

There was a decided lack of leadership from Congress. Congress in some sense committed suicide by not calling a halt to the Convention when the rule of secrecy was imposed. Some members of Congress sat in the Convention; they did not rebel against the oath of secrecy. Clinton Rossiter did not exaggerate when he wrote: “Congress was already falling when the Framers gave it their famous push.”<sup>48</sup> The Articles had required unanimity for the ratification of any amendment (Article XIII); this provision had delivered the destiny of the national government into the hands of Rhode Island, and Congress knew it. They knew by 1787 that Article XIII was wrong when it stated that “the union shall be perpetual.” But they did not know how simultaneously to escape both Rhode Island and dissolution. There was a failure both of vision and nerve in Congress. The sanctioned representatives of real-world voters did not have sufficient confidence in their own offices to challenge the self-designated representatives of the metaphysical People. The magistrates of the halfway covenant could not muster sufficient drive to defend it successfully in the face of a more consistent apostate covenant. They had forgotten that God gives His covenanted men confidence only when they obey His revealed law.<sup>49</sup> Thus, they meekly acquiesced to the transfer of sovereignty that was going on illegally in their midst, with the connivance of some of their members. George Washington

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47. Jack P. Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 396.

48. Clinton Rossiter, *1787: The Grand Convention* (New York: Norton, [1966] 1987), p. 52.

49. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Josh. 1:8-9).

in effect stared them down from Philadelphia.<sup>50</sup>

The voters had not been willing to require of their national representatives what most states required of state representatives: an oath of allegiance to God and His Bible. The voters had been embarrassed by God. The Framers were not embarrassed by Him; they simply prohibited any public oath to Him in their new covenant document. They regarded Him as some sort of senile Uncle who could be trotted out on holidays, counted on to make a toast or two — judicially non-binding, of course — and then be sent back to His retirement home. Like the Philistine when they had gained military power in Israel, the Framers did not take God seriously enough to be embarrassed by His presence.

The Antifederalists were placed in the unenviable position of saying that there was a need for reform, but not a great need, and not a great reform. Also, they could not show how these reforms could be achieved legally, given the limitations imposed by the Articles. Limited reform on the basis of traditional foundations is always a difficult position to defend after decades of philosophical compromise with those who are pressing for ever-greater social change in terms of ever-greater philosophical consistency. The Antifederalists learned the truth of politics: “You can’t beat something consistent if you don’t offer anything specific.”

Philosophically and theologically, the Antifederalists could not and did not match the Federalists with respect to faithful conformity to the ‘spirit of the age.’ They could not successfully appeal to the great overarching principle of Newtonian rational coherence, for such coherence pointed to universalist. Newton’s laws applied to the whole universe, even including Rhode Island. In an age of growing universalist, the Antifederalists clung to particularism and localism.

For example, they could not deal politically with the inter-colonial economic problems that the Articles had not solved. Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* defended the world of free trade and open borders, but this is always a difficult idea to sell to tax-hungry politicians and

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50. Writes McDonald: “In an age in which most Americans stood about five feet six and measured nearly three-fourths of that around the waist, Washington stood six feet and had broad, powerful shoulders and slim hips; and he had learned the trick, when men said something beyond his ken, of looking at them in a way that made them feel irreverent or even stupid.” Forrest McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776-1790* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, [1965] 1979), p. 262.

local producers who face competition from imports. Smith's view, like that of Scottish rationalism generally, was "systems-oriented: intellectual y speaking. It was mechanical rather than organic. Smith had built a towering intellectual system in defense of free trade. He showed what should be done — the abolition of political restraints on trade — but he did not show how a confederation might achieve this by political means. The Federalists did: no more internal tariffs, no more provincial fiat money, no more begging for financial support. A national central government would compel economic decentralization.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the Antifederalists could not beat something with nothing, i.e., demonstrate publicly how they could solve the fundamental weaknesses politically with "more of the same."

The Federalists could appeal to the need for a new union that would abolish these internal restraints on trade. This was the nature of Madison's vision: political centralization for the sake of economic liberty and decentralization. Hamilton had other ideas, as he proved when he was Secretary of the Treasury, but this was not known to his colleagues in 1789. Madison even went so far as to hope for an international economic decentralization based on American force. He thought that a strong central government could coerce England into opening up the West Indian ports to U.S. commerce. America would compel the world to accept free trade.<sup>52</sup> This was very far from the vision of the Antifederalists.

### *A Clean Break*

The Federalists also had made a nearly clean break with the half-way covenant Articles. (It took the Fourteenth Amendment to complete it.) The half-way covenant of the Articles was neither openly Christian nor openly secular. Colonial social and political thinkers had steadily abandoned biblical covenantalism for well over a century. The lawyers had won political control even in formerly Puritan New England; the preachers had grown muddled in offering specifics to colonial political leaders after the restoration of Charles 11 in

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51. Free market economist Ludwig von Mises argued the same way with respect to international government: *Omnipotent Government: The Rise of the Total State and Total War* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1944), pp. 243-45. If the barriers to trade can be accomplished individually, nation by nation, fine (what the state politicians could not understand or attain in 1786); if not, then world government is an alternative. Mises was being faithful to the vision of the Framers, but at the next level up.

52. Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, p. 101.

1660, and especially after King Philip's War (the Indian war) in 1675-76.<sup>53</sup> Step by step, Christians had compromised with Newtonianism and Deism, at least with respect to social theory. They had also been educated in the pagan classics. The Antifederalists referred in their pamphlets to ancient Rome, not ancient Israel. They had no principle of transcendence, no voice of authority. The Federalists did: the voice of the sovereign People.

But it was not merely the intellectual case for apostate covenantalism that won the day; traditionalism always dies hard. It was also a question of better political organization. If the Federalists were better organized, as they surely were,<sup>54</sup> then what was the basis of this better organization? What was the source of the cooperation these leaders received from so many others in the state conventions? Where did the common vision come from? These events were not random. Politics is not impersonal either — not the product of “vast social forces.” The issues of politics are organizational.

What I argue is very different from what appears in any textbook on U.S. history. I argue that 1787 was indeed a *coup d'état*. But this *coup* had a side to it that the history books refuse to mention: *religion*. The Constitutional Convention was a successful attempt by a small group of men whose most eloquent leaders had long-since rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. The voters were Christians; the Convention's leaders were what two decades later would be called Unitarians. They had imbibed their theology not from the creeds of the nation's churches but from dissenting Whig political theory — Newtonian to the core — and from the secret rites of the Masonic lodges to which many of them belonged, also Newtonian to the core. What the Constitutional Convention was all about was this: a *national political transformation by a group of men who really believed in secrecy and oaths*. That some of them had taken Masonic self-valedictory oaths is at least worth considering when it comes to assessing their personal motivations.

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53. Gary North, *Puritan Economic Experiments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1974] 1989), pp. 35-38; 54-55. For a more detailed study, see North, “From Medieval Economics to Indecisive Pietism: Second-Generation Preaching in New England, 1661 -1690,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, VI (Summer 1979); pp. 136-74; North, “From Covenant to Contract: Pietism and Secularism in Puritan New England, 1691 -1720,” *ibid.*, VI (Winter 1979-80), pp. 155-94.

54. This is not to say that the Antifederalists were disorganized. That myth has been laid to rest by Steven R. Boyd: *The Politics of Opposition: Antifederalists and the Acceptance of the Constitution* (Milwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1979).

### State Constitutions

The colonies' state constitutions were explicitly religious. This was especially true of the New England constitutions. The old Puritan rigor was still visible at the outbreak of the Revolution. Vermont's 1777 constitution begins with the natural rights of man (Section I), goes to a defense of private property (Section II), and then sets forth the right of religious conscience, "regulated by the word of GOD. . . ." There is full religious freedom for anyone to worship any way he chooses, *just so long as he is a protestant*: ". . . nor can any man who professes the protestant religion, be justly deprived or abridged of any civil right, as a citizen, on account of his religious sentiment. . . ." The public authorities have no authorization to interfere with people's rights of conscience; "nevertheless, every sect or denomination of people ought to observe the Sabbath, or the Lord's day, and keep up, and support, some sort of religious worship, which to them shall seem most agreeable to the revealed will of GOD."<sup>55</sup> (Not reproduced in this American Bar Association compilation are the crucially important clauses regarding the required confessional oath administered to state officers, such as those I have reproduced in Chapter 7 under the section, "Before the Constitution.")

The 1780 Massachusetts constitution and the 1784 New Hampshire constitution had almost identical passages requiring public worship. Section I of the Massachusetts document affirms that "All men are born free and equal, and have natural, essential, and unalienable rights," and then lists men's lives, liberties, and property ownership. Section II says: "It is the right as well as the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the SUPREME BEING, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe." This sounds universalistic and even Masonic. But Section III establishes the right of the state to support the building of churches and the payment of ministers' salaries. All the denominations were placed on equal status. Section III ends with these words: "And every denomination of Christians, demeaning themselves peaceably, and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law. . . ."<sup>56</sup> The same religious provisions are found in Sections I-VI of the New Hampshire constitution, and Section VI repeats

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55. Richard L. Perry and John C. Coeper, *The Sources of Our Liberties* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1952), p. 365.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 375.

verbatim the statement from Massachusetts' constitution: "And every denomination of Christians. . . ." <sup>57</sup> In short, these state commonwealths were explicitly designated as Christian.

The Virginia constitution of 1776 was less specific. It affirmed freedom of conscience, and it recommended "Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other."<sup>58</sup> Virginia had a state-supported church. Pennsylvania's 1776 constitution specified that a man's civil rights could not be abridged if he "acknowledges the being of a God."<sup>59</sup> The test oath had been removed through the influence of Franklin.<sup>60</sup>

Delaware in 1776 was more theologically explicit. "That all persons professing the Christian religion ought forever to enjoy equal rights and privileges in this state, unless, under color of religion, any man disturb the peace, the happiness or safety of society."<sup>61</sup> Maryland's 1776 constitution was similar to Delaware's: ". . . all persons, professing the Christian religion, are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty. . . ." Furthermore, "the Legislature may, in their discretion, lay a general and equal tax, for the support of the Christian religion. . . ." <sup>62</sup> North Carolina simply affirmed liberty of conscience.<sup>63</sup> Most states had special confessional oaths for state officials.

### The Short-Circuiting of the State Constitutions

The state governments of most of the colonies – always excluding Rhode Island – combined legitimate Christian oaths and illegitimate state-financed churches. (It is one of the great ironies of American history that Rhode Island served as the religious model of the Constitutional settlement, yet it was this state's intransigence after 1783 in the area of commercial policy and its wave of paper money inflation in the mid-1780's that persuaded the Framers to replace the Articles. Rhode Island refused to ratify the Constitution until 1790. It was the outcast of America in the 1780's as surely as it had been the

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57. *Ibid.*, p. 383.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 329.

60. Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Arno Press, [1888] 1972), p. 22.

61. Perry and Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 356.



outcast of Puritan New England in the 1640's and 1650's.)<sup>64</sup> The people of the colonial era recognized that an oath to God and an affirmation of the authority of the Bible were basic to the preservation of Christian social order, political freedom, and economic prosperity.

What the colonists did not fully understand is that the God-given function of civil government is inherently negative: to impose sanctions against public evil. It is not the function of civil government to use coercively obtained tax money in order to promote supposedly positive causes. By using tax revenues to finance specific denominations, the state governments created ecclesiastical monopolies. This was a catastrophic error — one shared by the whole Western world from the beginning of the West. This error could have been solved by the Constitution's refusal to subsidize churches with direct economic grants of any kind; instead, the Constitution created a secular humanist, anti-Christian republic in the name of religious freedom.

It was the legitimate hostile reaction of the various non-established churches to this misuse of tax revenues that created the alliance between the Deists-Masons and the dissenting churches. Church historian Sidney Mead has described this situation well: ". . . the struggles for religious freedom during the last quarter of the eighteenth century provided the kind of practical issue on which rationalists and sectarian-pietists could and did unite, in spite of underlying theological differences, in opposition to 'right wing' traditionalists."<sup>65</sup> The creation of 'positive' economic support of specified ecclesiastical groups led politically to the Constitutional destruction of the explicitly Trinitarian judicial foundations of the United States. The federal example reminded men that national leaders were not bound by any Trinitarian oath. Why should state officers be similarly bound? The symbol of the oath was real; the covenantal example could not be ignored. The Deists who wrote this provision into the Co"nstitution fully understood this; their opponents were not equally alert. A century of Newtonian rationalism and an ancient

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64. Irwin H. Polishook, *Rhode Island and the Union, 1774-1795* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969). Cf. Patrick T. Conley, 'First in War, Last in Peace: Rhode Island and the Constitution, 1786-1790,' in Patrick T. Conley and John P. Kaminski (eds.), *The Constitution and the States: The Role of the Original Thirteen in the Framing of the Federal Constitution* (Madison, Wisconsin: Madison House, 1988, Ch. 13.

65. Sidney Mead, 'American Protestantism During the Revolutionary Epoch,' in *Religion in American History*, edited by John M. Mulder and John F. Wilson (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 165-66.

heritage of Stoic natural law theory had blinded them to the importance and inescapable nature of covenantal civil oaths as surely as they have blinded Professors Nell, Hatch, and Marsden.<sup>66</sup>

The Framers who were the dominant voices at the Constitutional Convention had a definite goal: to make illegal at the national level the imposition of Rushdoony's thesis that theocracy is judicially mandatory and there must not be toleration of non-Christian religions: "The modern concept of total toleration is not a valid legal principle but an advocacy of anarchism. Shall all religions be tolerated? But, as we have seen, every religion is a concept of law-order. Total toleration means total permissiveness for every kind of practice: idolatry, adultery, cannibalism, human sacrifice, perversion, and all things else. Such total toleration is neither possible nor desirable. . . . And for a law-order to forsake its self-protection is both wicked and suicidal. *To tolerate subversion is itself a subversive activity.*"<sup>67</sup> Tolerating Christianity's subversion: it would be difficult to produce a more accurate yet succinct description from a biblical point of view of the result of the Constitutional Convention.

It was the explicitly Christian character of state constitutions that became the target of the delegates in Philadelphia.

### Franklin's Theology of Union

Benjamin Franklin has been regarded as a conservative Deist. He was not. When he died, a printed document was found in his pocket. He had carried it around with him for many years: "Articles of Belief." It declared his faith in the plurality of worlds, a widely held Renaissance doctrine.<sup>68</sup> The universe is filled with many suns like ours, and many worlds like ours, the document said. It also announced his idea that the "INFINITE has created many beings or Gods, vastly superior to Man. . . . It may be that these created Gods are immortal; . . . Howbeit, I conceive that each of these is exceeding wise and good, and very powerful; and that Each has made for himself one glorious Sun, attended with a beautiful and admirable System of Planets. It is that particular Wise and good God, who is the author and owner of our System, that I propose for the

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66. See Chapter 5, above.

67. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), p. 89.

68. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (New York: Harper & Row, [1936] 1965), ch. 4.

object of my praise and adoration.”<sup>69</sup> His religion was semi-deistic and proto-Mormon. He was also a member of England’s notorious and debauched Hell Fire Club. 70

In 1734, he was appointed as provincial Masonic Grand Master for the Province of Pennsylvania. <sup>71</sup> He had been seeking a high Masonic position for over a year.

In 1754, Franklin had worked to create a national government. This took place at the Albany Convention. This was the first attempt at colonial national union. Some two dozen delegates from seven states attended. The goal was to create a defense system against the French who were challenging British expansion in the Ohio Valley. A committee of five men was appointed to draw up a Plan of Union, and three were Masons: Hutchinson of Massachusetts, Franklin, and Hopkins of Rhode island. Franklin on May 9, 1754, printed in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* a woodcut of a snake in eight pieces, labeled ‘Join or Die.’ Then he submitted his Plan of Union. Writes Carter:

The plan provides for a president-general to be appointed by the Crown, and for a grand council to be elected by the colonial assemblies — the identical plan of organization of American Provincial Grand Lodges at that time. . . . Franklin left no hint that he used the constitution of Freemasonry as a model for his Albany Plan but, since he had published *Anderson’s Constitutions* in 1734 and had served as Grand Master of the Provincial Lodge of Pennsylvania also in 1734, there can be no doubt that he was familiar with the Masonic constitution. The fact that he called the council of the representatives of the several colonies a grand council and that the council of the representatives of Masonic lodges is called a Grand Lodge is circumstantial evidence that Masonry was influencing his thinking. 72

### Anderson’s Constitutions

What was Anderson’s *Constitutions*? This was the organizational handbook of English “speculative Freemasonry,” or at least of the branch that became known as the “Moderns.” (A rival Masonic group, formed in 1751, called themselves the “Ancients” or “Antients.”)

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69. Bernard Fay, *Revolution and Freemasonry, 1680-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), pp. 160-61.

70. Daniel P. Mannix, *The Hell Fire Club* (New York: Ballantine, 1959).

71. Melvin M. Johnson, *The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America* (New York: Doran, 1924), ch. 8.

72. James D. Carter, *Masonry in Texas: Background, History, and Influence to 1846* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955), pp. 130-31.

Their organization manual, the *Ahiman Rezon*, was heavily dependent on Anderson's. ) What was originally known as speculative Freemasonry, as distinguished from the economic guild of professional masons, grew out of the early masons' guilds. Several masons' guilds formed the Premier Grand Lodge of London in 1717.<sup>73</sup> Non-masons joined it and immediately captured it. Within three years, the Grand Lodge became the heart of English speculative Masonry, meaning modern Freemasonry.

James Anderson, a Presbyterian clergyman and genealogist,<sup>74</sup> joined the Premier Grand Lodge in 1720.<sup>75</sup> He was also a Fellow of the Royal Society, the prestigious scientific society, as was his Masonic colleague, Church of England clergyman and scientist John Desaguliers. Desaguliers had been hand-picked by Newton to be the first "experimental scientist" of the Royal Society. The latter became the first paid public lecturer in science history. He had been inducted into the Society in 1714. He and Anderson became the links between Newton, the Royal Society, and Freemasonry.

It should not be supposed that they were not self-conscious agents. The Royal Society was not simply some loose association of scientists and philosophers in this era. Newton ran the Royal Society with an iron glove. Writes his biographer, Christiansen: "Newton protected his disciples, advanced their careers, and, in return, demanded and received total obedience almost to a man."<sup>76</sup> Dr. Lipson concurs: "Newton, whose *Philosophise Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1686)<sup>77</sup> epitomized the mathematical work of that century, lived long enough to welcome Anderson and Desaguliers to the fellowship of the Royal Society. Thus the great intellectual revolution of the preceding century was telescoped in the Royal Society into the work of two generations: progenitors and heirs. Among their heirs were the founders of Freemasonry."<sup>78</sup> Anderson wrote the supposedly anonymous *Constitutions of Free Ma-sons* in 1723.

Freemasonry in London has been traced back by Masonic historians to at least the year 1620. There is a reference from a 1665 Com-

73. Dorothy Ann Lipson, *Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 14.

74. *Idem.*

75. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

76. Gale E. Christiansen, In *the Presence of the Creator: Isaac Newton and His Times* (New York: Free Press, 1984), p. 481.

77. Published in 1687.

78. Lipson, *Federalist Connecticut*, p. 15.

pany record to the *Old Charges*, or Gothic Constitutions, also known as *The Book of the Constitutions of the Accepted Masons*.<sup>79</sup> A major change had begun to take place by the time of the centralization of the lodges in 1717, as Masonic historian Joseph Fort Newton points out. In the *Old Charges* we read: "The first charge is this, that you be true to God and Holy Church and use no error or heresy." J. F. Newton instructs his readers to "Hear now the charge of 1723," meaning Anderson's *Constitutions*. On this point, I agree with Newton: pay close attention. Here is Anderson's charge:

A Mason is obliged by his Tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious Libertine. But though in ancient times Masons were charged in every country to be of the religion of that country or nation, whatever it was, yet it is now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves: that is, to be Good men and True, or Men of Honor and Honesty, by whatever Denomination or Persuasion they maybe distinguished; whereby Masonry becomes the Centre of Union and the Means of conciliating true Friendship amen'g persons that must have remained at a perpetual distance. 80

The universalist of the new position is obvious. This is an institutional manifestation of the ecumenical impulse of Newtonianism, which was Socinian and monotheistic. God the Architect was necessary to hold the original Newtonian system together; a belief in god the Architect was also necessary to hold Freemasonry together. But, like the god of Newton, this god of Freemasonry was not marked by attributes that are invisible to covenant-breaking rational men, unlike the God of the Bible. Thus, this Masonic god, universal in nature, and manifest only through nature, is to replace men's less universal, less rational, less mathematical, Trinitarian God.

We have in Masonry a manifestation of the Whig ideal of a world in which there is denominational equality through denominational irrelevance; simultaneously, we have an incarnation of the Tory ideal of a world devoid of powerful centrifugal religious forces that lead to revolution and chaos. There is an institutional fusion of the

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79. Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Freemason* (Richmond, Virginia: Macoy, [1914] 1951), p. 154.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 165. A more complete, though not fully complete, version of Anderson's *Constitutions* is reprinted as an appendix in Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 279-300.

one and the many, with unity provided by the common creed regarding an Architectural deity manifested only in his physical handicraft – the god of Newton – and with diversity provided by the personally legitimate but **Masonically** irrelevant creeds of the members.

This is the theological foundation of political pluralism. It is the revival of the Roman pantheon. All that is missing is political power. That, however, could be taken care of through careful organization outside the **official** meetings of the fraternity. Like Christians who conducted worship services generally devoid of politics, but who then met together for civic purposes after the worship service had formally ended, so were the Masons.

What must be clearly understood is that these men agreed with the sentiments articulated by William Blackstone in his comments on the distinction between natural law and **biblical** revelation. It is man's ability to perceive clearly the stipulations of the civil law that supposedly determines which of the two laws is to be regarded as dominant for society.<sup>81</sup> Blackstone said that biblical revelation is clearer to men, but if he really believed this, then he was John the Baptist crying in the eighteenth century's Enlightenment wilderness. No one, especially the Framers, took him seriously on this point.

### The Universalist of Masonry

The Christian Church is trans-historical. It carries forward into eternity. It is one in **Jesus Christ**. It is therefore international. But it has, to the present, failed to manifest organizationally both its internationalism and a unified system of courts. Its disputes have repeatedly led to bloodshed. By the eighteenth century, these religious wars seemed unavoidable unless there was a change in national covenants; therefore, a handful of enlightened men sought to base the civil order on something other than the Christian religion.

There were precedents for this Enlightenment hope. The development of economic science in the late seventeenth century was a self-conscious attempt to produce a scientific inquiry of society without any appeal to religion.<sup>82</sup> A growing minority of educated men had begun a quest for principles of social order beyond the disputes of revealed religion. So had advocates of a new paganism. Writes Jacob: "In the early eighteenth century, the return to paganism,

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81. See Chapter 6, above, pp. 321-23.

82. William Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1963).

especially of an indigenous variety, seemed to offer a solution to the religious problem bequeathed by the English Revolution. Radicals in the 1690s who desired a republican version of the constitution, true religious toleration, social reform, a Parliament ruled by gentlemen in the interest of the people, had to recognise that those goals had been rejected in 1660 at the Restoration."<sup>83</sup> They asked themselves: Why had the two English Revolutions failed? Religious conflict, concluded a radical minority. They concluded that what was needed was a program of reform based on a new 'religious consensus, in a civil and universal religion. . . . "<sup>84</sup> Freemasonry was the eighteenth-century's institutional culmination of this quest. 85

Masonry's principles, like its organizational structure, were "portable," to use Dr. Lipson's term. While I understand that readers have a tendency to skip over lengthy block quotations, I strongly suggest that this temptation be resisted at this point. Writes Dr. Lipson:

The first problem on which Freemasonry worked was how a society with an established church could accommodate both a growing religious diversity and the rationalistic universalist that had attended the growth of the new sciences. The Masonic response was to provide a secret (arcane) pseudo-religion by developing an elaborate mythology and system of rituals for teaching moral values that Masons claimed were universal. The leaders were not unaware of the parallels of Masonry and religion. Churches, however, required uniformity over a wide range of beliefs and values, from the immediate to the ultimate, while Masonry only required fidelity to a generally accepted system of moral values related to daily life. As [Wellins] Calcott reminded his English and American readers [in 1769 and 1772, respectively], in the implicit anticlericalism that pervaded Freemasonic literature, the church's interpretation of history was one of "enmity and cruelty." Masonry, on the other hand, was a system of morality based on the will of God and "discoverable to us by the light of reason without the assistance of revelation." According to the *Constitutions*, a Mason was obliged "to obey the Moral law," or the Religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is to be *good Men and true*, or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be dis-

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83. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 154.

84. *Ibid.*, p.155.

85. On the connections of Commonwealthman John Toland's pantheism, republicanism, and Freemasonry, see Jacob, *ibid.*, p. 153. This connection has been denied – unconvincingly, in my view – by Roger L. Emerson, "Latitudinarianism and the English Deists," in J. A. Leo LeMay (ed. ), *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment* (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press, 1987), pp. 43-44.

tinguished.” Masonry was designed to encompass all religions, or as the Ancients put it, to be “the universal religion or the religion of nature ‘as’ the Cement which unites men of the most different Principles into one Sacred Band.”. . . Masonry expressed another kind of universalist, which was not religious but humanistic.<sup>86</sup>

Masonry is a rival religion to Christianity: universalist in scope, rationalist in its ethics, and internationalist in its institutional goal.

*Silent Majority, Secret Minority*

I argue in this book that most Americans were Christians in the eighteenth century. During the American Revolution, especially through army Masonic lodges, a subtle change took place. A small but significant minority within the army adopted rival oaths to those of their churches. This new allegiance fused with a long tradition of republican ideology that had been devised and promoted by the English “Commonwealthmen,” whose theological commitment was not always orthodox. This minority of freethinkers, or at least seriously compromised Christians, in the armed forces led to a political transformation of the nation, especially in top national leadership positions. A minority could later subvert the American Christian commonwealth, just as a minority did in revolutionary Europe. The year 1789 was the testamentary year for both revolutions. This process of subversion had been going on for almost a century, as Jacob says, referring to the career of John Toland, a pantheist and major figure of the “Commonwealthmen”:

Most significantly, English radicals like Toland played an essential role in transmitting that originally English form of social behaviour on to the Continent, decades before that process began in earnest. They laid roots that flourished in the period after 1730 when official Freemasonry, that is Masonic lodges affiliated with the Grand Lodge of London, took hold in various European cities and towns. It now seems increasingly clear that from its earliest formation as an international culture, the social world of the Radical Enlightenment, although not necessarily all of its adherents, was Masonic. This milieu reveals a living historical culture where the connections between religion, natural philosophy and politics take on a human reality, where ideas about nature, social equality, the new science, as well as the republican ideal produced a new kind of European (few in number to be sure) who worshiped the natural world in a new temple and who found in

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86. Lipson, *Freemasonry in Federalist Connecticut*, pp. 37-38



the brotherhood of the lodge a private, secret expression of an egalitarianism that in the course of the eighteenth century became, and remains to this day, so vital to the programme and ideals of Western reformers. In purely demographic terms, during the eighteenth century the Enlightenment had few adherents, and the Radical Enlightenment had still fewer. But in assessing the force or validity of reforming ideals, then or now, it would be most discouraging to rest one's faith or programme on a mathematical reckoning.<sup>87</sup>

By the outbreak of the Revolution, there were about 200 lodges in the colonies.<sup>88</sup> That was a significant number for any inter-colonial association in the 1770's. By the time of the Constitutional Convention, Freemasonry had become the major inter-colonial organization, rivalled only by the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church.<sup>89</sup>

### Rival Covenant

Masonry has always been a rival institution to the Church, despite the fact that church members frequently belong to lodges. Masonry is self-consciously a parallel covenant institution. For example, Matthew 18:20 reads: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The following prayer is attached to the American edition of the *Ahiman Rezon*:

Most high and glorious Lord God, thou art the great architect of heaven and earth, who art the giver of all good gifts and graces, and hast promised that when two or three are gathered together in thy name, thou wilt be in the midst of them: In thy name we assemble and meet together, most humbly beseeching thee to bless us in all our undertakings, that we may know and serve thee aright, that all our doings may tend to thy glory and the salvation of our souls. 90

If this parallelism is the case, then Masonry ought to possess the five-point covenant structure. It does. This was as true in the eighteenth-century as it is today.

#### 1. Transcendence/Presence

First, Masonry began with the doctrine of the transcendent

87. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 156.

88. Sidney Morse, *Freemasonry in the American Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: Masonic Service Association of the United States, 1924), p. 28.

89. Baigent and Leigh, *Temple and Lodge*, p. 260.

90. *Ahiman Rezon Abridged and Digested* (Philadelphia: Hall & Sellers, 1783), pp. 111-12. Published for the Grand Lodge of Philadelphia.

Grand Architect. This Architect, however, was not the creedal God of the Bible, and therefore not the covenantally divisive God of either the Puritans or the Anglicans. This universalist or ecumenism can be seen clearly in the *Ahiman Rezon*, the constitutional handbook of Ancient Masonry.

The world's GREAT ARCHITECT is our *supreme Master*; and the unerring rule he has given us, is that by which we work; religious disputes are never suffered within the Lodge; for, as Masons, we only pursue the universal religion, or the religion of nature. This is the centre which unites the most different principles in one sacred band, and brings together those who were most distant from one another.<sup>91</sup>

This God was a kind of Kantian “limiting concept” that undergirded the phenomenal realm of cause and effect. This God was a useful hypothesis. He was as impersonal as a mathematical formula. In fact, the Masons regarded the knowledge of God in man to be essentially the same as the knowledge of geometry.<sup>92</sup> God's manifestation in history is in His Masonic brotherhood. Masons in fellowship manifest his presence. This quest for God's presence is why the pantheists could so easily capture existing Masonic lodges and adapt them for their own purposes.

## 2. Hierarchy/Representation

Second, the theory of Masonic hierarchy was very much like that of Puritan congregationalism: a structured assembly of moral equals with ranks in terms of ordination and function. A commoner outside the Masonic hall could be elected Grand Master inside. Buck privates could rule generals. There was a hierarchy, but it was officially egalitarian. It was officially open to all men, not just the elite. More to the point, Masonry was a means by which average men could come into contact with the rich and famous. Unlike real-world churches, which officially possess an egalitarian worldview regarding its members, but whose members seldom display it, Masonry appeared to embody this originally Christian ideal, expounded in the Epistle of James:

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91. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.

92. [James Anderson], *The Constitutions of Free-Masons*, p. 7. Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1734.

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors (James 2 :1-9).

Masonry was like the early Church in another respect. Like the Church, Masons were forbidden to take other Masons to civil court until the lodge had heard the dispute. The early Church's prohibition was total (I Cor. 6); it was forbidden to take a brother into civil court. The Masons' prohibition was partial; it was forbidden until the Masonic court appeals had been exhausted.<sup>93</sup>

The fact is, however, that the "craft" was divided by the mid-eighteenth century between "Ancients" (lodges started a generation after the formation of London's Grand Lodge in 1717) and "Moderns" (which the Grand Lodge called itself). Masonic historian Sidney Morse says that the 'Ancients' were often lodges of sea-faring men.' These men were excluded from membership in the Grand Lodge-connected lodges in Boston and Philadelphia because of their inferior social status, so they started lodges of their own. <sup>94</sup> The St. Andrews lodge of Boston, better known as the Green Dragon Tavern lodge, headed by Joseph Warren at the time of the Tea Party affair, was an "Ancient" lodge begun in 1752, the year after the founding of the first "Ancient" lodges in England. The St. Andrews lodge could not settle its continuing dispute with St. John's, the older Boston lodge, which resented these upstarts. Only with the victory of the Americans in the war and the severing of ties with the Grand Lodge did the original lodge make peace.<sup>95</sup> Thus, the age-old distinctions of status and

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<sup>93.</sup> Ahiman Rezon, pp. 45-46.

<sup>94.</sup> Morse, *Freemasonry in the American Revolution*, p. 19.

<sup>95.</sup> J. Hugo Tatsch, *Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies* (New York: Macoy, 1929), pp. 33-36.

wealth began to undermine the original egalitarian goal of Masonry. The fact that a single negative vote by a member could keep a proposed member out also indicates that the lodge system was not all that egalitarian.<sup>96</sup>

This Masonic hierarchical structure was gnostic. The Masonic degrees were – or rapidly became – official manifestations of a series of initiations into secret wisdom. This Gnosticism was inherent in its commitment to secrecy. In the *Ahiman Rezon*, the constitutional document of the Ancients, we are told regarding secrecy: “The last quality and virtue I shall mention, as absolutely requisite in those who would be Masons, is that of SECRECY. . . . So great stress is laid upon this particular quality or virtue, that it is enforced among Masons under the strongest penalties and obligations. . . .”<sup>97</sup> What was seemingly a vertical hierarchy was in fact concentric. It was this profound impetus to be elevated into a hierarchy by means of access to concentric degrees of illumination that is the key to understanding Masonry and all other illuminist secret societies. Every covenant requires a priesthood, whoever the elected Grand Master may be. The priests were those with higher knowledge who could select which of the brethren would be allowed to advance upward, i.e., inward. Masonry became an ideal recruiting ground for future revolutionaries.

Masonry cloaks its operations by means of parties and conviviality. Most of its own members do not suspect that it has ulterior motives, the main one being the substitution of a different covenant from that proclaimed by the Church. But the gnostic organization of its hierarchy — initiation into the “inner circles”<sup>98</sup> — is what distinguishes Masonry from clubs. Masonry can easily become a recruiting ground for those who are willing to submit unconditionally to others on the basis of hidden hierarchies. Secret societies, despite possible rhetoric to the contrary, inherently tend to promote institutional centralization and rigorous hierarchical obedience.<sup>99</sup>

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96. “By-Laws or Regulations” (1733), First Lodge, Boston: reprinted in Johnson, *Beginnings of Freemasonry*, p. 104.

97. *Ahiman Rezon*, pp. 19-20.

98. Wrote the sociologist Georg Simmel in 1908 regarding secret societies: “The contrast between exoteric and esoteric members, such as is attributed to the Pythagorean order, is the most poignant form of this protective measure. The circle composed of those only partially initiated formed a sort of buffer region against the non-initiates.” Simmel, “The Secret Society,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited by Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, [1950] 1964), p. 367.

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 370-72.

### 3. *Ethics/Law*

We come now to point three: law. Officially, law was Newtonian natural law, accessible to reason. Modern Freemasonry began as a "cult of Newtonian science," in the words of Margaret Jacob.<sup>100</sup> Newtonian scientists controlled Freemasonry in London; at least 25 percent of the members of the Royal Society were Masons in the 1720's, during the period when the society was personally controlled by Newton.<sup>101</sup> The link between the Royal Society and Freemasonry goes back to the very origin of Scottish Freemasonry in England. The first Englishman to be initiated into this ancient form of Freemasonry was Robert Moray, on May 20, 1641.<sup>102</sup> He was knighted by King Charles I a year and a half later. His brother William became Master of Works, meaning Master of operative masons, immediately after the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Among Robert Moray's associates in the post-1660 period were scientist Christian Huygens and diarist Samuel Pepys. He was a patron of the Invisible College (pre-Royal Society). He was also one of the founders of the Royal Society; Huygens said Moray was its "souL."<sup>103</sup> He was the Society's primary link to the king and his patronage.<sup>104</sup>

The Royal Society's formal, reason-based goal of open scientific investigation, would appear to be in conflict with the inescapable gnostic impulse of Masonry. This is why so few scholars until Francis Yates made the connection. But the links had been there from the beginning. These links are essentially priestly. Mathematics and science, while officially democratic impulses, are in fact far closer to priestly efforts, with membership closed to those who do not understand the language of mathematics, just as the Pythagorean priesthood had been closed on this basis. There is an esoteric aspect of science that is not discussed by standard textbook accounts of the history of science. They do not cite Yates' findings:

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100. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 120.

101. *Ibid.*, p. 112. See J. R. Clarke, "The Royal Society and the Early Grand Lodge Freemasonry; *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, LXXX (1967), pp. 110-19.

102. Baigent and Leigh, *Temple and Lodge*, p. 153.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

104. Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 210. Another link between the Royal Society and the earlier "Invisible College" was Elias Ashmole. Ashmole owned an enormous library of alchemical and magical works, including five manuscripts by the sixteenth-century astrologer John Dee. Ashmole was a Rosicrucian and a founder of the Royal Society. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

The great mathematical and scientific thinkers of the seventeenth century have at the back of their minds Renaissance traditions of esoteric thinking, of mystical continuity from Hebraic or 'Egyptian' wisdom, of that conflation of Moses with 'Hermes Trismegistus' which fascinated the Renaissance. These traditions survived across the period in secret societies, particularly in Freemasonry. Hence it is that we do not know the full content of the minds of early members of the Royal Society unless we take into account the esoteric influences from the Renaissance surviving in their background. Below, or beyond, their normal religious affiliations they would see the Grand Architect of the Universe as an all-embracing religious conception which included, and encouraged, the scientific urge to explore the Architect's work. And this unspoken, or secret, esoteric background was a heritage from the Renaissance, from those traditions of Magia and Cabala, of Hermetic and Hebraic mysticism, which underlay 'Renaissance Neoplatonism' as fostered in the Italian Renaissance.<sup>105</sup>

The possession of the knowledge of the laws of mathematics had been one of the screening devices used by operational stonemasonry. Officially, geometry was to serve a similar function in speculative Freemasonry, but the "craft's" rituals were officially substituted for the specialized knowledge of geometry and building materials. Eighteenth-century Freemasonry was tied to the legend of Hermes Trismegistus, the mythical teacher of the secret mathematical wisdom of ancient Egypt and Greece.<sup>106</sup> The motivation of Freemasonry had been esoteric from at least the 1690's,<sup>107</sup> and the roots of this esotericism can be traced back to early fifteenth century.<sup>108</sup> It was not sufficient for a Mason to master mathematics and practical physics; a more occult metaphysics was always present. Their rituals testify to this. Modern historians seldom take these rituals seriously. (They take very few rituals seriously, except perhaps a funeral, that most democratic of rituals. ) Ritual may have been fakery and fun at the level of the outer ring, but remove the rituals, and you disembowel Masonry. Ritual is fundamental to establishing any secret society's boundaries.<sup>109</sup> As the grandfather says in the movie, *Peggy Sue Got*

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105. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

106. Jacob, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 116.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

108. Baigent and Leigh have traced back to a guild document of 1410 the legend of the "king's son of Tyre" which associates him with an ancient science that survived the Noachic flood, transmitted by Pythagoras and Hermes. Baigent and Leigh, *Temple and Lodge*, p. 129.

109. Wrote Simmel: "The striking feature in the treatment of ritual is not only the rigor of its observance but, above all, the anxiousness with which it is guarded as

*Married*: Without the funny hats, there isn't any lodge." The hats are not funny ha ha; they are funny peculiar. They are funny occult.

Like ritual, mathematics is a universal language, just as Latin was among educated men until the 1880's, when Harvard University began its pace-setting curriculum revision. (There is another universal language: international money. ) It was this quest for universal laws of nature and society that undergirded speculative Freemasonry. This quest included universal moral law. In the second edition of Anderson's Constitution (1738), we read: "A Mason is obliged by his tenure to observe the moral law as a true Noachida." This word *Noachida* did not appear in the first edition. In the *Ahiman Rezon*, which follows Anderson's lead word for word, though not comma for comma, we read: "A Mason is also obliged, by his tenure, to observe the moral law, as a true *Noachide*."<sup>110</sup> In a note to this peculiar word, we read: "Sons of Noah; the first name for Free-Masons." The contributor in the *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* says that Anderson was not the inventor of the term; it first appeared, he says, in a letter sent by the Grand Lodge of England to the Grand Lodge of Calcutta in 1735.<sup>111</sup> One 1877 example of the word appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but only as an adjective, not a noun.

The Noachide is the son of Noah who possesses the knowledge of geometry and also a common morality. Just as the Bible is not needed in order to grasp the logical principles of geometry, so is it not needed to grasp the principles of morality.

This originally Masonic word *Noachite* was used by the translator of the medieval Jewish commentator, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon ("Rambam" or "Maimonides"), to describe the gentile sons of Noah. The Talmud's concept of the sons of Noah is even more hostile than Masonry to the idea of the need for biblical revelation as the basis of modern civil law. The gentile *Noachide*, according to at least some of the rabbis, is not supposed to study the Old Testament, especially Old Testament law. If he does, he is deserving of death. Maimonides wrote:

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a secret. . . . Under its characteristic categories, the secret society must seek to create a sort of life totality. For this reason, it builds round its sharply emphasized purposive content a system of formulas, like a body round a soul, and places both alike under the protection of secrecy, because only thus does it become a harmonious whole in which one part protects the other." *Sociology of Georg Simmel*, p. 359.

110. *Ahiman Rezon*, p. 14.

111. Albert G. Mackey, William J. Hughan, and Edward L. Hawkins (eds.), *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, 2 vols. (rev. ed.; New York: Masonic History Company, 1925), II, p. 514: "Noahidae."

A heathen who busies himself with the study of the Law deserves death. He should occupy himself with the (study) of the seven commandments only. So too, a heathen who keeps a day of rest, even if it be on a weekday, if he has set it apart as his Sabbath, is deserving of death. It is needless to state that he merits death if he makes a new festival for himself. The general principle is: none is permitted to introduce innovations into religion or devise new commandments. The heathen has the choice between becoming a true proselyte by accepting all the commandments, and adhering to his own religion, neither adding to it nor subtracting anything from it. If therefore he occupies himself with the study of the Law, or observes a day of rest, or makes any innovation, he is flogged, or otherwise punished and advised that he is deserving of death, but he is not put to death. <sup>112</sup>

Sufficient social order within the gentile world is supposedly achieved through their adherence to the seven commandments specifically given to the heathen, meaning gentiles. Six of these laws were first given to Adam, according to Jewish law: the prohibitions against idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and robbery, plus the command to establish courts of justice. A seventh law was also supposedly given to Noah: the prohibition against eating the limb of a living animal. <sup>113</sup> Beyond this minimal list of seven laws, the gentiles – “Noahides” or “Noahites,” the descendants of Noah <sup>114</sup> — are not supposed to go in their inquiry into the ethical requirements of Old Testament law, which belongs exclusively to the Jews. In making this assertion, Maimonides was faithfully following the teaching of the Talmud. He was taking the rabbis at their word: “R. [Rabbi – G. N. ] Johanan said: A heathen who studies the Torah deserves death, for it is written, *Moses commanded us a law for an inheritance; it is our inheritance, not theirs.*” <sup>115</sup> Resh Lakish (third century, A.D.) said that a gentile who observes the Sabbath deserves death. <sup>116</sup>

The ethical goal of both Masonry and Talmudic Judaism is the same: to keep gentiles from reading and applying Old Testament law in society. (The traditions and legends are also similar, accord-

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112. Moses Maimonides, *The Book of Judges*, Book 14 of *The Code of Maimonides*, 14 vols. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, [1180] 1949), “Laws Concerning Kings and Wars,” X:9, p. 237.

113. *Ibid.*, IX:1, pp. 230-31.

114. *Ibid.*, IX:2, p. 231.

115. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 59a. I use the Soncino Press edition.

116. *Sanhedrin* 59b.



ing to at least one favorable student of Masonry.)<sup>117</sup> Masonry defends a common-ground, non-revelational morality for all members. In this, it agrees entirely with rabbinic Judaism regarding gentiles.<sup>118</sup> What is remarkable is that this same idea of a common morality since Noah has been adopted by both modern Reformed theology and modern dispensationalism.<sup>119</sup>

This leaves Christians at the mercy of the wisdom of fallen man. By default, it puts the covenant-breaker in charge of society. It implicitly denies that God brings His sanctions in history in terms of His Bible-revealed law. This brings us to point four of the covenant model.

#### 4. Oath/Sanctions

Here we come to the heart of Masonry: the self-vaedictory oath. What circumcision is to the Jew, what baptism is to the Christian, the oath is to the Mason. It is the screening ritual which allows a man access to the ritual meals and libations in Judaism (Passover), Christianity (Holy Communion), and Masonry's fraternal meals. Here is where the covenantal aspect of Masonry becomes manifest.

Of course, this is manifest only to members of the "craft," These oaths are not published. The *Ahiman Rezon*, in the section describing the proper means of initiating the apprentice, refers cryptically to "some other ceremonies that cannot be written. . . ." <sup>120</sup> Masonic oaths call down judgments on those who would violate the secret terms of the covenant (see below, "Rival Oaths"). But those inside the brotherhood are promised positive sanctions: good connections, protection in civil suits, etc. This is why the Masonic sign or password is supposed to open doors, and it sometimes does.<sup>121</sup>

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117. E. Cecil McGavin, *Mormonism and Masonry* (Salt Lake City: Bookcrafter Publishers, 1956), p. 195: "The Jewish Talmud furnishes many illustrations of the Masonic system. Many of the traditions and legends, especially of the higher degrees, are either found in or are corroborated by the Talmud." The author, a Mormon, connects Mormonism and Masonry, but is not hostile to Masonry.

118. Gary North, *The Judeo-Christian Tradition: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 5.

119. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 118-19; H. Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Curse or Blessing?* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah, 1988), p. 130.

120. *Ahiman Rezon*, p. 34.

121. Political office in the American South has long been furthered by Masonic membership. Similar advantages exist for members in England: Stephen Knight, *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons* (London: Granada, 1984).

The biblical view of the covenant oath is that only three institutions can lawfully compel them: Church, State, and family. God has authorized only these three monopolies as His covenantal organizations. By requiring self-valedictory oaths for membership, Masonry has set itself up as a rival Church and, in eighteenth-century France and in late nineteenth-century Mexico, as a rival State. In the words of Count Savioli (“Brutus”), a member of Weishaupt’s Illuminate in the late eighteenth century: “The Order must possess the power of life and death in consequence of our Oath; and with propriety, for the same reason, and by the same right, that any government in the world possesses it: For the Order comes in their place, making them unnecessary.”<sup>122</sup>

##### 5. Succession/Inheritance

Finally, we come to point five of the covenant: continuity or inheritance. Here is where politics enters the picture. Those inside the organization are promised power outside the organization. Initiation and continued membership are the basis of this inheritance. Those who refuse to examine this “conspiratorial” side of secret societies miss the whole point. Those who see Masonry as “clubbery” miss the point.<sup>123</sup> Clubs are leisure-oriented. They are established for revelry and companionship; secret societies are established to gain power. The goal of the secret society is analogous to the goal stated by Psalm 37:9: “For evildoers shall be cut off but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.”

Who will exercise political power in a democracy or a republic? Those who gain the support of those who can communicate with and mobilize the party mechanisms, the media, and then the voters. It is this aspect of Masonry that can be of crucial importance. Those who have been sanctioned by the continuing brotherhood have a great advantage in the transfer of political power.<sup>124</sup> The continuity of the Masonic order provides a means of access to political continuity, even though Masonry is officially nonpolitical. It was not nonpolitical in 1776 or 1789 in the colonies, and not nonpolitical in 1789 in France.

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122. Cited in John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy* (4th ed.; New York: George Forman, 1798), p. 170.

123. See, for example, Robert Micklus, “The Secret Fall of Masonry in Dr. Alexander Hamilton’s *The History of the Tuesday Club*,” in *Deism, Masonry, and the Enlightenment*, pp. 127-36.

124. Knight, *The Brotherhood*.

### Rival Oaths

The average Christian may not understand the importance of oaths, except those taken in marriages and to the national government. They do not understand the function of the oath in a secret society. Some criminal secret societies, and even seemingly harmless secret societies, require their members to invoke a self-valedictory oath. This is why they frequently refer to themselves as "families."

Masons are self-professed brothers, part of an international brotherhood. Theodore Graebner's book, critical of Freemasonry, *A Treatise on Freemasonry*, reports that Freemasons require the following oath of their Apprentice Masons: a promise not to reveal any of the secrets of the "craft." Kneeling in front of the Grand Master's pedestal, blindfolded, with a noose placed symbolically around his neck, and the point of a compass pointed at his breast, he says: "To all of this I most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, with a firm and steadfast resolution to keep and perform the same without any equivocation, mental reservation, or secret evasion of mind whatever, binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots and buried in the rough sands of the sea at low water mark, where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty four hours, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate this my solemn oath or obligation as an Entered Apprentice Mason. So help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same."<sup>125</sup> A Masonic third-degree oath contains: "Binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my body severed in twain, my bowels taken from thence and burned to ashes, the ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven, so that no more trace of remembrance may be had of so vile and perjured a wretch as I. . . ."<sup>126</sup> This imagery is straight out of the Old Testament's account of God's covenant with Abraham: the dividing of the

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125. A similar version of this oath is reproduced in part in *Secret Societies*, edited by Norman MacKenzie (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 155.

126. Cited by Everett C. De Velde, "A Reformed View of Freemasonry," in *Christianity and Civilization*, I (1982), p. 283. For reproductions of these oaths, plus several higher degree oaths, see John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Christianity and the Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge: What Goes on Behind Closed Doors* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: John Ankerberg Evangelistic Association, 1989), ch. 10.

animals and the appearance of the consuming sacred fire of God.<sup>127</sup>

The Masons do not admit publicly that such oaths are required. How could they? The oaths are secret. As the *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* admits, “the conscientious Freemason labors under great disadvantage. He is at every step restrained by his honor from either the denial or admission of his adversaries in relation to the mysteries of the Craft.”<sup>128</sup>

Commenting on these oaths, Rev. Everett De Velde, Jr., concludes: “These oaths are a direct breaking of the third commandment. They take God’s name in vain by connecting His Holy Name with murder.”<sup>129</sup> He is too reserved. Taking such an oath involves violations of the third commandment other than merely linking God’s name with murder. First, the concept of God’s covenant in the Old Testament involved a severing of an animal in two parts. The use of this imagery in an oath taken in a non-Christian secret society is illegitimate. Second, the oath is innately self-vaedictory. It calls the judgment of man down upon oneself, if one reveals the secrets of the society. Such a self-vaedictory oath is legitimate only when making a covenant with one of God’s three sovereign governments: family, Church, and civil government.

#### *A Separate Kingdom*

The Masonic leadership unquestionably has long recognized the self-vaedictory nature of oaths taken before law courts. To the extent that Masonry comprises a self-proclaimed separate order or kingdom, the oaths given by initiates would have to be regarded by the hierarchy as comparable to oaths sworn before a civil magistrate. In fact, the Masonic oaths would have to supersede a civil oath, for the initiate is prohibited from revealing the details of his “craft” to the

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127. “And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not” (Gen. 15: 7-10). “And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:17-18).

128. “Oath,” in *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, II, p. 522.

129. De Velde, p. 283.

civil magistrate. The Mason, as an initiate, would face conflicting loyalties when called on by the civil magistrate to reveal details of his "craft." Should he reveal secrets to the magistrate or remain faithful to his "craft"? If he takes seriously the terminology of the reported oaths in Masonry, then there would be a strong temptation to refuse to testify and suffer the civil consequences, or else to lie. We would expect to find that Masonic literature would *publicly* place all oaths on equal par. In secret, of course, this public neutrality would vanish; the key loyalty would have to be to the guild. This publicly revealed position of "equally binding oaths" would tend to weaken the initiate's commitment to the civil magistrate, leaving him to worry about the vivid verbal terms of Masonry's self-vaedictory oaths. What we find is just such "public neutrality" concerning the equality of all oaths.

The oath of the third-degree Mason refers to "so vile and perjured a wretch as I." Using this as a guide, we can learn just how well Masonic leaders understand the close relationship between self-maledictory oaths and God's judgment. Under "perjury," the *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* declares:

In the municipal law perjury is defined to be a wilful false swearing to a material matter, when an oath has been administered by lawful authority. The violation of vows or promissory oaths taken before one who is not legally authorized to administer them, that is to say, one who is not a magistrate, does not in law involve the crime of perjury. Such is the technical definition of the law; but the moral sense of mankind does not assent to such a doctrine, and considers perjury, as the root of the word indicates, the doing of that which one has sworn not to do, or the omitting to do that which he has sworn to do. The old Remans seem to have taken a sensible view of the crime of perjury. Among them oaths were not often administered, and, in general, a promise made under oath had no more binding power in a court of justice than it would have had without the oath. False swearing was with them a matter of conscience, and the person who was guilty of it was responsible to the Deity alone. The violation of a promise under oath and of one not under such a form was considered alike, and neither was more liable to human punishment than the other. But perjury was not deemed to be without any kind of punishment. Cicero expressed the Roman sentiment when he said "perjurii poena divina exitium; humana dedecus" — *the divine punishment of perjury is destruction; the human, infamy*. Hence every oath was accompanied by an execration, or an appeal to God to punish the swearer should he falsify his oath. . . .

Freemasons look in this light on what is called the *penalty*; it is an invocation of God's vengeance on him who takes the vow, should he ever violate it;

men's vengeance is confined to the contempt and infamy which the fore-swearer incurs. <sup>130</sup>

If the human penalty were merely "contempt and infamy," then the perjurer would not fear for his property or life. On the other hand, oaths that are self-valedictory with respect to men as well as God are doubly fearful. If Masons do take the oaths described by Graebner, then they have a human sword hanging over them – the imitation covenantal oath — whenever they are tempted to reveal the society's mysteries. The language of the reported oaths is bloody — *covenantally bloody*. There is little doubt that Masonic leaders understand what an oath is, as distinguished from a contract, and they regard the verbal oaths of their members as oaths in the same way that a magistrate of a kingdom regards an oath in one of the kingdom's courts of law. An oath places a person under a sovereign, and this sovereign possesses power, at the very least, and presumably a degree of authority (legitimacy). It is easy to understand why orthodox Christianity has been hostile to secret societies over the years. A secret society sets up a rival kingdom with rival oaths and therefore rival gods.

### Conclusion

Henry Steele Commager has remarked that "The constitutional convention, which has some claim to be the most original political institution of modern times, legalized revolution."<sup>131</sup> This comes close to the mark, but not dead center. What legalized the revolution were the mini-conventions at the state level. These individual representative plebiscites sanctioned the *coup* in Philadelphia, and from that point on, the revolution was secured. Not the American Revolution . . . the lawyers' revolution.

The problem with exposing the *coup* in Philadelphia is that it was such a successful *coup*. Berman regards the American Revolution as one of the six successful revolutions in Western history. <sup>132</sup> To be a true revolution, he argues, a revolution must be a revolution in law, and it must survive more than a generation; otherwise, it is just a *coup*.<sup>133</sup>

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130. *Encyclopaedia*, II, pp. 555-56.

131. Henry Steele Commager, *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 182.

132. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 5, 18.

133. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

What transformed the *coup* in Philadelphia into a revolution was the national plebiscite. It was a stroke of genius to appeal to the voters in state-wide conventions rather than to existing legislatures. It was a stroke of providence that they succeeded in silencing the one man who might have stopped them: Patrick Henry. Henry knew the whole strategy was illegal. At the Virginia ratifying Convention, he introduced a motion to this effect: the need to consider the details of the original 1786 Annapolis Convention, which had led to the “revision” Convention at Philadelphia. Such a consideration would have reminded the attendees that the whole procedure at Philadelphia had been illegal. His motion:

That the act of Assembly appointing deputies to meet at Annapolis to consult from some other states, on the situation of the commerce of the United States – the act of Assembly appointing deputies to meet at Philadelphia, to revise the Articles of Confederation – and other public papers relative thereto — should be read.

To which Edmund Pendleton, President of the Convention, replied: “Mr. Chairman, we are not to consider whether the federal Convention exceeded their powers. It strikes my mind that this ought not to influence our deliberations.” Henry then withdrew the motion.<sup>134</sup>

For all his eloquence at the ratifying convention after that monumental but seemingly inconsequential decision to withdraw his motion, Henry never again came close to winning over the Virginia convention — one convention that the nationalists had to win, since it was a large state and the state in which so many of the Framers lived. The Virginia convention was crucial to the Framers symbolically. Once Henry agreed to let the Philadelphia Convention with its plebiscite procedure pass without criticism, the *coup* became a revolution. A Christian nation became, judicially and covenantally, a politically pluralist nation.

The Convention had broken covenant with the Congress that had delegated it and with the Articles of Confederation that had sanctioned Congress. Maryland’s Luther Martin understood that the Convention’s appeal to the People in mini-conventions was itself an act of revolution against the existing Constitution. He also cor-

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134. Jonathan Elliot (cd.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, [1836] 1907), III, p. 6.

rectly perceived that this was an act of rebellion against God, the violation of a covenantal oath.

Agreeably to the Articles of Confederation, entered into in the *most solemn manner*, and for the *observance* of which the states pledged themselves to each other, and called upon the *Supreme Being* as a witness and avenger between them, no alterations are to be made in those Articles, unless, after they are approved by Congress, they are agreed to, and ratified, by the legislature of every state; but by the resolve of the Convention, this Constitution is not to be ratified by the legislature of the respective states, but is to be submitted to conventions chosen by the people, and, if ratified by them, is to be binding.

This resolve was opposed, among others, by the delegation of Maryland. Your delegates were of opinion that, as the form of government proposed was, if adopted, most essentially to alter the *Constitution of this state*, and as our Constitution had pointed out a mode by which, and by which only, alterations were to be made therein, a convention of the people could not be called to agree to and ratify the said form of government without a *direct violation* of our Constitution, which it is the duty of every individual in this state to protect and support. 133

Martin's appeal fell on deaf ears. He did not admit what the Framers had implicitly recognized: the god of the Articles was a half-way covenant god, just as the Articles were a half-way national covenant. The fear of that god was minimal by 1788; he could no longer bring sanctions through Congress against covenant-breakers. A new god, with new stipulations and vast new sanctions, was therefore necessary, they believed. This new god would be the People. This god would share authority with no other god, and he would remain discreetly silent after one" brief public appearance. This time, there would be no creator-creature distinction: the creator would be the creature. The Framers believed that the time was ripe for announcing this new god, who would offer himself a new covenant for ratification, ratify it, and then turn over all civil authority to his representatives. Here was a god that the nationalist politicians could enthusiastically affirm. So, nature's god went the way of the dodo bird, replaced by a new evolutionary force in nature.

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135. Letter from Luther Martin, Attorney-General of Maryland, to Thomas C. Deye, Speaker of the House of Delegates of Maryland (Jan. 27, 1788), *ibid.*, I, pp. 386-87.



And here I would make this inquiry of those worthy characters who composed a part of the late federal Convention. I am sure they were fully impressed with the necessity of forming a great consolidated government, instead of a confederation. That this is a consolidated government is demonstrably clear; and the danger of such a government is, to my mind, very striking. I have the highest veneration for those gentlemen; but, sir, give me leave to demand, What right had they to say, *We, the people*? My political curiosity, exclusive of my anxious solicitude for the public welfare, leads me to ask, Who authorized them to speak the language of, *We, the people*, instead of, *We, the states*? States are the characteristics and the soul of a confederation. If the states be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great, consolidated, national government, of the people of all the states. I have the highest respect for those gentlemen who formed the Convention, and, were some of them not here, I would express some testimonial of esteem for them. America had, on a former occasion, put the utmost confidence in them — a confidence which was well placed; and I am sure, sir, I would give up any thing to them; I would cheerfully confide in them as my representatives. But, sir, on this great occasion, I would demand the cause of their conduct. Even from that illustrious man who saved us by his valor, I would have a reason for his conduct: that liberty which he has given us by his valor, tells me to ask this reason; and sure I am, were he here, he would give us that reason. But there are other gentlemen here, who can give us this information. The people gave them no power to use their name. That they exceeded their power is perfectly clear. It is not mere curiosity that actuates me: I wish to hear the real, actual, existing danger, which should lead us to take those steps, so dangerous in my conception. Disorders have arisen in other parts of America; but here, sir, no dangers, no insurrection or tumult have happened; every thing has been calm and tranquil. But, notwithstanding this, we are wandering on the great ocean of human affairs. I see no landmark to guide us. We are running we know not whither. Difference of opinion has gone to a degree of inflammatory resentment in different parts of the country which has been occasioned by this perilous innovation. The federal Convention ought to have amended the old system; for this purpose they were solely delegated; the object of their mission extended to no other consideration. You must, therefore, forgive the solicitation of one unworthy member to know what danger could have arisen under the present Confederation, and what are the causes of this proposal to change our government.

Patrick Henry (1787)\*

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\*Henry, in Jonathan Elliot (cd.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippencott, [1836] 1907), III, *Virginia*, pp. 22-23.

**“WE THE PEOPLE”**: FROM  
VASSAL TO SUZERAIN TO SERF

*We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

*Preamble, U. S. Constitution*

*How paradoxical that the first nation to base its political philosophy on the principle that all political authority derives from the people, and that the people express their will through elected representatives, should also be the first to embrace the principle that the ultimate interpretation of the validity of the popular will should be lodged not in the people themselves, or in their representatives, but in one non-elected and, therefore, non-democratic branch of the government.*

*Henry Steele Commager (1977) <sup>1</sup>*

In Chapter 7, I noted that Warren Burger, who served as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1970's and half of the 1980's, says that "We the people" are the Constitution's most important words. <sup>2</sup> He sent me a one-sentence reply when I questioned him about the meaning of his statement, "They are the key words *conceptually*."<sup>3</sup> This gets right to the point.

At the time that I read his reply, I did not fully understand the reason why his statement is correct. I had not yet recognized the extraordinary construction of the Preamble: it precisely follows the

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1. Henry Steele Commager, *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 229.

2. *Orlando Sentinel* (Sept. 8, 1988), p. A-2.

3. Letter to author: Sept. 26, 1988. Emphasis his.

biblical covenant structure. The 1) sovereign creating agency, “We the people” 2) acts in history (historical prologue) to establish a union that will 3) establish justice and insure the common defense (boundaries) to secure 4) the blessings of liberty for ourselves and 5) our posterity.

When finally I recognized this five-point structure, I immediately went to my library to get a copy of Meredith G. Kline’s *The Structure of Biblical Authority*. I wanted to be sure I had part two correct — what he, following George Mendenhall, calls the historical prologue. Lo and behold, Kline even uses the word *preamble* in describing the Ten Commandments section of Exodus 20:

“I am the Lord thy God,” the opening words of the Sinaitic proclamation (Exod. 20: 2a), correspond to the preamble of the suzerainty treaties, which identified the suzerain or “great king” and that in terms calculated to inspire awe and fear. \*

There is no historical prologue in the Preamble to the Constitution. Why not? Because the Constitution literally was announcing the advent of a new covenantal divinity whose prior existence had no independent legal status in American jurisprudence. The People had been referred to time and again in colonial political theory, but the People had no independent legal status. The Unitarian god of Locke and Newton had previously always been mentioned in close association with the god of the People. The People had heretofore always been under a god of some kind. This was about to change.

This new independently sovereign divinity, the People, would formally announce its advent as the sole covenantal agent of national incorporation by means of public ratification. The People, the Preamble states, “do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” The new god of the Constitution was *both suzerain and vassal*— something covenantally unique in the history of man prior to 1787. *The Constitution’s Preamble elevated the People from point two in the covenant structure - representation - to point one: the creator.* Warren Burger is absolutely correct: “We the people” are the key words *conceptually*.

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4. Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 114.

### Covenant: An Inescapable Concept

The Preamble is structured using the five points of the biblical covenant model. The Constitution's five parts — with the Preamble as part one (the suzerain) — also conform to the biblical five-point covenant model, though not in the same order. Do I think that the Constitution's Framers were *that* self-conscious? Were they the original discoverers of the covenantal insight that was first, presented by George Mendenhall in 1954?<sup>5</sup> I think not. Were they operating with the biblical model in the back of their minds? Had they stolen the model from the Puritans? No, because the Puritans never systematically articulated their model of the covenant, although they wrote a great deal about all five points. We can find discussions of all five points scattered throughout their writings, but these discussions are not systematical y arranged in the five-point outline.

What the Framers did do was write a constitution, and a constitution is a covenant document. All covenants must contain or at least deal with the five features of the biblical covenant model. There is no escape. This five-point model is an inescapable concept for every covenant institution. Nevertheless, the fact that the Preamble is structured in the same order as the biblical covenant model is remarkable.

In adopting this five-point model, the Framers were being faithful to something written by God into man's mind and his covenantal institutions. They remained true to their self-assigned calling: to create a new national covenant. Authorized by Congress to go to Philadelphia in order to revise and renew the Articles of Confederation — the by-laws of the old national covenant — they substituted a new covenant with a new God. The Preamble was the new Declaration of Independence, and the remaining four parts of the Constitution served as the covenant's by-laws.

The Framers also broke the older state covenants by establishing a new one outside of the oath provisions of most of the original covenant documents, and against the express intention of the Congress. But they could not beat something with nothing. They offered a new covenant in the name of a new sovereign agent, the People.

#### *A New Declaration of Independence*

This was the Convention's Declaration of Independence — independence from the god of Newton. Unlike the Continental Congress'

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5. G. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Structure in Israelite Tradition," *Biblical Archaeologist*, XVII (1954), pp. 50-76; cited in *ibid.*, p. 114n.

public Declaration of Independence from Great Britain in 1776, which also implicitly broke covenant with the God of the Bible in the name of the transcendent god of Newton,<sup>6</sup> this brief Preamble-Declaration publicly identified a new, immanent God: the People. Also unlike the older Declaration, this one would have to be ratified in legally open but well-managed state conventions. This public ratification could not be done by representatives of the legislatures, as the original Declaration had been ratified, because unlike the Continental Congress in 1776, the Convention of 1787 had no independent legal status nationally. National status belonged solely to the existing Congress, whose official subordinate agent the Convention was.

The Convention broke covenant with Congress when it broke covenant with the Deistic god of the Declaration of Independence. This was the legal meaning of the shift from a halfway national covenant to an apostate national covenant. The voters in state conventions then ratified the decision of the Convention.

In short: new *covenant*, new god.

The representatives of the People in the state conventions then voted to ratify the People's new-found divinity. They voted to move the People from point two — representative — up to point one: suzerain. In their legal capacity as representatives of the subordinate colonial people, who had previously been legal subordinates to the god of Newton (national covenant) and — in most cases — also the God of the Bible (state covenants), the state conventions declared the corporate People as the sole and exclusive suzerain god of the nation. They forgot the example of Herod:

And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nour-

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6. Writes David Hawke: "Jefferson's Declaration had passed the scrutiny of some fifty conservative gentlemen who had wanted old and tested ideas to justify their 'great revolution; and they had wanted nothing more. Old and tested ideas, apparently, are what Jefferson had handed them. Certainly they did not think they had approved a paper that opened the door to a democratic revolution. They had no awareness that an 'old god' had been displaced. . . ." Hawke, *A Transaction of Free Men: The Birth and Course of the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Scribners, 1964), p. 203. Hawke places "old god" in quotation marks. He does not really understand that this was literally what the Declaration had done: it broke covenant with a literal God by breaking covenant with that God's literal representatives, the King and Parliament together, which legally was and is the only way that civil government in Great Britain could rule.

ished by the king's country. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost (Acts 12:20-23).

The worms of humanism have taken longer to do their work, but they have been at their jobs continuously since 1788.

*From Covenant to Contract?*

The essence of the shift in the Framers' thinking appears to be a shift from covenant to contract. This explanation of eighteenth-century political theory is standard in many historical studies. The language of the marketplace was steadily imported into political theory through the concept of the social contract or social covenant. Nevertheless, the covenantal aspect of civil government cannot be evaded. Words can change, explanations can change, formal procedures can change, but covenantalism is an inescapable concept.

A covenant is a voluntary contract established under God, and it is then sealed by a self-valedictory oath, either implicit or explicit. The parties to the covenant call down God's negative sanctions on themselves should they violate the specified stipulations (laws) of the covenant. A contract, on the other hand, is an agreement between two or more parties for attaining specified objectives, the terms of which are enforceable in a court of law. There are no sanctions involved other than those specified by the contractor in the civil law. The motivation of the agreement is personal self-interest or the attainment of some personal goal. God's name is not lawfully invoked in contracts.<sup>7</sup>

This shift in language from covenant to contract accelerated on both sides of the Atlantic after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. s

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7. Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), ch. 3. This is what John Witherspoon forgot in his discussion of oaths and vows. He did not limit use of the oath to the three institutions of Church, State, and family. This destroyed the biblical concept of covenantal institutions. The presence of an oath implicitly equalized all other voluntary institutions with the three covenantal institutions, which in the hands of Madison and the other voluntarists and compact theorists led to the secularization of civil government. Witherspoon, *Lectures on Moral Philosophy*, edited by Jack Scott (Newark, New Jersey: University of Delaware Press), ch. 16.

8. C. B. McPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962). On the New England development, see Gary North, "From Covenant to Contract: Pietism and Secularism in Puritan New England, 1691 -1720," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, VI (Winter 1979-80), pp. 155-94,

The eighteenth-century world steadily abandoned the earlier view of the civil covenant: government under God. It became popular to speak of a social contract between or among the people, as the sovereign initiators. It is, in Wood's phrase, "the equation of rulers and ruled."<sup>9</sup> Charles Backus declared in a 1788 sermon: "But in America, the *People* have had an opportunity of forming a compact *betwixt themselves*; from which alone, their rulers derive all their authority to govern."<sup>10</sup>

The heart of the judicial apostasy of the modern world is found here: the shift from the formal biblical covenant to a State-enforced contract, so-called. The State, as the highest court of appeal — short of revolution — became the operational Sovereign of the civil covenant, since it was no longer formally covenanted under God. As the human agency with the greatest power, the State steadily has asserted jurisdiction over churches and families. Since the State is regarded as beyond earthly appeal, no other human covenant supposedly can be said to have a higher court of appeal than the State.

This shift in language — covenant to contract — unleashed the State from its traditional shackles under God and God's law. Darwinism later completed the process of emancipation from God and deliverance into the bondage of the State. But Darwinism was simply a working out in the field of biology of the judicial and covenantal viewpoint of seventeenth-century Whigs — the philosophers of the voluntary political contract — and the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment thinkers — the philosophers of the voluntary economic contract.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, this shift in language is misleading. There is no escape from covenantalism. Covenants are inescapable concepts. Many attempts have been made over the last three centuries to convert the three covenantal institutions into contractual ones, but the biblical fact is, men produce broken covenants when they speak of Church, State, and family as merely contractual. Men are self-deceived when they speak this way. There will always be some new

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9. Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History, published by the University of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. 600.

10. Charles Backus, *Sermon Preached at Long Meadow (1788)*; cited in *ibid.*, p. 601.

11. On this point, see F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 58-59. For my critique of Hayek's evolutionism, see Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), Appendix B: "The Evolutionists' Defense of the Market."

sovereign agent under whom these three covenants are ratified and sealed. There will always be a voice of authority who speaks in the name of the recognized sovereign who has authorized a covenant.

This was not clear to those who ratified the Constitution. It probably was not clear to those who drafted it, although Madison was very close to the truth. But one thing is clear: the God of the Bible was formally removed from the Constitution. Not even the lingering traces of His name in the Declaration of Independence were allowed to pass into the Constitution. There was nevertheless an incorporating authority: the People. There would therefore still be a voice in history of this final trans-historical authority. There have been several claimants for this title, but in this century, one has triumphed: the Supreme Court.

### The Voice of Authority

We have seen who the official authority is. In order to make the results of their closed-door conspiracy sound more authoritative and legitimate, the conspirators added these three words in the Preamble: "We the People." The fact is, the document would be more accurate had it announced, 'We the States,<sup>12</sup>' for it was submitted to the state-wide conventions that were called by the states' civil authorities. But the Framers took great care to make certain that voters perceived the Constitution as the work of the people as a whole, even though it was ratified by state ratifying conventions. The Convention in drawing up the Constitution was supposedly acting in the name of the sovereign People, as distinguished from the voters' legislatures, thereby gaining legitimacy for a revolution against the states-established Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. They were determined to gain legitimacy for the Constitution from a trans-historical sovereign in a one-time event that would be difficult to duplicate. Once the People had spoken in the ratifying conventions, they were collectively to go on a permanent vacation, as the textbook god of the Deists was supposed to do. Unlike children, who were to be seen but not heard, the People were to be neither seen nor heard after 1788.

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12. *We the States: An Anthology of Historic Documents and Commentaries thereon, Expounding the State and Federal Relationship*, published by the Virginia Commission on Constitutional Government (Richmond, Virginia: William Byrd Press, 1964).



*Keeping the People in Their Place*

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, a stage play and movie about Jewish village life in pre-Revolutionary Russia, the rabbi of a small village is asked publicly if he has a blessing for the Czar. The rabbi, a wise man, has an appropriate blessing: "May God bless the Czar . . . very far from here." This was essentially the prayer of the nationalists in 1787 regarding the People. The People, as the incorporating God, were to bless the completed work of the Framers, and then go very far away. The nationalists had the Bill of Rights forced on them by the Anti-federalists, but this was the last time any wholesale imposition on the Constitution was to take place. The People were then to sit down and shut up.

In acknowledging the original *judicial* sovereignty of the People, the Constitution greatly augmented the *political* sovereignty of the Nation-State, which is the only incorporated institution in society that has been officially produced by the people as a whole. The Framers fully understood that the Constitution's transfer of judicial authority from the People to the national government was a unique act of incorporation, and it would be very difficult to duplicate in the future. They wanted it this way. Madison flatly rejected Jefferson's assertion that it is a good idea to go to the people whenever there is any encroachment of one department of government on another. Madison appealed to the power of the People almost as if it were a one-time event. But first he began with the familiar theme of the sovereignty of the People, for "the people are the only legitimate fountain of power, and it is from them that the constitutional charter, under which the several branches of government hold their power, is derived; . . ." <sup>13</sup> He warned against "The danger of disturbing the public tranquility by interesting too strongly the public passions. . . ." <sup>14</sup> In short, "the expedients are of too ticklish a nature to be unnecessarily multiplied." <sup>15</sup>

Madison was concerned about the evils of paying too much attention to the passions of temporary public opinion. <sup>16</sup> Years later, he distinguished between a "constitutional majority" and a "numerical majority of the people." The constitutional minority, even if a major-

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13. Madison, Federalist 49, *The Federalist*, edited by Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 339.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 340.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 341.

16. Robert Nisbet, "Public Opinion versus Popular Opinion," *Public Interest* (Fall 1975), pp. 170-74.

ity of the people, had to submit to the constitutional majority until the Constitution could be amended. "The only remedy, therefore, for the oppressed minority is in the amendment of the Constitution or a subversion of the Constitution. This inference is unavoidable."<sup>17</sup> The act of incorporation was a unique event, unlikely to be repeated, Madison believed. Thus, while voters could reject candidates for public office, it was unlikely that they could reject the Constitution itself. The states could, however, fight a civil war when major disagreements arose, a possibility he prudently declined to discuss. Thus, the new national government was virtually secure, short of civil war or invasion. Its very judicial security transferred unprecedented political sovereignty to the national government.

### *A New Theory of Constitutions*

Madison's view of the future represented a break with the Whig theory of the origin and fate of constitutions. The Whigs, in turning to classical political models, were drawn into the classical world's cyclical theory of history. Cyclical history had been rediscovered by the Enlightenment humanists of eighteenth-century America, and it had become widespread.<sup>18</sup> The Whigs believed, as the Greeks had, that new orders inevitably decline. Hesiod said in the *Works and Days* (eighth century B.C) that the original age of gold degenerated into silver, then into bronze, then into the age of the heroes, and finally into iron.<sup>19</sup> Society, the classical world believed, needs periodic revolutions to restore new orders; this idea became common in Whig political philosophy.<sup>20</sup> Jefferson had reworked Tertullian's comment that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, turning it into the blood of patriots and tyrants refreshing the tree of liberty every twenty years<sup>21</sup> — a classical, cyclical concept of development. This perspective is reflected in the Virginia constitution of 1776, which

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17. Madison to [unknown] (1833), in Marvin Meyers (ed.), *The Mind of the Founder: Sources of the Political Thought of James Madison* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 529.

18. Stow Persons, "The Cyclical Theory of History in Eighteenth Century America," *American Quarterly*, VI (Summer 1954), pp. 147-63.

19. *Hesiod*, translated by Richmond Lattimore (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), lines 109-201, pp. 31-43.

20. Michael Lienesch, *New Order of the Ages: Time, the Constitution, and the Making of Modern American Political Thought* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), ch. 3.

21. Jefferson to William Stevens Smith, Nov. 13, 1787.

authorized the judicial principle that “a majority of the community bath an indubitable, inalienable, and indefeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish it [the government], in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.”<sup>22</sup>

By 1787, the Framers preferred to avoid such rhetoric. They wanted linear history, not cyclical. They hoped that constitutional balance would give them this providential fruit of Christianity, but without the theological or covenantal root. The Federalists had cried “crisis” in 1787, even as the Whigs of 1688 had done; and like the victorious Whigs of 1688, thereafter they wanted consolidation, stability, and continuity. They wanted the orderly, constitutional transfer of power and liberty to their posterity. They became “court Whigs,”<sup>23</sup> once they had created the new national court.

This permanent transfer of political sovereignty to the national State was not obvious at first, even to the Framers. The political boundaries were vague, as is testified to by Madison and Jefferson’s Virginia and Kentucky Resolves in 1798 and 1799, written to protest the Federalist Party’s Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798.<sup>24</sup> They had invented the People. Furthermore, it was not always clear just how the People had revealed themselves judicially in 1788: as a unit or through each state or through “the States as a *whole*,” as Madison later put it.<sup>25</sup>

*Patrick Henry: “By Whose Authority?”*

Patrick Henry had been invited to attend the Philadelphia convention, but he had refused. A year later, he spoke out against ratification. He had seen the meaning of “We the people,” and he warned against its implications during the debates over ratification: “Give me leave to demand, what right had they to say, We the People,’ instead of We the States? States are the characteristics, and the soul of a confederation. If the States be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great consolidated national government of the people of all the States. . . . Had the delegates, who were sent to Philadelphia

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22. “Constitution of Virginia” (June 12, 1776), in Richard L. Cooper and John C. Cooper (eds.), *Sources of Our Liberties* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1959), p. 311.

23. Lienesch, *New Order*, p. 64.

24. Henry Steele Commager (ed.), *Documents of American History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958), pp. 178-84.

25. See Madison’s letter to the *North American Review* (Aug. 28, 1830), in *Mind of the Founder*, p. 540.

a power to propose a consolidated government instead of a confederacy? Were they not deputed by States, and not by the people? The assent of the people, in their collective capacity, is not necessary to the formation of a federal government. The people have no right to enter into leagues, alliances, or confederations: they are not the proper agents for this purpose: States and sovereign powers are the only proper agents for this kind of government. Show me an instance where the people have exercised this business: has it not always gone through the legislatures? . . . This, therefore, ought to depend on the consent of the legislatures."

Henry said emphatically of the delegates, "The people gave them no power to use their name. That they exceeded their power is perfectly clear." He reminded them of the original authorization of the convention: "The federal convention ought to have amended the old system; for this purpose they were solely delegated: the object of their mission extended to no other consideration."<sup>26</sup> But since the legislatures authorized the conventions, they in effect had sanctioned this public transfer of the locus of sovereignty.

#### Divine Right, Closed Universe

Henry could not overcome Americans' commitment to a new theology, the theology of the divine right of the invisible People. This theology had now replaced the divine right of kings and the divine right of Parliament. There could ultimately be no appeal beyond the sovereign will of the voters. The People as a collective unit are best represented by the voters. The People collectively are originally sovereign; hence, the voters are intermittently sovereign. Men can build in institutional safeguards against the misuse of this authority — the Constitution is full of them — but ultimately the voters are sovereign. The People speak through the voters. This was why the Convention appealed to a plebiscite of voters, state by state, not as they were legally represented in the established legislatures, but in state-wide conventions — mini-conventions modeled along the lines of the Philadelphia Convention, and equally controlled by the same national political faction. The language of political philosophy in 1787

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26. I am using the version in Norine Dickson Campbell, *Patrick Henry: Patriot and Statesman* (Old Greenwich, Connecticut: Devin-Adair, 1969), p. 338. This appears in Jonathan Elliot (ed.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, [1836] 1907), III, p. 22.

had made this appeal to the voters not only logical but covenantally necessary. And being necessary, Mr. Madison did his organizational homework well in advance. He made sure that the Federalists would speak for the People.

Let us not be naive. We are not classroom historians, after all. When we read of elections behind the Iron Curtain – pre-1989 elections, that is — or elections in some African democracy, we are not surprised to learn that the existing national administration has been re-elected almost unanimously. We are not surprised because we know that the elections were rigged by those in power. We know it was not a representative procedure. Yet how many American history textbooks raise the obvious question: How did it happen that nine out of the first nine state ratifying conventions voted to ratify, yet from what we can determine from the documentary record, the actual voting public was evenly split? The Man Who Hated Monolithic Faction organized one whale of a monolithic faction in 1787-88. The angry young man got even.

This theology of the People had been prominent in political theory since at least the sixteenth century, but it had been offset by the Christian doctrine of the Creator God. He was seen as both the initiating authority and the final authority. Men had long debated over who held lawful claim to be God's final earthly authority, but there had been no doubt that this final earthly authority was under God. But in the early eighteenth century, this assumption steadily disappeared in the writings of the Commonwealthmen, especially in the popular newspaper, *Cato's Letters*. The language of divinity is applied to the People in this 1721 essay on libel:

I have long thought, that the World are very much mistaken in their Idea and Distinction of Libels. It has been hitherto generally understood that there were no other Libels but those against Magistrates, and those against private Men: Now, to me there seems to be a third Sort of Libels, full as destructive as any of the former can possibly be; I mean, Libels against the People. It was otherwise at *Athens* and *Rome*; where, though particular Men, and even great Men, were often treated with much Freedom and Severity, when they deserved it; yet the People, the Body of the People, were spoken of with the utmost Regard and Reverence: *The sacred Privileges of the People, The inviolable Majesty of the People, The awful Authority of the People, and The unappealable Judgment of the People.* <sup>27</sup>

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27. "Reflections upon Libelling" (June 10, 1721); reprinted in *The English Libertarian Heritage*, edited by David L. Jacobson (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), p. 75. Italics in original.

Notice the final phrase: the unappealable judgment of the People. This is the essence of the divine-rights philosophy: a final, *unitary* court of earthly appeal. But in this case, there is no heavenly court of transcendent appeal. This doctrine of the closed universe is the essence of humanism, as Rushdoony pointed out in 1967:

Humanistic law, moreover, is inescapably totalitarian law. Humanism, as a logical development of evolutionary theory, holds fundamentally to a concept of an evolving universe. This is held to be an "open universe," whereas Biblical Christianity, because of its faith in the triune God and His eternal decree, is said to be a faith in a "closed universe." This terminology not only intends to prejudice the case; it reverses reality. The universe of evolutionism and humanism is a closed universe. There is no law, no appeal, no higher order, beyond and above the universe. Instead of an open window upwards, there is a closed cosmos. There is thus no ultimate law and decree beyond man and the universe. Man's law is therefore beyond criticism except by man. In practice, this means that the positive law of the state is absolute law. The state is the most powerful and most highly organized expression of humanistic man, and the state is the form and expression of humanistic law. Because there is no higher law of God as judge over the universe, over every human order, the law of the state is a closed system of law. There is no appeal beyond it. Man has no "right," no realm of justice, no source of law beyond the state, to which man can appeal against the state. Humanism therefore imprisons man within the closed world of the state and the closed universe of the evolutionary scheme. 28

The Darwinian philosophy of law that has dominated American legal theory since at least O. W. Holmes, Jr.'s *The Common Law (1881)* had been made judicially enforceable by the Constitution itself. Darwinian evolutionary thought is consistent with the Preamble. It is naive — I am tempted to say "terminally naive" — to regard the modern evolutionary view of American Constitutional law as being a deviation from the Constitutional settlement; on the contrary, it was guaranteed by that settlement. If we should appeal to the idea of the Framers' original intent, we are driven straight to the worldview of political Darwinism: a final earthly political court of appeal from which no heavenly appeal is judicially warranted. Well, perhaps not

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28. R. J. Rushdoony, "Humanistic Law," introduction to Hebden Taylor, *The New Legality* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1967), vi-vii. Cf. Cornelius Van Til, *The Doctrine of Scripture*, vol. 1 of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (den Dulk Foundation, 1967), p. 5.

absolutely final. We can always call another Constitutional Convention. We the people. Madison set the precedent.

And Madison was well organized years in advance.

### Judicial Sovereignty

The Constitution's transfer of the locus of initiating sovereignty and therefore final sovereignty to the People has led to a special situation, not foreseen by most of the Framers: the Supreme Court's appropriation of nearly total judicial sovereignty.<sup>29</sup> There was no effective, clear-cut check placed on the Court's authority because the threat was not perceived by the Framers. Inevitably, the Court's authority expanded, for it can declare the true law which governs all legislation.

The Framers believed that Congress would possess the greatest power because it would make the laws. But the biblical covenant model tells us that it is the person who *interprets* the law who is sovereign. The Constitution was written on the assumption that there is a higher law that is sovereign. This was a natural law theory version of biblical law, but it did govern the thinking of the Framers, and the Constitution reflects this belief.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the Supreme Court has attained final judicial sovereignty, for it judges the legitimacy of the laws of Congress in terms of the higher law that the Constitution supposedly embodies, and voters are unwilling generally to overturn the Court by Constitutional amendment. The Supreme Court provides *retroactive legitimacy* to legislation, just as the voters in their ratifying conventions in 1788 provided retroactive legitimacy to the *coup* of 1787. Five unelected jurors for life, immune from the retroactive vengeance of voters, now speak finally in the name of the sover-

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29. As Constitutional scholar and historian Forrest McDonald points out, Congress was originally the most powerful branch, with the Supreme Court the weakest. (Hamilton certainly believed this to be the case: Federalist 78.) McDonald says that the Court's power to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional was exercised only twice prior to the Civil War, "and on both occasions the ferocity of the ensuing opposition caused the justices to fear, with some reason, that the court system would be emasculated if not destroyed." McDonald, "Interpreting the Constitution: Judges-versus History," *The John M. Olin Lectures on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution* (Reston, Virginia: Young America's Foundation, 1987), p. 18. The second case was the infamous *Dred Scott* decision of 1857, in which the Court forced a former slave who was then residing in a free state to return to his condition of enslavement in a slave state.

30. Edwin S. Corwin, *The "Higher Law" Background of American Constitutional Law* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, [1928] 1955).

eign People. No wonder, in the words of Forrest McDonald regarding public opinion in 1787, that "few Americans except lawyers trusted a truly independent judiciary."<sup>31</sup>

Political conservatives cry out against the concentration of power in the hands of the Supreme Court. <sup>32</sup> Such complaining does little good. Others have called the Court's authority judicial tyranny. <sup>33</sup> This also does little good. The Court's power is still unchecked because of public opinion. The voters really do regard the Supreme Court as sacrosanct. Conservatives for a generation have appealed to the Constitution's explicit language and point to the obvious fact that the Framers expected Congress to be the dominant branch. <sup>34</sup> Such appeals are futile. They do no good. The Court's authority is untouched by such appeals. What the Framers may have expected or wanted is here judicially irrelevant; it is the structure of the Constitution's underlying and fundamental principle of *judicial declaration* that is crucial.

### Legislation Through Declaration

The Court is the legislator, for it declares the "true" law of the land, and voters perceive it as possessing the legitimacy to do this. Chief Justice John Marshall's doctrine of implied powers was a correct view of the Constitution. <sup>35</sup> These powers are implied by the very structure of all covenantalism. The earthly judge who declares the true law and applies it to specific circumstances is the earthly sovereign. He who declares the unchanging moral law in individual cases — the *casuist* — is the true lawmaker. So is he who declares the evolving amoral law. Chief Justice Burger has set forth this position clearly: "The cornerstone of our constitutional history and system remains the firm adherence of the Supreme Court to the Marbury principle of judicial review that 'someone must decide' what the Constitution means."<sup>36</sup> Cornerstone, indeed!

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31. Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 85.

32. Rosalie Gordon, *Nine Men Against America: The Supreme Court and Its Attack on American Liberties* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1958).

33. Caroll D. Kilgore, *Judicial Tyranny* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1977).

34. James Burnham, *Congress and the American Tradition* (Chicago: Regnery, 1959).

35. Cf. Gerald Gunther (ed.), *John Marshall's Defense of McCulloch v. Maryland* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1969).

36. Warren Burger, Introduction, William E. Swindler, *The Constitution and Chief Justice Marshall* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1978), p. xiii.



It was what John Marshall formally announced concerning the sovereignty of the Supreme Court, not what the Framers announced about it, even in *The Federalist*, that has determined the history of civil government in the United States. That the Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren produced what Professor Alexander Bickel called a web of subjectivity<sup>37</sup> should surprise no one. This web of subjectivity is the inevitable product of a combining of two doctrines: the biblical doctrine of hierarchical representation and the Darwinian doctrine of the autonomy of man in a world of ceaseless flux. The mythical “higher law” of natural law theory was erased from modern man’s thinking by Darwin, as Rushdoony noted in 1969.<sup>38</sup> This left the Voice of the People in control. This voice in the United States is the latest pronouncement of the civil agency beyond which there is no judicial appeal: the Supreme Court.

#### *Point Two of the Covenant*

Hierarchy is the second point of the biblical covenant model. It is the section that deals with representation. Some office, agency, or individual must represent the people before the throne of God and God before the people. In the church, this is the local pastor or elders. In denominations, it will be the General Assembly, or in some cases, the Synods or Presbyteries acting as a constitutional unit. But the agency, commission, or person with the authority to issue a binding judgment on disputed cases is the *final earthly authority* for that sphere of covenantal human government. In the U.S. government, this clearly is the Supreme Court.

There is no escape from the principle of judicial authority. There must always be a final earthly court of appeal. It can in theory be a plural voice, however: legislature, court, and executive combined, or any two of them. In the twentieth century, the U.S. Supreme Court has become America’s final court of appeal. Five justices speak for the invisible People through the judicially flexible words of the Constitution. The Framers did not recognize this possibility. They did not even bother to stipulate how many Supreme Court justices there should be. They did not understand point two of biblical covenantalism, although the Constitution is structured in terms of

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37. Alexander M. Bickel, *The Supreme Court and the Idea of Progress* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), ch. 3: “The Web of Subjectivity.”

38. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), p. 7.

the five-point biblical covenant model (with a different order, however). They should have seen that the doctrine of judicial review was inevitable. Someone must speak definitively in the name of the sovereign People.

The only way that they could have overcome this transfer of ultimate sovereignty to the Supreme Court would have been through the creation of some sort of institutional appeals structure beyond the Court. If, for instance, the Court's declaration that a law is unconstitutional could be constitutionally overturned by a vote of three-quarters of both houses of Congress plus the signature of the President, a truly federal system of checks and balances would now exist.<sup>39</sup> Instead, the Constitution lodges theoretical judicial authority in the People, and final practical authority in the hands of five people: a five-to-four decision of the Court. It is significant that this constitutional structure was the work of lawyers rather than common people.

*The Evolving Voice of Authority*

The fact is that *there must always be a voice that interprets the will of the sovereign agent in history*. Today, the amorphous deity "We the People" is represented in a sovereign way by five people. This was admitted casually and almost cynically by Chief Justice Burger:

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Constitutional cases – constitutional jurisprudence is open to the Court to change its position, in view of – of changing conditions. And it has done so.

MOYERS: And what does it take for the Court to reverse itself?

CHIEF JUSTICE BURGER: Five votes.<sup>40</sup>

This is process philosophy, a view which has steadily gained control of the Court ever since justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. announced its principles in *The Common Law* in 1881. (His father, O. W. Holmes, Sr., was the author of the clever poem attacking the supposed fragility and rigidity of Calvinism, "The Deacon's Masterpiece; or the Wonderful One-Hess Shay.") This is process philosophy

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39. The conservative political philosopher Wilmore Kendall once said in a 1962 speech at the University of California, Riverside, that Madison had considered proposing this judicial option to the Convention, but had not done so. I have never seen any documentary evidence of this assertion, but the idea is a good one.

40. "The Burger Years," p. 6.

“by the numbers.” The People speak by way of five votes out of a maximum of nine.

The Court had reversed itself in 143 cases by 1972.<sup>41</sup> Of this total, all but seven instances came after the Civil War.<sup>42</sup> All but 28 came after 1913.<sup>43</sup> Over half have come since 1941.<sup>44</sup> This process has been accelerating. The element of judicial discontinuity has now begun to undermine the concept of the Constitution as fundamental law, as covenant. Legal scholars have all but abandoned such a view of the Constitution. Respect for the intentions of the Framers, respect for the idea that the document’s language is perpetually binding, and respect for the idea of binding judicial precedent are now all but gone. This loss of faith has undermined the very concept of Constitutional legitimacy.<sup>45</sup> But without faith in legitimacy to undergird a legal system, self-government becomes anarchy, and the State asserts its will in the name of power alone. Like the Persian kings of old, whose word was law, but only for as long as their power could enforce their word, so is the modern State when the public’s confidence in its judicial legitimacy wanes in response to the assertions of what Glazer has called the imperial judiciary.<sup>46</sup>

The doctrine of judicial review was the only available alternative to the idea of continuing plebiscites. Until the Civil War, the Supreme Court reigned but did not rule. It only asserted its authority to declare a law unconstitutional twice. But as its arrogance has increased, and it has attempted to rule, it has become the ever-changing plebiscite that the Framers feared. But it is a plebiscite of a majority of nine rather than a majority of the voting public. The Constitutionally unavoidable doctrine of the Court’s legitimate representation cannot survive the public’s loss of faith in the existence of a stable, permanent, *fundamental* law which is being represented by the Court. There must be continuity between the voice of the fundamental law and the law itself over time. This continuity has been des-

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41. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, *The Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 1797.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 1790.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 1791.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 1793.

45. Robert Bork, Foreword, Gary L. McDowell, *The Constitution and Contemporary Constitutional Theory* (Cumberland, Virginia: Center for Judicial Studies, 1987), pp. viii-ix.

46. Nathan Glazer, “Towards an Imperial Judiciary?” *Public Interest* (Fall 1975).

troyed in theory by Darwinism and in fact by the twentieth century's political wars to control appointments to the Court. The idea of the legitimate earthly sovereignty of the Court cannot be maintained once the public loses faith in the heavenly origin of the law.

In short, the incorporation of *legitimate* earthly sovereignty was destroyed by the voters in 1788 when they ratified the Constitution, with its denial of the legitimacy of a covenantal oath to the covenantal God who alone is the source of all law. Here is what is most significant covenantally about the Constitution, and therefore most significant overall. It abandoned the source of legitimacy, the Creator. The state constitutions on the whole were explicitly Christian. The Constitution was explicitly non-Christian: Article VI, Clause III on official federal oaths. The language of natural law in the Declaration, the absence of any religious test oath in the Articles, and the concept of the religiously neutral civil compact in the Constitution, began the formal judicial break nationally with Christianity. The Fourteenth Amendment completed it.

Then came Darwinism. We can accurately date the coming of widespread unbelief in the United States: 1865-90.<sup>47</sup> With the rapid philosophical erosion of the traditional eighteenth-century worldview, the long-term covenantal basis of U. S. Constitutional law was undermined — I believe permanently.

### The Antifederalists' Warning

Patrick Henry was one of the few critics who sensed the danger.<sup>48</sup> As mentioned earlier, Hamilton went so far as to say that "the judiciary is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power," and he assured his readers that "it can never attack with suc-

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47. James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), Pt. II.

48. He warned that the implicit doctrine of judicial review would eventually lead to a conflict with the common law principle of trial by jury: Elliot, *Debates*, III, pp. 539-42. It is one of the strangest ironies of American history that Chief Justice John Marshall, the man who first declared openly the doctrine of judicial review in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), was appointed Chief Justice by Adams in the fall of 1800. His predecessor, Oliver Ellsworth, had as a U.S. Senator written the Judiciary Act of 1789, which permitted the Court to overturn acts of state courts and legislatures. He later became Supreme Court Chief Justice. He resigned in time for outgoing President John Adams to appoint John Marshall to the position. Had Ellsworth waited just a few weeks before resigning, the likely nominee by Jefferson would have been Spencer Roane, Henry's son-in-law, who was a defender of the state's rights position. Campbell, *Patrick Henry*, pp. 367-68.

cess either of the other two; and that all possible care is requisite to enable it to defend itself against their attacks .<sup>49</sup> Hamilton was wrong. At least some of the Antifederalists saw what was coming. "The weakening of the place of the jury, the provision for a complete system of national courts, the extensive jurisdiction of the national judiciary, the provision for appeal to the Supreme Court on questions of fact as well as law, and the supremacy of the Constitution and the laws and treaties made thereunder all seemed to give enormous power over the daily concerns of men to a small group of irresponsible judges."<sup>50</sup> Storing then cites "Brutus," whose Antifederalist writings he regards as the best regarding the federal judiciary.<sup>51</sup> "Brutus" prophesied that "the supreme court under this constitution would be exalted above all other power in the government, and subject to no controul."<sup>52</sup> He forecast clearly what subsequently has taken place:

The power of this court is in many cases superior to that of the legislature. I have shewed, in a former paper, that this court will be authorised to decide upon the meaning of the constitution, and that, not only according to the natural and ob[vious] meaning of the words, but also according to the spirit and intention of it. In the exercise of this power they will not be subordinate to, but above the legislature. For all the departments of this government will receive their powers, so far as they are expressed in the constitution, from the people immediately, who are the source of power. The legislature can only exercise such powers as are given them by the constitution, they cannot assume any of the rights annexed to the judicial, for this plain reason, that the same authority which vested the legislature with their powers, vested the judicial with theirs – both are derived from the same source, both therefore are equally valid, and the judicial hold their powers independently of the legislature, as the legislature do of the judicial. – The supreme tort then have a right, independent of the legislature, to give a construction to the constitution and every part of it, and there is no power provided in this system to correct their construction or do it away. If, therefore, the legislature pass any laws, inconsistent with the sense the judges put upon the constitution, they will declare it void; and therefore in this respect their power is superior to that of the legislature. In

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49. Hamilton, Federalist No. 78: *The Federalist*, p. 523.

50. Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 50.

51. Storing, introductory remarks, "Essays of Brutus," *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 7 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), II, p. 358.

52. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 437-37.

England the judges are not only subject to have their decisions set aside by the house of lords, for error, but in cases where they give an explanation to the laws or constitution of the country, contrary to the sense of the parliament, though the parliament will not set aside the judgement of the court, yet, they have authority, by a new law, to explain a former one, and by this means to prevent a reception of such decisions. But no such power is in the legislature. The judges are supreme – and no law, explanatory of the constitution, will be binding on them.<sup>53</sup>

Today, only a handful of legal scholars still argue that both Congress and the Executive possess the authority to enforce and interpret the Constitution. Constitutional historians do not tell their students the truth, namely, that John Marshall had to grab at historical straws in his attempt to find Constitutional support for his conclusion that the Supreme Court alone was charged with the duty of interpreting the Constitution. He used the strange argument that the judges take an oath to the Constitution. As Gordon Tullock reminds us, the argument makes equal sense when applied to all other departments of the federal government.<sup>54</sup>

#### *A Final Interpreter*

Nevertheless, Marshall's position, while not grounded in the words of the Constitution, was fully grounded in covenantal reality. There must always be a final interpreter of the civil law, and by refusing to specify a judicial appeals system based on plural interpreters – for instance, three-quarters of both branches of Congress plus the President vs. the Supreme Court – the Framers implicitly accepted the notion of a unitary interpreter. There are no obvious Constitutional checks and balances in this crucial task of civil government, the task of declaring valid law. The Framers, by not specifying a means of appeal beyond the decisions of the Supreme Court, except the involved system of Constitutional amendment, left

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53. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 440-41.

54. Gordon Tullock, "Constitutional Mythology," *New Individualist Review*, III (Spring 1965), p. 584. This has been reprinted in one volume by Liberty Press, Indianapolis, Indiana. Tullock holds a law degree but is a self-taught economist, and he is one of the two developers of the economics subdiscipline known as public choice theory. His colleague James Buchanan received the Nobel Prize in economics in 1985; that Tullock did not was probably because he has never taken a college class in economics. This was too much of an embarrassment for the Nobel Committee. He is Professor of Economics at the University of Arizona, but for many years taught at the University of Virginia.

no institutional basis for rejecting the Court's position as the final voice of authority. Over time, the Supreme Court gained sufficient legitimacy – *legitimacy by default* – to monopolize this sovereign power of judicial review, especially after the Civil War.

Scholars properly regard as a Constitutional aberration President Andrew Jackson's decision to ignore the Supreme Court's decisions in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), which defended the Indians' tribal lands from encroachment by the state of Georgia. 55 The President was not impeached for his decision, nor did anyone in Congress suggest that he should be. The fact remains that this is the only peacetime example in U.S. history of a President's successfully denying the authority of the Court. The authority of the Court was established implicitly because of the structure of the biblical covenant, which the Constitution imitates.

#### *Fundamental Law*

The Framers regarded the Constitution as fundamental law. This, Paul Eidelberg argues persuasively, is the foundation of the concept of judicial review.<sup>56</sup> Article VI, Clause 2 states that "This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State to the Contrary notwithstanding in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding." But a fundamental law needs a fundamental interpreter, a fundamental casuist, a final earthly court of appeal. Someone must speak *representatively* for the sovereign source of law. This is the U.S. Supreme Court. It was not intended to be so by the Framers, but it has become so. As the Massachusetts Bay Colony's General Court became the legislature, so has the modern Supreme Court become the legislature. The difference is, the Puritans of New England acknowledged the transformation and made this court elective.

The Constitution is a covenant, Eidelberg correctly observes, 'for this term denotes its juridical basis as a permanent law.'<sup>57</sup> If the people are the true source of law, as the Constitution states in the

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55. Alfred H. Kelly and Winfred A. Harbison, *The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development* (rev. ed.; New York: Norton, 1955), pp. 302-3.

56. Paul Eidelberg, *The Philosophy of the American Constitution: A Reinterpretation of the Intentions of the Founding Fathers* (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 216.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

preamble, then there is only one alternative to the doctrine of judicial review: continual plebiscites. But continual plebiscites would destroy the concept of permanence — the heart of a covenant. 58 Too much political change, too much political passion, and too many shifting majorities will destroy the very idea of a covenant. The Framers recognized this, and sought ways to cool public passions. 59 Thus, concludes Eidelberg, the doctrine of judicial review was implicit in the Constitution, whether the Framers saw this or not.

### Appellate Jurisdiction

The Framers did insert a clause to limit the Court's authority, but it has been used infrequently and is inherently not in agreement with the spirit of the Constitution: the ability of Congress to remove most issues from the Court's jurisdiction. All Congress has to do is to pass a resolution removing the Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction. That would do it. Article III, Section 2, Clause 2, of the Constitution reads as follows:

In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, and other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be a Party, the Supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all other Cases before mentioned, the Supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.

There is no mention of the President. Whether he must agree with Congress on this removal of the Court's appellate jurisdiction has never been decided. An interesting question is: What if the Court were to say that the President must agree with Congress, but Congress disagrees? What if Congress should remove the jurisdiction of the Court in this particular area of disagreement?

### *Ex Parte McCordle*

The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction only in cases where ambassadors and consuls are involved, or in cases in which states shall be a party. The Supreme Court 'has in the past acknowledged this long-neglected judicial fact. Consider the case of *Ex Parte McCordle* (1868). In the late 1860's, Congress imposed a military dictatorship

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58. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-32.



over the defeated South. During Reconstruction, a man was convicted in a military court of certain acts that were deemed by that court as obstructing Reconstruction. The Supreme Court decided to review the case. Here is the analysis of the case from the Library of Congress:

Anticipating that the Court might void, or at least undermine, congressional reconstruction of the Confederate States, Congress enacted over the President's veto a provision repealing the act which authorized the appeal *McCardle* had taken. Although the Court had already heard argument on the merits, it then dismissed for want of jurisdiction. "We are not at liberty to inquire into the motives of the legislators. We can only examine into its power under the Constitution; and the power to make exceptions to the appellate jurisdiction of this court is given by express words."<sup>60</sup>

The President had been asked to sign the measure, but the text of the analysis does not say why. The Constitution surely does not mention any such requirement. Perhaps Congress submitted it to President Johnson out of spite; they knew his veto could be overridden. In any case, the Court withdrew peacefully. It had no choice. The Constitution is clear, and previous cases had admitted such authority on the part of Congress.

#### *Initial Judicial Restraint*

Obviously, this is a very ticklish subject. Like the principle of judicial review, it was seldom invoked in the early days of the republic. Judicial review is not a principle written into the Constitution. Chief Justice John Marshall invoked it in the famous *Marbury u. Madison* case in 1803 when he declared an Act of Congress unconstitutional. The only other time prior to the Civil War that the Court invoked it was in the *Dred Scott u. Sandford* case of 1857, which more or less guaranteed the Civil War. The Court determined that Dred Scott was the property of his southern owner, even though he had been taken into states that did not recognize the lawfulness of chattel slavery. He did not thereby become a citizen, so he could not sue in federal court, the Supreme Court declared. The Court declared that Negroes could not be citizens of the U. S., although they could become state citizens. That decision was overruled at the cost of 600,000 dead. The 14th Amendment (1868) was the result.

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60. Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, *The Constitution of the United States: Analysis and Interpretation* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 752.

A similar self-restraint has been shown by Congress in removing the Court's appellate jurisdiction. In fact, the decrease of such assertions of authority has paralleled the increase of the Court's willingness to declare laws unconstitutional. It is clear why: Congress *has defined authority to the Supreme Court*. A power never announced by the Constitution (judicial review) has triumphed, and a power clearly announced by it — Congress' control over the Court's appellate jurisdiction — has dropped from the memory of Congress and the vast majority of citizens.

The source of the Court's power is the *implied* doctrine of judicial review, the idea that in law, as in politics, there must be this sign on someone's desk: "The buck stops here." Again, citing former Chief Justice Burger, who has set forth this position clearly: "The cornerstone of our constitutional history and system remains the firm adherence of the Supreme Court to the Marbury principle of judicial review that 'someone must decide' what the Constitution means."<sup>61</sup>

### The Break With the Colonial Past

Sociologist Robert Bellah, in his provocatively titled book, *The Broken Covenant*, begins with a chapter titled, "America's Myth of Origin." He speaks of the era of the Revolution, from the Declaration to Washington's inauguration in 1789, in religious terms: "We will want to consider the act of conscious meaning-creation, of conscious taking responsibility for oneself and one's society, as a central aspect of America's myth of origin, an act that, by the very radicalness of its beginning, a beginning *ex nihilo* as it were, is redolent of the sacred."<sup>62</sup> He refers to these datable acts as "mythic gestures" that stirred up images and symbols of earlier myths. The newness of America is one such myth. So is the wilderness theme. So is reform and rebirth. So is the promised land and the city on a hill. These are an biblical images, he says.<sup>63</sup> (The book is a collection of lectures delivered at Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Institute of Religion.) He recognizes the Augustinian-Calvinist-Puritan roots of the American experiment in freedom.<sup>64</sup> The Revolution appropriated these biblical themes by reworking them in a secular mold.

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61. Burger, Introduction, William E. Swindler, *The Constitution and Chief Justice Marshall*, p. xiii.

62. Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: Crossroad Book, Seabury Press, 1975), p. 4.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-16.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

We can see this clearly in a statement by James Madison toward the end of his life. He appropriated the postmillennial eschatology of John Winthrop's city on a hill in describing the position of America as the workshop of liberty: "The free system of government we have established is so congenial with reason, with common sense, and with universal feeling, that it must produce approbation and a desire of imitation, as avenues may be found for truth to the knowledge of nations. Our Country, if it does justice to itself, will be the workshop of liberty to the Civilized World, and do more than any other for the uncivilized ."<sup>65</sup> This was nothing short of messianic. It was also a false prophecy; no nation has ever successfully imported and applied our Constitution. At best, they have imitated our economics, not our political structure. Bellah writes:

The men who consciously felt themselves to be "founding fathers" had a profound conviction of the solemnity and significance of their role as lawgivers. John Adams wrote that he was grateful to have "been sent into life at a time when the greatest lawgivers of antiquity would have wished to live." . . . At the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries Americans had wavered about claiming to be a city set on a hill with the eyes of the world upon it. But by the end of the 18th they were certain once more.<sup>66</sup>

### *Anticlerical Moralism*

What the historians fail to discuss is the relationship between the antinomianism and anticlericalism of the Great Awakening and the pseudo-classicism of the Framers. The loudly professed moralism was conspicuously vague about details. In short, the moralism of the Framers, like the moralism of the pastors inside the churches, was devoid of casuistry. The Framers had substituted undefined classical virtue for the Great Awakening's undefined Christian piety; both views were self-consciously opposed to biblical law.

The basis of the American civil religion was its abandonment of 1) biblical covenantalism, 2) the public announcement of the historic creeds of the Church, and 3) the pre-Revolutionary requirement of

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65. Cited in Adrien Koch, *Power, Morals, and the Founding Fathers: Essays in the Interpretation of the American Enlightenment* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, [1961] 1975), p. 105.

66. Bellah, *Broken Covenant*, p. 33. It is clear that America in the late twentieth century is far more like the America of the late seventeenth than the late eighteenth. This is why a growing sense of radical spiritual change is likely to manifest itself as the new millennium approaches.

civil magistrates to invoke Trinitarian oaths. Christianity became instrumental to the preservation of the political order. It became an appendage of the State to the extent that it retained any civil function at all. The doctrine of the separation of Church and State became in practice subordination of Christianity to the State. While the national government was prohibited by Article VI, Clause 3 from even recognizing the civil government's dependence on Christianity, the churches were expected to become amateur cheerleaders for the Constitution and the State. This they have dutifully done from the beginning. There is no escape from the principle of the civil covenant; the churches have faithfully come to the altar of the empty pantheon to drop its pinch of incense to the genius of the sovereign People.

The covenant's law-order had already been broken by Jonathan Edwards and his emphasis on emotionalism and "sweetness."<sup>67</sup> The Framers simply worked out judicially what had been accepted morally: the irrelevance of biblical law for civil government. The shattered church covenants of the Great Awakening, especially Presbyterianism, like the shattered civil covenants of New England that the Great Awakening produced,<sup>68</sup> could be restored only by an appeal to the newly emerging civil religion, a religion devoid of biblical law and Trinitarian oaths. For over a century, the Calvinists had talked about the law of God but never the laws of God; they talked moralism, not covenantalism. They talked about the moral law of God but not the civil law. (They still do.) The result was a crabbed theology that did not offer specific standards for social transformation, but surely burdened men with guilt. It was a theology, as Haroutunian has described it, of "a consistent and unlovable legalism."<sup>69</sup> And as he shows, the Unitarian revolt in the 1770's steadily replaced this crabbed Calvinism in the thinking of intellectual and political leaders. 70 Baptized Unitarianism had replaced pietistic Calvinism as an operational social ideal by the late 1780's. The heirs of the Commonwealthmen replaced the heirs of the holy commonwealth in the seats of authority.

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67. Edwards, *Treatise on the Religious Affections* (1746).

68. Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), Parts 4 and 5.

69. Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety Versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York: Holt, 1932), p. 177.

70. *Ibid.*, ch. 8: "The Unitarian Revolt."

*Discarding Puritanism*

Thomas Pangle has emphasized the sharp covenantal break with the past made by the Framers. He insists that "there is a striking discontinuity, as regards underlying constitutional theory, between the seventeenth-century charters or compacts and the grounding documents of the Revolution and the Founding."<sup>71</sup> We can see the difference in the covenanting documents. "The Mayflower Compact, for example, does not suggest a social contract of independent and equal men constituting by consent their own sovereign and representative government for the purpose of the protection of their own liberties and property."<sup>72</sup> They characterized themselves as loyal subjects of King James. Their purpose was twofold: the glory of God and the honor of king and country. The Fundamental Articles of New Haven (1639) asked everyone to assent to the truth that "The Scriptures doe hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties which they are to perform to God and men as well in the government of famylyes and commonwealths as in matters of the church."<sup>73</sup> After surveying several other early colonial laws, Pangle then states what should be obvious to any Christian historian and any secular historian who has studied the primary source documents of the two eras:

These were the constitutional foundations of the first American civil societies, societies that comprised men who believed, and rightly believed, that they were liberating themselves from the oppressions and fanaticisms of the Old World. *This was the moral world*, or the freest that the moral world could conceive itself as being, before the conceptions of Thomas Hobbes, Benedict Spinoza, and John Locke shattered its foundations. 74

*Shattered foundations*: this is the covenantal legacy of the U. S. Constitution in the history of the American nation. It is time for Christians to stop living in the shadow of Whig and Unitarian historiography. It is time to admit the obvious. The conspiracy in Philadelphia was a success, and so was the revolution that followed in the ratifying conventions. The subsequent events proceeded as outlined by

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71. Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founding Fathers and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 112.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-13.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

the Antifederalists: the centralization of power, the weakening of local juries, 75 the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment, and a Senate filled with atheists.

### Conclusion

The Preamble of the Constitution and the plebiscite of 1788 established a new covenantal foundation for the American republic. It transferred ultimate sovereignty from God to the People as a whole, and mediatory political sovereignty from the states to the national government. The question then became: Which branch speaks authoritatively in the name of the new divinity? While the Framers did not expect the Supreme Court to emerge as the People's spokesman, it was inherent in the nature of the Constitutional settlement: 1) the inescapable doctrine of judicial review; 2) a unitary reviewer (i. e., no provision for an appeal to the plural sovereignties of President and Congress); 3) lifetime tenure for federal judges (continuity of the spoken word). The lawyers created a civil government made in their own image, and they transferred penultimate sovereignty to the "lawyers' lawyers," those sitting permanently on the Supreme Court until they die or voluntarily resign. Only the voters can overcome the Court through the amending process, or so it has appeared.

There is no escape from judicial authority. There must always be a final earthly court of appeal. The Framers did not fully recognize this. They should have seen that the Constitutional doctrine of judicial review was inevitable. The only way that they could have overcome this transfer of ultimate sovereignty to the Supreme Court would have been the creation of some sort of appeals structure beyond the Court, such as my three-quarter's vote suggestion. Instead, the Constitution lodges theoretical judicial authority in the People, and final practical authority in the hands of five people (a five-to-four decision of the Court).

The fact is that *there must always be a voice that interprets the will of the sovereign agent in history*. Today, the amorphous deity "We the People" is represented in a sovereign way by five people. A Constitutional amendment can override the Court, as can a new Convention, but these alterations are costly to organize and infrequent. The Court not only reigns today; it also rules.

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75. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

The remarkable fact is that this development was foreseen clearly by "Brutus." Analyzing the Preamble, he recognized that a vast expansion of national political power was inevitable:

To discover the spirit of the constitution, it is of the first importance to attend to the principal ends and designs it has in view. These are expressed in the preamble, in the following words, *viz.* "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution," &c. If the end of the government is to be learned from these words, which are clearly designed to declare it, it is obvious it has in view every object which is embraced by any government. The preservation of internal peace – the due administration of justice – and to provide for the defence of the community, seems to include all the objects of government; but if they do not, they are certainly comprehended in the words, "to provide for the general welfare." If it be further considered, that this constitution, if it is ratified, will not be a compact entered into by states, in their corporate capacities, but an agreement of the people of the United States, as one great body politic, no doubt can remain, but that the great end of the constitution, if it is to be collected from the preamble, in which its end is declared, is to constitute a government which is to extend to every case for which any government is instituted, whether external or internal. The courts, therefore, will establish this as a principle in expounding the constitution, and will give every part of it such an explanation, as will give latitude to every department under it, to take cognizance of every matter, not only that affects the general and national concerns of the union, but also of such as relate to the administration of private justice, and to regulating the internal and local affairs of the different parts.<sup>76</sup>

The means of this centralization of power, he predicted, would be the Supreme Court's power of judicial review:

Perhaps nothing could have been better conceived to facilitate the abolition of the state governments than the constitution of the judicial. They will be able to extend the limits of the general government gradually, and by insensible degrees, and to accommodate themselves to the temper of the people. Their decisions on the meaning of the constitution will commonly take place in cases which arise between individuals, with which the public will not be generally acquainted; one adjudication will form a precedent to the next, and this to a following one. These cases will immediately affect individuals only; so that a series of determinations will probably take place be-

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76. "Brutus," *Complete Anti-Federalist*, II, p. 424.

fore even the people will be informed of them. In the mean time all the art and address of those who wish for the change will be employed to make converts to their opinion. . . .

Had the construction of the constitution been left with the legislature, they would have explained it at their peril; if they exceed their powers, or sought to find, in the spirit of the constitution, more than was expressed in the letter, the people from whom they derived their power could remove them, and do themselves right; and indeed I can see no other remedy that the people can have against their rulers for encroachments of this nature. A constitution is a compact of a people with their rulers; if the rulers break the compact, the people have a right and ought to remove them and do themselves justice; but in order to enable them to do this with the greater facility, those whom the people chuse at stated periods, should have the power in the last resort to determine the sense of the compact; if they determine contrary to the understanding of the people, an appeal will lie to the people at the period when the rulers are to be elected, and they will have it in their power to remedy the evil; but when this power is lodged in the hands of men independent of the people, and of their representatives, and who are not, constitutionally, accountable for their opinions, no way is left to controul them but *with a high hand and an outstretched arm*. 77

If America's national covenant remains broken, the Court will neither reign nor rule forever. In the longer run, there is no question where we are headed:

(A Psalm of David.) The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth (Ps. 110:1-3).

Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he bath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he bath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (I Cor. 15:24-28).

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77. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 441, 442



The natural leaders of the American people were at last assembled for the purpose of deliberating upon the whole question of the American state. They closed the doors upon the idle curiosity and the crude criticism of the multitude, adopted the rule of the majority in their acts, and proceeded to reorganize the American state and frame for it an entirely new central government. . . . This was the transcendent result of their labors. It certainly was not understood by the Confederate Congress, or by the legislatures of the commonwealths, or by the public generally, that they were to undertake any such problem. It was generally supposed that they were there for the purpose simply of improving the machinery of the Confederate government and increasing somewhat its powers. There was, also, but one legal way for them to proceed in reorganizing the American state as the original basis of the constitution which they were about to propose, *viz*; they must send the plan therefore, as a *preliminary proposition*, to the Confederate Congress, procure its adoption by that body and its recommendation by that body to the legislatures of the commonwealths, and finally secure its approval by the legislature of every commonwealth. The new sovereignty, thus legally established, might then be legally and constitutionally appealed to for the adoption of any plan of government which the convention might choose to propose. The convention did not, however, proceed in any such manner. What they actually did, stripped of all fiction and verbiage, was to assume constituent powers, ordain a constitution of government and of liberty, and demand the *plebiscite* thereon, over the heads of all existing legally organized powers. Had Julius or Napoleon committed these acts they would have been pronounced *coup d'état* [sic]. Looked at from the side of the people exercising the *plebiscite*, we term the movement revolution. The convention clothed its acts and assumptions in more moderate language than I have used, and professed to follow a more legal course than I have indicated. . . . Of course the mass of the people were not at all able to analyze the real character of this procedure. It is probable that many of the members of the convention 'itself did not fully comprehend just what they were doing. . . . Really, however, it deprived the Congress and the legislatures of all freedom of action by invoking the *plebiscite*. It thus placed those bodies under the necessity of affronting the source of their own existence unless they yielded unconditionally to the demands of the convention.

John W. Burgess (1893)\*

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\*Burgess, *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law*, vol. 1, *Sovereignty and Liberty* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1893), pp. 104-6.

### CONCLUSION, PART 3

*And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram (Gen. 14:13).*

*Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods (Ex. 23:32).*

*When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them. . .*

What went wrong with the American experiment in Christian freedom? Essentially, the same thing that has been going wrong with Christianity since the early second century: a compromise with false gods. It began in the early Church with the assumption that the false gods of Greek philosophy spoke to man with the same common language and message that the God of the Bible speaks. This intellectual error has continued to undermine all attempts to construct Christian civilization ever since.

The idea that there is common ground intellectually with covenant-breakers is really a symptom of a much worse error: the idea that there is common *ethical* ground between the believer and unbeliever. This is not to say that there is no possible connection. There is. It is based on the fact that all men are made in God's image. There can therefore be limited cooperation under some historical conditions because of the *work* of the law written on the hearts of all covenant-breakers (Rem. 2:15). This does not refer to God's law itself, which is the exclusive heart-engraved possession of Christians (Heb. 8:8-11).<sup>1</sup>

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1. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Remans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959), I, pp. 72-76.

The possibility of such cooperation declines as covenant-breakers and covenant-keepers begin to act more consistently with their underlying rival religious presuppositions.<sup>2</sup>

The idea that there can be common ground ethically and intellectually between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers then leads to the third error: there can be common ground judicially (civil covenants). This is the assumption that officially undergirds the common hierarchies, laws, and courts of all modern secular civil governments.

It does not matter if, for a time, subordinate civil governments continue to maintain a Christian confession. The covenantal confession of the national civil government inevitably will determine the covenantal confession of the regional civil governments under it. The central government must settle regional disputes and make national policy in terms of a single confession. Regional and local civil governments have agreed to subordinate themselves to a common central government. The god of this central government then becomes the suzerain of the local governments. The national pantheon may be full or it may be empty; the fact of the matter is, the god of the national covenant is the god of the composite local governments. There is no escape from the five points of the covenant. Things may not appear to be this way when the covenant is first cut, but here is where the system must end up, unless the nation: 1) changes its covenant voluntarily, 2) falls militarily to another nation, or 3) breaks apart into smaller jurisdictional units.

Two centuries after the United States broke covenant with God, very few American Christians have any idea that this was what took place in 1788. They see the growing evils that surround them, yet they do not even suspect a connection between these events and the events of 1785-89. They do not think in terms of sanctions against covenantal apostasy. They do not think covenantally.

James Madison did. So did John Adams.

### The American Revolution

Having a common enemy in 1776, i.e., Great Britain, made it easy for the Christian state commonwealths to forget a biblical covenantal requirement: the prohibition of covenants between covenant-

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2. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 6.

keeping commonwealths and covenant-breaking commonwealths. "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods" (Ex. 23: 32). Temporary political and military alliances and confederations with covenant-breakers are legitimate, as the example of Abraham shows (Gen.14:13); civil covenants are not.<sup>3</sup> They forgot because the Unitarian religion of Isaac Newton had already successfully compromised the Trinitarian religion of Jesus Christ.

Everyone in colonial America assumed that there are common, God-given ("natural") laws and rights. Everyone assumed that a public acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the Unitarian god of Newton was the covenantal equivalent of a public acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the Trinitarian God of the Bible. They assumed, as Christian Masons assumed (and still assume), that the Great Architect of the Universe (G. A. O. T. U.) is the Creator God of the Book of Genesis. Thus, when Great Britain became perceived as the common enemy of all the colonies, the patriots of the covenantally Christian states assumed that they could make a military alliance with the states that were not formally covenanted to the God of the Bible, or at least less formally covenanted. They assumed that because the citizens of all the states were Christians, there was no danger in a confederation among the state governments that politically represented these Christian citizens. There was great danger, as events soon proved. There was also the thorn of Rhode Island.

The war escalated rapidly, and self-defense appeared to require more than a mere confederation; it required a covenant. The Declaration of Independence was more than a statement of the creation of a new alliance; it declared the creation of a new nation of sovereign states. It was a classic halfway covenant. In the words of Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address, it was a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

All men are indeed created equal: equally guilty of transgressing God's covenant with Adam, equally under the negative sanctions of God. But a new birth is possible by God's grace: adoption by God through Jesus Christ into the household of God (John 1:12). This makes men *covenantally unequal*. It creates an eternal distinction between two kinds of people: covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers. These rival judicial conditions must be revealed in radically different

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3. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), ch. 9.

views of their civil judicial status. There will be screening. The question is: *By whose covenant?*

The problem in understanding this judicial screening process is easy to state but hard to comprehend, namely, *covenants are judicially binding under God*. He takes them seriously – as seriously as He takes Church covenants and family covenants. The civil and military alliance of the Revolutionary period, from July 4, 1776, until the ratification of the Articles by the state legislatures in 1781, was more than an alliance; it was a covenant. The Declaration of Independence was not heralded as a **covenantal** document, but it was one. It had to be; it formally dissolved the previous civil covenantal ties with Great Britain: ‘When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them. . . .’ The sovereign of this new civil covenant was Newton’s Unitarian god of nature. Thus, the next step – establishing the by-laws of a formal covenant – was far easier to take.<sup>4</sup>

#### *A Unitarian Rebellion*

In their act of Unitarian political rebellion, the colonies committed treason, not just against Great Britain, but against God. This is what the heirs of the American Revolution never admit, even in private. Neither the revolutionaries nor their heirs have taken biblical covenant theology seriously, so the covenantal character of that civil rebellion has simply been ignored for over two centuries.

The revolutionary leaders did not clearly and formally appeal to the Trinitarian God of the Bible in defending their rebellion; instead, they appealed forthrightly again and again to Newton’s Unitarian god. The Congress asked Jefferson to write the covenantal document that formally broke the existing covenant with the King. Jefferson became their covenantal representative, and therefore the ‘new nation’s representative (point two of the biblical covenant).

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4. The Declaration is sometimes referred to as having established the nation’s ‘organic’ law. This is the language of philosophical realism, religious pantheism, secular conservatism, and Roman Catholicism. The Declaration was a covenant treaty under a god that bound the formerly subordinate British states into a new judicial union. Covenants are *judicial*, not organic. We must abandon both nominalism (contractualism) and realism (organicism) in our thinking.

Congress then sanctioned this act of civil covenant-breaking when its members signed the document (point four). Had they made their case for separation in terms of the monarchy's 250-year-old break with the Bible — Erastianism, the theology of the national State Church — or with the growing Deism of the Parliament and the resultant corruption and tyranny, an unlimited Parliamentary power asserted by Parliament<sup>5</sup> and defended by Blackstone, they could have justified their civil rebellion biblically. But they chose to have Christianity's mortal enemy write the nation's covenant-breaking document. And so John Winthrop's dream died.

*There is no neutrality.* There is no neutral legal ground between a civil covenant under one sovereign and a civil covenant under another. A new covenant and a new sovereign is substituted for an earlier covenant and sovereign. To use the language of the Arminian and Deistic social contract theorists, there is never a return to the "state of nature." The colonists knew this much, even if they did not understand biblical covenant theology very well. They were necessarily creating a new civil covenant when they broke the old one. This is why Congress on July 4 set up a committee to create a national seal.

#### *Church and State in 1776*

Great Britain had unquestionably become bureaucratic. It was no longer the nation it had once been. But it was still a covenantally Christian nation. In fact, one of the major resentments that the Protestants of the colonies had against Great Britain was that they believed that the Church of England was planning to send a bishop to the colonies, therefore making it much easier to ordain new Anglican pastors here. Previously, candidates for the Anglican ministry had been required to travel to London, where the Bishop of London would consider ordaining them. No one else had this authority. This

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5. Parliament's Declaratory Act of Feb. 3, 1766, was announced in preparation for Parliament's repeal of the Stamp Act (taxes on formal sanctioning documents in the colonies) two weeks later. The Declaratory Act affirmed the following: "That the King's Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal and Commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever." Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (New York: Collier, 1963), pp. 347-48.

sea journey drastically reduced the supply of Anglican pastors in the colonies. (The Presbyterians faced a similar constraint: either advanced education in Scotland or at the tiny College of New Jersey. This restriction was later to cripple their missions program in the West, from which the church never recovered. The Baptists and Methodists captured the West and thereby the nation for Roger Williams' commonwealth vision.)<sup>6</sup> The colonists suspected that this move by the Anglican Church was an attempt to strengthen Anglicanism and therefore the English crown, for the King was the head of the Church.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the original Erastian error of Reformation England – a national church with the civil sovereign as its head – had at last led to a major political crisis. This, too, was an aspect of God's historic sanctions. When Saul had offered a sacrifice instead of Samuel, he violated God's law (I Sam. 13:9-15). The same was true of Uzziah (II Chr. 22:19). Saul lost his kingdom; Uzziah was stricken with leprosy. George III lost a war and claims to most of a continent

Christians all over the world in the mid-eighteenth century still believed that it was necessary for the State to finance the Church. This placed the Church economically under the State to some degree. Christians, then as now, did not understand that the State is a ministry of God for the suppression of evil — a covenant institution which is supposed to impose exclusively negative sanctions. By making the State into an organization like the family or Church — an institution imposing positive sanctions — Christians created a perverse institution that could masquerade as a blessing. It was a curse in disguise, a wolf in sheep's clothing. It still is. (Fortunately, it is a nearly bankrupt wolf. )s

#### *The Defection of the Pastors*

A majority of colonial patriot pastors became Whig Commonwealthmen rather than Holy Commonwealthmen during the years of the Revolution. They became dissenters in the sense of the Whig radical dissenters. They saw the need to escape an Anglican bishop

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6. Leonard J. Trinterud, *The Forming of an American Tradition: A Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 269-71.

7. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faith, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Trinterud, *Forming*, ch. 13.

8. Peter G. Peterson and Neal Howe, *On Borrowed Time: How the Growth in Entitlement Spending Threatens America's Future* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1988).

in the colonies, but they did not see the enormous threat to Christian civilization posed by the Unitarians and Masons who were becoming the colonial leaders, and who were articulating the civil principles of the Revolution. The pastors became “the black regiment” of the Revolution,<sup>9</sup> but they did not become its general officers. In 1776, they became chaplains at home and in camp for an army that was under the hierarchical control of a dedicated Mason of great public virtue. They preached their fast-day sermons and their regimental sermons just as they had preached election-day sermons since the Indian wars of 1675-76: as anointers of the State. Their messages had been self-consciously devoid of specific biblical judicial content for a century by the time of the Revolutionary War.<sup>10</sup> This did not change, 1776-1788.

The pastors had long since deferred politically to the lawyers. The lawyers inherited the kingdom of politics during the American Revolution. They did this ingeniously; in fact, like the rise of the empire in Rome, politics fell into their hands as a by-product of war.

The Christians made that most fundamental of foreign policy mistakes: “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” They made it within each colony when they allowed Unitarians, Deists, and Masons to make the civil case for revolution, and they made it again in the creation of a new nation that was formally subordinate to the Unitarian god of Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams. When they broke their state covenants with the English King on the basis of political and economic grievances — the self-interested complaints of the lawyers and the merchants — when in fact they needed to break covenant with a morally corrupt Parliament and the Erastian Anglican Church, they broke their covenant with the God of the Bible. He immediately delivered them into the hands of their theological enemies. They wound up in 1788 with a broken national halfway covenant and a new covenantal bondage. We are in that bondage still.

From the day that John Witherspoon signed the Declaration of Independence, as the symbolic representative of the colonial clergy, with Christian physician Benjamin Rush alongside, the new halfway

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9. *Peter Oliver's Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View*, edited by Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, [1781] 1961), pp. 41-45.

10. Gary North, “From Medieval Economics to Indecisive Pietism: Second-Generation Preaching in New England, 1661-1690,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, VI (Summer 1979).



covenant was sealed. Rush's confidence in the wisdom of this act began to waver within a year;<sup>11</sup> Witherspoon's never did. After July 4, 1776, it was then just a matter of extending the apostate principles of the original halfway covenant into a full-scale apostate covenant.

### The New Nationalism

The language of the laws of nature and nature's god disappeared from the Constitution. So did the twin doctrines of natural law and natural rights. Historian Cad Becker wrote in 1922: "In the Declaration the foundation of the United States is indissolubly associated with a theory of politics, a philosophy of human rights which is valid, if at all, not for Americans only, but for all men. This association gives the Declaration its perennial interest."<sup>12</sup> Yet a few pages later he noted, almost as an aside, that these ideas disappeared in nineteenth-century constitutions. Natural rights are absent, he said, "even where we should perhaps most expect it, in the Constitution of the United States. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

On the contrary, if my theory of apostate covenantalism is correct, this is exactly where we should *not* expect it. When the American nation moved from biblical covenantalism to halfway covenantalism, it remained open to a universal god, though Newtonian-Unitarian. Article VI, Clause 3 of the Constitution closed the door judicially to any transcendent god beyond the political order itself. The Constitution is therefore an apostate covenant; a wholly new god is ordained in it, a god acknowledged by the Framers in order to ordain it and

11. Writes Rush's biographer, David Freeman Hawke: Rush "had banked on the Declaration to bring about a real revolution in America – a purified people marching as one in a glorious crusade while the world looked on. A year with the reality of independence had darkened the dream. Rush still hoped for a revolution in the hearts of the people, still dreamed the war would introduce 'among us the same temperance in pleasure, the same modesty in dress, the same justice in business, and the same veneration for the name of the Deity which distinguished our ancestors.' But by the summer of 1777 hopes were tarnished with doubts, and he saw 'a gloomy cloud hinging over our states.' He once feared Tories would subvert the cause; now he saw the corrosiveness of internal danger. 'If we are undone at all,' he said in early August, 'it must be by the aristocratic, the mercenary, the persecuting, and the arbitrary spirit of our own people – I mean the people who are called Whigs.'" Hawke, *Benjamin Rush: Revolutionary Gadfly* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), p. 203.

12. Carl L. Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (New York: Vintage, [1922] 1942), p. 225.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

ratify it: the American People. This is not a universal god; it is a national god. This national god can neither offer nor defend any universal rights of man. It can only offer power to the national State, with derivative power in the states. The national State becomes the sole definer and guarantor of American rights, which today means five people on the U.S. Supreme Court.

### *Farewell to Christendom*

Washington's Farewell Address of 1796 (a newspaper article, not an actual verbal address) reflected a major change in the thinking of Americans. A new nationalism had already appeared. Washington's address merely ratified this shift in popular thinking. There must be no covenants with other nations, Washington said. He did not use the words, "no entangling alliances," but this is what he meant. He thereby announced the end of the older Puritan vision of Trinitarian universalism, the kingdom of God on earth. There can be no covenanted community of nations in a world marked by nation-states created by exclusively national democratic gods. The new democratic nationalism destroyed the covenantal foundation of Christendom when it removed the covenantal foundation of Trinitarian national covenants.

*There is no neutrality.* There are two kingdoms in history. Both kingdoms seek to establish covenantal connections. Satan's kingdom is an empire: a top-down, centralized, bureaucratic system. Initiative is at the top. God's kingdom is a bottom-up, decentralized, appeals court system. Initiative is at the bottom. In God's kingdom, Christian localism is supposed to lead also to Christian regionalism, to Christian nationalism, and finally to Christian internationalism, just as it was supposed to do in Old Covenant Israel.<sup>14</sup> Israel failed in internationalizing God's kingdom, so God gave the kingdom to a new nation, the Church International (Matt. 21:42-43). Christian civil governments are supposed to imitate the churches, and the churches are not to remain the tiny, fragmented, isolated institutions that Madisonian political nominalism and extreme denominational confessionalism have made them. Like the Trinity who created it, the international Church of Jesus Christ is to be both one— a unity based on Athanasian confessionalism – and *many*: traditional denominational practices and confessions. The problem is, the

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14. North, *Healer of the Nations*.

churches for over three centuries have imitated the national State, a disastrous legacy of Erastianism: the national Church-nation State alliance. It was this that the American colonies should have revolted against in 1776; instead, they allowed the merchants, the lawyers, the Unitarians, and the Freemasons to set the agenda for covenant-breaking revolution. The result is today's apostate national covenantalism and denominational impotence, just as Madison planned.

In contrast to God's kingdom, Satan's empire leads to the reduction of localism through the investiture of total political power at the top: the central international state facing the lone, atomized individual. This is Rousseau's nationalism writ large: the political elimination of all intermediary institutions. It is also Madison's and Hamilton's: the political trivialization of all intermediary institutions. This new nationalism also created the need for a new humanist international pantheon, i.e., the revival of Imperial Rome: an international one-world order which must be a one-State order, a world in which the national gods remain forever silent except as relics of the new world order. ,

What I am arguing is that nationalism is an *intermediary historical step in the progress of the two kingdoms*. It is not the final resting place of either Christian covenantalism or humanistic covenantalism. We are inevitably headed toward world government, both civil and ecclesiastical. World government is an inescapable concept, given the universalistic claims of both God and Satan. Neither God nor Satan is about to "back off" in his claims for total allegiance. The question therefore is: *By whose covenant will this world government be created?*

I offer this litmus test or early warning system regarding the coming of humanism's one-world order: *Christian missions*. The day the churches stop sending out missionaries is the day we can mark the next step of the extension of Satan's one-world kingdom. The missionary is living proof of the continuing commitment of Christians to world government. He is the *representative* of Christian internationalism. The missionary delivers a universal message: the kingdom of God. He delivers God's announcement of His sovereignty. The missionary delivers *God's covenant lawsuit* to foreign nations. He also brings a denominational slant to the message. Unfortunately, Christian social thought has ignored the missionary for so long— as if the work of world missions were some sort of peripheral Church activity — that Christians have for two centuries or more been enchanted by spurious nationalism and spurious denominationalism.

In fact, these two spurious views feed on one another. They keep Christians thinking small. They work together to limit the boundaries of Christianity's vision of victory.

Meanwhile, Satan has nearly completed the creation of his one-world political order. Without the special grace of God in the form of a major international revival of Trinitarian faith, only the common grace of God through the intense rivalries of fallen men will be able to call a halt to this demonic political process. One thing is sure: it will not be stopped by "Christian nationalism." There are no longer any Christian nations, covenantally speaking. Roger Williams and his spiritual heirs did their work very well.

*From 1776 to 1787*

Jefferson's Declaration of Independence compromised the original Christian covenantalism of the states by joining them together in an alliance of independent states under the authority of nature and nature's god, a myth of Unitarian theology. The Articles of Confederation completed the Declaration's halfway covenant by creating the United States of America: a true covenant document rather than a mere alliance of judicially independent states. The Constitution then eliminated all references to the Newtonian god and his supposed grant of rights to men. It created a new national god, one that is an affront to humanist internationalism, but also an affront to Christian internationalism.

Nationalism is a dying philosophy today. It will not be sustained institutionally forever. The question is: What will replace it? Political fragmentation, a new humanist world order, or a new Christian world order?

So powerful is the Constitution in the eyes of American Christians that they have rejected Christian internationalism as if it were a satanic philosophy. They have lost the Puritan vision. That was precisely Madison's agenda in 1787. By trivializing the churches and by exalting the new national government, he dealt a blow against Puritanism. Puritanism has yet to recover.

And still the Christians cheer<sup>15</sup> — even those who think of themselves as neo-Puritans.<sup>16</sup>

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15. Gene Fisher and Glen Chambers, *The Revolution Myth* (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1981).

16. After I had delivered a brief speech summarizing my book, *Healer of the Nations*, one Christian Reconstructionist leader quipped: "Have you joined the Council on Foreign Relations?" This man's theology is officially Puritan; his kingdom worldview, however, is exclusivist and nationalist.

## Miss Hall's Dilemma

Verna Hall is well known to conservative Christian schoolteachers in America. Her "red books" serve as textbooks for many Christian day schools and home schools. Miss Hall has articulated the dilemma we Christians face as Christians: the nature of self-government.

The first lesson the American Christian must learn if he would successfully develop, maintain or restore the Christian republic, is Christian self-government. Self-government without the modifier "Christian" in its full Biblical meaning, is nothing more than self-will regardless of initial intent to be or do good. Man without Christ cannot succeed in producing lasting good.<sup>17</sup>

Never in the history of the world has there been such an example of Christian voluntary union in civil affairs as was exhibited by the colonists between 1775 and 1783. This costly experience laid the groundwork for the adoption of our National Federal Constitution six years later in 1789.<sup>18</sup>

In these two statements, separated by three and a half paragraphs, we see the reasons why Miss Hall's task is inherently impossible to complete honestly: to write a Christian Constitutional history of the United States. Each of Miss Hall's three volumes ends no later than 1777. There is surely a reason for this, other than lack of time or money; the first volume appeared in 1960; the last, *Consider and Ponder*, appeared in 1975.<sup>19</sup> She died over a decade later, her publishing foundation still solvent — a remarkable achievement, given the narrow intellectual focus of its publications.

I single out her dedicated efforts because she devoted her life to this project, yet it never came close to reaching its stated goal: the Constitutional Convention. Her books never even reached the formal introduction of the Articles of Confederation in 1777. These collected primary sources are useful, but they do not prove the thesis of her books' titles: the *Christian* history of the Constitution. Her books do reveal the Christian history of the colonial American period, *up to 1776*. They do not show anything after that. They end.

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17. Verna M. Hall, Preface (1978), *The Christian History of the Constitution of the United States of America, Christian Self-Government With Union*, edited by Joseph Allen Montgomery, Compiled by Verna M. Hall (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, [1962] 1979), pp. II-III.

18. *Ibid.*, p. III.

19. This gorgeously printed book adopted the general title, *The Christian History of the American Revolution*.

To escape the restriction of the copyright laws, Miss Hall included extracts from late nineteenth-century textbooks and other narrative sources. These narratives were frequently written by Unitarians and non-Trinitarians, for non-Christians controlled American publishing after the Civil War. John Fiske, 20 for example, was one of the great champions of evolutionism. Historiography is not a neutral enterprise. It is shaped by the presuppositions of the authors. There was no market for explicitly Christian histories in 1890; there is very little demand even today, and even then what we get is Noll-Hatch-Marsden.

There are a lot of conservative Christians who have seen the set's title, but who have not read the contents. They take it for granted that the set's primary source documents really do prove that the Constitution was originally Christian. This is a grave mistake. There are no primary source documents in these books that extend beyond the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. What the post-1776 documents do show is that after the War ended, Christian influences in the country declined for a decade or more. This is the argument of Nell, Hatch, and Marsden, and it is corroborated by most of the primary sources that I am familiar with. The pastors certainly complained about this moral decline in their published sermons and private correspondence and diaries.

Perhaps the presently unpublished volumes compiled by Miss Hall and Miss Slater will at last present the missing evidence, although I doubt it. If so, then the book's narrative needs to show why it was that from 1776 on, those who organized the Convention were so determined to remove or overcome the binding authority of pre-Revolutionary Trinitarian state oaths. That, of course, will not be possible if the books continue to rely on nineteenth-century humanist textbooks to supply the narratives.

### *The Unasked Questions*

Miss Hall says that she began her intellectual journey when she was employed by a federal bureaucracy which she recognized was socialistic in intent.<sup>21</sup> She wondered how this had come about, given the existence of the Constitution. There is a correct simple answer,

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20. Reprint from Fiske, in *Christian History of the Constitution* (1966 edition), pp. 271-82.

21. Verna M. Hall, Preface, *Christian History of the Constitution* (San Francisco: American Constitution Press, 1960), p. III.

one which would have pained her greatly: *because of the Constitution*. The Constitution's Framers unquestionably began their historic efforts with the presupposition of the indispensability of moral self-government. Nevertheless, the document they produced categorically and formally rejects the concept of *Christian* self-government. And, citing Miss Hall again, "Self-government without the modifier 'Christian' in its full Biblical meaning, is nothing more than self-will regardless of initial intent to be or do good. Man without Christ cannot succeed in producing lasting good." The good that the Constitution was intended to do could not survive unscathed.

The hard question that is never faced clearly and decisively by those who defend the theory of the Christian origins of the Constitution is this one:

Why were the Articles of Confederation inherently less Christian than the Constitution, and so ineffective that a conspiracy had to be entered into, organized initially in 1785-87 by Freemasons, Deists, and proto-Unitarians, in order to restore inherently Christian principles of national government?

To put it another way, why were the lawyers in charge of the Convention and the pastors absent? Why were the pamphlet debates of 1787-88 conducted in terms of Roman historical examples and not biblical historical examples? Why was there never any appeal to specific biblical laws, but endless appeals to natural laws? Why were the symbols adopted by the Continental Congress, the Convention, and the post-War nation systematically non-Christian? Why, if the Constitution is Christian, is the name of Jesus Christ missing?

There is only one sensible answer: the U.S. Constitution is not Christian.

### Surprises

We should not be surprised to learn that Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, taught that the Constitutional Convention was either divinely inspired or very close to it. "And for this purpose," he has God say, "have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood."<sup>22</sup> Smith prayed: "Have mercy, O Lord, upon all the nations of the earth; have mercy upon

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<sup>22</sup>. *Doctrine and Covenants*, 101:80.

the rulers of the land; may those principles, which were so honorably and nobly defended, namely, the Constitution of our land, by our fathers, be established forever."<sup>23</sup>

The reason why we should not be surprised at this is because Joseph Smith was a Mason, and Mormonism adopts many Masonic symbols, most notably the beehive, and also adopts Masonic rituals. These facts are freely admitted by E. Cecil McGavin in his book, *Mormonism and Masonry* (1956), which is often sold in Mormon bookstores. 24 Smith's last words, "O Lord my God," is a Masonic cry, and he uttered it because he hoped that the Masons in the crowd that killed him would intervene on his behalf. Instead, they joined in the execution. 25 (The spirit of fraternity has its limits, apparently.)

What *is* surprising is that so many conservative Christians today are seeking the previously hidden Christian roots of the U.S. Constitution. These are not hidden roots; they are missing roots. The roots of the Constitution are Rhode Island political theory, Newtonian philosophy, Deist-Unitarian-Whig social theory, Scottish Enlightenment rationalism, and Masonic universalist. The Constitution's structure was Christian-Puritan; its content was humanist. There may well be trappings that are Christian, for the Framers were men of their era, and that era was at bottom Christian. But the Christianity of eighteenth-century America was deeply schizophrenic. Newton was the favored model, not Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17).

The primary problem with Protestant Christianity in the eighteenth century was its ethical and judicial dualism: biblical law vs. natural law. The problem has been dualism for eighteen hundred years. The two systems are rival systems, yet Christians persist in arguing that they are at bottom the same, even when they simultaneously insist that there is no neutrality. They affirm, yet subsequently deny, that "The first lesson the American Christian must learn if he would successfully develop, maintain or restore the Christian republic, is Christian self-government. Self-government without the modifier 'Christian' in its full Biblical meaning, is nothing more than self-will regardless of initial intent to be or do good. Man without Christ cannot succeed in producing lasting good."

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23. *Ibid.*, 109:54.

24. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Publishers. The same title was used by Grand Master S. H. Goode for his 1925 book, which makes many of the same observations regarding the parallels.

25. McGavin, *Mormonism and Masonry*, ch. 3.



## Constantine or Pharaoh?

I have argued that the Framers were generally committed to a specific historical model: republican Rome. They used Roman pseudonyms in their pamphlet wars. (So did their Antifederalist adversaries. ) They adopted Roman architecture for the nation's capitol. But there was a problem that they all recognized and feared, for good reason: republican Rome became imperial Rome. Cicero was no doubt eloquent; he also died a fugitive from justice, slain by agents of the authorities. <sup>26</sup> If *vox populi* is in fact *vox dei*, why did Cicero die a fugitive of the people's justice?

The pantheon of Rome was polytheistic in appearance, but it was monotheistic in substance. The many gods of the expanding Republic were united by their place in Rome's religious order. They publicly manifested the unifying power of the Roman State. By the time of Christ, the Republic had become the Empire. The Roman pantheon was then international in scope. Every god of every captive people had a lawful place in the pantheon, testifying publicly to the subordination of each god's city to the Empire.

One God was conspicuously absent from this pantheon: the God of the Bible. This God acknowledged no other god and no other kingdom but His own. Rome was under the authority of this God, not over it. And so, there was from the beginning an inevitable civil war between Christ and Caesar, Church and State. This war was eventually won by the earthly representatives of the ascended Christ. <sup>27</sup> Christians finally replaced pagans in the offices of civil authority.

This "Constantinian settlement" still outrages and embarrasses political polytheists in the modern Church: fundamentalists, pietists, neo-evangelical liberals, and Christian college professors everywhere. <sup>28</sup> They much prefer to see pagans occupy the seats of civil authority, so the example of Constantine offends them. They

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26. The legacy of Rome continues today. Our military adopts the names of Greek and Roman gods for weapons systems. (The Thor missile reveals a tolerant spirit of ecumenism: giving the Norse gods their due. ) The Israelis call their battle tank the David. This sets a good example.

27. Ethelbert Stauffer, *Christ and the Caesars* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

28. A representative statement is Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church-State Relationships* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976). This has been the Anabaptist position ever since the military defeat of the communist Anabaptist revolutionaries at Münster in 1535.

prefer a contemporary political polytheism analogous to that of the Roman pantheon, either because they secretly worship the messianic monotheism of the State (political liberals, humanists, and some neo-evangelicals) or because they refuse to acknowledge that statism is always the political manifestation of polytheism (fundamentalists, Lutherans, most Calvinists, and any remaining neo-evangelicals). Like the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, they prefer rule by polytheistic taskmasters in the service of a divine State to self-rule under God's revealed law, administered in terms of biblical covenants. The end results of this perverse preference are grim: added years of bondage in Egypt, followed by aimless wandering in the wilderness, or else the fate of Korah and Dathan (Num. 16).

It is time to begin making plans for the conquest of Canaan.

### Biblical Law or Natural Law

In a perceptive essay on the relationship between the biblical covenant and modern Constitutional law, E. M. Gaffney presents a subsection: 'American Constitutional Law as a Corrective to Religion.' He announces that "The main burden of this essay has been to show that secular law influenced the formation and development of major themes of biblical religion. It is now my point that American constitutional law can continue to serve this function by correcting adherents to biblical religion when they fail either to accept the demands of biblical religion concerning justice and freedom, or when they fail to acknowledge that in some major respects biblical religion did not adequately resolve issues of justice and freedom."<sup>29</sup> He then appeals to the Torah as a document promoting a pluralism of legal traditions. This is proved, he says, by the conflicting interpretations of the Bible. 30

He forthrightly contrasts the Bible and justice. This is standard humanist fare, especially humanism within the churches. Biblical law is seen as offering society a potential threat of tyranny, a means of unleashing oppressive forces in society. The presumption here is that humanistic law is the proper corrective for biblical oppression. Christianity is therefore desperately in need of humanism in order to maintain freedom. So runs the standard halfway covenant party line.

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29. Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., "Of Covenants Ancient and New: The Influence of Secular Law on Biblical Religion," *Journal of Law and Religion*, II (1984), pp. 137-38.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

The historical problem with such arguments is that the Church has almost always systematically avoided the implementation of biblical law. We have not seen biblical law in action in Christian societies. Instead, century after century, Church scholars have imported the prevailing brands of humanist philosophy, social theory, and jurisprudence into the churches, all in the name of justice. And when one society did its best to avoid this error — New England Puritanism — Roger Williams appeared on the scene and started the first covenantally “open” society to serve as the model.

*Winthrop or Williams*

In the first case, we have John Winthrop and the first generation of Puritans, whose company Williams had fled. Yale historian Edmund Morgan describes them:

Nevertheless, the Puritans did make strong demands on human nature, for they were engaged in a mission that required great exertion. They had undertaken to establish a society where the will of God would be observed in every detail, a kingdom of God on earth. While still aboard the *Arbella*, Winthrop had explained to his fellow immigrants their solemn commitment to this task. Every nation, they all knew, existed by virtue of a covenant with God in which it promised to obey His commands. They had left England because England was failing in its promise. In high hope that God was guiding them and would find their efforts acceptable, they had proposed to form a new society. Now God had demonstrated His approval. He had made way for them by a “special overruling providence . . .” By staying His wrath so long and allowing them to depart in peace, by delivering them safe across the water, He had sealed a covenant with them and given them a special responsibility to carry out the good intentions that had brought them into the wilderness. Theirs was a special commission. And “when God gives a special commission,” Winthrop warned them, “He lookes to have it strictly observed in every Article.”<sup>31</sup>

Willard Sperry, Dean of the Harvard Divinity School, has painted an accurate picture of Williams, who took for his social model natural law rather than covenant theology.

He lived only some forty miles from Boston; but between Providence and Boston a great gulf was fixed, theologically and ecclesiastically. Williams

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31. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), pp. 69-70.

believed that the sources of the state should be sought and found in the secular rather than in the spiritual order. The right of magistrates is natural, human, civil, not religious. The officer of the state gains nothing and loses nothing by being a Christian, or by not being. Likewise, the Christian merchant, physician, lawyer, pilot, father, master are not better equipped for fulfilling their social function than are the members of any other religion. There can be no such thing as a Christian business, or a Christian profession of law or medicine. These vocations stand in their own right. No state may claim superiority over any other state by virtue of being, or professing to be, Christian. The state is not irreligious; it is simply non-religious. As for the church, Williams said it was like a college of physicians, a company of East India merchants, or any other society in London, which may convene themselves and dissolve themselves at pleasure. Roger Williams's ideas in these matters were and still are overstatements and oversimplifications of the problem. Indeed, he followed the logic of his own thinking so far that he outgrew the visible organized church, even of his own independent kind, and finally parted with all institutional religion. Yet his overstatements were so true to Baptist convictions that one can readily see how this strongest single sect in the colonies, advocating religious liberty for all, was in entire good conscience prohibited by its own faith from any slightest interest in a union of church and state. 32

But this does not answer the more fundamental covenantal problem: What about the union of religion and State? No State can live without a religion. *There is no neutrality.* The question is: *Which religion?* There is no question which religion the Baptists chose for their State: Jeffersonian Unitarianism. This remains the continuing political manifestation of the failure of the American Baptist Culture. 33

The choice for Christians in America has been this one since 1636: John Winthrop or Roger Williams, God's law or man's law, civil covenant-keeping or civil covenant-breaking. For over three centuries, Americans have made the wrong choice. So has virtually everybody else on earth.

### Civil Compacts Are Broken Covenants

I have not discussed in detail in this book what I regard as the great myth of modern liberalism, from Locke to the present: the

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32. Willard L. Sperry, "The Separation of Church and State: Its Causes," in Phillip E. Hammond and Benton Johnson (eds.), *American Mosaic: Social Patterns of Religion in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 121-22.

33. James B. Jordan (cd.), *The Failure of the American Baptist Culture*, Issue No. 1 of *Christianity and Civilization* (1982).

myth that out of correctly devised procedural arrangements, coupled with an undefined personal and civil virtue, society can produce, or at least encourage, the creation of a good society. This myth was the foundation of eighteenth-century Enlightenment humanism, both right wing and left wing. The virtuous humanist leader, whether Washington or Robespierre, is not a defender of explicitly Christian virtues. The theoretical foundations of this myth collapsed with the coming of Darwinism, but the myth's rhetoric still persists whenever the covenantal remains of that lost world are proclaimed as the law of the land, i.e., whenever Christians are told that the idea of biblical theocracy is morally perverse and the idea of political pluralism is God's preferred plan for the New Covenant era.

To build a good society there must first be an accurate vision of the good society: a fixed vision unaltered by the flux of history. There must also be a permanent concept of personal morality that remains constant despite changing circumstances. These two visions must reinforce each other: the good society and the righteous individual. This combination is what was lacking in Greek political philosophy. The righteous philosopher, who was to be a master of doubt, was seen both by the Socratic philosophers and by the civil authorities as a threat to the stability and peace of conventional society, which is one reason — though in my view not the only reason — why the philosopher-king was supposed to resort to misleading rhetoric and “noble lies .”<sup>34</sup>

There must also be an institutional arrangement to bridge the gap between the mutually reinforcing social and individual ideals within the flux of history. Humanism offers no consistent, widely agreed-upon solution to these problems.

This is why the voluntary civil contract between men or among men is no valid substitute for the civil covenant between or among men under the sovereign Creator God of the Bible. We must never forget that there is no such thing as a civil compact; all such hypothetical compacts are in fact covenants under God, whether the participants believe this or not. (The same is true of marriage “contracts.”) Such a contractual view of society denies that God has created society, established hierarchies, declared His permanent law, and enforces this law in history through positive and negative sanctions,

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34. Thomas L. Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founding Fathers and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 60.

directing history so that His people progressively inherit the earth. This view denies the reality of Psalm 37:9: "For evildoers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth ." It replaces the personal God of the Bible with the god of the State. The State, as the judge and enforcer, becomes the agent that declares the will of the People.

Modern civil justice is viewed by liberals as the product of procedurally precise confrontations between trained specialists in the law – the rule of the lawyers. The almost pathological and potentially bankrupting quest for procedural perfection in the modern American court system is a consistent development of this seventeenth- and eighteenth-century liberal philosophy. 35 But there is no way for the humanist to prove that procedural precision during the lawyers' confrontation can in fact produce justice, except by *defining* justice as "the product of a procedurally precise outcome." There is no higher law to appeal to, and no sanctioning agency other than the State, except during a revolution.

#### *The Expansion of the Autonomous State*

When men abandon biblical covenantalism, they must find a substitute. There is no escape from covenantalism; the question always is: *Whose* covenant? Modern liberalism became steadily statist, except for a brief interlude during the nineteenth century (pre-1890),<sup>36</sup> because the State, as the sovereign enforcer of the People's covenant, has attained the position of divine-right status: there is no appeal beyond it. It alone supposedly speaks authoritatively for the sovereign People. Revolution alone can legitimately overturn the State, but this must always be in the name of the true sovereign, the People. This worldview is the legacy of John Locke.

The political compact among autonomous men has replaced the biblical covenant as the agreed-upon source of social continuity. Therefore, the primary goal of politics today (and just about everything else) is to gain control over the monopolistic voice of authority, the State. Claimants today for the crucial position of "voice of the sovereign People" are surely as numerous as the defenders of contract theory assert with regard to their traditional opponents, the

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35. On the extent of the crisis, see Macklin Fleming, *The Price of Perfect Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

36. In the United States, from the Constitution until the Progressive era; in England, from the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 until the mid-1870's.

theocratic Christians. The Whig liberals, in reaction to the Puritan Revolution of 1640-60, successfully ridiculed the churches and sects on this basis: surely they could not all have represented God. But the same accusation can be made against the critics today: surely not all the claimants to the office of Official Spokesman are accurately representing the sovereign People. When it comes to numbers of claimants, in fact, the humanists today are far more numerous than theocratic claimants who say they are the voice of the sovereign God of the Bible. In this day and age, Christians are almost completely politically humbled; they are terrified of the thought they might in fact really be God's lawful designated authorities in speaking for God in the realm of civil law. They do not even want to think about the possibility that God's revealed laws in the Bible are God's required standards for modern jurisprudence. They do not want to bring God's covenant lawsuit against any nation. They have been steadily browbeaten on this point since at least 1660.

### *The Religion of Procedure*

Contractualism is evolutionary when honored and revolutionary when transcended. It is an empty "ethical shell. Lenin once remarked about making omelettes, that you have to break a lot of eggs. If there are no ethical standards inside the contractual shells, then we should expect to see a lot of broken shells as time goes by, as people continue their search for righteous civil government.

There is no sovereign God in contractualism who will judge the righteousness of men's contracts, in time or eternity. Man is officially on his own. Thus, there is only procedure. In cases of civil dispute, the only question is: Which of the parties best honored the formal terms of the contract, meaning the letter of the contract? This means *the triumph of fine print* and the lawyers who alone can interpret it. To the extent that questions of ethics enter into the judge's decision — substantive questions — the result is judicial arbitrariness. Such judicial arbitrariness erodes the very foundation and justification of contractualism: *procedural predictability*. This creates an intellectual atmosphere favorable to revolution. Every would-be spokesman for the People wants to be sure that his version of god's word is enforced. The inherent, inevitable dualism or dialecticism between formal procedure and ethics, 37 between the letter of humanist law and the

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37. Gary North, "Max Weber: Rationalism, Irrationalism, and the Bureaucratic Cage," in Gary North (ed.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976), ch. 8.

spirit of humanist law, offers no permanent solution to the perpetual question: What is the righteous decision of the civil magistrate, jury, or judge? And this means there is no humanist answer to the question: What procedural arrangement can be devised to increase the likelihood that righteous decisions will be made by those in authority?

The Framers attempted to devise such a system, but their endeavor was doomed from the beginning, for they denied the legitimacy of the biblical covenant. They broke the halfway national covenant, and we appear to be living in the era of God's cumulative negative sanctions in response to this act of covenantal rebellion.

### The Forgotten Meeting

Before we end this discussion of the Constitution, we need to take note of a forgotten event. On Friday, May 25, 1787, the first meeting of the Constitutional Convention began in Philadelphia. George Washington was elected president of the Convention. A secretary was elected, Major Jackson. The meeting then adjourned. The Convention began its first full session on Monday, May 28.

Across town, another meeting was ending that fateful Monday. The united Presbyterian Synods of New York and Philadelphia had met together. What they did at that final session, and at the meeting exactly one year later, was to change the course of Protestantism in America. It also paralleled to a remarkable degree the political events being engineered by James Madison. The issues were also similar: the relation of Church and State, and the issue of centralized authority.

### *The Problem of Geography*

Like Madison and his associates, between 1785 and 1789, a quiet group of churchmen in the Presbyterian Church had been preparing for a major reorganization. Even today, it is not entirely clear from the historical records just who was behind this push. There was no sense of imminent ecclesiastical crisis, but there was a sense of failure in the face of continuing problems that never seemed to get resolved.

War weariness had affected all the denominations, Presbyterians included. What had begun as a sacred cause of liberty had produced unforeseen negative results, as war always does. The loose morals that the war had unleashed made the church's work that much more difficult. 38

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38. Trinterud, *Forming of an American Tradition*, pp. 258-61.



Power shifts were taking place within the denomination. Increased immigration from Scotland, was making the church more theologically conservative, less enthusiastic about the heritage of the Great Awakening. <sup>39</sup> At the same time, these immigrants were heading West, where there were no well-organized presbyteries. <sup>40</sup> There was also a growing reaction against Deism, skepticism, and the increasingly liberal rationalism of the remnants of Jonathan Edwards' rationalistic theology, the New Side heritage.

Attendance at the annual synod meetings had declined during the war and had not recovered. The expanding geography of the American nation by 1780 had overthrown the theory of a single annual synod meeting that could handle all business not capable of being handled at the presbytery level.<sup>41</sup> Changes were needed. A committee was appointed in 1785 to draw up a new form of Presbyterian discipline. Then, later in the day, another overture was suggested: the creation of a General Assembly, along the lines of the Scottish church, and the creation of three synods. The records do not indicate who made this overture. <sup>42</sup>

On the face of it, this overture was highly peculiar. If the institutional problem facing the denomination was geographical, why would anyone propose the creation of a General Assembly? The answer should have been obvious: *to centralize the denomination once and for all*. If the regional presbyteries were becoming more distant from the center, then there would have to be a *central representative body* as well as *central judicial body* that could hold the Church's governmental system together. (This was exactly what Madison had concluded regarding American civil government.) The Committee on Overture took over; a second study on Church government began. As is usual for Presbyterianism, no official decision was made at that time. (This was paralleled by the late-March meeting at Mount Vernon at which Maryland and Virginia commissioners proposed ways of settling trade disputes. And like the Synod meeting, the records of what took place are unclear.)<sup>43</sup>

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39. *Ibid.*, pp. 263-64.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 268-72.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 281-82.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

43. Writes Burton K. Hendrick: "The gathering attracted little attention at the time, and has not figured extensively in history since. Yet its outcome, two years afterward, was the Constitution of the United States." Hendrick, *Bulwark of the Republic: A Biography of the Constitution* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1937), p. 11.

A poorly attended Synod in 1786 resolved to create 16 new presbyteries. Action on the creation of four synods was postponed.<sup>44</sup> The report of the committee on discipline was discussed, but no action was taken. A new committee was set up to continue the study. A meeting in September of 1786 led to a draft of a whole new constitution, to which the presbyteries generally paid little attention. 45 (These events were paralleled by Madison's and Hamilton's inconclusive Annapolis convention in September, which in turn led to the call for the Convention in Philadelphia.)

Then came the Synod of 1787. From May 16 to May 28, the Synod met in Philadelphia to discuss the formation of a new church structure. On the last day of the Synod, May 28, the Synod voted to create yet another committee to print a thousand copies of the draft of the proposed form of government to be sent to the presbyteries for consideration. The presbyteries would have to confirm the plan. (This was paralleled by the Constitutional Convention's decision to have state 'ratifying conventions vote on the proposed new plan of government. One difference: the presbyteries were the legal equivalent of the established state legislatures, rather than conventions.)

The changes recommended by the committee were approved by the joint Synod meeting exactly one year later in Philadelphia: May 28, 1788. This judicial act established a new constitution, 46 pages long, for the Presbyterian Church in America. The form of government radically centralized power in the General Assembly. From that time on, it would take a two-thirds vote of the presbyteries plus the assent of the General Assembly to make further changes. The Synod did this on its own authority; after consultation with the presbyteries; the presbyteries did not vote.<sup>46</sup> (On June 21, New Hampshire became the ninth state convention to ratify the Constitution; the new nation came into being.)

Trinterud tries to make this sound as if it was not a monumental centralization of power. After all, he says, the General Assembly could not initiate any further changes; only the presbyteries could. 47 This is hardly persuasive. Try to organize presbyteries that are scattered across a growing country. Get them to initiate and then organize fundamental change. The whole discussion of the change in

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44. Trinterud, *Forming*, p. 285.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

church government had arisen in 1785 because of the supposed need to escape the annual meetings in Philadelphia.

The new plan also entitled the General Assembly to issue standing rules, which a majority of the presbyteries would have to ratify. Any student of bureaucracy can see what the results would be. The General Assembly would normally be attended by the activists in the presbyteries. Thus, any organized resistance by over half of the presbyteries would be unlikely. To change this new system, it would take a two-thirds vote of the presbyteries.

### *Church and State*

The restructured form of government included a revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith: specifically, Chapter XX (closing paragraph), XXH1:3, and XXXI:1, 2. These were the sections dealing with the relationship of Church and State, in which the civil magistrate was charged with certain tasks, such as defending the Church and calling assemblies. The main figure on the committee was New Side leader John Rogers, who had served on all of them since 1785. He became an ecclesiastical leader in the late 1760's during the colonial battle against the sending of an Anglican bishop to the colonies. As he believed so greatly in the separation of Church and State that he thought ministers should not vote in civil elections.<sup>49</sup> The Synod was adjourned. In 1788, it reconvened, and the recommended changes in the Confession were approved. Church historian Philip Schaff describes these alterations:

The changes consist in the omission of those sentences which imply the union of Church and State, or the principle of ecclesiastical establishments, making it the duty of the civil magistrate not only to protect, but also to support religion, and giving to the magistrate power to call and ratify ecclesiastical synods and councils, and to punish heretics. Instead of this, the American revision confines the duty of the civil magistrate to the legal protection of religion in its public exercise, without distinction of Christian creeds or organizations. It thus professes the principle of religious liberty and equality of all denominations before the law. This principle has been faithfully and consistently adhered to by the large body of the Presbyterian Church in America, and has become the common law of the land.<sup>50</sup>

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48. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 281.

49. Trinterud, *Forming*, p. 260.

50. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, [1877] 1977), I, p. 807.

The synod of 1788, in its last official act as a Synod, appointed John Witherspoon to address the new General Assembly before it elected a moderator, which was John Rogers. This seemed appropriate, for it was Witherspoon who almost certainly had written the Preface to the proposed new form of government back in 1786. The Preface stated:

“God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship;” Therefore they [Presbyterians] consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and inalienable: they do not even wish to see any religious constitution aided by the civil power, further than may be necessary for protection and security, and, at the same time, be equal and common to others.<sup>51</sup>

### *The End of the Holy Commonwealth Ideal*

Thus ended the ideal of the theocratic republic in mainstream Presbyterianism and American Protestantism in general. That this official position had been articulated by the president of the College of New Jersey was fitting. Its predecessor, the Log College, had been the leading light in the battle against what Trinterud calls “the narrow spirit of denominationalism .”<sup>52</sup> Founded in 1746, its trustees had invited newly appointed Governor Jonathan Belcher onto the Board of Trustees in 1748. They immediately voted him president of the Board. Governor Belcher saw to it that the college was granted a new charter, and he worked hard to create a new board filled (with three exceptions) with graduates of Harvard and Yale. This is understandable; he had been Governor of Massachusetts from 1730-41. The college was moved to Newark; in 1755, it was moved to Princeton. 53

That Jonathan Belcher became the driving force of the development of the College of New Jersey is representative of what was taking place throughout the colonies. Belcher was not a Presbyterian. Nevertheless, he found it easy to cooperate with Presbyterians. His theology was expressly geared to cooperation. Jonathan Belcher was

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51. Cited in James H. Smylie, *A Cloud of Witnesses: A History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond, Virginia: Covenant Life Curriculum, 1965), p. 26. The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. was the Southern Presbyterian Church until it merged with the P.C.U.S.A. (Northern) in 1983.

52. Trinterud, *Forming*, p. 131.

53. Jacob Harris Patton, *A Popular History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: Mighill, 1900), pp. 118-19.

a Freemason. But this puts it too mildly. Jonathan Belcher was the original Freemason in the colonies, having been initiated in London in 1704.<sup>54</sup> He was literally the pioneer. One Masonic historian refers to him as "the Senior Freemason of America."<sup>55</sup> After his initiation, he experienced rapid success as a merchant. <sup>56</sup> His son became the Deputy Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Massachusetts at its founding in 1733.<sup>57</sup> In 1741, the brethren of the First Lodge read a message to Mr. Belcher, who had been succeeded by a new governor the previous spring. The lodge thanked him for "the many favours You have always shared (when in Power) to Masonry in General. . . ." <sup>58</sup> "The spirit of nondenominationalism at the College of New Jersey was not going to be overturned by Brother Belcher!

It should be no surprise to learn what President Witherspoon revealed in 1776, in his quest for nondenominational money from donors in Bermuda, namely, that no discussion of church government was tolerated at the college. "Every question about forms of church government is so entirely excluded that . . . if they [the students] know nothing more of religious controversy than what they learned here, they have that Science wholly to begin."<sup>59</sup> Thus, concludes Trinterud, James Madison did not learn about Presbyterian polity from Witherspoon. "The theological doctrine of natural law and the political theory of natural rights provided the meeting place for Presbyterian and citizen rather than the Presbyterian form of Church government. New England Congregationalists and Virginia Episcopalians stood with American Presbyterian laymen in this political theory, and with this common heritage they were able to work together although their heritages in ecclesiastical polity still separated them widely."<sup>60</sup>

Brother Belcher would have been proud.

### Whigs Ecclesiastical

Three weeks after Witherspoon delivered his speech, on June 21, 1788, New Hampshire's convention became the ninth state conven-

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54. J. Hugo Tatsch, *Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies* (New York: Macoy, 1929), p. 27.

55. Melvin M. Johnson, *The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America* (New York: Doran, 1924), p. 49.

56. His father had been a successful merchant, too, but not on Jonathan's scale.

57. Tatsch, *Freemason*, p. 30.

58. Cited in Johnson, *Beginnings*, p. 255.

59. Cited in Trinterud, *Forming*, p. 256.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

tion to ratify the U.S. Constitution, which immediately went into force as the new covenant of the nation. Thus, the Whigs political and the Whigs ecclesiastical had at last overturned the covenantal foundations that had been established by their seventeenth-century Puritan enemies, and had done so in a period of slightly less than thirteen months.

Governor William Livingston of New Jersey was correct when he observed in 1790 that the clergy of America were “almost all universally good Whigs.”<sup>61</sup> He himself had been “the American Whig” in 1768, when he wrote or at least organized a series of *New York Gazette* and *Pennsylvania Journal* articles against sending an Anglican bishop to the colonies, a step regarded by many colonists as being the first step in Parliamentary control over colonial religion.<sup>62</sup> Yet it was “the American Whig” himself who had asked rhetorically the most important question in American history: “. . . why might not Christianity have been allowed the honor of being called the National Religion?”<sup>63</sup> The answer should be clear by now: because the Unitarians did not want it that way, and the Whigs ecclesiastical did not really think that the implicit Christianity of the nation was threatened by the idolatry of the new national covenant, i.e., the People as the new national god.

A year after the 1788 Synod, in May of 1789, the General Assembly had John Witherspoon again chair a committee, this time to prepare an address to the newly elected President of the United States. The alternate chairman was John Rogers. The committee drafted a lengthy report in which it expressed those sentiments that have been passed down from textbook to textbook. Echoing Washington’s Masonic rhetoric, the address announced: “Public virtue is the most certain means of public felicity, and religion is the surest basis of virtue. We therefore esteem it a peculiar happiness to behold in our Chief Magistrate a steady, uniform, avowed friend of the Christian religion, and who on the most public and solemn occasions devoutly

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61. William Livingston, “Observations on the Support of the Clergy,” *American Museum*, VIII (1790), p. 254; cited in Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 1.

62. Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*, pp. 297-98.

63. “Colonial Criticism of the Appeal (1768),” in John F. Wilson and Donald L. Drakeman (eds.), *Church and State in American History: The Burden of Religious Pluralism* (2nd ed.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p. 57.

acknowledges the government of Divine Providence .” The address then identified the role of the Presbyterian Church in the American political religion: We shall consider ourselves as doing an acceptable service to God in our profession when we contribute to render men sober, honest, and industrious citizens, and the obedient subjects of a lawful government .”<sup>64</sup>

The Grand Master from Virginia politely responded in kind. <sup>65</sup>

I have argued elsewhere that the Church sets the pattern for what the State does. <sup>66</sup> That pair of constitutional assemblies held on May 28, 1787 – one civil, the other ecclesiastical; one beginning, the other ending— are the best representative examples in American history of how a change in the thinking of Christians parallels a change in the thinking of politicians. As the Presbyterians closed their meeting and the Framers opened theirs, the nation was turned down a path that would have been **covenantally** unthinkable anywhere on earth a generation earlier (except, of course, in Rhode Island). In this case, the change in men’s thinking transformed the constitutional (**covenantal**) foundations of both Church and State in America. What had been called the Presbyterian Rebellion by its enemies in England became a Presbyterian revolution judicially. The Presbyterians and the Framers ended the holy commonwealth ideal in America. The Presbyterians of Philadelphia, like the lawyers of Philadelphia, removed the **covenantal** foundations of the American Christian experiment in Christian self-government. Without these **covenantal** cornerstones to support it, the American Trinitarian edifice collapsed. We live today in its ruins.

### Conclusion

By 1800, the myth of the national covenant was just about over. The churches, in the words of Perry Miller, “were forced to recognize that in fact they now dealt with the Deity only as particular individuals gathered for historical, capricious reasons into this or that communion. They had to realize, at first painfully, that as a united people they had no contractual relationship with the Creator, and that consequently a national controversy with Him could no longer

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64. Cited in Patton, *Popular History*, p. 209.

65. *Idem.*

66. North, *Healer of the Nations*, especially pp. 4-5.

exist.”<sup>67</sup> He wrote contractual, but he clearly meant *covenantal*.<sup>68</sup> Miller saw what the key issue was: *sanctions*. There would be no more national controversies with God. He would no longer threaten the nation with His negative sanctions.<sup>69</sup>

If it were not for the continuing presence of the remnant Church (Chapter 11), Miller would be correct. God would have washed His hands of this nation long ago. He would have imposed His negative sanctions.

Despite the historical facts – both theological and Constitutional — that I have surveyed in this study, from the beginning of the Constitutional era, Christian historians have promoted the myth of the Christian origin of the Constitution. Philip Schaff, the most prominent American evangelical Church historian of the late nineteenth century, summarized this view, and the language of his imitators has not deviated in any significant respect:

We may go further and say that the Constitution not only contains nothing which is irreligious or unchristian, but is Christian in substance, though not in form. It is pervaded by the spirit of justice and humanity, which are Christian. . . . The Constitution, moreover, in recognizing and requiring an official oath from the President and all legislative, executive, and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several States, recognises the Supreme Being, to whom the oath is a solemn appeal. . . . And, finally, the framers of the Constitution were, without exception, believers in God and in future rewards and punishments, from the presiding officer, General Washington, who was a communicant member of the Episcopal Church, down to the least orthodox, Dr. Benjamin Franklin. . . .<sup>70</sup>

There are minor variations, of course. Rushdoony argues that the Constitution is neutral both in substance and in procedure. (See Appendix B.) But on the whole, Schaff’s statement is representative of two centuries of incomparable historical misrepresentation — a myth that is taken seriously by virtually all conservative American Christians. The conspirators were successful beyond their wildest

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67. Perry Miller, *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 113.

68. His chapter is titled, “From the Covenant to the Revival.”

69. What is needed today is a detailed study of how the American churches could continue to proclaim God’s positive historical sanctions for the nation. Did they re-interpret the covenant’s sanctions? Did they really teach such views?

70. Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States or the American Idea of Religious Liberty and Its Practical Effects* (New York: Arno Press, [1888] 1972), pp. 40-41.



dreams. Their victims still do not know what happened to them. That a serious historian could write about the oath in this manner – the oath that is in fact the exact opposite of what Schaff claims it is – is nothing short of mind-boggling. It is self-deception on a scale not normally encountered, even in academia. The oath does indeed recognize the Supreme Being, to whom the oath is a solemn appeal; that Supreme Being is the sovereign incorporating People. And Article VI, Clause 3 announces, theologically speaking: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

### *Missing Pieces*

It is now the time and place to admit that I have neglected a very important institutional question. I have not yet done the necessary research. This much seems clear: if we properly begin our inquiry into the origins of the Constitution with the founding of the Royal Society (1661), the publishing of Newton’s *Principia* (1687), and the creation of the Grand Lodge (1717), we should not skip over the formation of the Bank of England (1694). We need to ask: *What is the relationship between the Bank of England and subsequent events in England, the Netherlands, France, and the new American nation?* The path broken by P. G. M. Dickson needs to be widened beyond Britain and extended beyond 1756.<sup>71</sup> Few historians have even taken a stroll down this path.

This key question regarding central banking and civil government leads to a subordinate group of questions regarding colonial history and early American history. Our investigation should begin with Hamilton’s statement in *Federalist 30*: “Money is with propriety considered as the vital principle of the body politic; as that which sustains its life and motion, and enables it to perform its most essential functions.”<sup>72</sup> Was he using hyperbole, or was he serious? Did money replace the sovereignty of God in his thinking? If so, he was not alone, and would not be alone were he alive today.

This question leads to other questions. What is the relationship between the issuing of fiat money and the creation of national sover-

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71. P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1967). John Brewer has taken it to 1783, but this is still not far enough: *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State* (New York, Knopf, 1989). Let me at this point also ask another burning question that has eating at me for twenty-five years: Why doesn’t Knopf ever trim its books’ pages?

72. Hamilton, *Federalist No. 30*; *The Federalist*, edited by Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 188.

eignty? Where did Hamilton get the revolutionary idea that the best way to tie the jealous states together was by means of consolidating state debts into a common national debt? Why was Hamilton's major act as Secretary of the Treasury to gain a national charter for the foreign-owned Bank of the United States? If national debt is without legal limits, then what about taxation to sustain the debt? Why did the Framers insist that the states be prohibited from issuing coins – even gold and silver coins – and that only gold and silver coins could be declared legal tender by a state (Art. I, Sect. 8), even though they placed no such restrictions on the national government? If inflation was truly regarded by the Framers as the scourge of the states, why should they have regarded inflation as less of a scourge nationally? And why have professional historians ignored these monetary questions for so long?

These are questions for another study, another time. But the rule holds good: when we are trying to find the historical origins of anything men do, *start with how and where people take the sacraments, and then find out where they lend or borrow their money.* The covenantal sanctions of God in history are tied to debt: lending is a blessing and borrowing is a curse.

The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow (Deut.28:12).

He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail (Deut.28:44).

**Part 4**  
**RESTORING THE**  
**NATIONAL COVENANT**

Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I makeup my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments (Mal. 3:13-4:4).

## INTRODUCTION, PART 4

*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (I John 2:2-6).*

Men can publicly profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but if they do not obey His commandments, their confession merely condemns them. They can make a public oath to God, but if they disobey the stipulations attached to this oath, they can and should expect to receive God's negative sanctions. They can expect them in history, and they surely can expect them in eternity. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deut. 23:21).

I believe in the judicial necessity of establishing a national statement of constitutional faith that confesses the God of the Bible as the Lord of the national covenant. This will require a Constitutional amendment. (This assumes, of course, that the Constitution is still intact at the time that the nation is ready to confess the lordship of the God of the Bible. This is a major assumption. If it is no longer in force, then whatever national covenant document is in place will have to be modified or replaced.)

Such an amendment is not enough. It would settle only points one and two of the biblical covenant: the sovereignty of God and the subordination of "the people." The People must be demoted from the sovereign god that established the covenant as suzerain to become once again the vassal that complies with the true Suzerain's covenant. We need to stop capitalizing "people." But this would be only

the beginning. The third point of the covenant still would have to be dealt with: What about God's revealed civil law? Will the whole Bible be established as the final law of the land, the common law of the nation? Point four: What about a national oath required of all citizens and all civil magistrates? Will people who are not under ecclesiastical covenant sanctions be allowed to serve as civil magistrates or agents who sanction civil magistrates? Fifth point: What about a system of adoption: the "naturalization" (meaning de-naturalization) <sup>1</sup> of future citizens? Will all immigrants be allowed to take the national and ecclesiastical Trinitarian oaths, thereby becoming full citizens? Will the nation have open geographical borders, but closed political borders?

In short, while it is certainly important to preach the necessity of re-establishing the abandoned Trinitarian state confessions of the colonial American period, this is not enough. We need to renew the original civil covenant, this time on a national basis. God's covenant is comprehensive. We have already seen what happens to halfway national covenants. We do not need a replay of the last two centuries. We need a full covenant, not a halfway covenant. Newton's god was buried by the Framers in 1787; there is no need to seek to resurrect him.

This does not mean that the civil magistrate is required by God to launch a wave of religious persecutions. What it means is that the *long-term goal* of Christians should be the preaching of the comprehensive gospel of salvation, including the supernatural healing of all institutions. Christians should also pray for and expect a huge revival, so that a vast majority of Americans will convert to saving faith in Jesus Christ. If this future postmillennial revival does not take place, then any attempt to establish a national covenant will fail, long-term. It is not our job as Christians to ram religion down everyone's throat. We must recognize that if postmillennialism is wrong, then the pursuit of the national covenant really is utopian. Worse; it would require massive coercion or deception. We dare not imitate the deceptive strategy of James Madison and his national covenant-breaking accomplices. We also dare not be premature, as Cromwell was.

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1. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

### A Covenantal Strategy

The first step is to adopt a slogan. Every revolution needs slogans. Here is mine: *politics fourth*. First comes personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (not just Savior).<sup>2</sup> Second comes Church renewal. There can be no successful reformation of society without first beginning a reformation of the Church.<sup>3</sup> Third comes family renewal. This involves pulling your children out of the public schools. Fourth comes local politics. At a minimum, this would involve public protests against abortion. From there we go to state and national politics.

Before national political renewal can begin, we must first do what we can to make it clear to the politicians and the national government that a major religious transformation has already taken place. Without the widespread movement of the Holy Spirit, this cannot happen. Thus, the national confession movement is either going to shift forthrightly to postmillennialism or else remain a kind of sectarian game for psychological outsiders, a monumental pretence that writing forever-ignored manifesto on the need for a national covenant is anything more than a way to keep Christians' vision focused on an unattainable utopia. Amillennialism coupled with the goal of national confession is an experiment in psychological masochism and sectarianism. Passing out simple gospel tracts on street corners would be more productive for the kingdom of God; at least someone might get saved. Better to experience the joy of seeing sinners get saved from hell than to condemn oneself and one's church to a lifetime of eschatologically guaranteed disappointment. If one defines himself in terms of an eschatologically lost cause, he is sure to suffer mentally and spiritually. He will also have identified himself as a self-professed loser in a church of self-professed losers. Outsiders will normally avoid joining such denominations.

Where should Christians begin? What is required by God today is for His people to press for comprehensive covenant renewal at every level of civil government? Christians must bring a *covenant lawsuit* against this present social order.

We must fight to win. We dare not make a lost cause our eschatological goal, either ecclesiastically or personally. As God told Joshua: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:9).

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2. John MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 1988).

3. James B. Jordan (cd.), *The Reconstruction of the Church, No. 4 of Christianity and Civilization* (1985).

Should the provisions of the Constitution as here reviewed be found not to secure the Government & rights of the States against usurpations & abuses on the part of the U.S. the final resort within the purview of the Constitution lies in an amendment of the Constitution according to a process applicable by the States.

And in the event of a failure of every constitutional resort, and an accumulation of usurpations & abuses, rendering passive obedience & non-resistance a greater evil, than resistance & revolution, there can remain but one resort, the last of all, an appeal from the cancelled obligations of the constitutional compact, to original rights & the law of self-preservation. This is the *ultima ratio* under all Government whether consolidated, confederated, or a compound of both; and it cannot be doubted that a single member of the Union, in the extremity supposed, but in that only, would have a right, as an extra & ultra constitutional right, to make the appeal.

James Madison (1830)\*

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\*Letter to the *North American Review* (Aug. 28, 1830), in Marvin Meyers (ed.), *The Mind of the Founder: Sources of the Political Thought of James Madison* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 529.



## A NEW NATIONAL COVENANT

*If I shall be in the minority, I shall have those painful sensations which arise from a conviction of being overpowered in a good cause. Yet I will be a peaceable citizen. My head, my hand, and my heart, shall be at liberty to retrieve the loss of liberty, and remove the defects of that system in a constitutional way. I wish not to go to violence, but will wait with hopes that the spirit which predominated in the revolution is not yet gone, nor the cause of those who are attached to the revolution yet lost. I shall therefore patiently wait in expectation of seeing that government changed, so as to be compatible with the safety, liberty, and happiness of the people.*

*Patrick Henry (1788)1*

Christians lost the battle in 1788. The lawyers in Philadelphia won it. Christians accepted the ratification of the Constitution, not just as good losers, but as enthusiastic cooperators. They have yet to identify their problem, as decade by decade, the American republic has grown ever-more consistent with the apostate foundation of the Constitution. Christians find themselves besieged today, and they vainly expect to get rid of their problems by a return to the “original intent” of the Framers. On the contrary, what we have today is the political outcome of that original intent, as Henry warned so long ago. Darwinism, socialism, and several major wars speeded up the process of moral disintegration, but the judicial foundation of this disintegration had been established in 1787-88.

The political question facing American Christians today is this: How much longer will the Constitution serve as the protector of our

1. Jonathan Elliot (ed.), *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, .5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, [1836] 1907), III, p. 652. Henry remained true to his word. He remained loyal to the United States, even when he opposed the Federalist Party's Alien and Sedition Acts at the end of his life. He was opposed to anarchy. Norine Dickson Campbell, *Patrick Henry: Patriot and Statesman* (Old Greenwich, Connecticut: Devin-Adair, 1969), pp. 426-28.

legal immunities from State interference? At some point in time, the Constitution will become too great a threat to one side or the other: to covenant-breakers who resent any residue of Constitutional restraint or to covenant-keepers who have been pushed to the limits of their endurance by the culmination of the original apostate covenant. The Constitution's provisions were written by self-consciously apostate men and conspiratorial Christian colleagues whose understanding of the biblical covenant had been eroded by a lifetime of Newtonian philosophy and training in the pagan classics. Nevertheless, these men were under restraints: philosophical (natural rights doctrines) and political (a Christian electorate). Both of these restraints have almost completely disappeared in the twentieth century. Thus, the evils implicit in the ratified national covenant have grown more evil over time.

### Declining Restraints

The first set of restraints on the Framers was philosophical: *natural rights philosophy*. Officially, the Constitution does not recognize natural rights. It was from the beginning far more in tune with the Darwinian world to come than the world of eighteenth-century Whig moral philosophy. Today, almost no one in a place of intellectual influence or political authority defends the older natural rights viewpoint. Take the case of the man who is perhaps the most distinguished and best-known legal scholar and judge in American conservatism, Robert Bork. Because of his conservative judicial views, Bork was refused confirmation to the Supreme Court by the U.S. Senate in 1987. We might expect him to be a defender of natural rights. Not so. He was the author of a 1971 essay denying the natural rights foundation of judicial decisions. He denied that moral considerations can properly enter into judicial decisions, except insofar as the political decision of the legislature has colored a law.<sup>2</sup> Judges, he insisted, must remain morally neutral. The older, pre-Darwin moral framework for American Constitutional law is dead. It was a long time dying, both philosophically and judicially.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Robert Bork, "Natural Principles and Some First Amendment Problems," *Indiana Law Journal* (Fall 1971). In this essay, Bork called on judges to adopt a principle of moral neutrality in making judicial decisions. Critical of Bork was Christian Reconstruction columnist John Lofton, "Soft on Natural Rights?" *Washington Times* (July 8, 1987).

3. Gary Jacobsohn, *The Supreme Court and the Decline of Constitutional Aspiration* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986).

The humanists have abandoned natural law; so have the theonomists. The Marxists never did accept the theory. Thus, whether the case law approach of the Harvard Law School is adopted or the case law approach of the Bible, natural law or natural rights philosophy no longer provides either covenantal legitimacy or judicial restraint; the philosophical-moral foundation of the original Constitutional settlement — but not the actual document — has disappeared. It is therefore just a matter of time and escalating crises for the U.S. Constitution to go the way of the Articles of Confederation. It can be re-defined into something new by the courts, as has been done for over a century, or else it can be replaced by a series of amendments over many years or overnight by a Constitutional convention. If the final option is selected by those who make long-term political plans, it is not the Christians who are the likely candidates to achieve a victory.

### *Strangers in Their Own Land*

The second set of restraints on the Framers was political: *Christian voters*. They still controlled or heavily influenced state politics. They had lost only the battle in Philadelphia. For a time, they remained a threat to the humanists who ran the country, but it was a downhill battle after 1788. Liberal theologian and University of Chicago professor of Church history Martin Marty waxes eloquent regarding Franklin and his Deist peers. “Fortunately for later Americans, the Founding Fathers, following the example of Franklin, put their public religion to good use. While church leaders usually forayed only briefly into the public arena and then scurried back to mind their own shops, men of the Enlightenment worked to form a social fabric that assured freedom to the several churches, yet stressed common concerns of society.”<sup>4</sup> Today, however, the ‘common concerns of society’ — legalized pornography and prostitution, for instance — have come into conflict with local church freedom.

What Marty and virtually all contemporary historians fail to disclose is that virtually **all** of these leaders of the American Enlightenment had a working model for this common “social fabric”: the Masonic lodges of America (and in Franklin’s case, of France). Some were actual members, bound by its oaths; others were simply literate men of their time, and Masonry was *the* religion of the New-

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4. Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), p. 158.

tonian era. Its worldview spread far beyond its closed doors in the back rooms of local taverns. This fact the historians fail to mention.

“Public religion,” continues Marty, “looked for institutional embodiment. A few enterprising deists thought they should make churches of their movement for enlightenment and public religion, but little came of their efforts.”<sup>5</sup> Then he adds this non-illuminating note: ‘Masonic lodges embodied some of the teachings of public religion, but the public who were not their members did not see them doing so.’<sup>6</sup> This is literally true, but hardly relevant. Of course the public could not see inside the lodges; that was the whole point of lodge secrecy. Had the Christians who voted for the Constitution in 1788 understood what was being done to them, and why it was being done, the Constitution would not have been ratified. But secrecy prevailed: in the lodges and in Philadelphia. Christians became, to cite the stunning title of Marty’s book, pilgrims in their own land.

But are Christians still in their own land? If we are, then this means that there is some sort of continuity between the original civil covenants and today’s wilderness condition. If we are strangers in our own land, then this is because we have lost out to interlopers. This, of course, is exactly what the Bible predicts for those who break covenant with God: “The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low” (Deut. 28:43). What was lost can be regained. The means of re-conquest is to press toward a new national covenant, and a better national covenant, with God.

### Continuity Despite Discontinuity

I have stressed the *covenantal* discontinuity between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. I have argued that the Constitution was the product of a *coup*. This *coup* was ratified by the voters and thereby given legitimacy retroactively. The *covenantal* question is: Is the United States now a Christian nation? How can it be, if the Constitution is, as I have argued, judicially anti-Christian?

Is the United States a Christian nation? The answer lies in the biblical idea of a covenant. Once formally under the terms of God’s personal covenant, there is no escape for the individual. The sanctions will eventually be applied, both positive and negative. The

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5. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

same is true for ecclesiastical and national covenants. Some nations have departed completely from the Christian faith in the past, most notably northern Africa, which fell militarily to the Moslems in the seventh and eighth centuries. Christians were defeated in history, and their Muslim descendants have suffered from poverty and backwardness ever since. There is no trace of that original Christianity. But what about Europe? World War I, the Nazis, World War II, and the fall of Eastern Europe to the Communists indicate the presence of negative historical sanctions, not an escape from God's covenant.

*The State Covenants' Stipulations Remain in Force*

When Jeroboam pulled the ten tribes out of the kingdom of Israel, he did not escape the terms of Israel's covenant. He created a halfway covenant political order. He imposed halfway covenant ritualism: Jehovah worship with Baalism's rituals. He set up the golden calves and hired the lowest elements of the society to become priests (I Ki. 12:28, 31). Nevertheless, Northern Israel did not escape the negative sanctions of the national covenant. The nation drifted into apostasy. Ahab later imposed pure Baalism. But even under Ahab, there remained 7,000 in Israel in Elijah's day who had not bowed the knee to Baal (I Ki. 19:18). *The presence of this remnant church provided the historical continuity with the original covenant.* Their presence allowed God to impose his sanctions. The result was the captivity under Assyria. Jeroboam and Ahab had not escaped the covenant. They only brought the historic sanctions of God on Israel.

The continuing presence of the Church in the United States provides the covenantal continuity with the true founders of this nation, those bands of Calvinistic Christians who fled from Europe in the seventeenth century and came here to build a city on a hill. The Founding Fathers were the nearly forgotten men like William Bradford of Plymouth Colony and John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.<sup>7</sup>

Like Jeroboam before them, and also like Roger Williams, Professors Nell, Hatch, and Marsden look to the outward symbols of American civil religion and the details of the nation's civil "contracts." They believe that there never really had been a national covenant — Ahab's covenantal perspective — and that in any case, the Constitution's pluralism is today the true religion of this society.

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7. John Adair, *Founding Fathers: The Puritans in England and America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, [1982] 1986).

They are incorrect. There is covenantal continuity in the United States as surely as there was in the Northern Kingdom in Elijah's day. *It is the continuing presence of people who affirm the gospel that provides covenantal continuity with the past, as well as with the future.* It is this covenantal continuity that will bring forth (and has brought forth) God's historic sanctions – sanctions leading either to national oblivion, as they did in North Africa in the seventh century, or to covenantal restoration. Let us pray that it will be the latter.

### *Jeroboam's Priesthood*

The U.S. Constitution is one step beyond Jeroboam's golden calves, but not yet the covenant of Ahab and Jezebel. Today's political leaders are the judicial equivalent of Jeroboam's priesthood. They are morally superior to Ahab's 450 priests of Baal and 450 priests of the groves (Asherah). Christians therefore should defend the golden calf of the Constitution as a temporary device that gives us freedom to work for an eventual return to Jerusalem.

We now face the threat of a transition to the Ahab and Jezebel school of civil religion, if the plans for a new Constitutional Convention go through. One thing is clear, however: Jeroboam's halfway covenant world did not survive. Neither did the Articles of Confederation. Jeroboam's halfway covenant moved forward into Ahab's Baalism. We also live under a transitional covenantal settlement. Either this nation will return to its pre-Constitution orthodoxy or else it heads into outright paganism. Judicially speaking, the latter is more likely than the former. We are already judicially pagan.

### Covenant Sanctions: Church and Family

The Anglo-Saxon Masons of the eighteenth century ridiculed atheism, but the atheists have triumphed, just as a handful of Antifederalists predicted in state ratifying conventions and pamphlets. The Masons used the widely accepted doctrine of neutral natural law to undergird their appeal to religious toleration. They took their Unitarian Masonic oaths in secret, and they took their secular political oaths, and they thought that all was well. It wasn't. The worst elements have inherited the supposedly neutral kingdom.

The American Civil Liberties Union has few supporters within the lodges of the deeply Masonic South. The good old boys with their fezes and Shriner regalia do not cheer when the ACLU gets a federal injunction against having a Christmas manger scene on the

local court house lawn. But such is the inevitable result of halfway civil covenants. The opponents of the Constitution saw it coming in early 1788, but could not get the votes to stop it. Mercy Warren's Antifederalist lament a decade and a half after ratification has proven prophetic: ". . . most of the inhabitants of America were too proud for monarchy, yet too poor for nobility, and it is to be feared, too selfish and avaricious for a virtuous republic." "When men see themselves rather than God as the source of their wealth (Deut. 8:17), they have adopted the fundamental principle of humanism. The inevitable result is the advent of negative sanctions from God in history (Deut. 8:19-20). This is the threat of retaining We the People."

The question is, can we reverse the drift into political Baalism before these sanctions escalate – not arrive: escalate? They have already arrived, as AIDS indicates. Can we return to Jerusalem without being invaded by the Assyrians? Can we avoid the Ahab covenant? If so, how?

I know the *first step*: churches must excommunicate anyone who remains a Mason. Every Mason in every Bible-believing church should be asked to choose between the two implacably rival covenants he has sworn to uphold. The double-minded Masons must not make the churches double-minded. Churches must publicly break this covenant with evil. At least in our churches, if not yet in our civil courts, we must not retain the services or the tithes of anyone who sacrifices in the groves of Masonry. Bible-believing churches got us into this mess by refusing to cast out Freemasons beginning 250 years ago. They set the pattern. That pattern has now led to the secularization of the republic.

*Step two* is also clear: Christians must pull their children out of the public schools. It is no wonder that Freemasonry is so supportive of the public schools; the public schools are the State-established churches of the modern world. They are based on the same theology that Masonry promotes: common-ground ethics and government. Parents must break with the public schools as surely as churches must excommunicate Freemasons. Until this is done, this society will remain in its present broken covenant status. God's negative sanctions will escalate.

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8. Mercy Warren, "History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution" (1805), in *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, 7 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), edited by Herbert J. Storing, VI, p. 216; cited by Storing, *ibid.*, I, p. 76.

These steps are both positive and negative. Excommunicating Freemasons purifies the body of Christ. It makes plain the covenantal choices involved in taking self-valedictory oaths. Pulling children out of government schools means putting them into Christian schools. But these steps are only the beginning. Much more needs to be done. The long-term national political goal has to be the substitution of a Trinitarian national oath for the present prohibition against religious test oaths. We need to fight nothing (no test oaths) with something (Trinitarian test oaths). So far, Christians have accepted *nothing* on principle. In the world of political pluralism, nothing (no test oaths) is something (judicial atheism).

### Closing the Constitution's Open End

The Constitution is presently a judicially open-ended document. I am hereby asking: *What if someday a majority of citizens should vote to close this open end?* The Constitution clearly allows amendments, It allows an amendment to revoke one or more past amendments, as the twenty-first amendment proves: it abolished the eighteenth amendment (Prohibition). If voters change their minds about any Constitutional provision of the past, they possess the authority to rewrite it. To cite Justice Burger regarding the authority of the Supreme Court: "But when we decide a constitutional issue, right or wrong, that's — that's it until we change it or the people change it. Don't forget that. The people made it, and the people can change it. The people could abolish the Supreme Court entirely."<sup>9</sup> The Court has never accepted as legally valid any argument that would challenge the substantive content of an amendment.<sup>10</sup>

The question of the possibility of legally amending the U. S. Constitution in order to remove all traces of its political pluralism is a question that none of the pluralist defenders of today's anti-Christian pluralistic republic cares to discuss in print. I can hardly blame them. Raising this question exposes to the voting public the existence of the Achilles heel of all political pluralism: its first principle — the sovereignty of the voters<sup>11</sup> — allows pluralism to commit suicide.

9. Transcript, CBS News Special, "The Burger Years," June 9, 1986, p. 11.

10. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, *The Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 856.

11. Prior to ratification, it was not clear where political sovereignty lay. The framers of the Constitution stated that it was in the people, but specifically people as



At any time, and for any reason, a sufficient number of voters can legally amend the U.S. Constitution to abolish its character as a religiously or even politically pluralistic document.

My point should be clear enough: once the political pluralist opens the judicial door to the political expression of all possible views, religious and ideological, this has to include the views of those who say that no one holding a rival view will be allowed to vote, once those holding this covenantal view legally amend the Constitution. The voters already say this to convicted felons. They are never again allowed to vote. Why not say it also to those who hold religious or ideological views that would threaten the very foundations of Christian civilization? (When I ask, "Why not?" I have in mind pluralism's formal legal principles, not substantive reasons.) This is the inescapable dilemma of democratic pluralism. *Pluralism officially allows the pluralistic system to make subsequent pluralism illegal.* Pluralists do not talk about this very often. The political pluralist cannot escape his own traditional liturgy: "The people giveth, and the people taketh away; blessed be the name of the people."

### The Humanists' Conspiracy to Inherit

Certain groups of liberal humanists are doing their best to make a transition to a new constitutional order. Beginning in 1964, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions began to produce plans for a new constitution. Rexford Guy Tugwell wrote a preliminary constitution for the "Newstates of America" which he presented for consideration to the Center.<sup>12</sup> This proposed constitution

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citizens of states. As historian Forrest McDonald says, "When the framers of the Constitution referred the proposed supreme law to the people of the states, in their capacities as people of states — rather than having it ratified in any of several ways — they were in fact asserting that was where sovereignty lay. The Congress, the state governors, the state legislatures, and the voters in every state, each in their turn, had opportunity to reject this assertion; when they unanimously confirmed the procedure, they necessarily confirmed the assertion ." Forrest McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Fortnation of the American Republic, 1776-1790* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, [1965] 1979), p. 31n.

12. The 1964 proposal recommended breaking up the existing states into new political units. It also included a restructuring of the branches of the federal government into the Electoral Branch, Planning Branch, Presidency, Legislative Branch, Regulatory Branch, and Judicial Branch. Initiating the amendment process would become the work of the Judicial Council, and with the approval of the President and Senate, the proposed amendment would be voted on by the electorate. A majority vote would ratify it (Article XI).

kept getting revised.<sup>13</sup> Tugwell, one of the original members of President Franklin Roosevelt's left wing "brains trust,"<sup>14</sup> issued the fortieth draft of these discussions in *The Emerging Constitution in 1974*.<sup>15</sup>

Another group proposing a new constitution is the Committee on the Constitutional System.<sup>16</sup> Still another is the Jefferson Committee. There is a growing fear among conservatives that a Constitutional Convention will be called – the first since 1787 – and then captured by the humanist Left. They are quite properly fearful of any such move to amend the Constitution.<sup>17</sup> Some traditional liberals are also skeptical about any major tampering with the Constitution.<sup>18</sup>

#### *A New Covenant Document?*

In mid-1986, Chief Justice Burger resigned from the Supreme Court to take over the directorship of the Bicentennial Constitutional Commission, whose meetings are closed to the public, despite being funded by the federal government.<sup>19</sup> This was a visibly strange move: from the highest judicial position in the land to the head of an obscure – deliberately obscure – closed-door "educational" organization. A political cartoon by Oliphant in late June, 1986, featured a drawing of Burger seated behind a little gift stand which was located directly in front of the Supreme Court. The sign on the stand said: "Constitutional Bicentennial Souvenirs." Smaller signs said: "Gifts!" "Buttons," "Ashtrays." The caption said: "Warren Burger's most confusing decision."

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13. "Constitution for a United Republics of America: A Model for Discussion, Version XXXVII (1970)," in *Center Magazine* (Sept./Ott. 1970).

14. R. G. Tugwell, *The Brains Trust* (New York: Viking, 1968); Bernard Sternsher, *Rexford Tugwell and the New Deal* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1964).

15. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

16. Marvin Stone, "A Better Constitution?" *The Editor's Page, U.S. News and World Report* (April 9, 1984), p. 84.

17. Phyllis Schlafly, *Plotting to Rewrite the Constitution*, brochure (Feb. 1987); W. Cleon Skousen, *What Is Behind the Frantic Drive for a New Constitution* (Provo, Utah: Freeman Institute, n.d.).

18. "Leave the Constitution alone" suggests Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., who rejects the plans of the Committee on the Constitutional System: Associated Press story by Donald M. Rothberg, Nov. 3, 1985.

19. Ralph Nader's organization, Public Citizen, sued the Commission in October 1985 because of this closed-door policy. United Press International story, October 11, 1985. The injunction was dismissed that year by the Federal district court on the grounds that these hearings were not advisory hearings but *operational* meetings, and therefore not subject to the "open door" clause of the Advisory Act. The meetings remain closed.

Perhaps it is not so confusing after all. Following a tip given to me, I had a year earlier predicted Burger's decision to resign in exchange for control of the Bicentennial Commission. 20 The Bicentennial of the Constitution is almost over as I write this. We shall see what time brings. What I expect is that sooner or later there will be a series of major national crises. These could then be orchestrated by the media to create public pressure to have a Constitutional Convention. The Constitution could easily be scrapped, just as the Articles of Confederation were scrapped. It does no legal good to tell the delegates that they are not allowed to offer a new Constitution. That strategy was taken by Congress in 1786. It failed.

This substitution could very easily destroy the one source of legitimacy remaining to the U.S. national civil government. A new covenantal experiment, I predict, will not gain widespread public support once the headlines fade. There would be a growing confrontation between Christians and humanists who run the various civil governments. Christians will see the openly humanist nature of the new Constitution; they are presently blinded by tradition and wishful thinking regarding the present Constitution. Thus, the humanist powers that be will lose the one thing that they desperately need: the legitimacy imparted by the national sovereign, "We the People." Couple this with a Holy Spirit-directed revival, and you could get a total transformation of the American political order. But this will take time. It will also take a recognition of the nature of the Masonic *coup d'état* of 1787-88.

### Conclusion

We cannot expect to go back to the Articles of Confederation, nor do I believe that the Articles were capable in 1781 of solving the covenantal problem of the one and the many, unity and diversity. This document was a halfway covenant. The Articles needed major revisions, as all men of the day knew. It may well be that the U.S. Congress in 1787 would not have agreed to the necessary revisions: the strengthening of the executive, the abolition of the unanimous state agreement rule, the abolition of all internal tariffs, and the abolition of state government fiat (unbacked) paper money. What I object to as a Christian is the continuing silence regarding the two fundamen-

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20. "Hijacking the Constitution, Phase One," *Remnant Review* (May 24, 1985), pp. 2-3. The man who first predicted this is Jeffrey St. John.

tal flaws of the U.S. Constitution: 1) the prohibition of a Trinitarian oath for all U.S. officials; and 2) the removal of the affirmation of the Bible as the revealed, sovereign, exclusive, and authoritative Word of God. Not all of the state governments had made these two covenantal mistakes in 1787.

The Constitution will eventually be amended, so that the religion of the nation is at last consistently manifested in its incorporating covenant document. Either the society will be remade by the politicians, bureaucrats, and hidden hierarchies into a secular society, top to bottom, or else it will become a Christian society, bottom to top. A halfway covenant Christianity cannot survive this clash of irreconcilable worldviews. Neither can a halfway covenant secular humanism. One or the other will triumph, or else lose to a third unified worldview.

This suggestion will be attacked as immoral, un-American, and tyrannical. It will be attacked as being undemocratic – the greatest political sin of this dying era. But the critics will not admit the truth, namely, that the U.S. Constitution is only the judicially official aspect of the story of political rule in America. The system of elitist control over national affairs in America which Georgetown University's Caroll Quigley wrote about favorably in *Tragedy and Hope* (1966),<sup>21</sup> and which George Washington University's Arthur Selwyn Miller wrote about favorably just before he died in 1988,<sup>22</sup> is never mentioned in polite academic circles. This system of hidden hierarchies is nonetheless the way our world works today.

The inescapable political fact is this: there must always be representation. This representation can be open or hidden, or more likely, hidden with the illusion of being open. It is time for Christians to cease deluding themselves about the hidden hierarchies of the modern democratic world. There will always be hierarchies; the question is: Will they be open or hidden? In modern democracy, where the political hierarchy is formally open, it is in fact secretly closed. It was planned that way, beginning no later than 1787.

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21. Caroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope. A History of the World in Our Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), especially Chapter 17. This textbook is extremely rare, available (if at all) only in a "pirate" edition.

22. Arthur Selwyn Miller, *The Secret Constitution and the Need for Constitutional Change* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987).

But is this contemporary Western culture likely to continue for long? The answer, it seems to me, must be in the negative – if we take any stock in the lessons of the human past. One cannot be certain, of course; there is no sure way of catapulting ourselves into the future; no way of being confident that even the hardest or most promising of current trends will continue indefinitely. But we can take some reasonable guidance, I believe, first from the fact that never in history have periods of culture such as our own lasted for very long. They are destroyed by all the forces which constitute their essence. How can any society or age last very long if it lacks or is steadily losing the minimal requirements for a society — such requirements being the very opposite of the egocentric and hedonistic elements which dominate Western culture today?

Second, it is impossible to overlook at the present time a phenomenon that as recently as the 1940s we thought so improbable as to be unworthy of serious thought or discussion. I refer to the faint, possibly illusory, signs of the beginning of a religious renewal in Western civilization, notably in America. Whatever their future, the signs are present — visible in the currents of fundamentalism, pentecostalism, even millennialism found in certain sectors of Judaism and Christianity. Even the spread of the occult and the cult in the West could well be one of the signs of a religious renaissance, for, as is well known, the birth of Christianity or rather its genesis as a world religion in Rome during and after the preaching of Paul was surrounded by a myriad of bizarre faiths and devotions.

Robert Nisbet (1980)”

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\*Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 256.

## THE RESTORATION OF BIBLICAL PLURALISM

*I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts (Psalm 119:99-100).*

We need to take David's words seriously. He defined personal progress in history in terms of a better understanding of God's revealed laws. He could measure his progress beyond anything achieved by those who had preceded him, not in terms of better study techniques or improved means of communication or greater per capita wealth, but in terms of his mastery of God's precepts. Put another way: *without God's precepts, we cannot measure our progress in personal sanctification.* Without a measure, we cannot make personal comparisons over time. This is equally true of institutions.

Covenant-breaking man regards as preposterous any such view of biblical law as the only valid standard of moral progress in history. Sad to say, so does the modern Christian. Modern men worship at their own shrines in the hope of achieving unbroken compound economic growth per capita, but without covenantal conformity to God. We the people" are the self-identified gods of this age. We propose "and we dispose. Morally, autonomous man refuses to change; economically, he expects and demands progress. He is like the drunkards described by Isaiah: "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant" (Isa. 56: 12). This is why modern society is headed for either an enormous series of disasters or an enormous and culturally comprehensive revival — or perhaps the crises, followed by the revival. God will not be mocked.

What Christianity needs today is a revival of casuistry: the application of conscience to moral decisions. The conscience needs a reliable guide: biblical law. Casuistry has not been a popular academic

endeavor within Bible-believing Protestantism since the late seventeenth century. I am thinking of Richard Baxter's enormous study, *A Christian Directory*, written in 1664-65 and first published in 1673, and Samuel Willard's equally massive commentary on the Westminster Larger Catechism, published posthumously, *A Compleat Body of Divinity* (1726). I am also thinking of the work of the Anglican theologian Jeremy Taylor. Richard Baxter's goal was basically the same as mine: "I do especially desire you to observe, that the resolving of *practical Cases of Conscience*, and the reducing of Theological knowledge into *serious Christian Practice*, and promoting a *skilful facility* in the faithful exercise of universal obedience and Holiness of heart and life, is the great work of this Treatise; . . ."]

### Biblical Pluralism

Dominion Christianity teaches that there are four covenants under God, meaning four kinds of vows under God: personal (individual), and the three institutional covenants: ecclesiastical, civil, and familial. <sup>2</sup>All other human institutions (business, educational, charitable, etc. ) are to one degree or other under the jurisdiction of one or more of these four covenants. No single human covenant is absolute; therefore, no single human institution is all-powerful. Thus, Christian liberty is *liberty under God and God's law*, administered by plural legal authorities.

There is no doubt that Christianity teaches pluralism, but a very special kind of pluralism: *plural institutions* under God's single comprehensive law system. It does not teach a pluralism of law structures, or a pluralism of moralities, for this sort of hypothetical legal pluralism (as distinguished from *institutional* pluralism) is always either polytheistic or humanistic. <sup>3</sup>Christian people are required to take dominion over the earth by means of all three God-ordained institutions, not just the Church, or just the State, or just the family.

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1. Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory Or, A Summ of Practical Theologie, and Cases of Conscience* (London: Robert White for Nevil Simmons, [1673] 1678), unnumbered page, but the second page of Advertisements.

2. Ray. R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 4. It was the failure to acknowledge the unique presence of God in these covenantal institutions that undermined the Christian case for state constitutional covenantalism in the late eighteenth century. See John Witherspoon's *Lectures on Moral philosophy*, Lecture 16, "On Oaths and Vows."

3. Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations: The Biblical Blueprints for Government* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), ch. 3.

*The kingdom of God includes every human institution, and every aspect of life, for all of life is under God and is governed by His unchanging principles. All of life is under God and God's law because God intends to judge all of life in terms of His law.* <sup>4</sup>

In this structure of *plural governments*, the institutional churches serve as *advisors* to the other institutions (the Levitical function), but the churches can only pressure individual leaders through the threat of excommunication. As a restraining factor on unwarranted Church authority, an excommunication by one local church or denomination is always subject to review by another, if and when the excommunicated person seeks membership elsewhere. Thus, each of the three covenantal institutions is to be run under God, 'as interpreted by its lawfully elected or ordained leaders, with the advice of the churches, not their compulsion.

All Christians are in principle theocrats. All Christians say that God rules the universe. God (*theos*) rules (*kratos*). Theocracy means simply that *God rules*. He rules in every area of life: Church, State, family, business, science, education, etc. There is no zone of neutrality. There is no "King's X" from God. Men are responsible for everything they think, say, and do. God exercises total jurisdiction. Jurisdiction means law (*juris*) and speaking (*diction*). God *speaks* His Word. It is a comprehensive Word. Anyone who says that God's law does not apply to some area of life is thereby saying that God does not have jurisdiction in that area. "No law — no jurisdiction."

### Revolution and Law

I am convinced that both the West and the Far East are about to experience a major transformation. It has already begun. The pace of social change is already rapid and will get faster. The technological possibility of a successful Soviet nuclear strike against the United States grows daily;<sup>5</sup> so does the possibility of chemical and biological warfare;<sup>6</sup> so does the threat of an AIDS epidemic. None of these threats to civilization may prove in retrospect to be devastating, but

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4. *Ibid.*, ch. 4.

5. Angelo Codevilla, *While Others Build: The Commonsense Approach to the Strategic Defense Initiative* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Quentin Crommelin, Jr., and David S. Sullivan, *Soviet Military Supremacy* (Washington, D. C.: Citizens Foundation, 1985).

6. Joseph D. Douglas and Neil C. Livingston, *America the Vulnerable: The Threat of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1987).



they are certainly perceived today as threats. Added to these grim possibilities is the much more predictable threat of an international economic collapse as a result of the vast build-up of international debt; this in turn could produce domestic political transformations. Also possible is the spread of terrorism and Marxist revolution. Drug addiction is spreading like a plague. Changes in the weather as a result of the use of fossil fuels (the “greenhouse effect”) are in the newspapers because of international drought. Agricultural output may be endangered, long term, by weather changes and also by soil erosion. We are not sure. What Christians should be certain of is this: *God has been plowing up our ethically erosion-prone world since World War I, and this process is accelerating.*

This has created a unique opportunity for Christian revival, but this time the revival could lead to a broad-based cultural transformation. In short, revival could produce an international revolution: family by family, church by church, nation by nation. For a true social revolution to take place, there must be a transformation of the legal order. This transformation takes several generations, but without it, there has been no revolution, only a *coup d'état*.<sup>7</sup> There is today an international crisis in the Western legal tradition.<sup>8</sup> This, far more than the build-up of nuclear weapons or the appearance of AIDS, testifies to the likelihood of a comprehensive, international revolution — not necessarily violent, but a revolution nonetheless. The Holy Spirit could produce such a revolution without firing a shot or launching a missile. This is my prayer. It should be every Christian's prayer.

Harold Berman's point is correct: *without a transformation of the legal system, there is no resolution.* This is why I have devoted so much space to explain the case laws of Exodus.<sup>9</sup> It is these laws, and their amplification in the Book of Deuteronomy, that must serve as the foundation of any systematically, self-consciously Christian revolution. Once the myth of neutrality is abandoned — really abandoned, not just verbally admitted to be a myth — then the inevitable question arises: By what standard? Christians who have abandoned faith in the myth of neutrality have only one possible answer: “By *this* standard: biblical law.”<sup>10</sup>

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7. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 20.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-41.

9. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

10. Greg L. Bahnsen, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985).

## Natural Law Theory: A Dead Mule

Natural law theory is a dead mule; it was always a sterile hybrid, and Darwinism has long-since killed the last known living specimens.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, anti-theistic conservative philosophers and a handful of traditional Roman Catholic and Protestant college instructors and magazine columnists still visibly cling to one or another of these taxidermic specimens, each proclaiming that his motionless specimen is still alive. They still pretend that Cicero is alive and well philosophically, and that Newton's god is still out there somewhere, protecting mankind's natural rights even as he occasionally shores up the declining universe. Christians have also been unwilling to accept biblical law as a replacement for the expired hybrid of natural law. They have clung to Locke's worldview as if Hume and Kant had not destroyed it. They have clung to a Newtonian worldview as if it had not been both Unitarian and Deistic from the beginning, as if Hume<sup>12</sup> and Darwin and quantum physics had not made faith in it untenable. They refuse to admit that there is nowhere for them to turn for guidance in developing a biblically believable social theory and workable social programs except to the case laws of the Old Testament.

And so, Christians remain culturally impotent. Their only psychological solution to this visibly unpleasant condition has been to develop eschatologies of defeat that announce this cultural impotence as God's inevitable, predestined way. Even the Arminians insist that the cultural defeat of Christianity in this, the "Church Age," is predestined by God. They may believe in free will for individuals, but they are adamant regarding the predestined defeat of Christianity in "Church Age" culture.<sup>13</sup> They do not bother to preach the specifics of Christian civilization, for they neither believe

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11. R. J. Rushdoony writes: "Darwinism destroyed this faith in nature. The process of nature was now portrayed, not as a perfect working of law, but as a blind, unconscious energy working profligately to express itself. In the struggle for survival, the fittest survive by virtue of their own adaptations, not because of natural law. Nature produces many 'mistakes' which fail to survive and become extinct species and fossils. The destiny of the universe is extinction as its energy runs down." Rushdoony, *The Biblical Philosophy of History* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), p. 7.

12. Richard Kuhns, "Hume's Republic and the Universe of Newton," in Peter F. Gay (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Studies Presented to Arthur M. Wilson* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1972), pp. 75-95.

13. Dave Hunt, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1988)

in Christian civilization (Nell, Hatch, Marsden, as well as all dispensational fundamentalists) nor regard it as a good use of one's gifts to promote it. As dispensationalist Peter Lalonde said: "It's a question, 'Do you polish brass on a sinking ship?' And if they're working on setting up new institutions, instead of going out and winning the lost for Christ, then they're wasting the most valuable time on the planet earth right now. . . ."14

### Tom Paine's Demon: The Bible

We know where antinomian (anti-covenantal) theology has headed in the past: to Unitarianism, atheism, pluralism, moral debauchery, national bankruptcy, and bloody revolution. It winds up with the theology of Tom Paine: that in consideration of "the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God ."15

Is the Old Testament the word of a demon? If not, then why do antinomian Christians — liberals and conservatives, neo-evangelicals and fundamentalists — continue to ridicule Old Testament law? They stick their fists in the face of the God of Psalm 119, and shout in defiance of His law: "Is God really nothing more than the abstract, impersonal dispenser of equally abstract and impersonal laws?" 16 Yes, He is *much* more than this. Among other things, He is the Eternal Slavemaster over those who rebel against Him, the dispenser not of abstract law but of personally experienced agony forever and ever. Hell is real. The lake of fire is real. God is therefore not to be mocked. But He has many mockers, and many of these mockers call themselves by His name. They do not fear Him. For now. But eventually God will stick His fist in their faces. People may choose to ignore God's law; they will not be able to ignore AIDS.

Another major alternative to Paine's sort of outright apostasy is some variation of Marcion's second-century heresy of the two-gods

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14. *Dominion: A Dangerous New Theology*, Tape One of *Dominion: The Word and the New World Order*, a 3-tape set distributed by the Omega-Latter, Ontario, Canada, 1987.

15. *The Age of Reason*, Pt. 1; cited by David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 525.

16. Rodney Clapp, "Democracy as Heresy," *Christianity Today* (Feb. 20, 1987), p. 23.

theory of history: that an evil god operated in the Old Testament, but a nice god runs the world today. (For more details, see below: "The Continuing Heresy of Dualism.") Robert Davison is correct when he says that a "Marcionite tendency may be fairly traced in much modern discussion of Christian ethics, nor is this tendency confined to scholarly discussion."<sup>17</sup>

The third alternative is dispensationalism: God used the revealed laws of the Bible to govern people before the advent of Christ, but today we have new laws in operation, or "wisdom," meaning vague, undefined personal laws, and no specifically New Testament cultural laws at all. The road to cultural impotence is paved with neat (and ultimately unworkable) solutions to difficult biblical problems.

### *The Search for Underlying Principles*

What we must search for is the moral principle that undergirds each Old Testament law. When we find it, we can then begin to discuss how or to what extent God expects the civil government or some other government to enforce it today. Those who begin with the presupposition that a particular Old Testament law or God-required Hebrew practice was innately evil have already taken the first step toward Paine's view: that the Bible is the word of a demon.

Christians today are afraid of the laws in the Bible. They are actually embarrassed by them. They do not recognize that biblical law is a two-edged sword of God's judgment: blessing for the righteous, but cursing for the unrighteous (Rem. 13:1-7). They do not understand that God's *law-order for society is merciful*. For example, God requires the death penalty for kidnappers (Ex. 21:16). The death penalty used to be imposed on kidnappers in the United States, and kidnapping was rare. It is no longer imposed regularly, and kidnapping has become a blight. Kidnapping by terrorists in Europe is commonplace. Who says that God's law regarding kidnapping is too harsh? Harsher than kidnapping itself? So it is with *all* of God's civil laws. They are merciful compared with the effects of unpunished evil. The modern world is learning just how unmerciful a society can be that is not governed by biblical law.

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17. Robert Davison, "Some Aspects of the Old Testament Contribution to the Pattern of Christian Ethics," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 12 (1959), p. 374; cited by Walter Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondeman Academie, 1983), p. 23.

“Theocrapobia”: Fear of God’s Rulership

When, in a court of law, the witness puts his hand on the Bible and swears to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help him God, he thereby swears on the Word of God — the *whole* Word of God, and *nothing but* the Word of God. The Bible is a unit. It is a “package deal.” The New Testament did not overturn the Old Testament; it is a *commentary* on the Old Testament. It tells us how to use the Old Testament properly in the period after the death and resurrection of Israel’s messiah, God’s Son.

Jesus said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise [way] pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:17-19). Christ took the Old Testament seriously enough to die for those condemned to the second death (Rev. 20:14) by its provisions. The Old Testament is not a discarded first draft of God’s Word. It is not “God’s Word (emeritus).”

If anything, the New Testament law is more stringent than the Mosaic law, not less stringent. Paul writes that an elder cannot have more than one wife (I Tim. 3:2). The king in the Old Testament was forbidden to have multiple wives (Deut. 17:17). This was not a general law, unless we interpret the prohibition of Leviticus 18:18 as applying to all additional wives, and not just to marrying a woman’s sister, as ethicist John Murray interprets it.<sup>18</sup> If we attempt to interpret Leviticus 18:18 in Murray’s way, the question inevitably arises: Why specify kings as being prohibited from becoming polygamists if the same law applied to all men anyway? Possibly to prohibit the system of political covenanting through marriage (Solomon is a good example here). In any case, there is no equally clear-cut Old Testament prohibition against polygamy comparable to I Timothy 3:2, which

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18. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957), Appendix B. Catholic theologian Angelo Tosato agrees with him: “The Law of Leviticus 18:18: A Reexamination,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 46 (1984), pp. 199-214. They are not followed in this view by most Protestant commentators, nor by Nachmanides, who said that the verse applies only to a woman’s sister: Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman [Ramban], *Commentary on the Torah: Leviticus* (New York: Shilo, [1267?] 1973), p. 255.

indicates a tightening of the legal requirements for at least church officers. The New Testament appears to be more rigorous than the Old in this instance.

Another alteration in marriage laws that we find in the New Testament is the abolition of concubinage that resulted from Christ's fulfillment of the terms of the Old Testament's bride price system. There are no more second-class wives.

### *A Scare Word*

The word "theocracy" is a scare word that humanists and frightened Christians use to chase dedicated Christians away from areas of their God-given responsibility. The critics focus on politics and civil government as if God's rule in this area were somehow evil. Because almost all humanists today believe in salvation through legislation,<sup>19</sup> they necessarily believe that politics is the primary means of social healing.<sup>20</sup> The Marxists are the most consistent defenders of human transformation through political action: the religion of revolution.<sup>21</sup> Because Christians are today so used to thinking in these humanistic terms, they seldom think to themselves: 'Wait a minute. I know that God rules the family, and the government of my family should reflect this fact. God also rules the Church, and the government of my church is supposed to reflect this fact. I know that God rules all civil governments, too. So why should it be evil for Christians to work hard to see to it that the civil government reflects this fact, just as they do in their families, churches, and businesses?' In short, why should politics be outside the realm of God-honoring Christian action?<sup>22</sup>

Humanist critics present Christians with a kind of mental image: a scarecrow that is locked in the stocks of Puritan New England. Every time a Christian walks by this scarecrow, a tape recorded message blares out: "Beware of theocracy! Beware of theocracy!" If

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19. The exceptions to this rule are classical liberals and free market economists like F. A. Hayek and Milton Friedman, traditional conservatives like Russell Kirk and William F. Buckley, neo-conservatives like Irving Kristol, and outright anarchists like Murray N. Rothbard.

20. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1971] 1978), chaps. 2-5, 8, 9, 11.

21. Gary North, *Marx's Religion of Revolution: Regeneration Through Chaos* (rev. ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

22. George Grant, *The Changing of the Guard: The Biblical Blueprint for Politics* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

the critics meant, "Beware of ecclesiocracy," meaning civil rule by the institutional Church, they would have a valid point, but they mean something different: "Beware of Christians in every area of life who seek to exercise biblical dominion under God by obeying *and enforcing God's holy law.*"

What "Beware of theocracy!" really means is, "Beware of God's righteous rule!"

### The Dismantling of the Welfare-Warfare State

Those who reject the theocratic ideal are ready to accuse Calvinists of being tyrants. Historian Ronald Wells of Calvin College has written an attack on Francis Schaeffer, which appears in a collection of essays that is best described as a neo-evangelical tirade. He points to the unfootnoted and unmentioned links between certain aspects of Schaeffer's social thought and Christian Reconstructionism, and then observes: "This tendency to promote one's own view by law' has always been the dangerous part of Calvinism: one sees Calvinists in power as triumphal and dictatorial. . . . Calvinists in power have wielded that power oppressively."<sup>23</sup>

I suspect that we Reconstructionists were Mr. Wells' target, for we are the only Christians on earth calling for the building of a biblical theocracy. What I also suspect is that what really disturbs our neo-evangelical academic critics is that we perceive this theocracy as a system of decentralized power. We call for a vast purging of present-day national power, both political and economic. We call for the dismantling of the welfare-warfare State, most notably every aspect of taxpayer-financing for education (except for the national military academies . . . maybe).<sup>24</sup> I have called for a reduction of aggregate taxes to the level required by I Samuel 8: where all levels of civil government *combined* are allowed to collect *less than 10 percent* of people's annual income.<sup>25</sup> I support the abolition of the local property tax, as well as all state and national direct taxation of individuals and corporations, which includes the graduated income tax, the Social

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23. Ronald A. Wells, "Schaeffer on America," in Ronald W. Ruesegger (ed.), *Rejections on Francis Schaeffer* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 1986), p. 237.

24. Robert L. Thoburn, *The Children Trap: Biblical Blueprints for Education* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1986).

25. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 61.

Security tax, the corporate income tax, the capital gains tax, and all sales taxes. I recommend the abolition of all direct taxation by any agency of civil government above the local township or county; every other level of civil government would be forced to seek its revenues by taxing the level of civil government immediately below it. Civil governments above the most local would have to live off the revenues collected from other civil governments. This would decentralize power with a vengeance. The Reconstructionists' version of theocracy is a decentralized system of multiple competing governments in which the modern messianic State and its economic subsidies would be dismantled. By modern political standards, such a vision of the shrinking of the centralized power of civil government is nothing short of utopian.

In short, if the Reconstructionists' version of theocracy were to be voted into operation, the tenured, subsidized intellectual class to which our academic critics belong would experience the end of its taxpayer-financed bonanza. An entire class would have to enter the competitive free market and seek productive employment. Consumers would reward former college professors in terms of what consumers want to buy, not what state legislatures want to buy. There would be no more compulsory education and no more tax support of existing schools. This fear, rather than the fear of theocratic tyranny, may well be the true underlying concern of our critics. If not, it should be.

### *Majority Rule*

The Bible does not allow the imposition of some sort of top-down bureaucratic tyranny in the name of Christ. The kingdom of God requires a bottom-up society. The bottom-up Christian society rests ultimately on the doctrine of *self-government* under God, with God's law as the publicly revealed standard of performance.<sup>26</sup> It is the humanists' view of society that promotes top-down bureaucratic power.

The basis for building a Christian society is evangelism and missions that lead to a widespread Christian revival, so that the great mass of earth's inhabitants will place themselves under Christ's protection, and then voluntarily use His covenantal laws for self-government. Christian reconstruction begins with personal conversion to Christ and self-government under God's law; then it spreads

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26. Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations*, ch. 2.



to others through revival; and only later does it bring comprehensive changes in civil law, when the vast majority of voters voluntarily agree to live under biblical blueprints.

Let's get this straight: *Christian reconstruction depends on majority rule.* More than this; it depends on overwhelming acceptance of the biblical covenant, perhaps as high as the 80% range of adult acceptance.<sup>27</sup> In the initial stages of the Constitutional reform movement, such as today, Christians are under the civil rule of the majority. We must work within a covenantally alien system, and we must do so peacefully. We expect positive feedback in history for covenantal faithfulness. Over a long period of time — or in a shorter period in the midst of a massive revival and national crisis — the majority of the society then becomes Christian. After the Christians have had decades of experience in many areas of leadership and followership, they will have proven to themselves and to non-Christians that they are competent to rule because the law of God is reliable. People will have seen biblical casuistry in action for generations. Only then can a broad consensus arise in both Christian and non-Christian segments of the population that a theocratic republic is the best way to organize the decentralized, limited-State system of civil government.

### Eschatology Matters

Leaders of the Christian Reconstruction movement expect a large majority of citizens worldwide eventually to accept Christ as savior. We believe in postmillennialism. 2s Those who do not share our confidence concerning the future success of the gospel, as empowered by the Holy Spirit, believe that an earthly kingdom must be imposed by force from the top down (premillennialism),<sup>29</sup> or else

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27. The legendary "80-20 rule" really is a recurring phenomenon in human affairs. I use it only as an example. Perhaps 75% is sufficient.

28. David Chilton, *Paradise Restored: A Biblical Theology of Dominion* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1985); Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1954] 1981); R. J. Rushdoony, *Thy Kingdom Come. Studies in Daniel and Revelation* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1971] 1978).

29. Dave Hunt writes: "During His thousand-year reign, Christ will visibly rule the world in perfect righteousness from Jerusalem and will impose peace on all nations. Satan will be locked up, robbed of the power to tempt. Justice will be meted out swiftly." Hunt, *Beyond Seduction: A Return to Biblical Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1987), p. 250. If Satan is unable to tempt mankind, then any evil that calls forth Christ's justice must be man-based evil. In a taped interview with

they do not believe in an earthly institutional kingdom at all (amillennialism).<sup>30</sup> Postmillennialists disagree, for several reasons.

Premillennialism and amillennialism both deny that the preaching of the gospel can ever bring a majority of people to faith in Christ, thereby bringing in the earthly kingdom of God in history on a voluntary basis, person by person, culture by culture. Premillennialist author Dave Hunt has gone so far as to argue that such a person-by-person extension of God's kingdom is literally impossible for God to achieve.<sup>31</sup> Premillennialists have always maintained that in order to produce universal peace on earth, Jesus will have to impose a top-down bureaucracy when He comes to reign in person.<sup>32</sup>

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Peter Lalonde, released in early 1987, Hunt said: "Christ himself is physically here. And He has us, the redeemed in our resurrection bodies, that nobody can kill us. And we are helping Him to maintain order. He is *forcing* this world to behave, and He gives a restoration of the Edenic state, so that the desert blossoms like a rose, and the lion lies down with the lamb, and you've got paradise on earth, once again, with Christ Himself maintaining it and, even better than the garden of Eden, Satan is locked up for a thousand years." *Dominion and the Cross*, Tape Two of *Dominion: The Word and the New World Order*, *op. cit.*, 1987.

It should be pointed out that Hunt's argument that resurrected saints will return to rule with Jesus during the earthly millennium has long been rejected by dispensational theologians at Dallas Theological Seminary. Resurrected saints will be dwelling in a place called the heavenly Jerusalem, argues J. Dwight Pentecost: "The Relation between Living and Resurrected Saints in The Millennium," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 117 (October 1960), pp. 335-37. See also John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academie, 1979), pp. 86-87.

30. Oddly enough, Hunt also denies that there can ever be an earthly kingdom, even in the dispensational millennium. He says in his taped interview: "What happens at the end of this time, when Satan is loosed? He deceives the nations and like the sand of the seashore, so many – a multitude. They gather their armies and come against Christ in Jerusalem. And, of course, that is when they finally have to be banished from God's presence forever. I believe it's the final proof of the incorrigible nature of the human heart. So, Christ Himself cannot make humanity behave. He cannot by legislation, or by political or military or coercive means, establish this kingdom." Tape Two, *Dominion and the Cross*.

31. "In fact, dominion – taking dominion and setting up the kingdom for Christ – is an *impossibility*, even for God. The millennial reign of Christ, far from being the kingdom, is actually the final proof of the incorrigible nature of the human heart, because Christ Himself can't do what these people say they are going to do – New Agers or Manifested Sons." (Verbal emphasis in the original interview.) *Dominion and the Cross*.

32. They have not taught, as popularizers like Hunt teach today, that resurrected Christians of the "Church Age" get to return to earth in perfect bodies to kick heads (or whatever) for Jesus. This is a new doctrine, one which Rev. Thomas Ice has adopted enthusiastically: "My blessed hope, however, continues to be that Christ will soon rapture his Bride, the church, and that we will return with him in victory to rule and exercise dominion with him for a thousand years upon the earth. Even so, come Lord Jesus!" Ice, Preface, in H. Wayne House and Thomas D. Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1988), p. 10.

In opposition to this view, amillennialists deny the premillennial doctrine that Jesus will ever physically return in history. They insist (as postmillennialism also insists) that Jesus will physically appear only at the end of history at the final judgment. They therefore deny (in contrast to postmillennialism) the possibility of an earthly manifestation of God's comprehensive kingdom in history.

Because of their denial of the widespread acceptance of the gospel at any point in history, premillennialists and amillennialists alike invariably associate the word "theocracy" with some sort of top-down, power-imposed, widely resisted rule that is imposed by an elite. Premillennialists accept this as a valid system of civil rule, but only if Christ personally and physically runs it from the top of the bureaucratic pyramid. Amillennialists deny that Christ will ever do this in history, so they deny bureaucratic theocracy's legitimacy at any point in the pre-final judgment future.

### *The Work of the Holy Spirit*

First, we Calvinistic postmillennialists disagree with both groups concerning the supposed impotence of the gospel in history in changing whole societies, person by person, covenant institution by covenant institution. We believe that the Holy Spirit will *impose* His will on the recalcitrant hearts of huge numbers of people, just as He has always imposed His will on each recalcitrant heart every time He has saved anyone from his sins. God is utterly sovereign in election and salvation. He changes people's hearts, transforming them so that they can respond in faith to the free offer of the gospel. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). This is the only way anyone has ever been saved, for the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness to him (I Cor. 2:14). The natural man does not partially receive the things of the Spirit in his unsaved state; he rejects the very idea that such a wrathful God exists or that his own condition warrants such negative sanctions. Thus, the unsaved person needs to be transformed *before* he or she can accept the gospel. First comes God's irresistible saving grace; then comes man's response: internal faith in Jesus Christ. In short, man does not have free (autonomous) will. Paul was correct. 33 Augustine was therefore

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33. "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written,

correct against Pelagius; Luther was correct against Erasmus; Calvin was correct against Pighius; and the Puritans were correct against the latitudinarians. Man's lack of free will is why God can easily change the spiritual condition of this world in order to give the human race freedom.

Second, because we Calvinistic Christian Reconstructionists believe that the Holy Spirit forces hearts to change – the doctrine of irresistible grace — we also believe that human institutions are not allowed to seek to coerce men's hearts and minds. Such coercion *of the human will*— its transformation prior to the permission of the individual whose will is being transformed — is a *monopoly that belongs exclusively to God*.

Men must recognize that coercion is an inescapable concept in history. It is never a question of coercion vs. no coercion. It is always a question of *whose* coercion. Reconstructionists affirm the power of the Holy Spirit to change men's souls – to declare judicially that they are saved, and therefore possess Christ's righteousness — and to change them ethically at the point of their ethical transformation. Those who deny this exclusive power of the Spirit in transforming the lives of covenant-breakers instinctively expect to find coercion somewhere else: in human institutions — either humanist or "theocratic-bureaucratic" – or in a future personal kingdom ruled by Christ in Person.

Third, because we postmillennialists find it taught in the Bible that there will be a future outpouring of this soul-transforming Holy Spirit — the only possible basis of the Bible's prophesied millennial blessings — we disagree with premillennialist and amillennialists concerning the limited extent of the Spirit's work in the future. The kingdom will not be brought in by a bureaucratic theocratic regime, but by the heart-transforming work of the Holy Spirit. We therefore

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Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore bath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why cloth he yet find fault? For who bath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor?"(9:11-21).

disagree with them concerning the supposed necessity of defining theocracy as a top-down social transformation. If God's kingdom rule is to be widespread in its influence in society, this transformation must be from the bottom-up: *self-government under God*. So, we do not call for a theocratic bureaucracy, either now or in the future. Such a top-down bureaucracy is not called for in the Bible, is impossible to maintain without unlawful coercion, and is not necessary to impose to bring in the kingdom. Christian Reconstructionists "call instead for a decentralized, international, theocratic *republic*.<sup>34</sup> Such a republic is ethically necessary, now and in the future, and it will be historically possible in the future, when the Holy Spirit begins His visibly triumphant sweep of the nations.

If postmillennialism is incorrect, and the Holy Spirit does not act to bring huge numbers of people to eternal life, then Christians must be content with only partial social reconstruction, and only partial external blessings from God. The earthly manifestations of God's heavenly kingdom will necessarily be limited. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," we should expect God to answer this prayer. Not all Christians pray this prayer. Many dispensationalists do not, saying that it is a Jewish-era prayer of Jesus, not a "Church Age" prayer. They at least are consistent. Many less consistent Christians teach that God will never answer this prayer before Jesus comes again physically to rule the world in person (amillennialists and premillennialists), yet they still ritually pray this prayer in church. If they are correct about the earthly kingdom of God, then we will not see the pre-second coming advent of a holy commonwealth in which God's laws are honored. We must content ourselves with less.

It is not possible to ramrod God's blessings from the top down, unless you are God. (If you *are* God, this ramrodding is the only system that works, convert by convert. ) Only humanists believe that man is God. They do indeed believe in social salvation through ramrodding by the State. Christians are simply trying to get the ramrod away from them and melt it down. This melted ramrod could then be used to make a great grave marker for humanism: "The God That Failed."

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34. E. C. Wines, *The Hebrew Republic* (Rt. 1, Box 65-2, Wrightstown, New Jersey: American Presbyterian Press, 1980). This is a reprint of a short section of Wines' late nineteenth-century book, *Commentary on the Laws of the Ancient Hebrews*, Book II.

## The Continuing Heresy of Dualism

Dualism teaches that the world is inherently divided: spirit vs. matter, or law vs. mercy, or mind vs. matter, or nature vs. grace. What the Bible teaches is that this world is divided *ethically* and *personally*: God vs. Satan, right vs. wrong, freedom vs. tyranny. The conflict between God and Satan will end at the final judgment. Whenever Christians substitute some other form of dualism for ethical dualism, they fall into heresy and suffer the consequences. That is what has happened today. We are suffering from revived versions of ancient heresies.

### *Marcion's Dualism*

The Old Testament was written by the same God who wrote the New Testament. There were not two Gods in history, meaning there was no dualism or radical split between the two testamental periods. There is only one God, in time and eternity.

This idea has had opposition throughout Church history. An ancient two-gods heresy was first promoted in the Church about a century after Christ's crucifixion, and the Church has always regarded it as just that, a heresy. It was proposed by a man named Marcion. Basically, this heresy teaches that there are two completely different law systems in the Bible: Old Testament law and New Testament law (or non-law). But Marcion took the logic of his position all the way. He argued that two law systems means two gods. The god of wrath wrote the Old Testament, and the god of mercy wrote the New Testament. In short: "two laws-two gods."

You would be surprised how many Christians still believe something dangerously close to Marcionism: not a two-gods view, exactly, but a "God-who-changed-all-His-rules" sort of view. They begin with the accurate teaching that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were fulfilled by Christ, and therefore that the *unchanging principles* of worship are *applied differently* in the New Testament, but then they erroneously conclude that the whole Old Testament system of civil law was dropped by God, and *nothing biblical was put in its place*. In other words, God created a sort of vacuum for State law.

This idea turns civil law-making over to Satan. In our day, this means that civil law-making is turned over to humanism. *Christians have unwittingly become the philosophical allies of the humanists with respect to civil law*. With respect to their doctrine of the State, therefore, most Christians hold what is in effect a two-gods view of the Bible.

*Gnostic Dualism*

Another ancient heresy that is still with us is Gnosticism. It became a major threat to the early Church almost from the beginning. It was also a form of dualism, a theory of a radical split. The gnostics taught that the split is between evil matter and good spirit. Thus, their goal was to escape this material world through other-worldly exercises that punish the body. They believed in *retreat from the world of human conflicts and responsibility*. Some of these ideas got into the Church, and people started doing ridiculous things. So-called "pillar saints" became temporarily popular in the fifth century, A. D. A "saint" would sit on a platform on top of a pole for several decades without coming down. This was considered very spiritual. <sup>35</sup> (Who fed them? Who cleaned up after them?)

Thus, many Christians came to view "the world" as something permanently outside the kingdom of God. They believed that this hostile, forever-evil world cannot be redeemed, reformed, and reconstructed. At best, it can be subdued by power (maybe). Jesus did not really die for it, and it cannot be healed. This dualistic view of the world vs. God's kingdom narrowly restricted any earthly manifestation of God's kingdom. Christians who were influenced by Gnosticism concluded that God's kingdom refers only to the institutional Church. They argued that the institutional Church is the *only* manifestation of God's kingdom.

This led to two opposite and equally evil conclusions. First, power religionists who accepted this definition of God's kingdom tried to put the institutional Church in charge of everything, since it is supposedly "the only manifestation of God's kingdom on earth." To subdue the supposedly unredeemable world, which is forever outside the kingdom, the institutional Church has to rule with the sword. The institutional Church must give orders to the State, and the State must enforce these orders with the sword. <sup>36</sup> The institutional Church must therefore concentrate political and economic power. *What then becomes of liberty?*

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35. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), pp. 228, 298.

36. The innovator here was Pope Gregory VII in the late eleventh century. He launched a major revolution in the West. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), ch. 2. Cf. Walter Ulmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A study in the ideological relation of clerical to lay power* (2nd ed.; London: Methuen, 1962), ch. 9.

Second, escape religionists who also accepted this narrow definition of the kingdom sought refuge from the evil world of matter and politics by fleeing to hide inside the institutional Church, an exclusively “spiritual kingdom,” now narrowly defined. They abandoned the world to evil tyrants. *What then becomes of liberty?* What becomes of the idea of God’s progressive restoration of all things under Jesus Christ? What, finally, becomes of the idea of biblical dominion?

When Christians improperly narrow their definition of the kingdom of God, the visible influence of this comprehensive kingdom (both spiritual and institutional at the same time) begins to shrivel up. The first heresy leads to tyranny *by* the Church, and the second heresy leads to tyranny over the Church. Both of these narrow definitions of God’s kingdom destroy the liberty of the responsible Christian man, self-governed under God and God’s law.

### *Manichaeism*

The last ancient pagan idea that still lives on is also a variant of dualism: matter vs. spirit. It teaches that God and Satan, good and evil, are forever locked in combat, and that good never triumphs over evil. The Persian religion of Zoroastrianism has held such a view for over 2,500 years. The incredibly popular “Star Wars” movies were based on this view of the world: the “dark” side of “the force” against its “light” side. In modern versions of this ancient dualism, the “force” is usually seen as itself impersonal: individuals personalize either the dark side or the light side by “plugging into” its power.

There are millions of Christians who have adopted a very pessimistic version of this dualism, though not in an impersonal form. God’s kingdom is battling Satan’s, and God’s is losing. History is not going to get better. In fact, things are going to get a lot worse externally. Evil will visibly push good into the shadows. The Church is like a band of soldiers who are surrounded by a huge army of Indians. We can’t win boys, so hold the fort until Jesus and the angels come to rescue us!”

That does not sound like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and David, does it? Christians read to their children the children’s favorite story, David and Goliath, yet in their own lives, millions of Christian parents really think that the Goliaths of this world are the unbeatable earthly winners. Christians have not even picked up a stone.

Until very recently.



### Athanasian Pluralism

What I am talking about in this book is a republic in which legal access to the franchise and seats of elected and appointed political authority are open only to those who take a Trinitarian civil oath of allegiance and who are also communicant members in good standing in churches that profess a Trinitarian creed. I call this *Athanasian pluralism*. The basic covenant issue is the Trinity. The earliest Church creeds will do quite well as judicial screening devices, at least for the first few centuries of the millennium. It is not my opinion that in a system of Athanasian pluralism, in the words of House and Ice, “heresy is apparently transformed from a punishable crime into ‘treason.’”<sup>37</sup> Apparently? Apparent to whom? What they are doing here is superimposing their view of the coming premillennial bureaucratic kingdom on top of Reconstruction’s blueprint for a theocratic republic. This sort of swift justice is how they expect Jesus to run things from his throne in Jerusalem. It is our view that uttering heretical opinions – yes, even theological opinions as utterly wrong-headed as those that House and Ice proclaim<sup>38</sup> – would not be civil crimes at all. The civil government would have nothing to say about it. Those who say that Christian Reconstructionists would “kill anyone who is not a Reconstructionist” are blowing smoke. They are bearing false witness against their neighbors. Where are their footnotes proving such an accusation? There are none.

What Christian Reconstructionists are saying is that the mark of judicial sovereignty in a Christian civilization will be membership in a Trinitarian church. The issue here is civil *sanctions*. Those not formally under God’s eternal sanctions — the ecclesiastical marks of baptism and regular holy communion – in a Trinitarian society would not be biblically authorized to impose God’s negative civil sanctions. Everyone else would have the same civil liberties guaranteed to strangers within the gates in Old Covenant Israel, beginning with equality before the civil law (Ex. 12:49). Those Christians who believe that Old Covenant Israel was a tyranny whenever biblical law was being honored will have to argue about this with God on judgment day.

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37. House and Ice, *Dominion Theology*, p. 79.

38. See Kenneth L. Gentry and Greg L. Bahnsen, *House Divided: The Break-Up of Dispensational Theology* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

What is the minimal required confession in order to participate as a citizen-judge? I think the best way to understand this principle of the minimal confession is to consider the case of the concentration camp. A Christian living as a prisoner in such a camp would be in need of fellowship and the sacraments. The question he would have to ask himself is this one: "What is the minimal confessional requirement placed on me by God that would enable me to locate another communicant church member?" I see no alternative: to defend the Church in the concentration camp, it would have to be a Trinitarian confession. To make it less than Trinitarian would be to destroy the integrity of the Church; to make it more would be to limit the authority of the Church and reduce the judicial impact of its sanction, the Lord's Supper.

We are therefore once again brought back to the question of judicial sanctions, the stumbling block of the Protestant era. We need to understand that the sacraments are judicial, not merely memorial (nominalism) and not "infusional" (realism). They are judicial and covenantal. They identify the person who acknowledges that he or she is under God's historical and eternal sanctions, both positive and negative. By placing oneself under these sanctions, the person is enabled to bring God's dominion covenant into effect. He works out his faith in fear and trembling under God (Phil. 2:12). He executes judgment in history as a covenant-keeper under God's sanctions.

We acknowledge that a person under God's sacramental covenant obligations and blessings has implicitly and visibly affirmed the covenant's sanctions in history. If a person has lawful access to the sacraments, what would lawfully keep him from exercising the church franchise? Only his refusal to pay the required tithe. This raises the question of the suffrage and taxation.

#### *Judicial Sanctions and Taxation*

Being a communicant church member should not automatically give that person the right to vote in church elections. For instance, baptized communicant children do not vote in church elections; children also do not vote in humanist democracies. Presumably, senile and retarded people are not allowed to vote in church elections; it would be strange if they were allowed to vote in democracies, although these days, it is probably illegal to exclude them. There are additional church qualifications for voting besides access to the Lord's Table. So there should also be for access to the political franchise in a theocratic republic.

Those who refuse to pay their tithes to their local church should not be allowed to vote in church elections. Why not? Because of the covenantal principle of sanctions. If a person refuses to be under the negative sanctions of membership (paying tithes), he should not be allowed to impose church judicial sanctions.<sup>39</sup> The same is true of civil government. The alternative view of the franchise leads straight to socialism and communism. Karl Marx declared in 1843 that once a society has accepted the political principle that the franchise need not be restricted to property owners and taxpayers, it has in principle already accepted the abolition of private property. "The state as a state annuls, for instance, *private property*, man declares by *political* means that private property is *abolished* as soon as the *property qualification* for the right to elect or be elected is abolished, as has occurred in many states of North America. . . . Is not private property abolished in idea if the non-property owner has become the legislator for the property owner? The *property qualification* for the suffrage is the last *political* form of giving recognition to private property."<sup>40</sup>

This principle of voting apart from equal-percentage taxpaying is inherently demonic. God is the Creator and Owner of the world. He delegated to man certain derivative rights of ownership-stewardship. Satan is a trespassing thief. He therefore proclaims the politics of pure democracy, the politics of open access to the ballot box by those who do not pay an equal share of taxes. He also proclaims the graduated income tax: richer people pay a higher percentage of their income to the State. Thus, Marx was consistent; as a God-hater, he proclaimed his hatred of private property. He also proclaimed his hatred of the property qualification for voting.

The principle of suffrage is covenantal: one must be formally under the eternal sanctions of God in order lawfully to execute the sanctions of God, in both Church and State. \*1 One must be under the penalties of equal-percentage taxation in order to have authority

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39. Gary North, "Two-Tiered Church Membership," *Christianity and Civilization*, 4 (1983), pp. 120-31.

40. Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" (1843), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), vol. 3, p. 153.

41. This is not true of the family. The family was created before either Church or State, and the dominion covenant was imposed on the family above all. The dominion covenant is a general covenant; it is given to mankind in general (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:1-17). This, above all, is why the family is neither a Church nor a State. Thus, lawfully exercising covenantal sanctions in a family does not require the head of the household to be a Church member. The Bible mentions no public, civil distinctions between non-Christian families and Christian families.

in allocating the revenues from taxation. The biblical model for a theocratic republic would restrict voting to those who are voting (i.e., tithe-paying) members of local churches, and who are also tax-paying citizens. The payment of taxes is not sufficient to gain a person access to the ballot box; resident aliens pay taxes today, but they do not legally vote. There must be something more: a voluntary acceptance of the national covenant. So it is with theocratic republicanism, but with this added provision: there must also be a voluntary acceptance of the Church covenant. Strict voluntarism means judicial independence, i.e., adult status. In Old Testament Israel, this occurred at age 20, when a man became eligible for military numbering (Ex. 30:14). There seems to be no New Testament reason to change this age standard.

Modern humanist political liberals and their Christian academic accomplices hate such a conclusion of covenantal politics with a passion because they hate covenant theology with a passion. *They hate the idea of covenant sanctions.*

### The Theocratic Strategy Is Not Primarily Political

Biblical theocracy is not primarily political, so the biblical theocratic strategy shouldn't be, either. Theocracy means "God rules ." God rules theocratically over everything. In God's kingdom, politics is supposed to be only a small part of life. Taxes are to be low; the State's influence is to be minimal. It should only impose negative sanctions; it is not to remain a modern welfare State. Family life, business, education, the arts, leisure, and just about everything else should be removed from State financing and therefore from direct State control. It is the humanist who believes in salvation by law, not the Christian. The humanist believes in the messianic State, not the Christian. The only reason that theocracy appears today to be primarily a political issue is that the biblical theocrat wants to shrink the State drastically. This is an affront to the modern humanist, who equates politics with religion.

The critics of Christian Reconstructionism seldom read any of the books written by Christian Reconstructionists. Only a few have been willing to read ten or fifteen, which is the minimum required, since we have about a hundred available, if you count the journals. Reading what we have actually written would be too difficult and time-consuming a task, as honoring the Ninth Commandment so often is. Slander and misrepresentation are easy. Therefore, I have

not written this book for their benefit; they will not read a book as long as this book is. I am writing for those who take seriously this book's covenantal theology, but who may be confused about where to begin a program of applied covenantalism.

The way to gain a Trinitarian national covenant is first to succeed visibly and undeniably in the other areas of life. Men must see the positive fruits of Christianity before they commit themselves to its negative sanctions. They must see, Deuteronomy 4:5-8 says, that biblical justice – and not just biblical civil justice – is the best available alternative to tyranny and misery.

There are three covenantal institutions: Church, family, and State. Therefore, I propose preliminary reforms in these three institutions based on the major area of theological confusion and rebellion during the Protestant era: the question of sanctions. I begin with the Church because the Church is God's model for the other two institutions. It extends into eternity; the other two do not. God begins bringing His historical sanctions, positive and negative, to those who are formally covenanted with Him ecclesiastically. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17).

#### *Church Sanctions*

This is the area of the sacraments. Church discipline must be imposed in terms of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Because the churches have not taken seriously baptism, the Lord's Supper, membership rolls, and excommunication for well over two centuries, the civil government has had no clear model. When the churches do start taking these things seriously, persecution and lawsuits against Church leaders will begin. Our enemies who now control civil government will instinctively perceive the threat to their power, and they will take steps to stop it. They cannot safely allow the Church to begin imposing sanctions against the sins of this age.

This is not the place to debate baptism. Baptism is the rite by which the dual judicial sanctions of the covenant — blessings and cursings — are imposed on people: either directly on adults or representatively on children through a baptized parent. This representation principle is valid. Just as the centurion's servant was healed through the centurion's faith in Jesus Christ and his willingness to submit to Christ publicly, even though the servant was absent and

had no knowledge of what was going on (Luke 7), so is the judicial authority of Christ transferred through the sacrament in infant baptism.

Baptism does not save anyone; it merely places people under the formal, legal, *covenantal* sanctions of God. Those legally under a Christian's *covenantal* authority in a family should be baptized when the head of the household is, even if the subordinate is not a believer. The issue is not saving faith for those under lawful *covenantal* authority; the issue is *obedience to God's law within a covenantal hierarchy*. Baptism of infants is therefore mandatory.<sup>42</sup> Obviously, children of non-communicant members have no right to the sacrament of baptism – a denial of original halfway *covenantalism* in New England.

But if this is true, then infant communion or very young child communion is equally mandatory, a fact that has not been accepted by modern “half Way covenant” Presbyterianism.<sup>43</sup> Churches give communion to retarded and senile people who do not know what is going on or what is being symbolized; churches have the same obligation to intellectually immature children of a communicant member. This is so obvious that only halfway covenant theology blinds the modern Church to the nature of communion. The modern Church is still hypnotized by the Greek ideal of the primacy of the intellect rather than the primacy of the covenant. Any church that refuses to give communion based on baptism and church membership alone, and then justifies itself in terms of the intellect, is condemning itself by “endangering the souls of intellectually incompetent retarded and senile people” if it continues to serve them communion.

The churches must move to infant baptism and weekly communion. (Weekly communion was John Calvin's choice, but the civil magistrates of Geneva prohibited this practice. They saw the threat to their authority.) Churches may have to do this in steps, just as the defenders of theocratic republicanism should move only as the political environment allows. We are not to become revolutionaries. But the long-term goal is clear: *infant baptism and also weekly communion for all baptized church members*. If God's people reject the legitimacy and necessity of the sanctions of covenant theology in the churches, then surely they will not persuade anyone else regarding the sanctions of covenant theology in civil government.

Once this is done, the negative sanction of public excommunication will become meaningful. People must be consigned to hell ver-

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42. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, Appendix 9.

43. *Idem*.

bally from the pulpit after excommunication. This is not done today. Other churches must honor these excommunications. This is also not done today. The modern Church simply pays no attention to God's ecclesiastical sanctions. Therefore, pagans pay very little attention to the churches. Why should they? The church is like an army without hierarchical order and without sanctions against mutiny. Such an army cannot win a battle. Pagans instinctively recognize this; Christians may also sense it, but then they blame eschatology rather than their own judicial cowardice.

Reform must begin with self-government under God's law.

### *Family Sanctions*

Anyone who gets a divorce without biblical justification should be brought under public sanctions, up to and including excommunication. First, however, Church leaders need to know what sins are grounds for divorce. They do not know the answer here, so the churches refuse to enforce sanctions against divorce and remarriage. 44 These sanctions are primarily Church sanctions brought against deviant family members in order to protect the innocent victims. What about the imposition of sanctions by the family?

The major areas of open rebellion here involve sanctions as they relate to inheritance: parents' compromise with taxpayer-financed education and their compromise with mixed marriages.

The second case is most obvious. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship bath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion bath light with darkness? (II Cor. 6:14). This applies immediately to the two voluntary covenantal institutions — Church and family — and it ought to apply eventually to the area of civil government with respect to voting. 45 Parents should not finance, attend, or in any way *sanction* a marriage of a communicant member child to anyone who is not a communicant member of a Trinitarian church. That Christian parents refuse to honor this requirement is one reason why they are losing their children. They are afraid to apply sanctions. They think this would

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44. Ray R. Sutton, *Second Chance: Biblical Blueprints for Divorce and Remarriage* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

45. I do not mean that Christians should not vote. They should. Their long-term task is to create a theocratic republic in which only voting church members are allowed to *vote* in civil elections, as this chapter seeks to prove. This is the legitimate application in civil government of II Corinthians 6:14.

not be loving. So their children conclude that God really does not care if they marry pagans, since God's lawful representatives over them, parents and churches, do not care enough to threaten public sanctions. Church leaders should prohibit parents from participating in such wedding ceremonies. When a father symbolically delivers his daughter to the covenantal authority of a pagan husband, he is covenantally sending her into bondage, a symbol of hell. Christian parents are so utterly ignorant of covenant theology and the concept of authority and sanctions that they do this without a thought.

The second area of family responsibility is also flagrantly ignored: the responsibility of parents to educate their children.<sup>46</sup> Christian parents send their children into the judicially and self-consciously pagan environment of the public schools. Parents are not acting faithfully as representatives when they do this. They are tithing their children to the State. They are tempting God to break the covenantal inheritance of their children. Until the vast majority of Christians pull their children out of the public schools, there will be no possibility of creating a theocratic republic. The Unitarians who invented modern public education in the 11330's and the Masons in churches today who religiously support the public schools have done their covenantal work well.

Reform must begin with self-government under God's law.

### *Civil Sanctions*

There is no question where the most flagrant violation of God's covenantal standards is in modern politics: the legalization of abortion. The pagans have attacked the fifth point of the covenant — continuity and inheritance — at its most vulnerable point: the mother's womb. The pagans know exactly what they are doing.<sup>47</sup> It is not random that in the United States, support for abortion on demand was only 24% among those who regard religion as a major aspect of their lives, 42% among those who said religion is "somewhat important," 45% among those who said it is "somewhat unimportant," and 66% among those who said religion is "very unimportant."<sup>48</sup> Christians

46. Thoburn, *The Parent Trap*.

47. George Grant, *Grand Illusions: The Legacy of Planned Parenthood* (Brentwood, Tennessee: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988).

48. William Schneider, "Trouble for the GOP" [i.e., the Republican Party – G.N.], *Public Opinion*, XII (May-June 1989), p. 2.



really do not fully understand this relationship between humanism and murder, so only a handful of them are willing to challenge abortion publicly. But they sense that abortion is wrong.

Pastors stay away from this topic in droves. They are afraid to bring sanctions, such as picketing abortion clinics. They are more afraid of the employment sanctions or declining membership sanctions that pro-death or anti-involvement congregations can bring against them. It is like pastors in the American South in 1859: they refused to preach against slavery. So, God brought negative military sanctions from the north. He had done this before. "Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land" (Jer. 1:14).

When the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973 made illegal all state and local civil sanctions against the practice of abortion, it thereby sanctioned murder. *There is no neutrality*. This ethical fact is clearer on the abortionists' table than anywhere else in America. This is why a growing number of Christians have been mobilized on this point. But this is still a minority of Christians in America.

We need prayer in the churches that God will withhold His judgments in history against the United States so that Christians can gain more time to fight this intolerable evil. If Christians do this, they will step by step be led to the philosophy of Trinitarian politics and away from political pluralism. This is what the abortionists failed to recognize in time. The tide has begun to turn. It is time for each Christian regularly to picket a local abortion clinic or even stand together with others (under publicly stated church sanctions) in the doorways of abortion clinics to close them for a day or more (if possible).<sup>49</sup>

Reform must begin with self-government under God's law.

### Conclusion

We must not come to the Old Testament with a sense of fear and loathing. The Old Testament provides us with a vision of victory and the tools of dominion, namely, God's laws. These laws are not a threat to us as Christians; they are the foundation of our efforts to reconstruct society.

Christians have not wanted to think about God's law. It reminds them of their sins of commission. It also reminds them of their sins of

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<sup>49</sup> Gary North, *When Justice Is Aborted: Biblical Standards for Non-Violent Resistance* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1989).

omission. They have failed to press the claims of Jesus Christ in every area of life. They have failed to challenge the sins of this age. They have refused to tell the world that God really does have specific answers for every area of life, including economics and politics. Christians have preferred to comfort themselves as they have sat in their rocking chairs in the shadows of history, rocking themselves back and forth, and saying over and over: "I am not a theocrat. I am not a theocrat." What this phrase means is simple: *God does not govern the world, so Christians are off the hook.*

But what if God *does* rule? What if He has given us the unchanging laws by which He expects His people to rule? What if He has given us the tools of dominion, and we have left them in the rain to rust? What will He do with our generation?

Just what He did with Moses' generation: He will leave them behind to die in the wilderness.

Christians in the Protestant era have not wanted to think about God's sanctions in history. This has been the number-one ethical, theological, and institutional problem ever since the Protestant Reformation: the nature of legitimate sanctions in Church and State. (The Roman Church abandoned biblical law early in the Middle Ages; this rejection of point three of the biblical covenant has been an ecumenical sin of omission ever since.) Because Christians have self-consciously refused to exercise God's sanctions in history — in Church, State, and family — we are now facing an escalating series of crises in Church, State, and family. Only repentance and reform will change the modern world's course toward a head-on collision with God's historical sanctions.

Reform must begin with self-government under God's law.

A world without judgment is a world without values and hence without meaning. To deny judgment is to deny value and meaning. *Without judgment, there can be no cultural progress*, and the only valid form of judgment is that which is grounded in the word of God. The general revelation of God to mankind enabled some cultures to progress to a point, until the relativism inherent in man's original sin, his desire to be his own god (Gen. 3:5), subverted judgment in his society. With relativism came stagnation and deterioration.

Moreover, judgment and salvation cannot be separated from one another. Those theologies which hold to judgment, while having a limited view of salvation, as witness premillennial and amillennial theologies, cut the vital nerve of both doctrines. Only as man has a total concept of salvation, of victory in time and eternity, can he apply a total concept of judgment to every sphere of life. Judgment is of necessity total wherever it is held that every sphere of life must be brought into captivity to Christ, because every sphere must manifest His salvation as an aspect of His new creation. A doctrine of salvation which calls for man's redemption, and limits that redemption to his soul now and his body in the general resurrection, is defective. The redeemed man will of necessity, because it is basic to his life, work to bring redemption to every sphere and area of life as an aspect of his creation mandate. The redeemed man's warfare against the powers of evil is not "after the flesh," i.e., does not rely on human resources, but relies rather on the supernatural power of God. *Everything* that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, St. Paul tells us, shall be cast down. In the words of Arthur Way's rendering of II Corinthians 10:3-5,

Very human as I am, I do not fight with merely human weapons. No, the weapons with which I war are not weapons of mere flesh and blood, but, in the strength of God, they are mighty enough to raze all strong-holds of our foes. I can batter down bulwarks of human reason, I can scale every crag-fortress that towers up bidding defiance to the true knowledge of God. I can make each rebel purpose my prisoner-of-war, and bow it into submission to Messiah.

R. J. Rushdoony (1983)"

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\* Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1983), pp. 22-23.

## WINNERS AND LOSERS IN HISTORY

*A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth (Ps. 110:1-3).*

*There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed (Isa. 65:20).*

*For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (I Cor. 15:25-29).*

The Bible is clear: Jesus Christ sits at God's right hand until the final judgment, at which time He will leave the throne, return in glory, and end the curse of bodily death. Premillennialism denies this; Jesus is supposed to leave the throne in heaven to reign on earth for a thousand years – a discontinuity not taught in Psalm 110. Second, before the final judgment takes place, the world will experience increased life spans far beyond what is common today. This extension of life has to take place before the final judgment, since there are still sinners operating in history (Isa. 65:20). Thus, there has to be a literal era of earthly blessings ahead of us before Jesus returns to earth at the final judgment: a continuity marked by God's visible

blessings for the culture at large, in response to covenantal faithfulness. Amillennialism denies this; the continuity of history for amillennialism is downward, spiritually, for the culture at large. In short, postmillennialism is the only possible valid eschatology. All other eschatologies are incorrect. (Why beat around the bush? ,” I always say.) Only postmillennialism affirms and explains both the biblical doctrine of historic kingdom continuity (Matt.13:24-30; 36-43), which premillennialism denies, and also the biblical doctrine of God’s external covenant sanctions in history, which amillennialism denies.<sup>1</sup>

I do not hold my eschatology because of its by-products, such as psychological motivation to work hard for God. I hold it because it is what the Bible teaches. This does not mean that I do not appreciate the by-products. I do. I refer to them frequently in my writings. Men do need motivation, and this is why God gives us sanctions in history and eternity: positive (blessings) and negative (cursings).

What I am attempting to do with my life is to publish Christian worldview materials that will lead to the steady replacement of the humanist intellectual foundations of modern civilization. The arena of conflict is nothing less than world civilization. The issue is the kingdom of God, both in heaven and on earth (Matt.28:18). There are many books that deal with the kingdom of God, but my view of the kingdom of God as it is visibly manifested in history is simple: it is God’s authorized and morally required *civilization*. It is simultaneously internal (world-and-life view), ethical (a moral law-order), and institutional (covenantal judicial relationships). This is denied, either explicitly or implicitly, by all those who deny postmillennialism.

### Amillennial “Victory”

Archibald Hughes, an amillennialist, has written *A New Heaven and a New Earth*. He subtitles this, *An Introductory Study of the Second Advent*.<sup>2</sup> One would think that in a book with this title, the author would devote at least a chapter to Isaiah 65 and 66, since these two chapters deal specifically with the New Heaven and New Earth. Hughes did not devote even a paragraph to this section of the Old Testament, despite the fact that it is one of only three passages in the Bible that deals with the New Heaven and the New Earth. Hughes’

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1. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

2. Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1958.

eschatology cannot not deal with the fact that the positive blessings of the covenant will be manifested in history, when sinners will still be alive. He would have to come out and say that all the historically specific language is really symbolic. To argue such a position is to argue nonsense in public; thus, he simply refused to discuss the passage.

It is this passage, more than any other in the Bible, that categorically refutes amillennialism. This passage deserves a whole volume; instead, it receives the silent treatment. Instead of dealing with *the* text that speaks of *the* positive sanction of the kingdom of God in history, Hughes removes God's kingdom entirely from history: "Further, the Kingdom is no longer of the earth, earthly, but of God and heavenly, being the Kingdom of God and Heaven."<sup>3</sup> The blessings of God are equally ethereal: "At present spiritual blessings are enjoyed by faith without sight, but in the New Heavens and the New Earth all will be visible, but that which will be seen will not be that of the past old order but the transformed glorified creation — a truly literal spiritual creation."<sup>4</sup> In short, *there is no continuity between history's blessings and heaven's blessings*. This is why amillennialism, for all its public denial of premillennialism's kingdom discontinuity — blessings in history and God's civic negative sanctions in history — is itself radically discontinuous. *There are no positive kingdom sanctions in history for amillennialism*. Because of this radical discontinuity of sanctions, the amillennialist also asserts a radical discontinuity of ethics: no Old Testament civil stipulations for the New Testament era.

The Calvinist amillennialist affirms one half of point one of the biblical covenant: the transcendent sovereignty of God. This sovereignty, however, is supposedly not manifested in New Covenant kingdom history, i.e., there is no visible sign of God's *judicial presence* in this era of history. We see this position articulated clearly in the book by Raymond Zorn on the kingdom of God. Zorn begins his amillennial study with these words: "In the broadest sense God's Kingdom refers to the most extended reaches of His sovereignty. As Psalm 103:19 puts it, 'The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.'"<sup>5</sup> The kingdom of God is all-

3. Hughes, *New Heaven*, p. 160.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

5. Raymond O. Zorn, *Church and Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), p. 1. Zorn, an amillennialist, stresses the kingdom as the reign of God rather than the sphere or domain of His rule (p. 1). Greg Bahnsen's response to this sort of argument is correct: it is ridiculous to speak of the reign of a king whose kingdom has few if any historical manifestations that are as comprehensive in scope

encompassing, in the same sense that a civilization is all-encompassing.<sup>6</sup> Zorn's main problem is that he does not expect this theocratic kingdom ever to manifest itself extensively outside of the institutional Church, and even in this case, it will be a contracting Church with declining influence. In his view, God remains throughout history a king with universal claims and declining territory. Zorn speaks of historical victory only with respect to the internal realm of the spirit of the Christian and the narrowly defined institutional Church; externally, kingdom victory takes place only when history ends, after the final judgment.

So, what Zorn gives us in the large print – kingdom universalist and the language of optimism — he takes away in the fine print. This self-conscious and utterly deceptive tactic is adopted by most Calvinistic amillennialists, who recognize how depressing it is to think about the historical implications of their eschatology, so they disguise these implications in the language of optimism.<sup>7</sup> (Van Til is the main exception; he tells us in his book, *Common Grace*, that there is no possible earthly hope for Christians, culturally speaking; it has been all downhill since the cross, and this will continue.)

Nevertheless, the traditional Calvinistic amillennialist is correct in his assessment of the transcendent extent of God's kingdom. It is indeed universal. Orthodox Jews also share something like this view.

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as his self-proclaimed sovereignty. Such a limited definition of God's kingdom and kingship is in fact a denial of God's kingdom. Bahnsen, "The World and the Kingdom of God" (1981), reprinted as Appendix D in Gary DeMar and Peter J. Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity: A Biblical Response to Dave Hunt* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1988).

6. The reader should not misinterpret what I am saying. I am not saying that the kingdom of God is the primary theme in the Bible, or in the message of Jesus. His primary theme is the same as the whole Bible's primary theme: *the glory of God*. I agree with Geerhardus Vos' statement: "While thus recognizing that the kingdom of God has an importance in our Lord's teaching second to that of no other subject, we should not go to the extreme into which some writers have fallen, of finding in it the only theme on which Jesus actually taught, which would imply that all other topics dealt with in his discourses were to his mind but so many corollaries or subdivisions of this one great truth. . . . Salvation with all it contains flows from the nature and subserves the glory of God. . . ." Vos, *The Tubing of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom and the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1958), p. 11. I am saying only that the kingdom of God is inherently all-encompassing culturally. In fact, I am convinced that the best biblical definition of "kingdom" is *civilization*. The kingdom of God is the civilization of God – internal, external, heavenly, earthly, historical, and eternal.

7. R. B. Kuiper's book, *The Glorious Body of Christ* (1958), is another example of this tactic. See North, *Dominion and Common Grace*, pp. 123-26.

I agree in principle with the Jewish scholar, 1. Grunfeld, when he writes that “true religion and true civilisation are identical. It is the view of the Torah as the civilisation of the state of God — where Torah is coextensive with life in all its manifestations, personal, economic, political, national.”<sup>8</sup>

#### *Covenant Sanctions and Millennialism*

The problem with amillennialism is that it has no doctrine of covenant sanctions in New Testament era history. It therefore has no way of calling fallen man’s attention to God’s judicial presence in New Testament era history. The best that the amillennialist can say about kingdom sanctions is that God used to bring temporal sanctions in history, but only in tiny Israel, nowhere else (except at the Flood, a one-time event until the final judgment). Amillennialism therefore denies the second half of point one of the biblical covenant: God’s covenantal presence in history. Because of this view of sanctions, amillennialism judicially turns over history to the devil, and it does so explicitly. Amillennialism’s eschatology is a product of its view of covenant sanctions in history. Evil men become more powerful as time goes on, while covenant-keepers become culturally impotent. *Amillennialism therefore preaches postmillennial victory for covenant-breakers.* Its advocates refuse to say this publicly, for obvious reasons, but this is exactly what they preach. It is not that the amillennialist denies postmillennialism. He affirms postmillennialism wholeheartedly. He just says that it is a manifestation of Satan’s kingdom in history rather than God’s kingdom in history.<sup>9</sup>

Try to recruit a volunteer army of Christian soldiers with *this* eschatology. Try to sell “defeat without a Rapture” to people who are not theological masochists. The Greek Orthodox Church has such a

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8. Grunfeld, “Samson Raphael Hirsch – the Man and His Mission,” *Judaism Eternal*, I, p. xiv. Obviously, I do not agree with Grunfeld’s next sentence: “This concept is applicable, of course, only when there is a Jewish State, or at least an autonomous Jewish Society, which can be entirely ruled by the Torah.” This statement provides evidence of the accuracy of Vos’ analysis of Jewish teaching concerning the Kingdom of heaven: “The emphasis was placed largely on what the expected state would bring for Israel in a national and temporal sense. Hence it was preferably thought of as the kingdom of Israel over the other nations.” Vos, *Kingdom and the Church*, p. 19.

9. It is time for students at amillennial seminaries to start asking some very specific eschatological questions in class, over and over, until they get *some* straight answers. They had better get some straight answers about God’s revealed law and God’s historical sanctions, too.



view of history; so does the Russian Orthodox Church. Both churches have a false view of the Holy Ghost: kenotic theology, a theology of victory in eternity through inevitable Christian suffering throughout history.<sup>10</sup> What this view got them was, respective y, Islamic tyranny and Communist tyranny.

We need to do better than this.

### Comprehensive Revival

Nothing less than a *comprehensive replacement* of humanism and occultism with Christianity will suffice to please God. We are called to work for the progressive replacement of humanist civilization by Christian civilization, a replacement that was definitively achieved with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and manifested by the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We are to *replace* Satan's humanistic kingdoms. "Kingdom" is an inescapable concept. It is never a question of kingdom vs. no kingdom; it is always a question of *whose* kingdom. Rushdoony is correct in his evaluation of mankind's inevitable quest for utopia, the final order, which only God can inaugurate and bring to pass: "The church accordingly has never been alone in history but has rather faced a multiplicity of either anti-Christian or pseudo-Christian churches fiercely resentful of any challenge to their claim to represent the way, truth and life of that final order. The modern state, no less than the ancient empire, claims to be the vehicle and corporate body of that true estate of man. As the incarnation of that final order, it views family, church, school and every aspect of society as members and phases of its corporate life and subject to its general government. It is in terms of this faith, therefore, that the state claims prior or ultimate jurisdiction over every sphere, and steadily encroaches on their activity."<sup>11</sup>

Christian Reconstructionists are self-consciously attempting to lay new intellectual foundations for a comprehensive moral and therefore intellectual, social, political, and economic transformation of the world. Not until at least the preliminary steps in this theological and intellectual transformation are accomplished can we expect

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10. R. J. Rushdoony, *Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thobum Press, [1969] 1978), pp. 125-27.

11. R. J. Rushdoony, Foreword, in Zorn, *Church and Kingdom*, pp. xix-xx. Rushdoony, a postmillennialist, rejects Zorn's view that the enemies of Christ will be progressively victorious in history, but this is not made clear in this Foreword.

God to send worldwide revival. If the coming revival is not comprehensive in its effects, it will no more change the world permanently than earlier revivals have changed it permanently. The regeneration of people's souls is only the first step on the road to comprehensive redemption. Cornelius Van Til, who died in 1987, has issued this profound warning: "The temptation is very great for the believers in these times when the Church is in apostasy, and its conquest of the world for Christ seems to be losing out, that they shall spend a great deal of their time in passive waiting instead of in active service. Another danger that lurks at a time of apostasy is that the few faithful ones give up the comprehensive ideal of the kingdom and limit themselves to the saving of individual souls."<sup>12</sup> We need a comprehensive revival that will produce comprehensive redemption.<sup>13</sup>

We must understand from the beginning that the message of the kingdom of God rests on a concept of *salvation which is supernaturally imparted*, not political y imparted. The kingdom of God is categorically not a narrow political program of social transformation; it is rather a supernaturally imposed salvational program that inevitably produces world-changing political, social, legal, and economic effects. Geerhardus Vos was correct: "The kingdom represents the specifically evangelical element in our Lord's teaching. . . . Jesus' doctrine of the kingdom as both inward and outward, coming first in the heart of man and afterwards in the external world, upholds *the primacy of the spiritual and ethical* over the physical. The invisible world of the inner religious life, the righteousness of the disposition, the sonship of God are in it made supreme, the essence of the kingdom, the ultimate realities to which everything else is subordinate. The inherently ethical character of the kingdom finds subjective expression in the demand for repentance."<sup>14</sup>

The primary need, today as always, is the need for widespread personal repentance before God. We therefore need a Holy Spirit-initiated Christian revival to extend the kingdom of God across the face of the earth. If we do not get this revival soon, my work and the work of those who are involved in the Biblical Blueprints project<sup>15</sup>

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12. Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theistic Ethics*, Vol. III of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1958] 1980), p. 122.

13. Gary North, "Comprehensive Redemption: A Theology for Social Action," in North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C.

14. Vos, *Kingdom and the Church*, pp. 102-3.

15. Ten volumes, 1986-87: Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press.

will remain curiosities, and then become antiquarian curiosities, until the revival comes.

### A Question of Confidence

Without a bottom-up religious transformation of civilization, the public policies that Christian Reconstructionists recommend will at best have only a peripheral influence on society. The reader should understand, however, that we expect the revival and this bottom-up transformation, if not in our own lifetimes, then eventually. The Bible's blueprints for society will eventually be universally adopted across the face of the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).<sup>16</sup> Christian Reconstructionists regard this as historically inevitable. (This is why most Christian Reconstructionists – and all of the authors — are Calvinists; we deeply believe in predestination: historical inevitability. ) This confidence is what makes the theonomic postmillennial worldview so hard-nosed and uncompromising. We annoy almost every Christian who has doubts about the earthly triumph of God's kingdom, which means that we initially alienate just about everyone who reads our materials. Our antinomian Christian critics call us arrogant. Bear in mind that the word "arrogant" usually means "a confident assertion of something I don't approve of."

Christians who doubt the future earthly triumph of God's kingdom tend to be less confident and less sure about the practical reliability of the Bible's blueprints. Sometimes they even deny that the Bible offers such blueprints. If it really does offer such blueprints, then evangelical Christians have major responsibilities outside the comfortable sanctuaries of church and family.

This prospect of worldwide, culture-wide responsibility frightens millions of Christians. They have gone so far as to adopt eschatologies that assure them that God does not hold them personally or corporately responsible for anything so comprehensive as the ethical and institutional transformation of today's sin-filled world. They do not believe that God offers to His Church the tools, skills, and time necessary for such a generations-long project of social transformation. Therefore, they adopt the philosophy that says that Christians should not even try to reform society, for such efforts are futile, waste-

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16. J. A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions, 1640-1810* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1970).

ful, and shift precious resources from the only legitimate tasks of the Church: preaching individual salvation to the lost, and sustaining the converted spiritually in a time of inevitable cultural decline. They equate social reform programs with polishing brass on a sinking ship. As dispensationalist newsletter writer Peter Lalonde remarked concerning Christians who possess such a vision of God's world-transforming kingdom in history, "It's a question, 'Do you polish brass on a sinking ship?' And if they're working on setting up new institutions, instead of going out and winning the lost for Christ, then they're wasting the most valuable time on the planet earth right now, and that is the serious problem. . . ."17

### Doubt vs. Dominion

Christians, paralyzed by their own versions of eschatological pessimism, have not taken advantage of the growing self-doubt that is progressively paralyzing their humanistic opponents. Christians should recognize the extent of the despair that has engulfed those who have rejected the idea that the Bible is the infallible word of God. An example of such despair is the following:

We live in a time in which old perspectives informing our understanding of the world have been seriously shaken by events of modern times. In many cases these old perspectives have collapsed; they no longer hold as our centers. . . . Against the backdrop of such events, an erosion of traditional values has taken place — an erosion which has left us feeling that we [are] adrift in a sea of relativity in which anything, including such evils as the holocaust or nuclear war might be rationalized as "necessary." It is with this experience that we know that the cultural foundations have been shaken. We know that we are no longer guided by a vision of coherence and relatedness concerning our individual existence. We know that we are no longer bound together by a set of values infused with a common sense of destiny. Our sense of destiny, if any, is dominated by an uneasiness and sense of foreboding about the future. The future itself is now feared by many as the ultimate danger to the fragile hold we have on whatever security we have achieved in the present. All of this has left some to question the meaning of their endeavors, while it has left many with a sense of isolation and loneliness. The irony is that this new sense of insecurity has come at a

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17. Tape One, *Dominion: A Dangerous New Theology*, in *Dominion: The Word and the NewWorld Order*, a 3-tape set distributed by the Omega-Latter, Ontario, Canada, 1987.

time when the material well-being of those in the advanced industrial nations has reached a height hitherto undreamed of.<sup>18</sup>

This is precisely what the Book of Deuteronomy predicts for a society that has covenanted with God, has been blessed with external wealth, and then has forgotten God in its humanistic confidence (Deut. 8:17): “. . . the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life” (Deut. 28:65b-66). This sort of widespread pessimism leads either to cultural collapse or military defeat, or else to revival. The first is taking place visibly, the second is a growing possibility,<sup>19</sup> and the third, revival, is also becoming more likely. Sociologist Robert Nisbet asks this question: “[W]hat is the future of the idea of progress? Any logical answer must be that the idea has no future whatever if we assume the indefinite, prolonged continuation of the kind of culture that has become almost universal in the West in the late twentieth century. If the roots are dying, as they would appear to be at the present time, how can there be shrub and foliage?”<sup>20</sup> But, he then asks, “is this contemporary Western culture likely to continue for long? The answer, it seems to me, must be in the negative — if we take any stock in the lessons of the human past.” He makes no absolute prophecies — much of his academic career has been devoted to reminding us that such comprehensive cultural prophecies are always overturned by the facts of the future<sup>21</sup> — but he is correct when he says that “never in history have periods of culture such as our own lasted for very long.” He sees “signs of the beginning of a religious renewal in Western civilization, notably in America.”<sup>22</sup>

### Guilt and Social Paralysis

This should not be a time for pessimism among Christians. Yet it is. They are missing an opportunity that has not been seen since the

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18. Howard J. Vogel, “A Survey and Commentary on the New Literature in Law and Religion,” *Journal of Law and Religion*, I (1983), p. 151.

19. Arthur Robinson and Gary North, *Fighting Chance: Ten Feet to Survival* (Ft. Worth, Texas: American Bureau of Economic Research, 1986).

20. Robert A. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 355-56.

21. Nisbet, “The Year 2000 And All That,” *Commentary* (June 1968).

22. Nisbet, *History*, p. 356.

late eighteenth century, and possibly since the resurrection of Christ. A universal world civilization now “exists for the first time since the Tower of Babel. It is disintegrating morally as it grows wealthy. It is ripe for the harvest.

A successful harvesting operation requires tools. To take advantage of this unique historical opportunity, Christians need tools of dominion –blueprints for the reconstruction of the world. But Christians today do not see that God has given them the tools of dominion, His revealed law.<sup>23</sup> They agree with the humanists who in turn agree among themselves, above all, that the Bible offers society no specific legal standards for comprehensive reform and reconstruction. They agree with such statements as the one made by the editor of *The Journal of Law and Religion*, who is also a professor of Constitutional law at a Catholic law school:

First, I assume that the Bible is not a detailed historical blueprint for American society, and that it does not contain much concrete guidance for the resolution of specific political conflicts or constitutional difficulties such as slavery and racism, sexism and equal opportunity to participate in society. The biblical traditions are not to be viewed as an arsenal of prooftexts for contemporary disputes. Contextual leaps from the situations in which the biblical authors wrote to the situations with which we find ourselves faced are likewise to be avoided .<sup>24</sup>

This hatred of God’s law has affected millions of Christians who sing the old hymn, “O How Love I Thy Law.” Even when they do not actively hate it (and most do), they are simply afraid of God’s law. They have not studied it, and they have been beaten into intellectual submission by humanists, Christian antinomians, and those who fear personal and cultural responsibility.

### The Whole Covenantal Counsel of God

When we preach covenant theology, we need to preach all of covenant theology, not just the sovereignty of God, not just biblical hierarchies (representation), not just biblical law (theonomy), not just God’s sanctions (let alone merely God’s final sanctions), and not just inheritance and disinheritance (postmillennialism). Covenant theol-

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23. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus*, (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

24. Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., “Of Covenants Ancient and New: The Influence of Secular Law on Biblical Religion,” *Journal of Law and Religion*, II (1984), pp. 117-18.

ogy is a package deal. We have been sidetracked for far too long by halfway covenant theologies.

To expect men to sacrifice their lives, fortunes, and reputations for the sake of a predestined lost cause is naive. There is no surer way to shrink churches and their cultural influence than to combine Calvin's doctrine of predestination with Luther's doctrine of amillennialism. This is what Continental (Dutch) Calvinism has done for three centuries, and the result has been disastrous: the creation of a ghetto mentality.<sup>25</sup> It is the mentality of the besieged fortress or wagon train. If Noah had been told by God that no dove would ever return with an olive branch in its beak, he would have become a prime candidate for membership in the Protestant Reformed Church.

The American Presbyterian tradition, both Northern<sup>26</sup> and Southern,<sup>27</sup> up until World War I or perhaps the Great Depression, generally rejected this amillennial view of eschatology. It was post-millennialism that had dominated both Great Awakenings.<sup>28</sup> It was postmillennialism which was characteristic of the Scottish Covenanter movement. Presbyterian Christians believed in the crown rights of King Jesus, not just in heaven but on earth, too. They believed that history would reflect a progressive extension of God's kingdom. When they began to doubt this, amillennial American Calvinists developed an inward-looking ghetto mentality. Premillennial Calvinists also adopted this same ghetto mentality, but they added to this a typically fundamentalist outlook: "We don't smoke, and we don't chew, and we don't date the boys who do!" First, Prohibitionism replaced evangelism. Then anti-Communism replaced the cultural mandate. The result was the Bible Presbyterian Church. The only premillennial Presbyterian alternative offered so far has been a vague evangelicalism, disdainful of God's cultural mandate:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air,

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25. The existence of this mentality was admitted by R. B. Kuiper: *To Be or Not Be Reformed: Whither the Christian Reformed Church?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959), p. 186.

26. North, *Dominion and Common Graze*, Appendix: Warfield's Vision of Victory: Lost and Found.'

27. James B. Jordan, "A Survey of Southern Presbyterian Millennial Views Before 1930," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Winter 1975-76), pp. 106-21.

28. The first Great Awakening (1740-50) was essentially Calvinist; the second Great Awakening (1800-40) was Arminian; both were postmillennial.

and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so (Gen. 1:26-30).

### Conclusion

The goal of bringing all civil covenants under the official jurisdiction of the God of the Bible is too terrifying a task for those who think it is inherently impossible. Christians with this attitude want to achieve something far more limited. This is why a few of them have adopted the goal of a Constitutional amendment to have Jesus Christ acknowledged in that systematically apostate document. We do not need a perfunctory admission that such a restructured covenant is judicially mandatory but historically impossible. We need a vision of victory to undergird a comprehensive, Bible-based, law-based program of comprehensive reconstruction. Men will not affirm the oath before "they see the benefits (Deut. 4:5-8). They must first learn to trust those who proclaim the judicial necessity of the oath. Thus, to proclaim the formal necessity of the Trinitarian national oath without also working in every area of life to manifest the historic benefits of God's covenant is an exercise in futility. It will lead to the creation of psychological and eschatological justifications for failure.

God does not expect excuses for failure; He expects victory, in time and on earth. We are His representatives (point two of the covenant model). Therefore, we are expected to win in history. Let us not downplay God's expectations or our capacities. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us: governed by God's law, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and blessed by God's external, visible, historic positive sanctions.



Christ is King in the most complete Biblical sense of the word 'king,' which means sovereignty, rulership, and authority, in the highest possible sense of each of these terms (Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:17-23; 1 Tim. 6:15; Heb. 1:8-14; 1 Peter 3 :22; Rev. 1:5). This sovereignty, or kingdom, exists in the sense that all the resources necessary for its world-wide, victorious manifestation are even now available to believing men and the faithful church (Mat. 28:18-20; Rem. 8:28; Eph. 1:10-11). Christ now occupies the *true* throne of which the old throne of David was but a visible and temporary symbol (Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-36). The old Israel has been expanded to include all the nations of men (Mat. 8:11; Acts 3:24-26; 5:30-32; I Cor. 12:12-13).

The kind of power present in and manifested by the kingdom is seen in its redemptive aspects at Pentecost and in the subsequent conversion of multitudes of Jews and Gentiles to the Christian faith (cf. Acts 1:8). The supplementary aspect of judgment is clearly visible in all human history, and especially in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the final dispersal of national Israel . The kingdom is not patterned after the kingdoms of this world (in pomp, pageantry and abundance of material possessions). It is a kingdom of truth, righteousness, peace and joy. Its citizens are recognized by their child-like humility, brotherly love, and self-sacrificing devotion to Christ (Mat. 5:3, 10; 18:1-5; John 18:36-37; Rem. 14:17).

The ultimate function of the Kingdom in time is the redemption of a multitude which no man can number out of all nations of earth, and their restoration to the favour and fellowship of God (John 3 :16; 17:20-23; 2 Cor. 5:19-20; Eph. 1:8-14; Revelation 7:9). When the kingdom shall have achieved its destined purpose on earth it will be transferred to the eternal world (1 Cor. 15:24-25).

The true nature of Messiah's kingdom cannot be rightly seen until we understand what is sometimes spoken of as "the reign of the saints ." In one of Daniel's visions of the coming kingdom, we read

Isaw . . . one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven, . . . And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: . . . And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, . . . (Dan. 7:13, 14, 27).

Roderick Campbell (1954)\*

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\*Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, [1954] 1981), pp. 132-33.

## CONCLUSION, PART 4

*The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow (Deut. 28:7-12).*

God gives His people blessings in history when they obey Him. This is a testimony to His reliability as the God of the covenant. "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18).

This confidence in God's covenant should be the basis of Christians' confidence about the earthly future. God will progressively extend His visible kingdom on earth in response to the covenantal faithfulness of His people. The end result will be the creation of an international theocratic kingdom in which all nations and peoples will be formally covenanted to God. <sup>1</sup>

Christians have all the time in the world to accomplish this task. In fact, the time allotted to us for this task is how the Bible defines

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1. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

“all the time in the world.” “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa. 55: 11). Thus, we can devise short-term tactics in terms of God’s long-run strategy, a strategy which is covenantal in nature.

It is time to adopt a vision of victory regarding the kingdom of God in history. To do less is to betray the God of the covenant. As His sole, lawful, delegated agents in history, Christians must make visible in history the kingdom of God which exists already in eternity and exists judicially. The ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God was the definitive historical manifestation of Christ’s kingdom reign; it is our task to make His reign manifest in history. This is the requirement of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18 -20).<sup>2</sup> This spiritual *and cultural* commission must not be evaded or defined out of existence by His people.

To do this, we must break from the mental chains of the present humanist order which claims to represent all the people. This is a false claim. It represents only some of the people. It surely does not publicly and self-consciously represent anyone before the judgment throne of God, which is what civil government is supposed to do. Paul called civil magistrates *ministers of God*. “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:3-4).

Christians are citizens of at least two nations: an earthly one and a heavenly one. Paul wrote: “For our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3: 20a, New American Standard Bible). Our primary allegiance is to the second nation. It is our task to begin to develop in history the principles of citizenship in the heavenly kingdom. We are to seek to persuade our fellow earthly citizens of the benefits of holding dual citizenship papers. In the United States, birth inside the national boundaries plus eighteen years of life gives one full citizenship. Baptism, profession of faith, taking the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and living a life in outward conformity to God’s revealed laws gives

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2. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., “The Greatness of the Great Commission; *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, VII (Winter 1981), pp. 19-47.

one full church citizenship, which is covenantally representative of heavenly citizenship (Matt. 18:18).

God wants every nation to have its political citizenship match its people's heavenly citizenship. This goal can be achieved positively: by widespread conversions of political citizens to saving covenantal faith in Jesus Christ. This new political order can subsequently be maintained — though not without continuing widespread conversions — on a judicially negative basis: by removing legal access to the franchise and civil offices from those who refuse to become communicant members of Trinitarian churches. Very few Christians believe that the former strategy is possible, and even fewer of them believe that the latter strategy is moral.

Christians therefore continue to live under apostate civil covenants. They continue to affirm implicitly and even explicitly that there is one area of life which is immune to the gospel, and required by God to remain immune from the gospel: civil government. They really believe that if every voter on earth were a Christian, all civil constitutions should remain religiously neutral on principle.

Meanwhile, they insist: *there is no neutrality*. They ignore James' warning: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8).

## **CONCLUSION**

The crisis of the Western legal tradition is not merely a crisis in legal philosophy but also a crisis in law itself. Legal philosophers have always debated, and presumably always will debate, whether law is founded in reason and morality or whether it is only the will of the political ruler. It is not necessary to resolve that debate in order to conclude that as a matter of historical fact the legal systems of all the nations that are heirs to the Western legal tradition have been rooted in certain beliefs or postulates: that is, the legal systems themselves have presupposed the validity of those beliefs. Today those beliefs or postulates – such as the structural integrity of law, its ongoingness, its religious roots, its transcendent qualities – are rapidly disappearing, not only from the minds of philosophers, not only from the minds of lawmakers, judges, lawyers, law teachers, and other members of the legal profession, but from the consciousness of the vast majority of citizens, the people as a whole; and more than that, they are disappearing from the law itself. The law is becoming more fragmented, more subjective, geared more to expediency and less to morality, concerned more with immediate consequences and less with consistency or continuity. Thus the historical soil of the Western legal tradition is being washed away in the twentieth century, and the tradition itself is threatened with collapse.

Harold J. Berman (1983)”

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\*Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 39.

## CONCLUSION

*There is no neutrality.  
You can't beat something with nothing.*

We see a conflict going on today in every area of life. It is a war over first principles. It is ultimately a war over the covenant. Whose covenant will individuals affirm, God's or Satan's? Being covenantal, this conflict also necessarily involves the allegiance of three corporate covenantal institutions: Church, State, and family. Which covenant will these God-authorized corporate monopolies affirm, God's or Satan's? Which covenant will be the source of law for them?

The humanist has made his choice against God's covenant. He has made this choice personally, and he sees to it that all those covenantal institutions in which he has authority have also made the same choice. The problem today is that Christians refuse to make this choice. They pretend that such a choice is unnecessary to their salvation, even uncalled for biblically. They refuse to think in terms of the five points of the covenant. They want Jesus as Savior but not as Lord, meaning *covenantal Lord*.<sup>1</sup> They think they can take part of Jesus' office and leave the rest. They think they are not under the full covenantal obligations of God when they accept Jesus Christ as their savior. They do not really believe that God imposes His covenantal standards on professed Christians to test the validity of their public confession. They say that they believe in the Book of Galatians, the book that frees Christians from the law of God. "Galatians, Galatians," they cry, conveniently forgetting Paul's warning in Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders,

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1. For a defense of the Lordship of Christ, see John MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 1988).

drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

The adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness of major Arminian, antinomian, dispensational leaders have been spread all over the front pages (and back pages) of the newspapers in the last few years. Why? *Because they have lived consistent with their theology!* They have publicly despised Calvinist covenant theology. They have said this theology is of the devil. They have done whatever possible to discredit it. And then they unzipped their trousers to prove their personal consistency to their publicly stated faith. They have testified under bedcovers that they are under antinomian grace, not biblical law.

The sanctions have come. "Extra, extra, read all about it!" "Details at eleven!" But these sanctions have not been imposed by their denominations until long after the sanctions have been imposed publicly by the secular humanist media. And so the curse of Nathan burdens the Church today just as it did in David's day: ". . . by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme . . ." (II Sam. 12:14). These pastors, living faithfully and consistently in terms of their publicly stated theology, have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

For this they may get suspended by their denominations for two whole years. Or transferred to a different presbytery. When they refuse to submit even to this, their denominations quietly erase their names from the list of official pastors. Nothing more. The three-ring circus will therefore go on. The scandals will continue; the enemies of God will be continue to blaspheme. And laugh.

God will therefore escalate His sanctions against the churches. Count on it. Prepare for it. God will not be mocked.

Modern Christians are like the Israelites of Elijah's day: they stand between two covenants and two covenant sacrifices, and they wait. 'And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word' (I Ki. 18:21). They waited then, and they wait today. And wait. They want to see which way the fire falls. After visible judgment comes, they think to themselves, *then* they will decide. Until it comes, they will hedge their bets.



Elijah wanted the people to make their decision before the fire fell. He wanted them to accept the covenant on its own merits, not in terms of power. But they believed in the power religion. So did the priests of Baal.

The problem today is that David's prayer to God is still worth praying, and someday it will be answered, just as it was answered on Mt. Carmel: "It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law" (Ps. 119:126).

### The Kingdom as K-Mart

What we have today is a generation of Christians who think of God's kingdom as if it were a giant discount chain store. You take a little of this, some of that, and expect a 30 % discount or more. Men want salvation, but they do not want discipline. They want a sense of freedom but not a sense of duty. "Save souls, not cultures!" is their cry to God.

They want a personal covenant with God, but not a family covenant. They send their children to the public schools because "it's free." They would be outraged if their churches disciplined them for this public mark of rebellion. "It's a family decision. It's none of the church's business." And after twelve or more years of education at taxpayers' expense, their children then rebel. They leave the faith. They turn to another covenant. They head straight for hell. "How did this happen?" the parents wail. The answer is obvious, so they avoid it like the plague. The parents sent them there. 'It was free.'

Christian women abort their unborn children, and they find theologians, pastors, and especially profit-seeking Christian physicians who support them in this decision. <sup>2</sup>If anyone were to suggest that these women should be excommunicated, along with those who advised them to abort their children, let alone publicly executed, they all would reply, with the chorus of the U.S. Supreme Court, "This is a personal decision between women and their physicians. The Church and the State should mind their own business." No biblical covenants here!

God's kingdom? Yes, indeed; just not God's law. Just not God's covenant sanctions in history. Just not God's institutional, hierar-

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2. Walter O. Spitzer and Carlyle L. Saylor (eds.), *Birth Control and the Christian: A Protestant Symposium on The Control of Human Reproduction* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1969), especially Sections 2, 4; D. Gareth Jones, *Brave New People. Ethical Issues at the Commencement of Life* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984).

chical discipline. A little bit of kingdom, but not too much—a discount kingdom. We can almost hear it over the store's intercom: "Shoppers, today K-Mart has a fantastic deal on God's kingdom. Sixty percent off!" Not just 60% off the price; 60% off the kingdom itself.

*Invisible Kingdom; Silent God*

Does God act in history? Yes, but He supposedly never tells us when. He honors His covenant, no doubt, but supposedly this has no public manifestations. <sup>3</sup>This way, God is nicely silent, which then allows us Christians to make a permanent cease-fire agreement with Satan's covenanted followers, who are forever to be our lawful earthly employers and masters. We need their respect, you understand. We need to *buy* their respect with our silence. As historian Mark Nell says so plainly, "Christian historians themselves made a strategic adjustment that both opened the door to their participation in the university world and encouraged more respectful treatment of religion. This adjustment was to abandon – at least while working within university precincts – the tradition of providential historiography stretching to Constantine's Eusebius. It marked a willingness to consider history writing in the sphere of creation rather than in the sphere of grace, a manifestation of general rather than special revelation."<sup>4</sup> In other words, none of *God's covenant sanctions in history are to be acknowledged by Christian historians*. Not those who expect tenure, anyway.

What these people want is *discount salvation*. Low, low prices, but with all the "frills" removed. They want personal healing but without any personal responsibility for extending the kingdom of God into every area of life. They want a Creator God who is not a full-scale Redeemer God. They want a **God** who tells them, "Look, this world is fallen, but not *that* fallen. It is corrupt, but not *that* corrupt. You can find a degree of peace here. Just think of me as the God who created the world, who then watched Adam pollute the world with sin, yet who really isn't interested in redeeming the world completely, 'cause I'm just good old God the Creator, not God the Redeemer. I am God the Sustainer of limited perversion in history,

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3. This is the theology of Meredith G. Kline, George M. Marsden, and just about every other Christian intellectual over the last century. In their theology, AIDS is just another random event, humanly speaking.

4. M. Nell, "Contemporary Historical Writing: Practice and Presuppositions," *Christianity and History Newsletter* (Feb. 1988), p. 17.

not God the Judge of perversion in history.” When these people speak of God the Creator, they do not mean the God who created the world in six literal days; they mean a hypothetical god of their imagination who does not bring full-scale covenant judgments in history. “God the Creator” in the theology of ethical dualism and natural law means “God the Stand-Patter.” This is the God of the rescue mission, with free meals, hot showers, and clean sheets for burned-out Christian scholars holding advanced academic degrees. They would, to a man, rewrite Genesis 25, for they have already done so in their own tenured lives:

And Esau sod pottage: and Jacob came from the field, and he was faint: And Jacob said to Esau, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same wheat and barley pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Wheaton. And Esau said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Jacob said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Esau said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Esau. Then Esau gave Jacob bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Jacob despised his birthright (Gen. 25:29-34; King Saul Edition).

The pietist declares, “God saves souls, not cultures. God judges souls in eternity, not cultures in history. And even if He may occasionally judge a culture, we Christians must attribute this to the forces of history,” i.e., the latest fad theory of historical change that has captured the historical guild. Any theory of historical causation is open for discussion by Christians, except one: God’s providence. Any theory of civil government is open for discussion by Christians, except one: God’s theocracy. These two opinions are linked together, and the common thread is a rejection of Eusebius and Constantine, for Constantine, the head of civil government in Rome, publicly placed an entire civilization under the sanctions of God’s civil covenant, as did his successors (except Julian the apostate, a two-year retrogression who failed). This was a bad, bad precedent in the eyes of pietists, whether they are fundamentalist political conservatives or tenured neo-evangelical political liberals. “No creed but the New Testament pastoral epistles and no law but love!”

This same discount kingdom syndrome existed in David’s day, too. Its promoters infuriated David. He cried out to God: “I hate the double-minded, but I love your law” (Ps. 119:113, New King James Version).

### Permanent Cease-Fires Are Concealed Surrenders

At the time of the American Revolution, there were three million people living in the U. S.; of these, 20,000 were Roman Catholics and about 3,000 were Jews. <sup>5</sup>Who inherited the country? The Unitarians and their spiritual heirs. They used the myth of neutrality to capture the national government covenantally — which Rushdoony has always denied<sup>6</sup> — and therefore politically, which Rushdoony has always affirmed.<sup>7</sup> “So deeply is the myth of neutralism imbedded,” he writes, “that to deal realistically and honestly with it is tantamount to political suicide. Politicians must assure every last plundering faction of its sanctimonious neutralism while insisting on its own. Each particular faction, of course, insists on its own impartial, neutral and objective stance while deploring the partisan and subjective position of its adversaries. All are equally committed to the great modern myth that such neutrality is possible. This myth is basic to classical liberalism and to most schools of thought, conservative and radical, which are derived from it .”<sup>8</sup> This myth of neutrality steadily leads to the concept of humanist world government; local loyalties are not sufficiently broad; true neutrality can only be achieved through international politics and international morality.<sup>9</sup>

The Constitutional capture of America by the Unitarians in 1788 was based on the myth of neutrality. They destroyed the biblical State covenant <sup>10</sup>at the national level, and then quietly, unobtrusively substituted apostate state and local covenants. This was also done in the name of neutrality, as Rushdoony has said so well. In short, *new covenant*, *new god*. This new god is revealed by his law-order in American society.

Rushdoony writes that ‘in any culture *the source of the law is the god of that society.*’<sup>11</sup> The source of biblical law is the God of the Bible. His moral character is revealed in His laws — all His laws, not just the Ten Commandments. Without biblical law at the center of a

5. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Nature of the American System* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1965] 1978), p. 67.

6. See Appendix B.

7. *Ibid.*, ch. 5: “Neutrality.”

8. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

10. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 12: “The Biblical State Covenant.”

11. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), p. 4.

society's legal order, <sup>12</sup> its legal order testifies falsely regarding the true source of all morally valid laws, namely, the God of the Bible. It testifies falsely regarding God. A society is in rebellion against God to the extent that its people refuse to acknowledge in the civil realm the terms of the civil covenant. There is a specific legal order which God requires in His Word. God is totally sovereign, as manifested by the presence of His required laws and sanctions. A society that denies the continuing judicial validity of Old Testament civil law in general thereby refuses to acknowledge that this world was, is, and ever shall be a theocracy. *God rules*. How does a nation testify in history to this fact? *God's rules*. To the extent that the legal order does not conform to the legal standard that God announces in His Bible, to that extent is a society in rebellion against God.

### Judicial Evangelism

That God requires Trinitarian evangelism to be law-oriented is denied by virtually all Christian denominations and congregations today. They deny that God reveals himself in New Testament times as clearly through His law as He did in the Old Testament. Christians should ask themselves: Why would God choose to reveal himself less clearly in the New Testament era by allowing every society except Puritan New England to adopt a law-order other than what He revealed in the Old Testament? The theonomists have an answer to this intriguing question. God allows this only to prove a point: the visible failure in history of all law-orders compared to the visible success of His revealed law-order. This visible failure can then become a tool of evangelism.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who bath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that bath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:5-8).

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12. At the center of Israel was the Ark of the Covenant. In the Ark was the law: the *two* tablets.

The fact that God has allowed this judicial evangelical testimony to fade, time after time, when His people have failed to maintain His laws whenever they have gained political influence, does not mean that His permanent norm for all societies is a similar abandonment of Old Testament law. It only means that so far in history, He has repeatedly allowed His people to depart from His law, just as Israel did, only to find themselves as slaves to their God-hating enemies. God does not annul His sanctions in history; He continues to enforce them.

The question of questions for Christian applied theology, ethics, and social theory is this one: Why should Christians accept as their long-term earthly goal the establishment of any system of civil law other than the one set forth in the Bible? In other words, why should Christians affirm *in principle* the acceptability of any law-order other than biblical law? Why should they enthusiastically choose second-best, third-best, or even totalitarian civil order in preference to biblical law? Why is their last choice always biblical law? We could search for answers in psychology, sociology, education, and in any other academic specialties. I prefer to begin looking for the answer in the area of ethics: *Christians prefer irresponsibility.*

#### *The Suppression of God's Eternal Sanctions*

It is not just biblical law that modern evangelicalism rejects. Where is any clearly stated doctrine of hell and eternal torment in most of today's evangelism programs? The doctrine of hell has steadily disappeared from mass evangelism ever since D. L. Moody announced: "Terror never brought a man in yet."<sup>13</sup> Campus Crusade for Christ is today's model: not a word about eternal punishment in their primary evangelism materials. The question of evangelical questions, "Are you saved?" does not have a forthright, open answer to the obvious response, "Saved from what?"<sup>14</sup>

The doctrine of covenantal sanctions has been the weakest point of the theology of the Protestant Reformation. Protestantism has never been clear on exactly what the sacraments are: *judicial sanc-*

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13. Cited by Stanley N. Gundry, *Love Them In: The Proclamation Theology of Dwight L. Moody* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), p. 99.

14. The Evangelism Explosion program is an exception to this rule. Its founder, D. James Kennedy, has publicly preached that modern preaching seldom mentions hell. Kenneth Kantzer of *Christianity Today* and Wheaton College remarked in the late 1980's that he had not heard a sermon on hell in a quarter of a century. I believe him.

tions. Instead, the sacraments are seen as either pure memorials (philosophical nominalism) or semi-Catholic (philosophical realism).<sup>15</sup> Step by step, Protestants have retreated from any concept of public sanctions against unbelief, including the outward workings of unbelief (e. g., abortion), until today, even the doctrine of hell is called into question.<sup>16</sup>

Academic Christian theology today has been stripped of almost all its distinctive in the name of anti-covenantalism. The covenant is a package deal, whether you are for it or against it. When people abandon it, they in principle have abandoned all of it. Over time, this abandonment forces people to restructure their theologies in all five points. Some people catch on earlier than others, but the direction away from the covenant is clear: away from Calvinism. Consistent theologians cannot hang onto only part of the biblical covenant.<sup>17</sup>

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15. As in Lutheranism's consubstantiation doctrine, where Jesus in His perfect humanity is in some way present in or near the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For a philosophical critique, see Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, vol. II of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (den Dulk Foundation, 1969), ch. 6.

16. A recent example of this 40-year drift away from the Bible took place in May, 1989, at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, near Chicago, Illinois. Trinity, with assistance from the National Association of Evangelical, held a conference of 385 theologians, Christian leaders, and laymen: "Evangelical Affirmations/89." The goal of conference organizers Cad F. H. Henry and Kenneth Kantzer was to develop a document defining the word "evangelical." (Better four decades late than never!) Henry's 1947 book, *The Troubled Conscience of Fundamentalism*, is accurately described as one of the founding documents of neo-evangelicalism. That he later wrote *Evangelicals in Search of Identity* (Word, 1976) is also worth mentioning. They are still searching. The dilemma of neo-evangelicalism today is acute; its advocates do not know what they believe in, except for their single creedal formulation: "Fundamentalism is too restricting on our career goals."

At the Trinity conference, a debate broke out over the doctrine of "annihilationism," also known as "conditionalism," a doctrine held by Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, etc. It teaches that there is only annihilation for unregenerate sinners in eternity — no hell or lake of fire. Theologian J. I. Packer adamantly pressed the assembly to adopt a statement affirming the traditional creedal position of eternal punishment, but to no avail. The vote *was* split, but the chairman declared that those refusing to include a positive statement on such a negative idea had been in the majority. Neo-evangelicalism, like the cults, is now prepared to shrug its collective shoulders to the question of God's sanctions with a noncommittal "What the hell?" Lacking fire in its eschatology, it lacks fire in its belly. Short on *ortho* in its *doxy*, neo-evangelicalism is increasingly bent out of shape. For an account of this conference, see *World* (June 3, 1989), p. 9.

17. A good example of this reactionary shift is the magazine that in the 1970's was called *Present Truth*. It was officially Calvinistic. In reaction against Christian Reconstruction, its editor in the early 1980's switched his theology to Barthianism and outright theological liberalism. It is now called *Verdict*. At least he still believes in judging: man's judging God's eternally present truth. A similar shift has taken place in

The history of Massachusetts from Governor John Winthrop in 1630 to Governor Michael Dukakis (a Harvard Law School grad) today, or of Harvard College from 1636 to today, can be seen as a step-by-step rejection of the biblical covenant. The history of Connecticut from its founder Thomas Hooker in 1639 to Connecticut scion George Bush (a Yale grad) <sup>19</sup> today, or the history of Yale College from 1740<sup>20</sup> to today, can also be viewed in the same way. The history of America has paralleled the development of Massachusetts and Connecticut. That Dukakis ran against Bush for President in 1988 is representative of the influence of anti-covenantalism in American history. Harvard and Yale still dominate the American Establishment; only their theologies have changed.

### A Preference for Irresponsibility

In the Northern Kingdom from the days of Jeroboam's revolt, there were only two publicly acceptable operating religious systems: the worship of Jehovah by means of Baalist icons and practices (the golden calves: I Ki. 12:28) and the worship of Baal by means of Baalist icons and practices (I Ki. 18). Elijah challenged representatives of the people of Israel to choose between Baal and Jehovah, but they answered not a word (I Ki. 18:21). Even when they at last declared themselves in favor of God (I Ki. 18:39), it was only as a result of God's display of greater supernatural and visible power, and their commitment did not last longer than Elijah's ability to repeat such displays on a regular, invariable basis. In their deepest apostasy, they became disciples of the power religion. They returned spiritually to Egypt.

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the life of antinomian Jon Zens, who used to publish a Calvinist magazine, *Baptist Reformation Review*, who is now a self-conscious Anabaptist as a result of his reaction to Christian Reconstruction. He changed the name of his magazine to *Searching Together*. Roger Williams' legacy lives on. Both editors finally recognized that Calvinism is covenantal, and the biblical covenant is a unitary system. They then abandoned Calvinism. This connection between Calvinism and the biblical covenant may also eventually occur to seminary professors at Calvinist institutions, though not in the near future, I suspect.

18. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1935).

19. He is also a member of Yale's Skull and Bones secret society. On Skull and Bones, see Antony Sutton, *America? Secret Establishment* (Billings, Montana: Liberty House, 1986).

20. Louis Leonard Tucker, *Puritan Protagonist: President Thomas Clapp of Yale College* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Institute of Early American History and Culture; published by the University of North Carolina Press, 1962).



The Northern Kingdom was worse in this regard than the Southern Kingdom was. Judah had the Temple. It had ritually acceptable religion. It never adopted pure Baalism. God therefore delivered Israel into captivity to the Assyrians more than a century before He delivered Judah (and Assyria) to the Babylonians. Even so, He had waited several centuries before He abandoned Israel to Assyria. The Northern Kingdom's religious practices had been corrupt from the very beginning, but there are degrees of corruption. For a time, God graciously delays bringing His negative sanctions in history. It is not that He honors corruption; instead, He honors the absence of full corruption. But corruption, like "incorruption," does not remain idle. Corruption grows or contracts. Both corruption and righteousness are kingdom principles. It depends upon which kingdom we are discussing: God's or Satan's. Each kingdom seeks extension geographically, temporally, institutionally, and psychologically. Each serves as leaven.<sup>21</sup> Each recognizes that in principle, there can be no neutrality. Each therefore recognizes that as time goes on, there will be less and less cooperation possible between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers. There can be no combination of leavened and unleavened bread. The same is true of society.

#### *Progressive Ethical Self-Consciousness*

Covenant-breakers generally recognize the nature of this ethical and institutional conflict earlier than covenant-keepers do. They see what will happen when covenant-keepers at last become self-conscious in their commitment to God's Bible-revealed kingdom principles. Like the leaders of the Jews who understood that Jesus had prophesied that He would rise again in three days, and so put a stone and guards at the tomb, so are the covenant-breakers in history. Similarly, like the disciples who did not understand what Jesus had said, and who therefore fled in despair, so Christians have been in their misunderstanding of Christ's comprehensive challenge to non-Christian society. They have not understood the comprehensive challenge of the gospel.<sup>22</sup> But eventually a few disciples returned to the tomb, only to find it empty. Eventually, a few more recognized that Jesus'

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21. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* (3rd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), pp. 315-19, 325-26.

22. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), Appendix C: "Comprehensive Redemption: A Theology for Social Action."

words were true. The word of His resurrection spread among the called-out *ekklesia*. Then the war between the kingdoms began in earnest — earnest in the sense of serious, and also earnest in the sense of God's down payment in history of a future fulfillment. When Christians at last begin to see the comprehensive implications of the resurrection, the war will escalate. (This escalation has been going on since the resurrection, but it has been a process marked by many historical discontinuities.)

Once a new phase of the war begins, both sides become increasingly consistent. The cultural advantage swings to the covenant-keepers *whenever they honor the external laws of God's covenant*. Their obedience brings visible, external blessings (Deut.28:1-14), while the rebellious receive visible blessings more and more in terms of their public honoring of the kingdom principles announced by the covenant-keepers. If they refuse to adapt, they grow weak and eventually disappear in history.<sup>23</sup> Those who survive become increasingly dependent on the good behavior and good works of covenant-keepers. This dependence tends to persuade them to reduce their persecution of covenant-keepers. They hire them because covenant-keepers — *when the latter are adhering to the external laws of God's covenant* — are honest, effective workers. They buy from them for the same reason. Service leads to dominion.

The law of God is the primary tool of dominion that God offers to all men, irrespective of their personal faith. He gives the Holy Spirit to His people, but if His people refuse for a season to honor the terms of the covenant, while God-rejecting men willingly adopt the external terms of the covenant, then the latter will prosper externally. The best example of this process in recent history is the reversal of economic power between Japan and the United States, 1945-1988. The Japanese, not being Protestants, nevertheless adopted the Protestant ethic of their American conquerors. The Americans, having become the richest people on earth by their adherence to this ethic, steadily abandoned it in the post-War era. They concluded incorrectly that the might of their hands had gotten them this wealth

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23. My favorite example is the disintegration of the culture of the Ik, a thoroughly perverse Kenyan tribal people. See Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People* (New York: Touchstone, 1972). The author in the Preface attempts to deny that this society is inhuman, by denying the existence of common standards of what might be termed true humanity. Once you deny the image of God in man, as both Turnbull and the Ik do, anything goes. Eventually, civilization goes.

(Deut. 8:17). Worse; they concluded that public education had gotten them this wealth. They began to worship at the temple of the State. They began to put more faith in formal tests than in actual on-the-job productivity. In this sense, Confucianism progressively conquered America, and one of the worst aspects of Confucianism: the worship of bureaucratic status based on examinations.<sup>24</sup>

Long-term, it requires that God grant special grace (regeneration) to large numbers of people in order for a society to adhere to the external terms of the covenant.<sup>25</sup> But in the short run, which can last several generations, the appropriate visible blessings of the covenant can go to those who are committed only externally to particular terms of the covenant. Japan, for example, was the first nation to adopt abortion as a national policy. Why should the Japanese be uniquely blessed? It is a case of comparative obedience: the Soviet Union and the Chinese also began to promote abortions as national policy; the United States accepts its legality, and its intellectual leaders are overwhelmingly pro-abortion. So, God looks at other aspects of the covenant, those related to the economics of dominion: honesty, hard work, precise work, rigorous education, thrift, future-orientation, etc. In these areas, the Japanese excel. They therefore receive the lion's share of the external blessings. If they refuse to convert to faith in Jesus Christ, however, they will find it impossible to adhere as a nation to the external terms of the covenant. The rising sun will set.

### *The Supposed Perversity of History*

The modern Church has abandoned faith in the covenantal cause-and-effect relationship between national external conformity to God's law and His external blessings. The Church therefore does not believe in God's sanctions in history. In Old Testament times, yes, but not in New Testament times. The Church believes that God gave a clearer revelation of His ethical standards before Christ came to redeem the world. They believe with Van Til that God's visible sanctions in history were a mark of His condescension to His people in an earlier era.<sup>26</sup> In short, they conclude that Christians do not

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24. James Fallows, *More Like Us: Making America Great Again* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), ch. 10: "Confucianism Comes to America."

25. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 6.

26. He writes: "In the New Testament God expects his people to live more fully into the absolute future than in the Old Testament. He expects of them that they will

need such a visible revelation of the ethical character of God, so He has removed this revelation of Himself by removing His historical sanctions. Covenant-breakers rejoice at this thought, for such a removal of God's sanctions in history leaves Satan's sanctions intact: cursing for the righteous and blessing for the unrighteous. This is what Van Til taught, and it is what all non-theonomic pessimillennialists implicitly believe.

Van Til always insisted that there can be no neutrality. He meant intellectual neutrality and ethical neutrality. But because he did not affirm all five points of the biblical covenant, he separated ethics from historical sanctions. Thus, as far as history is concerned, he did affirm neutrality. And yet he didn't. Van Til really affirmed satanic sanctions. He implicitly recognized (but never explicitly) that if God does not impose His sanctions, then Satan will impose his. Meredith Kline's view of historical sanctions affirms neutrality – random sanctions, humanly speaking— but Van Til, as a consistent amillennialist, affirmed reverse sanctions: the bad get richer and the good get poorer. Christ's second coming is a total reversal of this world of perverse sanctions. Thus, neither the covenant-keeper nor the covenant-breaker has an "earnest" of the final judgment to come. Neither is given a warning in history of the eternal consequences of his respective covenant. History for the amillennialist is not a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing; it is a tale told by a deceiver, concealing everything.

Rarely do modern Christians take seriously the idea of "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." For example, fully consistent dispensationalists refuse to pray Jesus' "Jewish kingdom" prayer in this, the "Church Age." As far as the dispensationalist is concerned, the "Church Age" manifests all the characteristics of amillennialism's psychologically internal and shrinking ecclesiastical kingdom: the progressive defeat and isolation of Christians and Christianity. They affirm with Van Til the ethical perversity of God's historical sanctions, at least during the "Church Age." Thus, they reject the legitimacy of God's Old Testament law-order.

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be able to sustain the unevenness of the present revelation to the day of their death, since they have a clearer revelation of the new heavens and the new earth. In the Old Testament, on the contrary, God condescends to give an external manifestation of the principle that righteousness, holiness and blessedness belong together." Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theistic Ethics*, vol. III of *In Defense of Biblical Christianity* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), p. 104.

Even in the coming millennium, they insist, this Old Testament, “Jewish kingdom” law-order will not in and of itself produce appropriate sanctions; only Jesus’ physical presence in Jerusalem will produce them. Sanctions then, unlike today, will be swift. 27

### Kingdom and Case Laws

Rarely in the history of the Church have leaders or laymen taken the Old Testament case laws seriously. Christians have assumed that Jesus’ ministry, or at least Paul’s, did away entirely with the case laws. Nevertheless, when pressed to defend some traditional practice of any particular denomination, the group’s in-house theologians turn to the Old Testament in search of a legal precedent. This is an aspect of what Rushdoony has called *smorgasbord religion*: selectively picking what you like out of a large selection of rules and doctrines. The best example of such New Testament selective shopping is the strict sabbatarian’s appeal to all but one verse in the Old Testament requiring God’s people to keep holy the sabbath. The exception is Exodus 35:2, the verse to which the capital sanction is attached: “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.” When it comes to the imposition of this most rigorous of Old Testament civil sanctions, capital punishment, the Church flees in holy terror. “Keep the sabbath holy, but not *that* holy!”

A required sanction clearly identifies God’s attitude toward a particular infraction. The sanction tells us just how important the infraction is in the overall operation of the kingdom of God. Without sanctions, there can be no civil law, and without civil law there can be no civilization, meaning no identifiable kingdom. But there is always some form of civilization. There are no historical vacuums. There are therefore no political or judicial vacuums. Thus, we ought to conclude that God has required His people to declare His required civil sanctions, while self-proclaimed autonomous man has a different set of civil laws and sanctions. God has revealed His required sanctions in His Bible-revealed law; self-proclaimed autonomous man has revealed his required sanctions in his voluminous legislation. For as long as there are infractions of a judicial standard, there will be sanctions. The question is: Whose? Whose standards and whose sanctions?

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27. See footnote 29, Chapter 12, p. 586.

The Church has not wanted to face the stark contrast between the two kingdoms. It has wanted to find some agreeable halfway position. Christian scholars have endlessly asserted the existence of neutral, “natural” laws that can serve as the Church’s earthly hope of the ages, an agreeable middle way that will mitigate the conflict in history between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man. The winner of such a naive quest will always be the kingdom of man. *Theoretical neutrality* means man’s *operational autonomy*: men do not have to consider what God requires or threatens in history.

God brings His sanctions in history, positive and negative. He can do this through His people, who act representatively as His agents, or He can do it through pagan armies or seemingly impersonal environmental forces. He can choose war, pestilence, or famine. He can even choose “all of the above.” But He does bring His sanctions in history. There is no escape from these historical sanctions, any more than there is an escape from His eternal sanctions. The former point to the latter. History has coherence and meaning *only* because of these sanctions and the decrees of God.

God’s historical sanctions serve as evidence of His theocratic sovereignty over the creation. This is why Christians who rebel at the idea of theocracy also must rebel against the idea of God’s temporal sanctions. The idea of the national covenant repels them, for such a covenant testifies to the existence of a Christian civil hierarchy, Christian civil laws, Christian civil sanctions, and Christian civil conquest in history by means of God’s sanctions of blessings and cursings. Thus we find a trio of Christian historians, safe and tenured in their humanist-accredited colleges and universities, who insist on placing the word *Christian* in italics when they speak of America’s “Christian” origins or “Christian” cultures in general. (See Chapter 5.)<sup>28</sup>

### Kingdom and Sanctions

In order to establish a Christian culture, there would have to be identifiably Christian laws — biblical blueprints, in other words — by

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28. Mark A. Nell, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search@ Christian America* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1983), p. 28. Notice that the publisher also publishes Francis Schaeffer’s *Complete Works* and three of Franky Schaeffer’s books. It also ceased publishing my book, *Conspiracy: A Biblical View* (1986), shortly after Rodney Clapp’s essay appeared in *Christianity Today* in February, 1987. The company’s owners could no longer maintain a compromise between its halfway covenant worldview and Christian Reconstruction.

which the national covenant could be judged by God and other nations. Only one idea is more repugnant to modern Christian intellectuals than the idea of judicially binding biblical civil blueprints. 29 That idea is the doctrine of each person's predestined eternity. The two ideas are linked judicially: *sanctions*. Men do not like to be reminded by Paul that "the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore bath he mercy on whom he bath mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rem. 9:17-18). If God did this with Pharaoh, He can do it to anyone. *This means sanctions*.

The mild and gentle negative civil sanctions of the Old Testament — whipping, restitution, slavery, banishment, and public execution — are light taps on the wrist compared to eternal screaming agony in the lake of fire. Covenant-breaking men easily understand this distinction in intensity. They know what is coming in eternity. They resent it. Thus, in order to banish from their consciousness the thought of eternal torture at the hand of an outraged, implacable God, they feel compelled to banish also the idea that God has established civil covenants in history which authorize and require His lawful representatives to apply the Old Testament's minimal negative sanctions. Instead, they have implicitly adopted two other doctrines, the doctrine of autonomous man and the concomitant doctrine, the autonomous State.

The State becomes the sole agency authorized by autonomous man to impose compulsory sanctions. (The only alternative to this view is the doctrine of zero civil government, meaning zero compul-

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29. That no such blueprints exist in the field of economics was the assertion of all three of the other authors in the book, *Wealth and Poverty: Four Christian Views*, edited by Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1984). The fourth view — the explicitly, self-consciously, blueprint-insistent Christian one — was mine. I, of course, challenged all three of the others, calling attention to their self-conscious rejection of any explicitly biblical standards in economic analysis. Not surprisingly, in less than a year, with the book selling well and our royalties adequate, the neo-evangelical liberals who run InterVarsity pulled the book off the market and sold my company the remaining 6,000 copies at 25 cents per copy, just to wash their hands of the whole project. That was when I knew who had won the debate. Liberals would never be so crass as to burn conservative books; they simply refuse to publish them or, once the mistake has been made, dump them. But their name is still on the books, and I am making an astounding profit margin on each sale. And I was able to add this choice footnote, too. Liberals are really suicidal (Prov. 8:36).

sory sanctions, a consistent but seldom articulated viewpoint. )<sup>30</sup> *In order to assert his autonomy from God, the covenant-breaker places himself under the authority of a self-proclaimed autonomous State.* He prefers to believe that the State's sanctions are final. The State's sanctions must be seen as alternatives to God's final judgment, not evidence for it. He must assert this if God's final sanctions are to be denied effectively. In order to make such an assumption believable, the State must be given power to impose sanctions far worse than those authorized by the Old Testament.

### *Leaky Christians*

It is my view that there are three subordinate tests for orthodoxy, once a person has affirmed the obvious: the virgin birth of Jesus, the Trinity, and the bodily resurrection of Christ. These three tests are: affirming the six-day creation, affirming the worldwide Noachic flood, and affirming the doctrine of hell (lake of fire). There are other tests, but anyone who waffles on one of these should be examined far more carefully; he leaks. He is going to leak a lot more. A Christian who is unwilling to affirm publicly the inescapability of God's eternal negative covenant sanctions is also unlikely to be willing to insist on the temporal, negative, and **covenantal** sanctions, for such temporal sanctions are an earnest — down payment — on His final sanctions.

Such sanctions-denying Christians eventually find themselves under the civil (and also intellectual) authority of covenant-breakers who also deny the continuing validity of biblical law, meaning Old Testament sanctions. Those who assert their defiance of covenant law the most insistently are covenant-breakers who affirm the autonomy of man, or who at least deny the existence of the God of the Bible. Thus, in their quest to avoid thinking about God's eternal torture chamber beyond the grave, Christians have willingly submitted in *principle* to temporal rule by those covenant-breakers who deny the lake of fire with the greatest self-confidence. You cannot beat something with something less.

On the other hand, those Christians who in history were most willing to affirm God's predestinated, inescapable, eternal sanctions were also the only ones ready to insist on the **covenantal** necessity of legislating the most feared of God's negative sanctions, public execu-

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30. Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (rev. ed.; New York: Collier, 1978); Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983).



tion, for every crime identified as a capital crime in the Old Testament. I am speaking of the Puritans, who did exactly this when they were given the legal authority in history to do so, in New England: the Massachusetts Body of Liberties (1641). The Puritans understood that civil liberty begins with the civil government's enforcement of God's required sanctions. Their successors have not understood this, and they have deeply resented the Puritans' public testimony in this regard.

### Kingdom and Education

The Constitution made religious test oaths illegal. It also made it illegal for Congress to make any laws regarding religion, though of course it could not and did not prohibit religious laws, since all *law is religious*.

This precedent obviously made it illegal to establish any church by law at the federal level. But until the Fourteenth Amendment became the law of the land, this restriction on Congress did not apply to the states. Steadily, however, the states abandoned the support of churches with tax money. Connecticut ended the practice in 1813; Massachusetts ceased in 1833.<sup>31</sup>

This disestablished the Trinitarian churches; it did not disestablish Unitarianism. The Unitarians were wise men; they knew that they were strangers in a generally Christian culture. They realized that they had to disguise their program to establish their religion. They knew that they could not, and should not, receive tax money for their little group of churches in Boston. That would have given the game away. Instead, their agent, Horace Mann, devised and then successfully sold the idea of religiously neutral but universally moral education to the taxpayers of Massachusetts. He did this by adopting the same doctrine of religious neutrality and common-ground knowledge that had worked so well from 1687 (Newton's *Principia*) to 1787 (the Constitution). With this, Mann created a new concept of public education. This was the great flim-flam, the establishment of a new national denomination and a new national priesthood.

It took well over a century for any Christian scholar to sound the alarm on both evils: taxpayer-financed education and religiously neutral education. There had been many opponents of Mann, but

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31. Philip Schaff, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Arno Press, [1888] 1972), p. 46.

they all to some degree accepted the principle of taxpayer-financed education. Rushdoony first sounded the alarm among Christian scholars: that 1) all state-supported, taxpayer-financed education is inherently immoral and anti-Christian, since it removes the authority over education from parents, and 2) the Unitarians had invented the public school system to further their own messianic and salvational agenda. 32 Sidney Mead also admitted it in 1963: “. . . the public-school system of the United States *is* its established church.”<sup>33</sup>

Mann built his case on the doctrine of natural law, natural rights, and Providence, and he stated this forthrightly, in the language of George Washington and the Framers, whose theology he shared. “I believe in the existence of a great, immortal, immutable principle of natural law, or natural ethics – a principle antecedent to all human institutions, and incapable of being abrogated by any ordinance of man, – a principle of divine origin, clearly legible in the ways of Providence as those ways are clearly manifested in the order of Nature and in the history of the race, which proves the *absolute right* to an education of every human being that comes into the world; and which, of course, proves the correlative duty of every government to see that the means of education are provided for all.”<sup>34</sup>

Mann’s program of education was a consistent development of Madison’s system of fictionalizing Christianity. The goal is to remove faction — meaning *sectarianism* — from every public institution and from all public policy. Mann’s program relied on the Madisonian removal of Trinitarian oaths and creeds from public institutions, a policy that had been copied by Massachusetts law in 1833. His strategy involved the substitution of creedless morality for Trinitarian morality. It therefore involved the substitution of common-ground religion for Trinitarian religion. His was the morality of the procedurally empty but substantively Unitarian, fully Constitutional, Madisonian pantheon. He articulated this Madisonian strategy in 1848, at the end of his career.

I believed then (1837), as now, that sectarian books and sectarian instruction, if their encroachment were not resisted, would prove the overthrow of the schools.

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32. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Messianic Character of American Education: Studies in the History and Philosophy of Education* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1963). Reprinted by Presbyterian & Reformed, Phillipsburg, New Jersey.

33. Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 68.

34. Mann, “The Tenth Annual Report” (1846), cited by Rushdoony, *Messianic Character*, p. 21.

I believed then, as now, that religious instruction in our schools, to the extent which the Constitution and the laws of the state allowed and prescribed, was indispensable to their highest welfare, and essential to the vitality of moral education. 35

The Puritans of Massachusetts had enacted legislation in 1638 that required local town governments to appropriate tax money to support local Congregational churches.<sup>36</sup> This was an implicit denial of the biblical concept of civil government as a negative institution that brings negative sanctions against public evil. The New England Puritans viewed the State as an agency of positive good, as did all Christians in 1638, and to that extent they adopted to some degree the Greco-Roman view of the messianic State. This misuse of Massachusetts public funds was stopped in 1833.

The Puritans also used local tax money to support local schools. This practice began in 1642 and was reinforced by a new law in 1647.<sup>37</sup> In the state constitutions of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Maryland of the 1780's, the public support of school teachers was reaffirmed.<sup>38</sup> Not only was this legacy of New England Puritanism not abandoned in the 1830's, it accelerated, culminating in the post-World War I modern public school system.

Those Christians who adamantly oppose taxpayer-financed education because of its humanism understand that the myth of educational neutrality is indeed a myth. Nevertheless, the theological roots of the public education system are the same as the theological roots of the U.S. Constitution: the doctrine of moral neutrality in civil government. That Christian Freemasons have supported the public schools and opposed Christian schools system should be no more surprising than the fact that Christian Freemasons supported

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35. Cited in Anson Stokes Phelps and Leo Pfeffer, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, [1950] 1964), p. 267.

36. Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 152.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 264; cf. on the 1642 law, see Cremin, *American Education*, pp. 124-25. For some reason, Rushdoony got it into his head that the colonial Puritans did not have taxpayer-supported local education, and that the practice was invented by Mann. He wrote in 1961: "Although, in the United States, this transfer of education to the state began early in the 1800's, in actuality it was not in full effect until after World War I. Prior to the 1800's, schools had been operated by churches, local parents, or by the teachers," Rushdoony, *Intellectual Schizophrenia: Culture, Crisis and Education* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1961), p. 56.

38. James Hastings Nichols, "John Witherspoon on Church and State," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, XLVII (Sept. 1964), p. 172.

the U.S. Constitution in 1787 and opposed religious test oaths. That Christian opponents of the public school system support without hesitation the Constitutional provision of prohibiting religious test oaths is surprising. Madison's theory of the neutral State undergirds both institutions. Public money goes to both systems in the name of civic religious neutrality and common-ground morality.

Education is the working out of a religious worldview. It cannot be neutral. It will reflect either the kingdom of God or the kingdom of man. It is the outworking of kingdom principles. But we should not make the mistake of thinking that education is itself a separate **covenantal** calling. It is not on the same level that the Church, State, and family are. It is not marked by a self-valedictory oath. It is analogous to a Christian business, not a church. *We must be very wary of investing education with sacramental or covenantal language.* This leads back down the path of humanism: education as salvational and messianic.<sup>39</sup>

### Kingdom and Civilization

Kingdom means civilization. It means either the lawful or unlawful exercise of authority in history. In short, kingdom means sanctions. God's kingdom can operate with minimal civil sanctions in history, meaning a minimal State, only because it is authorized by God and accepted **covenantally** by people who believe in God's horrifying negative sanctions beyond the grave. *Self-government can then replace civil government.* The widespread belief in hell and the lake of fire is one of the foundations of Western liberty. It made less neces-

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39. Rushdoony made this mistake early when he said that "Education was thus inevitably a *covenantal act*, an incorporation of the person into the life of a rich and vital body. . . ." *Intellectual Schizophrenia*, p. 8. The language of incorporation is sacramental. This is why he could argue years later that Christian education, as an extension of the family, is sometimes deserving of the title rather than the Church. Rushdoony, *Tithing and Dominion* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, 1979), p. 9. Rushdoony has long ignored what should be obvious: sacramentalism is an inescapable concept; some institution must be "sacramentalized." Some institution has to administer the sacraments. Man must meet his sovereign master to renew the covenant on a regular basis. Rushdoony denies that either the Church or the State should be sacramentalized: *Law and Society* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, 1982), p. 128. Then, three pages later, he writes: "The family, as we have seen, is the most powerful institution in society, controlling as it does, in terms of Biblical law, the three key areas of society, children, property, and inheritance" (p. 131). The sacraments do not appear at all in his discussion, nor does he take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or belong to a local church. *This inevitably leads to the sacramentalizing of the family by default.* As such, education becomes covenantal in his thinking, for it is an adjunct of the family.

sary for social order men's faith in a State that possesses imitation final sanctions.

What the case laws provide is an alternative to the messianic State. The case laws provide sanctions that match the magnitude of the crime. The basic penalty for crimes against property and body is some form of restitution. Capital crimes are crimes against the integrity of God: those convicted of such infractions are delivered into God's court for His direct judgment. As history moves closer to the day of final judgment, covenantal postmillennialism teaches, society will progressively be conformed to these standards. Democratically, meaning *a bottom-up movement initiated by the Holy Spirit*, voters will progressively enact the whole law-order of God. This will probably take several centuries. Christian maturity is costly and time-consuming. Thus, what the Puritans attempted to do in England, 1640-60, was morally wrong and strategically self-destructive because it was a top-down imposition of God's law. What the New England Puritans attempted to do was valid; there was general agreement about biblical civil law when the society was founded in the wilderness. But immigration and defections, coupled with the restoration of King Charles II in 1660, changed the religious environment in New England. The era of the halfway covenant began .40

### *The Spirit and Democracy*

Democracy literally means "people's rule." The sovereignty of the people is the basis of the modern democratic order. In ancient Greece, democracy was a product of family gods; male representatives of household gods spoke in clan councils; and as the city-state developed, they spoke in the councils of the *polis*. The idea is that man speaks in the name of a ruling deity; in modern times, the ruling deity is the people as a whole, who of course remain politely silent. A distinction is made between the will of the silent, represented people and the present decision of the representatives. The people can retroactively bring sanctions against the representatives, either at elections or in revolution. Thus, those speaking for the people at any time cannot be said to represent the people perfectly at any given time, since it is not clear precisely who the people are, and how (or if) they differ from their present representatives. As Sir Henry Maine put it over a century ago:

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40. Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), pp. 130-38.

The greatest, most permanent, and most fundamental of all the difficulties of Democracy, lies deep in the constitution of human nature. Democracy is a form of government, and in all governments acts of State are determined by an exertion of will. But in what sense can a multitude exercise volition? The student of politics can put to himself no more pertinent question than this. No doubt the vulgar opinion is, that the multitude makes up its mind as the individual makes up his mind. A host of popular phrases testify to this belief. The “will of the People,” “public opinion,” the “sovereign pleasure of the nation,” “Vox Populi, Vox Dei,” belong to this class, which indeed constitutes a great part of the common stock of the platform and the press. But what do such expressions mean? They must mean that a great number of people, on a great number of questions, can come to an identical conclusion, and found an identical determination upon it. But this is manifestly true only of the simplest questions. 41

Vox Populi may be Vox Dei, but very little attention shows that there never has been any agreement as to what Vox means or as to what Populus means. . . . In reality, the devotee of Democracy is much in the same position as the Greeks with their oracles. All agreed that the voice of an oracle was the voice of a god; but everybody allowed that when he spoke he was not as intelligible as might be desired, and nobody was quite sure whether it was safer to go to Delphi or Donona. 42

The discrepancy between the hypothetical sovereign People and the representatives of the People is why we have constitutions: to hold in check those who claim to speak for people who have not yet had time to bring sanctions or the threat of sanctions against their spokesmen. Of course, even this is too limited; constitutions exist in order to place restrictions on a temporary majority, even a huge majority, at any point in time. As Nisbet says, “Of all the heresies afloat in modern democracy, none is greater, more steeped in intellectual confusion, and potentially more destructive of proper governmental function than that which declares the legitimacy of government to be directly proportional to its roots in public opinion – or, more accurately, in what the daily polls and surveys assure us is public opinion. It is this heresy that accounts for the constantly augmenting propaganda that issues forth from all government agencies today – the inevitable effort to shape the very opinion that is being so assiduously courted — and for the frequent craven abdication of the

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41. Sir Henry Sumner Maine, *Popular Government* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Classics, [1885] 1976), p. 104.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

responsibilities of office in the face of real or imagined expression of opinion by the electorate .<sup>43</sup>

The voice of the people is not the voice of God. The voice of political representatives is supposed to be mediatory judicially. Judges are to declare God's law and apply it to specific circumstances. There is supposed to be a progressive maturation of men's ability to make formal judgments in terms of God's law as time goes on. Representatives are supposed to think analogously to God. God is not a silent God; He has spoken in His Word. His representatives are supposed to teach His Word to the people, so that they can exercise self-government under God.

And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it (Deut. 31:10-13).

What the critics of theocracy always assume is that the imposition of God's law in civil government has to be anti-democratic, i.e., opposed to the principle of political representation. It assumes that civil rulers impose God's law on recalcitrant citizens, who are somehow deprived of their right or actual ability to bring negative political sanctions against their rulers. But if the Spirit of God moves a vast majority of men to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and if they return to the Old Testament in search of biblical blueprints, then the resulting theocratic republic will be legitimate in terms of democratic theory. That this idea is antithetical to the eschatological visions and schemes of humanists, amillennialists, and premillennialists does not refute the theory. Nevertheless, humanists, amillennialists, and premillennialists continue publicly to misinterpret the position of Christian Reconstruction because these critics are intellectually incapable of equating *theocracy* with *democracy*. They do not

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43. Robert Nisbet, "Public Opinion versus Popular Opinion," *Public Interest* (Fall 1975), p. 166.

believe that it is possible for large numbers of people voluntarily to become theonomists; after all, *they* haven't !

When that theocratic consensus appears, you can bet your life (perhaps literally) that the humanists will then try to subvert it by an elitist conspiracy. We read about such a revolt against Moses and Aaron in Numbers 16. It was done in the name of the People: "And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" (v. 3). We read about the final such attempt in Revelation , 20:8-9, at the very end of history. These voices of the People are in favor of democracy for only so long as they can control a majority of voters by means of a hierarchical elite that pretends to listen to the People – an elite far more subtle than the Communists' one-party dictatorship in the name of the people.

A sovereign agent always acts through spokesmen in a hierarchy. There will always be an elite: intellectual, educational, military, and so forth. The question is never elite or no elite. It is always a question of which elite. It is a question of the judicial terms of authority, internal and civil, governing the elite. It is therefore a question of *which sovereign agent authorizes the elite*. The Bible is clear: God is completely, absolutely sovereign over the creation, and men are subordnately, inescapably responsible for their actions. Thus, the goal of covenant-keepers is to work toward a social order in which every institution reflects this dual sovereignty, absolute and delegated. It is the creation of an entire world order that prays, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt.6:10).

As a subset of this broad social goal is politics. Politically, the only legitimate long-term biblical goal is the creation of a worldwide theocratic republic. \* It is the creation of a bottom-up political order whose civil courts enforce the law of God, and whose people rejoice, not because such a law-order is natural but because it is supernatural.

#### *A Christian National Covenant*

This raises a valid question: Should Christians who are covenanted to God personally and ecclesiastically seek to persuade their

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44. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), ch. 2:"All Nations Under God."



own nations to affirm God's national covenant? The vast majority of all social philosophers say no. They hate the very thought of a national covenant, let alone an international covenant. 45 We are told that pluralism is God's plan for the ages, at least since the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They argue that political and religious pluralism are morally binding forever, and not just legally binding today.

To which I respond: Who says so? Certainly not the philosophy of political pluralism itself. Political pluralism, unique among all political philosophies, allows for its own institutional suicide. It allows people to repeal judicial pluralism. And in fact, this is precisely what is being done today by humanists in the United States, led by the "neutral" U.S. Supreme Court. They are destroying Christian judicial standards. The myth of pluralism is now being exposed for what it has always been: a philosophical covering for society during temporary periods when no one political group can gain the allegiance, or at least the compliance, of the voters.

The judicial mark of political pluralism is the right to amend the theological character of the national judicial contract. This is what the humanists did nationally in 1787-88. This is what they have been doing to state covenants in the United States since at least the time of the Civil War. They used to be subtle about this; confident of their power today, they no longer are subtle in' the least. Nevertheless, it has only begun to occur to a minority of Christian activists that the national judicial system is systematically stacked against them. What they need to understand is this: *it always has been*. From 1789 to the present, the American political system has been stacked against Christianity, for it rests on a pair of myths: the myth of political pluralism and the myth of neutral natural law.

Fortunately, the American political system can be changed peacefully, through the amending process. Political pluralism can be reversed through amendment when self-conscious Christians have the experience, the worldview, and the votes. If this takes two or three centuries to accomplish, fine. Christians have time; humanists don't. If the great reversal takes place in the aftermath of a collapsed humanist culture, equally fine. Humanism does not work. It will fail. When it fails, Christians must faithfully pick up the pieces and rebuild according to biblical blueprints.

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45. Gary DeMar, *Ruler of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for Government* (Ft. Worth., Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

But what if Americans refuse to change either their thinking or the Constitution? Then the representative leadership of God's kingdom on earth will be transferred. God will not put up with political pluralism forever. There is far less excuse for proclaiming the benefits of ethical and judicial neutrality today than there was two centuries ago. The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution have intervened. We can expect the visible judgments of God. What kinds of judgments? Political and judicial catastrophes. Perhaps even a military catastrophe.

Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee (Deut. 28:47-52).

Americans think that they are militarily immune to the first-strike technology of the Soviet Union. They do not realize that from a strictly technological and strategic standpoint, the United States has already lost World War III.<sup>46</sup> It is only the grace of God that keeps this from being made public in a fiery (or chemical-biological) demonstration of this technological reality. The Soviets believe that they can accomplish more through international diplomacy and perhaps, in a few years, chemical and biological warfare.<sup>47</sup> We should

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46. Quentin Crommelin, Jr. and David S. Sullivan, *Soviet Military Supremacy* (Washington, D. C.: Citizens Foundation, 1985); Arthur Robinson and Gary North, *Fighting Chance: Ten Feet to Survival* (Ft. Worth, Texas: American Bureau of Economic Research, 1986), ch. 1.

47. Joseph D. Douglas and Neil C. Livingstone, *America the Vulnerable: The Threat of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1987). Dr. Douglas informs me that at least a dozen scientists who have been active worldwide in developing a space-based defense against Soviet ballistic missiles have died mysteriously in the last few years.

not presume upon God to maintain His grace irrespective of the covenantal unfaithfulness of those who call themselves by His name.

What is needed is a very simple modification of the U.S. Constitution. First, the Preamble should **begin**: We the people of the United States, as the lawful delegated agents of the Trinitarian God of the Bible, do ordain and establish. . . .<sup>48</sup> Second, Article VI, Clause 3, should state "The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all the executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; and a Trinitarian religious Test shall be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." These minimal steps would mark the overthrow of the Masonic revolution of 1787 -88.'

### *National Judgments and False Theology*

God always bring judgments that are part and parcel of the specific sins of the culture. This is the lesson of the Book of Judges, James Jordan writes:

Israel had become enslaved to the Canaanite gods; it was therefore logical and necessary that they also become enslaved to the Canaanite culture. In effect God said, "So you like the gods of Ammon? Well then, you're going to just love being under Ammonite culture! Oh, you don't like being in bondage to Ammon? You'd like to have Me as your God once again? Wonderful, I'll send a judge, who will have My Son as his Captain, and set you free from Ammon." Yet, in a few years God would be saying this: 'So you like the gods of Philistia? Well, I gather then that you will be extremely happy under Philistine culture!' And so it would go.

God's judgments are never arbitrary. God chastises and curses people by giving them what they want. Israel wanted **Baalism** as a philosophy, so God gave them into the hands of **Baalistic** civilizations. Since they were slaves of the gods of these cultures, it was only proper that they should be slaves of the cultures themselves as well.<sup>49</sup>

Modern Americans have worshiped at the temple of political neutrality. The progressive disintegration of American civilization is

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48. It is not sufficient to call for an amendment that names Jesus Christ as Lord of the national covenant. There are cults that proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. They are anti-Trinitarian, however, and the inclusion of a statement identifying God as a Trinity is necessary.

49. James B. Jordan, *Judges: God's War Against Humanism* (Tyler, Texas: Geneva Ministries, 1985), p. 41.

the predictable result, the frantic chasing after ethical and judicial stability in a world of moral chaos and arbitrary courts. The so-called sovereign people, the gods who are supposed to legitimize the political order, have lost faith in the prevailing political order, refusing even to vote. They have been replaced by permanent politicians, permanent bureaucrats, and nearly permanent judges. The people, the supposed sovereigns, have been placed at the mercy of their own public servants. The myth of neutrality is exploding in people's faces, but still they refuse to believe it. Like a vampire bat that is sucking the life out of a sleeping animal whose nerve endings have been locally anesthetized by the bat, so is the Christian American voter today. Worse; he has persuaded himself that he is receiving a blood transfusion from the bat.

The theology of political pluralism is the chosen local anesthetic of the humanists who seek to destroy Christianity. Christian apologists for political pluralism are their enthusiastic assistants who help administer the anesthetic.

#### A Loss of National Identification

Harold O. J. Brown writes: "The United States of America is a generic name and strangely non-revealing. America basically does not know what it is. The United States is not a nation in the traditional sense, because it lacks a common ethnic heritage and spiritual tradition. A viable alternative to nationhood is an empire, but to constitute an empire a society must have a sense of mission that transcends differences of race, language, and culture. The United States currently seems to be a kind of political 'limited liability holding company,' and this is not enough to sustain its existence."<sup>50</sup>

Professor Brown has raised a fundamental problem in American life. It is my contention that this problem is the result of decisions made in 1787-88. This lack of American identity was not always the case. The colonies possessed a common religious heritage when the Revolution broke out in 1775-76: Calvinism mixed with varying degrees of natural-law philosophy. But the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1787-88 created a new nation based on a new covenant. At that point, the nation broke with its previously Christian

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50. Harold O. J. Brown, "Christian America Position," in Gary Scott Smith (ed.), *God and Politics: Four Views on the Reformation of Civil Government* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1989), p. 136.

judicial roots by covenanting with a new god, the sovereign People. There would be no other God tolerated in the new political order. There would be no appeal beyond this sovereign god.

This collective god, speaking through the federal government, began its inevitable expansion, predicted by the Antifederalists, most notably Patrick Henry. The secularization of the republic began in earnest. This process has not yet ceased. Brown is correct: "The most revolutionary aspect of the founding of the United States was neither independence nor democracy, but the new government's official neutrality on religion, which has gradually turned into a mild to severe antagonism toward religion. Lamentably, this antagonism is now helping to undermine all the foundations of a humane America."<sup>51</sup>

Nevertheless, this surrender to secular humanism was not an overnight process. The rise of Unitarian abolitionism, the coming of the Civil War, the advent of Darwinism, the expansion of immigration, the spread of the public school system, the rise of state licensing and the concomitant growth of university certification, and a host of other social and political influences have all worked to transform the interdenominational American civil religion into a religion not fundamentally different from the one that Jeroboam set up, so that the people of the Northern Kingdom might not journey to Jerusalem in Judah to offer sacrifices (I Ki. 12:26-31). The golden calves may not be on the hilltops, but the theology is the same: religion exists to serve the needs of the State, and the State is sovereign over the material things of this world. There are many forms of idol worship. The worship of the U.S. Constitution has been a popular form of this ancient practice, especially in conservative Christian circles. It is not seen as a flawed tool in need of revision but as a holy witness to the truth of the moral validity of permanent political pluralism.

### *Pre-Constitutional Covenants*

The covenantal sanctions of the pre-Constitutional colonial covenants are still in force. Those oaths were taken in good faith before a God who does not forget. One cannot break covenantal continuity with the Great King at zero price. He will bring additional negative sanctions unless those original covenants are renewed. This, how-

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51. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

52. Christians did yeoman service in the household of their theological enemies. Cf. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1969).

ever, requires that men break covenant with the present god of this age, the People. The People are under God as legally protected vassals. If this is not acknowledged **covenantally** and formally, then the common people will find eventually themselves under tyrants as legally unprotected vassals.

Thus, I cannot agree with the statement of Kevin Clauson, presented at the end of an otherwise "insightful essay: ". . . there is nothing in the original U.S. Constitution (when not misinterpreted by modern noninterpretivists), the Bill of Rights, and the Constitution's subsequent amendments that is antithetical to the principle or outworking of **theonomy**."<sup>53</sup> I can think of three features of the Constitution which, in and of themselves, broke the Christian civil oaths of the pre-Constitution states: "We the People," Article VI, Clause 3, and the Fourteenth Amendment: citizenship by physical birth alone. These three are sufficient to destroy the long-run possibility of establishing theonomy as the law of the land. All three are based on the idea of the legitimacy of general revelation as sufficient for establishing a civil covenant before God. H. B. Barrington's observation is correct: "Throughout the history of ethics whenever general revelation has been the starting point, the resulting ethical systems have not been reconcilable with biblical principles."<sup>54</sup> The history of once-Christian America stands as a grim piece of evidence for his conclusion. It is time to reverse this **covenantal** drift before the evidence becomes even more grim.

The establishment of a Christian amendment is merely a first step. To proclaim the Trinitarian God of the Bible as the Sovereign Lord of the nation will not solve the problem of civil righteousness. There is no covenant without hierarchy (representation), law, sanctions, and a system of transfer for civil office-holders. A statement of Christ's judicial sovereignty at best provides a biblical answer to only one of the five **covenantal** requirements. This is not enough to placate the God of the Bible. We dare not forget the warning of Isaiah:

Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 5:24).

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53. Kevin L. Clauson, "The Christian America Response to Theonomy," in *ibid.*, p. 66.

54. H. B. Barrington, "The National Confessional Response to Theonomy," *ibid.*, p. 69.

### Covenantally Trinitarian

Nell, Hatch, and Marsden argue that the Puritans did not establish a truly Christian society because they put Old Testament case laws and sanctions into their criminal codes. “But these positive accomplishments were offset by more dubious practical consequences. Old Testament law was directly if not exclusively incorporated into the legal systems of New England.”<sup>55</sup> This supposedly proves that the Puritan holy commonwealths were not Christian. This view is widely shared by almost all Christians today.

Christian Reconstructionists would initially appear to be among those who reject such a view of civil government. Not necessarily so. Rushdoony’s view of the Constitution indicates that he holds a very similar view. He accepts and passionately defends the legitimacy of the idea that a Christian national government should not be allowed to mention the God of the Bible in its Constitution. (See Appendix B.) Other Christian defenders of the Constitution argue similarly: the very presence of a Trinitarian clause in the Constitution would be innately anti-Christian. So completely did the Masonic worldview triumph in 1787-89 that the victims of that revolution still regard it as a great leap forward. This is why it was a successful revolution.

Should the Constitution be amended to make this nation formally Christian? Let us return to my proposed scenario in Chapter 5: the conversion of a large majority of voters to Christianity. The three pluralist Christian scholars who wrote *The Search for Christian America* may believe that such a widespread conversion to Christ will never happen in history. No doubt they do believe this. Most Christians do. They are not postmillennialist. But if they take this approach in denying the future political legitimacy of my scenario, *they have switched the debate from politics to eschatology*. In doing so, they have denied the fundamental principle of political pluralism: the legal right to change the system to non-pluralism.

The pluralist is stuck, in fact and in principle. What he affirms as a mandatory procedural requirement — the open-ended nature of democracy — can backfire on his substantive goal: the maintenance of a permanent halfway covenant political order. Those who want to establish a biblical covenant can legally work to reverse permanently the prevailing pluralist political order. So can those who favor apos-

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55. Nell, Hatch, and Marsden, *The Search for Christian America*, p. 35.

tate political covenants. In fact, the pluralist cannot successfully defend the legitimacy of the pluralist order once the anti-pluralists have persuaded the voters of the impossibility of maintaining a halfway covenant political order. And pluralism, because it encourages open debate and lots of “dialoguing,” opens the political door to its deadly enemies. Pluralists have in principle left wide open the political door to future Constitutional amendments, as they must do if they are to remain true to their pluralist principles. Those of us who are theonomic postmillennialist can then respond: We will live peacefully with this open-door policy for the present, but we do not intend to live with it forever. Someday, we or our spiritual heirs will close that door. We will vote it shut by popular acclamation.”

In short, we covenanted Christians can presently rejoice: *O pluralism, where is thy long-run sting?*

Christian pluralists are hypnotized by their apostate enemies because their enemies have learned to play the game by mouthing pluralist rhetoric even while they are substituting political oligarchy and bureaucracy for pluralism. The theonomists refuse to play this rhetorical game — or in cases where they do play it, they play it abominably — so they draw the wrath of the pluralists. “How dare you people break with our rhetoric? Better to suffer tyranny at the hands of bureaucratic humanists who say what we like to hear while they are sending us into the cultural gulag rather than live under the ideology of theocracy!” And so, as always, substance progressively triumphs over procedure in the name of procedure. The pluralists never know what is happening to them. Even when they do, they prefer it to living under God’s civil law. “And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us” (Ex. 5:20-21).

I realize that very few Christians believe this today. I am writing for the handful who do. I am not writing a manifesto to be used in today’s elections. I am writing a manifesto for the more distant future. I realize that a Christian politician or activist who is living on this side of the looming crises, and on this side of the great work of the Holy Spirit, will probably prefer to disassociate himself from these sentiments. I was in a meeting of Christian political activists in the fall of 1987. During that meeting, a number of Arminian charis-



matic Christians wanted a definition of Christian Reconstruction that would enable them to “join the ranks” without giving up their distinctive. Several objected to the fact that “Christian Reconstruction” had been defined too narrowly — meaning, I think, eschatologically — and suggested that the definition should be broadened. One astute charismatic participant objected to this objection, however, a former state-wide political organizer. He said this: “The definition of what Christian Reconstruction is should be offered by those who developed the position. We ought to do our best not to be brought under the definition. We want to be able to distinguish our work from theirs. Each of us needs to be able to say to the public, ‘No, I am not a Christian Reconstructionist.’” He was a wise short-term Arminian political strategist. He will lose the war, of course, but he will not *automatically* lose the next battle. I commend his suggestion to others who are also short-term strategists. Stay away from long-term theocracy. You will not like it until you switch your *covenantal* position. (And eventually you will switch, or your spiritual heirs will. Isn’t postmillennialism great?)

What I am doing here is to lay down the foundation for a future comprehensive revolution. I want men to look back at my books and say, “He laid down the theological, moral, and political principles of a decentralized, international theocracy. No Protestant before him ever did.” Somebody has to set forth the ideal — the *covenantal* ideal — for politics. Somebody has to tell Christian activists where they are inevitably headed if they take an implicitly pro-covenantal position regarding such issues as abortion and private education, and then try to defend themselves theologically. I might as well be the one to do it. *They will either become theocrats or quietly drop out of the fight.* I have been saying this throughout the 1980’s,<sup>56</sup> and leader by fundamentalist leader, my prediction is coming true. They are dropping out. They no longer even attempt to write a theological rationale for their political views. They know that if they do, they will windup sounding too much like the Reconstructionists (dangerous) or like Nell, Hatch, and Marsden (wimpy liberal). So they stay silent.

This leaves the Christian intellectual battlefield to a tiny handful of theonomists and a large, theologically incoherent, “mentally soft through disuse” group of Christian humanists. Meanwhile, self-

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<sup>56</sup> Gary North, “The Intellectual Schizophrenia of the New Christian Right,” *Christianity and Civilization*, 1 (1982), pp. 1-40.

proclaimed pluralistic humanists will continue to remove all traces of Christianity from the public square, issue by issue, confrontation by confrontation. Like the American Civil Liberties Union, which cannot bear the sight of a Christmas scene on the front lawn of the courthouse, <sup>57</sup> so are the increasingly self-conscious pluralists — pluralists who are in fact steadily abandoning the philosophy of political pluralism. They would like to do to all of life what they have done with the public schools: make the name of God illegal.

The war against Christianity that began behind closed doors in Philadelphia in 1787 (or at Mount Vernon in 1785) is now beginning to become visible to formerly naive Christians. They can no longer count on being able to use the Constitution to defend their hoped-for autonomy from the now-humanistic State, for the humanistic State wants autonomy from the covenants of God. It cannot achieve this if Christians are pursuing inherently Christian political or judicial objectives.

There is now only one way for Christians to get back inside that officially naked public square: *theocratically*. There is no naked public square. Natural law philosophy died as an intellectual force at least by 1900. Its bastard heir, political pluralism, is now dying. It will soon be dead. Thus, the Christians' task is to begin to recapture the public square for God. Christians must declare the crown rights of King Jesus in every nook and cranny of the land, including politics. But we need not all come to this controversial conclusion prematurely. Just one step at a time, one conflict at a time, one confrontation at a time.

### A Trinitarian Refuge

The world desperately needs a sanctuary. It needs dozens of them. There are none left.<sup>58</sup> They all closed after World War I. They closed because the nations that had been sanctuaries as a result of their original Christianity switched to full-scale democracy. The threat of immigrants with the vote scared them too much. They are unwilling to give the power to impose sanctions to "outsiders." So these outsiders remain outside.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The best response I have heard was from one mayor who had lost his town's manger scene to the ACLU. "They resented a scene that depicted what the ACLU doesn't have: three wise men and a virgin."

<sup>58</sup> "Closing the Doors," *Time* (July 3, 1989).

<sup>59</sup> The most flagrant example on earth today is Britain's unwillingness to grant entry visas to Hong Kong's citizens, some of the most productive people on earth. Brit-

It is understandable that men do not want to grant to foreigners the sanction of the suffrage. They believe that if someone has fled from another place of residence, the refugee should not expect to tell his hosts how to run their country. It takes generations to learn the ways of a foreign nation, unless *the immigrant has already accepted the religious views that undergird that nation*. If he accepts the religion of the host nation, then he has made the transition. He is ready for citizenship. If he is willing to come under the sanction of the sacraments, then he is ready to exercise civil judgment in terms of the law of the covenant.

Because modern democracies honor only the civil sacrament of voting, they resist turning over this authority to immigrants who can, in a mass democracy, vote their way into the pocketbooks and bank accounts of those who now reside in the host nation. So, the residents want to limit immigrants to those who have equally large pocketbooks and bank accounts. Canada welcomes Hong Kongers who can bring large sums of money with them. Nations allow immigrants to buy their way in. Closed borders are the price of political “open communion” — one man, one vote.

Until Christians understand the principle of closed communion and excommunication in the Church (point four of the Church covenant), and until they link this by civil law with the exercise of the franchise (point four of the State covenant), they will not understand the biblical principle of open borders and sanctuary. It will take a paradigm shift of historic proportions to accomplish this transformation. Christians will first have to abandon both Witherspoon and Madison, and for over two centuries, they have been unwilling to think about this, let alone do it.

### Conclusion

It is not enough to know what to do; it is required that those who know *do* it. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). The problem today — and for the

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ain has agreed to deliver Hong Kong to the Chinese Communists in 1997. Hong Kong's citizens are being denied access to a legal escape route to Britain, despite the fact that Hong Kong had been part of the British Empire and still is part of the Commonwealth. Britain's voters are racists, but no politician dares say this in public. They remember what happened to Enoch Powell, M. P., who did say this, in the early 1970's. He was attacked in the press by every liberal in England, who today remain silent regarding Hong Kong.

last three centuries — is not just Christians' ignorance about God's law; it is that they do not want to know about it, for if they knew, they would have to obey it. They do not want to obey it. They also do not want the added responsibility that such knowledge inevitably brings. This is a psychological reason why Christians are generally premillennial and amillennial. It is not because they have personally spent a great deal of time examining the three major views of eschatology. It is because they do not want to believe that God holds His people accountable for using His law to heal this world. If such healing is possible, then Christians are responsible. Such healing *is* possible; Christians *are* responsible.

In America, there is a slogan: "Either sink or swim." Premillennialism and amillennialism are eschatologies based on treading water. If the Church of Jesus Christ treads water long enough, we are assured, Jesus will come and throw it a life preserver, either just before the millennium (premillennialism), just before the great tribulation (pre-trib dispensationalism), or at the end of history (arnillennialism).

The premillennial fundamentalists and the amillennialist Lutherans are content with treading water culturally; they are ethical dualists who believe in natural law and the legitimacy of political rule by the devil's disciples during the era of the Church. The Calvinistic Dutch followers of Kuyper, Dooyewewerd, and Schilder, however, have a problem with this Arminian dualism. Unlike their water-treading brethren, they believe that there is an as-yet undiscovered Christian theory of swimming. So, as they tread furiously, decade after decade, they worry a lot about discovering this missing theory of swimming. Is it just a theory or is it real? Does it have specifically biblical content or is it cosmomic, i.e., an empty box that floats on top of the water until you open it, whereupon it immediately fills with water and sinks like a stone?<sup>60</sup> Dutch Calvinistic scholars worry a lot about this.

Meanwhile a tiny handful of postmillennialists have begun swimming toward shore. If they didn't have lines tied around their waists attached to fifty pessimillennialists each, they could go a lot faster.

There is not much time remaining for "treading water for Jesus." The storm is coming, and the waves are getting higher. The dispen-

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60. L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An introduction to Herman Dooyewewerd's thought* (Toronto, Canada: Wedge, [1970] 1975).

sational response is to assure everyone that Jesus is coming soon with his life preservers, but that promise is wearing thin. Meanwhile, the humanists are coming to us, one by one, with an anchor to tie around our right legs. And every time they attach an anchor to some faculty member from either Wheaton College or Calvin College, the victim cries out: "Look, everyone: it floats!" Two minutes later, all we can see is bubbles.

We have less and less breathing room. To switch metaphors, the lines between Christianity and humanism are being drawn more sharply. We have less room to maneuver. C. S. Lewis' fictional college professor said it well: "If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family – anything you like – at a given point in its history, you always find that there was a time before that point when there was more elbow room and contrasts weren't quite so sharp; and that there's going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision and choices are even more momentous. Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder."<sup>61</sup>

Sooner or later, the reality of this Vantillian-style prophecy will dawn on both sides of the two-edged sword of God's covenant: *there is no neutrality*. And when it does, both sides will give political pluralism the burial it deserves, before it stinks up the commonwealth even more. And after political pluralism has been in the grave for a century or so, people will look back in amazement at the period that began in Rhode Island in 1636, expanded nationally in 1789, and internationally in the twentieth century. They will ask: "How could serious people have believed such naive drivel — that it is possible to operate a political order apart from a public acknowledgment of God?"

The intermediate strategy question facing Christians today is this: Which God will they have in mind? <sup>62</sup>

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61. C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy - Tale for Grown-Ups* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 283.

62. Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam* (New York: Vintage, 1982).

# **APPENDIXES**

It is clear that, though many men, including many leaders of the modern church, will allow for the idea of authority, it is not biblical authority that they accept. They will accept only such an authority as is consistent with man as ultimate and as the final point of reference in all human assertion.

The question of the point of contact may therefore again be noted briefly. Is there no value then in the fact that men recognize their need of authority? Does their recognition of absolute dependence mean nothing at all? Is man's recognition of the need of gods above him as well as his recognition of wrong that he has done of no value for the question of point of contact? Is it only a head-on collision that you seek with the natural man in trying to win him over to the faith?

We answer as we did above on the question of the necessity of Scripture. In their recognition of their sin and in their expressed need of authority men do recognize, but in spite of themselves, that they are really not so self-sufficient as their principle requires them to be. They are like the prodigal son whose principle requires him to deny that he is a son of his father whom he has left, but who cannot forget his father's voice. God's authoritative Word does not speak in a vacuum. It speaks to such as are unable ever to escape the call of his voice. They have to maintain their own principle artificially by building dams anew each day against the overwhelming evidence of the presence of their Creator and Judge. Men therefore try to naturalize the idea of authority as well as the idea of sin; they say it is to be expected that finite men do not know all things and do not do fully that which is right and true. Even so they cannot fully naturalize these concepts. They will not be naturalized. In their refusal to be naturalized these concepts testify to man to the effect that he ought to accept that which his adopted principle requires him to reject. Thus the futility of his struggle with the problem of authority as well as with the problem of evil is itself a means by which God brings his pressure to bear upon men. Having a consciousness of their creaturehood and with it a consciousness of "good and evil," their need of authority is the sounding board against which the gospel comes to man. But the gospel's idea of authority is not a mere continuation of the idea of authority such as the natural man admits that he needs.

Cornelius Van Til (1969)"

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\*Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* ([Phillipsburg, New Jersey]: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), pp. 63-64.

## Appendix A

### THE AUTHORITY OF H. RICHARD NIEBUHR

*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Col. 2:6-8).*

What Nell, Hatch, and Marsden reject is the idea of biblical blueprints. This rejection is basic to all modern academic Christianity. (If anyone wonders why I selected “Biblical Blueprint Series” for the set of books I edited on Christian real-world activism, cease wondering.<sup>1</sup> For years, neo-evangelicals and even some fundamentalists have repeated their litany: “There are no biblical blueprints. There are no biblical blueprints .“ Yes there are. ) Their rejection of the idea of biblical blueprints means that they also had to reject the Old Testament case laws. To do this with respect to American history, they cite an insight from Niebuhr’s book, *Christ and Culture*. ‘We may speak, as many Christians do, of that transformation which H. Richard Niebuhr described as ‘Christ the transformer of culture.’ But as we do, we must retain a realistic view of the limited and often ambiguous accomplishments of Christians in the past. We should be reminded also that we ourselves do not have the final blueprints for establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.’<sup>2</sup>

No final blueprints? Well, we hardly need final blueprints. All we need are God’s revealed judicial blueprints. These *are* the final blueprints. They are called case laws. We have those at our fingertips in the Old Testament. But our authors dismiss the case laws as if they were part of a discarded first draft of the Bible. They are not im-

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1. Ten volumes as of 1989: Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1986-87.

2. Mark A. Nell, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway, 1983), p. 46.



pressed with the case laws. What they are impressed with is H. Richard Niebuhr. They continue: 'We should recognize that we are no more careful students of God's will than were the Puritans, and we are no more exempt from misreading that will than they were. The relationship between Christianity and culture is always reciprocal. The culture transforms the Christian at the same time the Christian transforms the culture. Hence as we assume our responsibilities for the 'transformation of culture,' we should do so with an equal appreciation for the view that Niebuhr describes as 'Christ and culture in paradox.'"<sup>3</sup>

Why would any Bible-believing Christian take seriously even for a moment Niebuhr's concepts of "Christ the transformer of culture" or "Christ and culture in paradox"? Niebuhr's Christ was a figment of his Barthian imagination, a force, not a person. But the trio could not resist referring to him, for their view of the absence of the covenant *and its covenant sanctions* in American history is far, far closer to Niebuhr's false Christ than to the covenant God of the Bible. For this reason, we need to review Niebuhr's theological views, for he expressed the ethical viewpoint of virtually all "reputable" historians writing today. He was one of this century's major apostles of relativism, yet he cloaked this relativism in biblical terminology. This has been the demonic and highly successful strategy of many generations of covenant-breakers, but the practice has accelerated since the advent of Karl Barth.

#### Our Source, the Antinomian Apostate

Who was H. Richard Niebuhr? First and foremost, he was an apostate. He was also an antinomian. He was as forthright a relativist as has ever walked into a seminary classroom. He saw Christianity as all good evolutionists see everything, in terms of *process* rather than permanent ethical standards. He was quite outspoken about this. In the Preface to his enormously influential history, *The Kingdom of God in America*, Niebuhr wrote: "May I underscore some convictions which this study has fostered in me and which are even stronger than appears in the book? First is the conviction that Christianity, whether in America or anywhere else but particularly in Protestantism and in America, must be understood as a movement rather than as an institution or series of institutions. It is gospel

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3. *Idem.*

rather than law, it is more dynamic than static. The genius of Christianity does not appear in its ethical programs any more than in its doctrinal creeds, important as they may be at times; these are abstractions from its life and become fetters when they are not recognized as abstractions. The true church is not an organization but the organic movement of those who have been 'called out' and 'sent.' <sup>4</sup>

This is the standard liberal, apostate, God-hating, covenant-denying mumbo-jumbo that has been adopted by covenant-breakers, especially German-trained covenant-breakers, for two centuries. Nothing exceptional here! These men hate the idea of permanent biblical law (ethics) with the same passion that they hate the creeds of Christianity. They are at war with the God who has spoken in cognitive language that can be understood by men and acted upon. Why? Because, above all, *they hate the idea of final judgment*, for they will be held eternally accountable for every word that has come out of their mouths, as well as for every deed. And so they mumble. And mumble.

#### The Relativism of Faith

Do I exaggerate? Not at all. Here is a typical selection from Niebuhr. It is a defense of relativism by means of matching language. He calls the section, "The Relativism of Faith." Warning: you are about to enter the swamps of modern theological discourse. Take a deep breath and pray for a speedy deliverance.

The conclusions at which we arrive individually in seeking to be Christians in our culture are relative in at least four ways. They depend on the partial, incomplete, fragmentary knowledge of the individual; they are relative to the measure of his faith and his unbelief; they are related to the historical position he occupies and to the duties of his station in society; they are concerned with the relative values of things. <sup>5</sup>

. . . Everyone has some kind of a philosophy, some general world view, which to men of other views will seem mythological. That philosophy or mythology affects our actions and makes them relative. They are not less relative when affected by the mythology of the twentieth century than when influenced by the mythology of the first. We do not dare to act on the basis

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4. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, [1937] 1959), pp. xiii-xiv.

5. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Colophon, [1951] 1975), p. 234.

of the latter, and deal with mental patients by exorcising demons; we shall endeavor to use our best understanding of the nature and relations of spirit and body, yet we shall know what is relatively true for us also contains mythological elements. <sup>6</sup>

Finally, there is a relativity of values that we must take into account in all our choices. Everything with which we deal has many value relations; it has value for ourselves, for other men, for life, for reason, for the state, and so on. Though we start with the bold affirmation of faith that all men have sacred value, because all are related to God, and that they are therefore equal in value, yet we must also consider that all men are in relations to other finite beings, and that in these relations they do not have equal value. . . . Though truth has eternal value, value for God, it also stands in value relations to human reason, to life, to society in its order, to the self. Our work in culture is concerned with all these relative values of men, ideas, natural objects and processes. In justice we deal with the relative values of criminals and honest men for their fellow men; in economics we are concerned about the relative values of things and actions that are related to millions of beings in multiple relations to each other. In every work of culture we relate men, with our relative points of view and relative evaluations, deal with relative values; thus we make our decisions. <sup>7</sup>

Then he adds: "The recognition and acknowledgment of our relativity, however, does not mean that we are without an absolute."<sup>8</sup> What absolute? Biblical law? Hardly. The Westminster Confession of Faith, perhaps? Are you mad, sir? No, we must have faith in "the absolute faithfulness of God-in-Christ."<sup>9</sup> Could you be a bit more specific, Dr. Niebuhr? After all, we are talking of life-and-death issues here — *eternal* life-and-death issues. And the answer drifts in like London fog.

So also the performance of our relative duties in our particular times, places, and callings is far from being relativistic and self-assertive when it is carried out in obedience to the command of the Absolute. It does become relativistic and falsely absolute when I require that what is right for me be the whole right and nothing but the right; when I, in my relativity, demand that what I do in obedience be worthy of being regarded by myself, by other men and God, as right apart from all the complementary actions, the precedents and consequences in my own activity, the activity of my fellow

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-38.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

men, and, above all, the activity of Christ. For faith in the Absolute, as known in and through Christ, makes evident that nothing I do or can do in my relative ignorance and knowledge, faithlessness and faith, time, place, and calling is right with the rightness of completed, finished action, right without the completion, correction, and forgiveness of an activity of grace working in all creation and in the redemption.<sup>10</sup>

Got that? He went on like this for another two pages, but you probably cannot stand much more of it. I can think of no more fitting evaluation of the literary style, not to mention theological content, of H. Richard Niebuhr, theologian of the Absolutely Relative, than H. L. Mencken's description of the oratorical style of President Warren G. Harding: "He writes the worst English that I have ever encountered. It reminds me of a string of wet sponges; it reminds me of tattered washing on the line; it reminds me of stale bean soup, of college yells, of dogs barking idiotically through endless nights. It is so bad that a sort of grandeur creeps into it. It drags itself out of the dark abyss (I was about to write abscess!) of pish, and crawls insanely up to the topmost pinnacle of posh. It is rumble and bumble. It is flap and doodle. It is balder and dash."<sup>11</sup>

What was Niebuhr getting at? Simple. He did not want to face the thought of a personal God who judges all men in terms of their personal commitment to His living, bodily resurrected, physically Incarnate Son. He did not want to accept the fact that God's Son came into history in order to fulfill perfectly the specific terms of God's covenant law, and that anyone who refuses to accept the work of Jesus Christ as his personal sacrificial substitute will spend eternity in screaming agony.

### Escape to the Noumenal

To avoid thinking of these unpleasant things, Niebuhr the Apostate also abandoned along the way other unpleasant thoughts, such as covenant law, an infallible Bible, cognitive revelation from God to man, prayer that works, exorcism of real demons, creeds that accurately reflect the theological and ethical standards of God, and the

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10, *Ibid.*, pp. 239-40.

11. Mencken, *Baltimore Evening Sun* (March 7, 1921). Cited by Mirian Ringo, *Nobody Said It Better!* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1980), p. 201. William Allen White almost matched Mencken, and did so in one sentence: "If ever there was a he-harlot, it was this same Warren G. Harding." *Idem.* He-harlotry is the very core of Niebuhr's theology.

idea of a linear history that is moving progressively toward final judgment — “progressively” being defined as 1) linear temporal movement in time toward the final judgment, and also as 2) linear temporal movement in terms of fixed standards of God-ordained ethical performance, both individual and corporate. Abandoning all this, Niebuhr adopted the language of Barthian liberalism, a language which reflects a personal commitment to anti-creedalism. His language resembled Kant’s *noumenal* realm of incoherence which is in no cognitive way connected to Kant’s *phenomenal* realm of predictable cause and effect. His philosophical dualism nearly destroyed his ability to write a coherent paragraph. At least his brother Reinhold wrote better prose.

Writing of the brothers Niebuhr, along with several other Barthian theologians, Van Til comments: “In their theology, as in that of Barth it is in the last analysis the religious consciousness that divides itself into two sections after the style of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The higher aspect will then address the lower aspect and insist upon obedience to its voice. And thus man will tell himself that he has been listening to God or to Jesus.”<sup>12</sup> Their Christ is the Christ of Kant, by way of Kierkegaard.<sup>13</sup> H. Richard was quite self-conscious about this: he defended what he called “social existentialism” in terms of the heritage of Kierkegaard. This section of *Christ and Culture* is its conclusion.<sup>14</sup>

Yet it is to *Christ and Culture* that Nell, Hatch, and Marsden appeal to help support their conclusion that there is no historical Christian America at the end of the academic quest. They believe that this supposed absence of a covenant-bound Christian past has relieved them of the moral burden of laboring to build a covenant-bound Christian America in the future. To build such an America would require the use of blueprints — God-revealed covenant standards — and this, above all, is what this trio of highly respectable Christian historians despises: the very idea of God-required blueprints. The members of the trio have all read their Bibles, and they know exactly where such an idea leads: straight into the camp of the unrespectable Christian Reconstructionists. So they prefer to obscure the ethical

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12. Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969), p. 63.

13. Van Til, *The Great Debate Today* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1971), p. 109.

14. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 241-56.

issue for kingdom-building: “. . . we ourselves do not have the final blueprints for establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.”

No final blueprints? Well, they are sufficiently final to be used by God to consign covenant-breakers to eternal agony. But this, in the eyes of academically respectable people, is the case laws' chief offense: they point to the God who brings His sanctions.

All created reality is revelational in character; its revelation of God is unavoidable and unescapable. But the natural man seeks to suppress this witness as well as that of his own nature. As a result, the only point of contact he tolerates is one which concedes his claim to autonomy. The only way the Christian can deal with this stubborn and wilful blindness is by "head-on collision," by an all-out challenge to the natural man. He must reason by presupposition, and the ontological trinity, as taught in the Scriptures, is the presupposition of all human predication.

All reasoning is by presupposition, but too little reasoning is consistently and self-consciously presuppositional. Some years ago, a Western trader found his work vastly enhanced by his half-white, half-Indian status. Among the Indians, he naturally and easily spoke his mother's tongue, acted as one of them, and reasoned in terms of their culture and faith. Among the white miners and ranchers, he readily fell into his father's ways, his father's skepticism of Indian myth, and the white man's sense of superiority. Although often accused of hypocrisy, a sin not uncommon among such mixed bloods and a source of advantage to them, this was not entirely true in his case. He shared in both outlooks and lived in unresolved" tension and frustration. In a sense, this is the position of the natural man today. A creature, created in God's image, his entire being is revelational of God. To think coherently, he must presuppose God. In order to have science, he must begin with Christian assumptions and presuppose the unity of science and of knowledge. But, being fallen, he now presupposes his autonomy and attempts to suppress, wherever he becomes conscious of its implications, this basic presupposition of God. As a result, his thinking is inconsistent, reveals his tension and frustration, and lacks an epistemological self-consciousness. To live consistently in terms of his autonomy would plunge him into the shoreless and bottomless ocean of relativity, but to live and think consistently in terms of the self-contained God would involve a total surrender to His sovereignty. The natural man tries, as indeed too many regenerate men do also, to live in terms of both presuppositions, to have a foot in both camps and have the advantages offered by both God and Satan, but the results of this conscious and subconscious effort is tension and frustration.

R. J. Rushdoony (1959)"

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\*Rushdoony, *By What Standard? An Analysis of the Philosophy of Cornelius Van Til* (Tyler, Texas: Thoburn Press, [1959] 1983), pp. 103-4.

## Appendix B

### RUSHDOONY ON THE CONSTITUTION

*The Constitution gives us procedural law, not a substantive morality, so anyone can use the Constitution for good or ill. So the Constitution gives us a good procedural manual, and is on the whole a very good one. But it has to be the people as they change and govern themselves; the Constitution cannot save this country.*

*R. J. Rushdoony (1987)*<sup>1</sup>

*The church . . . was thrown out into the street by the lawyers of Philadelphia, who decided not to have a Christian country. . . . [I]n effect, they took all the promises of religion, the pursuit of happiness, safety, security, all kinds of things, and they set up a lawyers' paradise, and the church was disenfranchised totally.*

*Otto Scott (1988)*<sup>2</sup>

Otto Scott, in a perceptive essay on the ever-changing U. S. Constitution, warns us against becoming deluded by “a sloganized history” of this nation and its Constitution. He traces the history of growing tyranny in the United States in terms of the steady transformation and reinterpretation of the Constitution. “The history of the Constitution of the United States, like all other aspects of our national history, reflects the changes in American society and government through the years. To understand these changes it is essential to understand that history as it was, and ourselves as we are. Yet we have as a nation failed to confront the truth of our history in many

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1. Rushdoony's response to Bill Meyers: Transcript, “God and Politics: On Earth as It Is in Heaven,” Public Affairs Television (broadcast date: Dec. 23, 1987), p. 4.

2. “Easy Chair” audiotape #165 (March 10, 1988), distributed by the Chalcedon Foundation, P. O. Box 158, Vallecito, California 95251.



important respects.”<sup>3</sup> He then calls for the restoration of Christianity to “its early prominence among us. Let us, therefore, abandon the legend that the Constitution is intact, and set about the task of Christian Reconstruction – and Constitutional restoration.”<sup>4</sup>

Stirring words, indeed! But what he fails to note in this perceptive essay is something he called to R. J. Rushdoony’s attention during a taped discussion they had regarding the theological foundation of the Constitution. Scott, over Rushdoony’s protest, identified the Constitutional Convention accurately: a successful effort by lawyers to overcome Christianity. <sup>5</sup>Thus, if we are to achieve Scott’s two-fold goal – the restoration of Christianity as it once prevailed in this nation and Constitutional restoration – we must return to the expressly Christian oaths of the state constitutions of 1787, the constitutions that prevailed before the Philadelphia lawyers displaced them by means of a new national oath, an oath that refused to acknowledge the sovereign God of history who had made possible this nation’s experiment in freedom. We must no longer ignore Scott’s analysis: “The United States is the only government in the history of the world that has been established without a god . . . without specifically acknowledging any definition of any religion. The Constitution of 1789 was unique in that respect. No society had ever done that .”<sup>6</sup> Actually, Rhode Island had, but that experiment in pluralism was protected by a larger commonwealth.

Beginning in the eighteenth century in Northern Europe, anti-Trinitarian humanists combined with dissenting (non-State-established) churchmen and Deists <sup>7</sup>to restructure the existing basis of citizenship, which had previously been explicitly Christian. The two wings of the Enlightenment, Scottish empiricism and French *a priori* rationalism, both proclaimed a new concept of citizenship: citizenship without a required profession of faith in the God of the Bible. It was this new concept of citizenship which was ratified into law in the United States in 1788.

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3. Otto Scott, “The Legend of the Constitution,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, XII (1988), p. 59.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

5. “Easy Chair” audiotape #165.

6. Otto Scott, question and answer session, message on Leviticus 8:1-13 by R. J. Rushdoony (Jan. 30, 1987).

7. A detailed study of their movement is found in Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959).

## The American Enlightenment

Rushdoony, as a disciple of Van Til, should have been more alert to this crucial and early Enlightenment invasion of America, but he has done his best implicitly to deny its implications. He views early American thought as a mixture of Christianity and natural law, which it was, but not as being at bottom dominated by the key foundation of Enlightenment thought: the doctrine of the autonomy of man's reason. He has always refused to say of the Constitution, as he said in Chapter 1 of *By What Standard?* regarding every other "hybrid world-view," every other compromise with the intellectual systems of self-professed autonomous man: "Behold it was Leah!" He assumed that the colonists' faith in the Christian God was more fundamental than their faith in Enlightenment thought. This was no doubt true of considerable segments of the population, especially after the revivals of the second quarter of the century. But this was not true of the *intellectual leaders* of the Revolutionary War era, who were overwhelmingly Deist (proto-Unitarian) in outlook. On this point, at least with respect to those men who wrote defenses of the War, C. Gregg Singer's view of the American Revolution is correct.<sup>8</sup> I think that May's assessment is fair: ". . . most forms of the Enlightenment developed among the middle and upper classes of European cities, spread mainly among similar groups in America, and failed to reach the agrarian majority. On the whole, various forms of Protestant Christianity served the emotional needs of most Americans better."<sup>9</sup> But when we inquire about the beliefs of the articulate leadership of the nation, especially the triumphant nationalists of 1789, we find that the philosophy of the Scottish wing of the Enlightenment was dominant.

*The Two Wings of the Enlightenment*

Rushdoony repeatedly refers to the anti-French Revolution attitude that prevailed in the last decade of eighteenth-century America. He offers this as evidence of an attitude hostile to the Enlightenment. What he never says is that he is defining "Enlightenment" solely in terms of its left-wing ideology: the *philosopher* of France.

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8. Singer, *A Theological Interpretation of American History* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1964), ch. 2: "Deism in Colonial Life."

9. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. xviii.

This is only half of the story of the Enlightenment. That in 1798 we find an anti-Jeffersonian, anti-French Revolution outlook among many Americans<sup>10</sup> – those who agreed with Edmund Burke regarding the horrors of the French Revolution – should be no more surprising than the fact that we also find pro-French, pro-Jefferson sympathizers.<sup>11</sup> The mere presence of an anti-French Revolutionary outlook in the late eighteenth century was no guarantee of Enlightenment-free wisdom.

Edmund Burke had been the most eloquent opponent of the French Revolution from the very beginning, and nineteenth-century European conservative intellectual thought was overwhelmingly Burkean. Yet Burke was surely a representative thinker of the right wing of the Enlightenment. He was a correspondent with Adam Smith, David Hume, and other Scottish Enlightenment figures. His conservative philosophy of pluralism and social traditionalism agreed with their classical liberal doctrine of social evolutionism. This outlook is reflected in Burke's statement that "The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *a priori*. Nor is it a short experience that can instruct us in that practical science, because the real effects of moral causes are not always immediate; . . ."12 Burke had been a supporter of the American Revolution, actually serving as the paid London agent-lobbyist of the New York Legislature right up until the War broke out.<sup>13</sup> His defense was that the British Parliament should 'leave the Americans as they anciently stood.'<sup>14</sup> Was this opinion inherently conservative, liberal, or

10. Vernon Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminate* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1918] 1967); Zoltan Haraszti, *John Adams and the Prophets of Progress* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, [1952] 1964); David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Feds-alist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

11. On the conflict, see John C. Miller, *The Federalist Era, 1789-1801* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, [1960] 1963); Daniel Sisson, *The American Revolution of 1800* (New York: Knopf, 1974); Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972). For an interesting monograph on one such Jeffersonian, Nathaniel Ames, see Charles Warren, *Jacobin and Junto* (New York: Blom, [1931] 1968). Ames was Fisher Ames' brother.

12. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, [1790] 1955), p. 69.

13. Robert B. Dishman, "Prelude to the Great Debate," *Burke and Paine: On Revolution and the Rights of Man* (New York: Scribners, 1971), pp. 27-28.

14. Isaac Kramnick (ed.), *Edmund Burke* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974), ch. 2.

radical? This is why he is such a difficult man to interpret.<sup>15</sup> But he was clearly a man of his age: an Enlightenment thinker.

We should never forget that the Scottish Enlightenment's social evolutionism served as the model for nineteenth-century biological evolutionism, including Darwinism.<sup>16</sup> F. A. Hayek, as a representative of the classical liberal position, still claims allegiance to the Scots, especially Adam Ferguson,<sup>17</sup> and he has made their social evolutionism the foundation of his legal and economic analysis.<sup>18</sup> (Hayek's philosophical and institutional target is the other half of the Enlightenment heritage: top-down, a *priori*, "French" social planning.)<sup>19</sup> Thus, it is not surprising to find that James McCosh, president of Presbyterian Princeton College from 1868-88, invoked a version of Christian apologetics based on Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, and he also adopted a naive, pre-Darwinian, purposeful (teleological) system of geological evolution.<sup>20</sup> Two presidents later, Princeton got Woodrow Wilson. That decision firmly established Princeton University's academic reputation and also ended its previous public commitment to evangelical Christianity.<sup>21</sup>

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15. Cf. Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of An Ambivalent Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

16. F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 58-59.

17. F. A. Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* (University of Chicago Press, 1967), ch. 6: "The Results of Human Action but not of Human Design." This phrase is taken from Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), p. 187.

18. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* (2nd ed.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), Appendix B: "The Evolutionists' Defense of the Market."

19. F. A. Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution in Science: Studies of the Abuse of Reason* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Press, [1952] 1979).

20. James McCosh, *The Supernatural in Relation to the Natural* (1862). Cf. J. David Hoeveler, Jr., *James McCosh and the Scottish Intellectual Tradition: From Glasgow to Princeton* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 194-211. Hoeveler's description of McCosh applies as well to members of the American Scientific Affiliation as it does to McCosh: ". . . a literal adherence to the Word forced a foolish and wrongheaded consistency on Christian believers. McCosh therefore chastised fellow believers who resisted the geologists' evidence respecting the age of the earth. When expert study of fossil remains continued to increase the age of the world, even into the 'millions of ages,' it was useless to be calculating the generations of Adam as a reliable guide to this essentially scientific question. Religion would surely be the loser in such an unnecessary contest." Hoeveler, p. 203. After Darwin's *Origin of Species* took hold of his thinking, McCosh abandoned his previous strong defense of purposefulness in the process of evolution, accepting in its place natural selection as the mode of development: pp. 204-5.

21. Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson: The Academic Years* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Belknap, 1967).

After 1789, the battle in American intellectual thought was between the two rival wings of the Enlightenment; Protestant Christianity had no separate worldview. It was much the same in Northern Europe. The division in social philosophy keyed on the French Revolution. The conservatives clung to Burke; 22 the anti-revolutionary liberals clung to Lamennais and Tocqueville; 23 the revolutionaries clung to Babeuf; 24 and most dynastic politicians hoped and prayed – if they prayed at all — that the rising tide of Napoleonic nationalism could be contained at home by patriotism and kept from turning into revolution. It couldn't. My point is this: the intellectual conflict was between the two sides of the Enlightenment, the decentralizing social pluralists vs. the centralizing political Revolutionists. The terms of the debate were established by the presuppositions of the Enlightenment. Conservative Protestant Christians simply lined up behind Burke. 25

*The Denial of Natural Law*

Ironically, it was with Rushdoony's writings of the 1960's that a separate, anti-natural law, Bible-based Protestant social philosophy first began to emerge. Rushdoony did not understand in 1964 the extent to which his view and Van Til's had broken with the American intellectual and political tradition. That tradition was grounded in natural law and natural rights theory. Rushdoony did not recognize in 1964 what ought to be obvious to any person who has read the tracts and treatises of that Constitutional generation: the American Deists of the second half of the eighteenth century adopted the same strategy of infiltration that the followers of neo-orthodox theologians Karl Barth and Emil Brunner adopted in the twentieth century,

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22. Russell Kirk, *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1967); Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Regnery, 1954); Robert Nisbet, *The Social Philosopher: Community and Conflict in Western Thought* (New York: Crowell), pp. 407-18.

23. Nisbet, *Social Philosophers*, pp. 418-29.

24. James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

25. The development of the Calvinistic Anti-Revolutionary Party in Holland was a reaction to the French Revolution. Out of this came the writings on social philosophy of Green van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper (who served as Prime Minister in 1896); theologically, Kuyper and Herman Bavinck were the leading Calvinist thinkers; and from Bavinck we arrive at Cornelius Van Til, by way of Geerhardus Vos, who had left the Netherlands to teach in the United States. But none of them developed an explicitly Bible-based social philosophy. The dominant influence was still Burke.

namely, *importing alien religious and philosophical principles under the cover of language that had long been considered Christian*. In fact, this process of infiltration has been going on in Christianity since the second century, as Van Til argued throughout his career. The difference by 1770, however, was that the anti-Christians in America were self-consciously using these alien Greek and Roman Stoic concepts to undermine the religious and especially the judicial foundations of what was then clearly a Christian society. Earlier Christians had appealed to natural law philosophy as a support for orthodoxy; the main Framers of Constitutional nationalism – Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, John Adams, and Madison<sup>26</sup> – used natural law philosophy as a tool to undermine orthodoxy. Historian David Hawke is correct regarding Jefferson's writing of the Declaration of Independence: "He did more than summarize ideas accepted by all thoughtful Americans of the time. He intentionally gave new implications to old terms."<sup>27</sup>

### Rushdoony's Error: Judicial Continuity

I think Rushdoony's error has been both emotional and intellectual. He sees himself as one who is calling for a return to the theological and judicial foundations of the American experiment in freedom. This experiment was grounded in the Bible. But in his attempt to trace his own worldview back to the Framers, he has neglected to adhere to the principles he learned from Van Til. He has not acknowledged the extent of the religious war that was in principle going on in the eighteenth-century American colonies. This is in direct contrast to anti-covenantal historians like Nell, Hatch, and Marsden, who have chosen to ignore the explicitly Christian covenantal foundations of pre-Constitution America, because they can point to the U.S. Constitution as the covenanting document of the nation. They understand what Rushdoony has long refused to admit: *the U.S. Constitution is judicially anti-Christian*. It is an explicitly covenantal document; it is also explicitly not Christian. It was designed that way. But if it is *not Christian*, then it must be *anti-Christian*. There is no neutrality, after all.

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26. Selections from the writings of the last five men comprise Koch's *The American Enlightenment*. See Adrienne Koch (cd.), *The American Enlightenment: The Shaping of the American Experiment and a Free Society* (New York: Braziller, 1965).

27. David Hawke, *A Transaction of Free Men: The Birth and Course of the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Scribners, 1964), p. 3.

Rushdoony has argued that it was against just such a notion of an earth-bound final judicial sovereignty that the American Revolution was fought. Such a view of judicial sovereignty, he says, had been foreign to American political philosophy prior to 1789, for American political philosophy had been primarily Christian and Calvinist. He admits, however, that the terminology of popular sovereignty had been influenced by the doctrine of the *political* sovereignty of the people. 28

The problem with this line of reasoning is that there is no way to distinguish judicial sovereignty from political sovereignty in the documents of the Revolutionary War era. The Delaware Declaration of Rights of 1776 begins with this declaration: "That all governments of right originates from the people, is founded in compact only, and instituted solely for the good of the whole."<sup>29</sup> The state constitutions usually began with a statement of natural rights. While no other state constitution began with a formal declaration of popular sovereignty, they all had a section stating this principle. Section V of Massachusetts spoke of "All power residing originally in the people, and being derived from them. . . ." <sup>30</sup> This means, it continued, that all public officials are answerable to the people. The same declaration of the people's sovereignty was in Section VIII. Officials are "at all times accountable to" the people. <sup>31</sup>

By formally announcing the will of the people as politically sovereign, the constitutional documents revealed the extent to which the older theocratic foundations had been steadily undermined since John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*. The supposedly religiously neutral common-ground philosophy of natural law was believed in by all participants. The language of political sovereignty is found in all the state constitutions of the Revolutionary War era. It is also found in Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, the common legal textbook of English common law, which was read widely in the colonies just before the outbreak of the Revolution. Rushdoony notes that nearly 2,500 copies of the *Commentaries* were sold in the colonies in the decade prior to the Revolution. <sup>32</sup> Nevertheless,

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28. R. J. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, ch. 4: "Sovereignty."

29. Richard L. Perry and John C. Cooper, *The Sources of Our Liberties* (Chicago: American Bar Association, 1952), p. 338.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 375.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 383.

32. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, p. 32.

Rushdoony never cites Blackstone directly; and the one quotation he cites from secondary sources is his defense of the absolute sovereignty of Parliament.<sup>33</sup> Had he read Blackstone, he would have had great difficulty in defending his chapter on sovereignty. Consider Blackstone's general statement that "Sovereignty and legislature are indeed convertible terms; one cannot subsist without the other."<sup>34</sup> He went on to speak of "the natural, inherent right that belongs to the sovereignty of a state, wherever that sovereignty is lodged, of making and enforcing laws."<sup>35</sup> This is surely the language of political sovereignty.

Rushdoony's chapter on sovereignty I regard as the weakest in *This Independent Republic*. He makes it look as though the Constitution possessed a judicial continuity with Christianity. It did not. It represented a fundamental break from Christianity, a break that the Lockean concept of humanistic sovereignty and civil compact had been preparing for almost a century. Rushdoony still believes that a restoration of Constitutional order is the best strategy for Christian Reconstruction in the United States. Not only is this impossible eschatologically — time does not move backward — but it is naive judicially. In his desire to make the case for Christian America, he closed his eyes to the judicial break from Christian America: the ratification of the Constitution. The Christian cultural continuity of America was not able to be sustained by subsequent generations; the judicial break with Christianity had been definitive.

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### Rushdoony's Rewriting of Constitutional History

It is this covenantal fact which Rushdoony, in his 30-year defense of the Constitution as an implicitly Christian document, has refused to face. Indeed, he has created a whole mythology regarding the oath in order to buttress his case. To an audience of Australian Christians, who could not be expected to be familiar with the U.S. Constitution, he said in 1983: "In every country where an oath of office is required, as is required in the United States by the Constitution, the oath has reference to swearing to almighty God to abide by His covenant, invoking the cursings and blessings of God for obedi-

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33. *Ibid.*, pp. 18 (from a book by Clarence Manion), 29 (from Tocqueville).

34. William Blackstone, Commentaries on *the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1765] 1979), I, *The Rights of Persons*, p. 46.

35. *Ibid.*, I, p. 47.



ence and disobedience.”<sup>36</sup> But what does the Constitution actually say? Exactly the opposite: “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.” To put it mildly, this was deliberate deception. Rushdoony is determined not to face the facts of the U.S. Constitution, and he does not want his audience to do so, either.

To his own American audiotape audience, Rushdoony insisted: “The Constitution required an oath of office. To us this doesn’t mean much. Then it meant that you swore to Almighty God and involved all the curses and blessings of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 for obedience and disobedience. Nobody knows that anymore.”<sup>37</sup> Nobody knew it then, either. Deuteronomy 28 was about as far from George Washington’s mind as might be imagined. Rushdoony has never offered so much as a footnote supporting such a claim *with respect to the U.S. Constitution*. The story is mythical. What he has done is to pretend that the Trinitarian oath-taking that did take place at the state level had become a Christian oath-taking ceremony at the federal level. The opposite is the case, and it was the statist element of the federal oath which steadily replaced the theistic oaths in the states.

How, in good conscience, could he announce this to his followers? “An oath to the men who wrote the Constitution was a Biblical fact and a social necessity.”<sup>38</sup> If this was true, then why did they exclude God from the mandatory oath? They well understood the importance of oaths. <sup>39</sup> They insisted on a required oath as the judi-

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36. Rushdoony, *The “Atheism” of the Early Church* (Blackheath, New South Wales: Logos Foundation, 1983), p. 77.

37. Rushdoony, question and answer session at the end of his message on Leviticus 8:1-13 (Jan. 30, 1987).

38. Rushdoony, “The United States Constitution,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, XII, No. 1 (1988), pp. 28-29.

39. Writes Albert G. Mackey, the Masonic historian: “It is objected that the oath is attended with a penalty of a serious or capital nature. If this be the case, it does not appear that the expression of a penalty of any nature whatever can affect the purport or augment the solemnity of an oath, which is, in fact, an attestation of God to the truth of a declaration, as a witness and avenger; and hence every oath includes in itself, and as its very essence, the covenant of God’s wrath, the heaviest of all penalties, as the necessary consequence of its violation.” Albert G. Mackey (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, 2 vols. (New York: Masonic History Co., [1873] 1925), II, p. 523. On the illegitimacy of such self-vaedictory oaths except in Church, State, or family, see Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), ch. 3.

cial (and psychological) foundation of a federal officer's allegiance to the U.S. Constitution. Their insistence on the importance of oaths was not because they were all Christians; it was because so many of the leaders were Freemasons.<sup>40</sup> They had sworn to a Masonic self-maledictory blood oath, for there was (and is) no other way to become a Mason. This is the most crucial neglected topic in the historiography of the Revolutionary War era, and especially the Constitutional Convention, which Rushdoony has known about from the beginning of his published career,<sup>41</sup> but which he has categorically refused to discuss publicly. The reader must search his footnotes for the appropriate bibliographical leads, and very few readers do this. He only discusses Freemasonry in relation to the French Revolution, which he knows was pagan to the core, and in relation to New England in the nineteenth century. He insists that "This decline came later. At the time of the Revolution and much later, New England and the rest of the country shared a common faith and experience."<sup>42</sup>

### *Mytho-History*

Absolutely crucial to his interpretation of Constitutional history is what he never mentions: the legally secular ("neutral") character of Article VI, Clause 3. He pretends that it does not say what it says, and it does not mean what it has always meant: a legal barrier to Christian theocracy. Instead, he rewrites history:

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40. James D. Carter, *Masonry in Texas: Background, History and Influence to 1846* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955), chaps. 2,3, Appendix 2; Dorothy Ann Lipson, *Freemason in Federalist Connecticut* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), ch. 1; Sidney Morse, *Freemasonry in the American Revolution* (Washington, D. C.: Masonic Service Association, 1924); J. Hugo Tatsch, *Freemason in the Thirteen Colonies* (New York: Macoy, 1929); Tatsch, *The Frets About George Washington as a Freemason* (New York: Macoy, 1931); Philip A. Roth, *MaSony in the Formation of our Government, 1761-1799* (Wisconsin: Masonic Service Bureau, 1927). A comparative study of freemasonry in both the American and French revolutions is Bernard Fay, *Freemason and Revolution, 1680-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935).

A non-Masonic historian who is familiar with Masonic historical records needs to produce a detailed study of the lodge membership of signers of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. William J. Whalen says that a certain Gen. John C. Smith discovered that only six signers of the Declaration were lodge members, rather than the 55 claimed by Masons, but Whalen does not footnote this source nor mention it in his bibliography. William J. Whalen, *Christianity and American Freemason* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1958), p. 6. See Appendix C, below.

41. See his reference to Fay in his book, *The Nature of the American System* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1965] 1978), p. 143n.

42. Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic: Studies in the Nature and Meaning of American History* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1964] 1978), p. 60.

Forces for secularization were present in Washington's day and later, French sympathizers and Jacobins, deists, Illuminists, Freemasons, and soon the Unitarians. But the legal steps towards secularization were only taken in the 1950's and 1960's by the U.S. Supreme Court. For the sake of argument [!!!! – G.N. ], we may concede to the liberal, and to some orthodox Christian scholars,<sup>43</sup> that Deism had made extensive inroads into America by 1776, and 1787, and that the men of the Constitutional Convention, and Washington, were influenced by it. The fact still remains that they did not attempt to create a secular state. The states were Christian states, and the federal union, while barred from intervention in this area, was not itself secular. The citizens were citizens of their respective states and of the United States simultaneously. They could not be under two sets of religious law. 44

This is mytho-history designed to calm the fears of Bible-believing Christians as they look back to the origin of the Constitution. Of course the Framers created a secular state. The secular character of the federal union was established by the oath of office. Politically, the Framers could not in one fell swoop create a secular state in a Christian country; judicially and covenantally, they surely did. Hamilton made it clear in *Federalist 27* that the oath of allegiance to the Constitution superseded **all** state oaths. That was why he insisted on it. Yet Rushdoony substitutes the language of Church worship when speaking of early American politics: "Officers of the federal government, president and congress, worshiped as an **official** body, but without preference extended to a single church."<sup>45</sup> This was true enough, but it implied a great deal more than denominational neutrality; it implied secularism. It led directly to the rise of religious pluralism, *in* which Christianity receives no notice as the nation's religion.

Today's secularism is not simply the product of Chief Justice Earl Warren and his court, let alone the theology of Madalyn Murray O'Hair. It was implicit from 1789. It was made official in February, 1860, when the House of Representatives invited the first rabbi to give the invocation, only a few years after the first synagogue was established in Washington. They invited a New York rabbi, since no

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43. He seems to have in mind here C. Gregg Singer's *A Theological Interpretation of American History* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1964), ch. 2: "Deism in Colonial Life."

44. Rushdoony, *Nature of the American System*, p. 48.

45. *Idem.*

officially ordained rabbi was yet in Washington. <sup>46</sup> It took no Supreme Court decision to make this covenantal denial of a judicially Christian culture a reality. This was not the product of nineteenth-century Freemasonry. It was the product of late eighteenth-century Freemasonry. It was an outworking of Article VI, Clause 3.

That a President might, as Washington did (and George Bush did two centuries later) swear his non-religious oath of office with his hand on a Masonic Bible, is legally and covenantally irrelevant. (That this same copy of the Bible was used by four other Presidents at their inaugurations is surely symbolically significant.) <sup>47</sup> An oath, to 'be judicially binding, must be *verbal*. It must call down God's sanctions on the oath-taker. This is what is specifically made illegal by the U.S. constitution. Any implied sanctions are secular, not divine. Without this self-vaedictory aspect, a symbolic gesture is not a valid biblical oath. Rushdoony knows this, which is why he has invented the myth of the Levitical and Deuteronomic "almost-oath." The Presidents have thrown a sop of a symbol to the Christians – one hand on a Bible while taking an explicitly and legally non-Christian oath — and the Christians have accepted this as being somehow pleasing in God's eyes.

### Covenants and Sanctions

Every covenant has sanctions. Without sanctions, there is no covenant. Rushdoony knows this, which is why he invokes Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28: they set forth God's sanctions in history. The Constitution is a covenant document. He writes that "the Constitution is not only a law but also a contract or covenant."<sup>48</sup> The question is: Whose sanctions are invoked by this covenant document? Clearly, autonomous man's sanctions. Rushdoony knows this. So he has restructured U. S. political theory to create a justification of this absence of any reference to God's law or God's sanctions: "*Second, we must remember that the Constitution can make no man*

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46. Bertram W. Kern, "Rabbis, Prayers, and Legislatures," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XXIII, Part II (1950-51), pp. 95-108. Part of the reason for this delay was that there had not been a Jewish congregation in Washington, D. C. until 1852, and they worshiped in homes until 1855. Those pastors asked to pray before Congress were usually local pastors (p. 109). The rabbi who gave the prayer was Dr. Morris J. Raphall of New York City.

47. *Life* (Feb. 1989), p. 8.

48. Rushdoony, "U.S. Constitution; p. 21.

nor nation good; it is not a moral code. It does not give us a substantive morality, but it does reflect a procedural morality.<sup>49</sup>

Notice, first, that this is basically the same language he first introduced on his interview with Bill Meyers on national television. This essay uses terms that are found in “technical legal discussions; we do not find anything like this language in his earlier writings. Perhaps he consulted a law professor. If so, he weakened his theological case. Law professors are concerned with procedure because of the nature of the adversarial system of American law. Modern legal theory assumes that substantive (righteous) judgment is the result of procedurally rigorous but morally neutral confrontations between lawyers. Contrast this outlook with what Rushdoony wrote in 1975: “In the Anglo-American tradition of jurisprudence, the Biblical revelation has been decisive. The purpose of law is to codify and enforce the moral system of Biblical faith. The common law embodied this purpose.”<sup>50</sup> Christian constitutional law is *codified biblical law*, not procedural neutrality.

What he refuses to ask is this: *What judicial procedure is not religiously neutral?* It should be an obvious question for Rushdoony; he has made it his standard practice in all other areas of his writings to deny the possibility of religious neutrality in any area of life. If judicial procedure is not religiously neutral, then it is either covenant-keeping or covenant-breaking procedure. Covenant-breaking procedure will tend to produce immoral outcomes. It is not some neutral judicial tool. This should be obvious to anyone who has studied Van Til; it is not obvious to Rushdoony, or even a question to be considered, when he discusses the U.S. Constitution. He adopts the epistemological position of eighteenth-century humanism whenever he discusses the Constitution.

### *Making People Good*

Second, notice the shift in his argument: the Constitution cannot make anyone good. This is the standard humanist line against all Christian legislation: “You can’t legislate morality!” What Rushdoony has always maintained is that you can’t legislate *anything except* morality. As he wrote in the *Institutes of Biblical Law* (1973), “But, it must be noted, coercion against evil-doers is the required and inescapable duty

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49. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

50. R. J. Rushdoony and Fred André, “The Adversary Concept,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, II (Winter 1975-76), pp. 29-30.

of the civil authority.”<sup>51</sup> Again, “law is a form of warfare. By law, certain acts are abolished, and the persons committing those acts either executed or brought into conformity to law.”<sup>52</sup>

Of course the Constitution cannot make anyone good; the function of biblical civil law is not to make anyone good; it is to *suppress public evil*. Rushdoony has said this clearly: “It is impossible to separate morality from law, because civil law is simply one branch of moral law, and morality is the foundation of law. Laws cannot make men good; that is the work of the Holy Spirit. But laws can prevent men from doing evil.”<sup>53</sup> Again, while “man can be *restrained* by strict law and order, he cannot be *changed* by law; he cannot be saved by law.”<sup>54</sup> For 30 years, Rushdoony previously had argued that any other view of civil law is the “works doctrine” of all non-Christian religion: *salvation by law*. This is humanism’s view, he always insisted: ‘Humanistic law aims at saving man and remaking society. For humanism, salvation is an act of state.’<sup>55</sup> Again, “Man finds salvation through political programs, through legislation, so that *salvation is an enactment of the state*.”<sup>56</sup> What is the Christian alternative? To enforce God’s law and God’s sanctions in history, and *only* God’s law and God’s sanctions.

The second aspect of *man under law* is that man’s relationship to law becomes ministerial, *not legislative*, that is, man does not create law, does not decree what shall be right and wrong simply in terms of his will. Instead, man seeks, in his law-making, to approximate and administer fundamental law, law in terms of God’s law, absolute right and wrong. Neither majority nor minority wishes are of themselves right or wrong; both are subject to judgment in terms of the absolute law of God, and the largest majority cannot make valid and true a law contrary to the word of God. All man’s law-making must be in conformity to the higher law of God, or it is false. 57

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51. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1973), p. 292. Contrast this statement with the following position taken in *the Journal of Christian Reconstruction*: “God did not make salvation coercive. Neither is morality coercive. . . . Punishing sin is *not* a role delegated to civil government.’ Tommy W. Rogers, “Federalism and Republican Government: An Application of Biblically Derived Cultural Ethos to Political Economy,” vol. XII, No. 1 (1988), p. 95.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 191. See also pp. 92-95.

53. Rushdoony, *Bread Upon the Waters* (Nutley, New Jersey: Craig Press, 1969), p. 15.

54. Rushdoony, *Law and Liberty* ([Nutley, New Jersey]: Craig Press, 1971), p. 3.

55. *Idem.*

56. Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1970] 1978), p. 145.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

A fourth aspect of man under law is that *law means true order as justice*. The law is justice, and it is order, godly order, and there can be neither true order nor true law apart from justice, and justice is defined in terms of Scripture and its revelation of God's law and righteousness. The law cannot be made more than justice. It cannot be made into an instrument of salvation without destruction to justice. Salvation is not by law but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.<sup>58</sup>

The issue is *justice, not salvation*. So, why does he now raise the spurious issue that the Constitution "can make no man nor nation good; it is not a moral code"? This is utter nonsense; *every law-order is a moral code*. Until he got on national television, this had been Rushdoony's refrain for 30 years! As he wrote in the *Institutes*, there is "an absolute moral order to which man must conform."<sup>59</sup> He insisted therefore that "there can be no tolerance in a law-system for another religion. Toleration is a device used to introduce a new law-system as a prelude to a new intolerance."<sup>60</sup> In this sentence, he laid the theological foundation for a biblical critique of the U.S. Constitution as a gigantic religious fraud, a rival covenant, "a device used to introduce a new law-system as a prelude to a new intolerance," which it surely was and has become. But he has been blinded for 30 years by his love of the Constitution. In a showdown between his theocratic theology and the U.S. Constitution, he chose the Constitution.

#### *Prohibiting Judicial Evil*

He says that it will do no good for Christians to appeal to the Constitution. "The Constitution can restore nothing, nor can it make the courts or the people just."<sup>61</sup> The courts are the enforcing arm of the Constitution, yet it supposedly cannot make the courts good. Of course it cannot; but a constitution can and must *prohibit evil, lawless decisions by lower courts*. It must reverse all lower court decisions that are not in conformity to the fundamental law of the land. This is the doctrine of judicial review. This is the whole idea of American Constitutional law. Rushdoony knows this. In 1973, he appealed to that crucial covenantal and legal concept: *sanctions*. He warned Christians that the concept of treason is inescapably religious:

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58. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

59. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 18.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

61. Rushdoony, "U.S. Constitution," p. 39.

But no law-order can survive if it does not defend its core faith by rigorous sanctions. The law-order of humanism leads only to anarchy. Lacking absolutes, a humanistic law-order tolerates everything which denies absolutes while warring against Biblical faith. The only law of humanism is ultimately this, that there is no law except self-assertion. It is "Do what thou Wilt." . . . To tolerate an alien law-order is a very real subsidy of it: it is a warrant for life to that alien law-order, and a sentence of death against the established law-order. <sup>62</sup>

### The Death Warrant

The Framers at the Constitutional Convention issued a death warrant against Christianity, but for tactical reasons, they and their spiritual heirs refused for several generations to deliver it to the intended victims. They covered this **covenantal** death sentence with a lot of platitudes about the hand of Providence, the need for Morality, the grand design of the universe, and similar Masonic shibboleths. The death sentence was officially delivered by the Fourteenth Amendment. It has been carried out with escalating enthusiasm since the 1950's. But Rushdoony dares not admit this chain of **covenantal** events. He writes as though everything humanistic in American life is the product of a conspiracy of New England's Unitarians and the radical Republicans of the Civil War era. To admit the historical truth of 1787-89 would mean that a restoration of so-called "original American **Constitutionalism**" would change nothing **covenantally**. The nation would still rest judicially on an apostate covenant.

The Constitution must prevent treason. Every constitution must. Treason is always a religious issue. The question must be raised: In terms of the U.S. Constitution, what constitutes treason, Christianity or pluralism (secular humanism)? If you want to see the change in Rushdoony's thinking, consider these observations:

[1973: ] The question thus is a basic one: what constitutes treason in a culture? Idolatry, i.e., treason to God, or treason to the state? <sup>63</sup>

[1973:] Because for Biblical law the foundation is the one true God, the central offense is therefore treason to that God by idolatry. Every law-order has its concept of treason. . . . Basic to the health of a society is the integrity of its foundation. To allow tampering with its foundation is to allow its total subversion. Biblical law can no more permit the propagation of idolatry

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62. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, pp. 66, 67.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 68.



than Marxism can permit counter-revolution, or monarchy a move to execute the king, or a republic an attempt to destroy the republic and create a dictatorship.<sup>64</sup>

[1973:] The commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In our polytheistic world, the many other gods are the many peoples, every man his own god. Every man under humanism is his own law, and his own universe.<sup>65</sup>

[1988: ] The Constitution is no defense against idolatry; . . .<sup>66</sup>

### The Problem of Dualism

Here is a basic dualism of **all** humanistic thought: ethics vs. procedure in the judicial system. Max Weber, the great German sociologist, spent considerable space dealing with this dualism, and I devoted a section of my essay on Weber to just this topic in Chalcedon's book of essays honoring Van Til.<sup>67</sup> I concluded that discussion with this warning: Weber's vision of the increasingly bureaucratic, rationalized society **hinged** on the very real probability of such a subordination of substantive law to formal law. . . . He hated what he saw, but he saw no escape. Bureaucracy, whether socialistic or capitalistic, is **here**.<sup>68</sup>

Today, reversing his entire intellectual career (except for his early view on the Constitution as somehow an implicitly Christian document), including his commitment to Van Til's presuppositional apologetics, as well as his commitment to biblical law, Rushdoony says that the Constitution's procedural morality can be *and is* legitimately religiously neutral, and that any interest group can adopt the Constitution's procedural morality to create whatever law-order it prefers, without violating the text of the nation's covenanting document. *But the text is all there is of the underlying religious foundation.* If the text were silent, then there would be no formal underpinning. But the text is not silent. The text categorically prohibits the imposition of the biblical covenant oath in civil law. Let us put it covenantally: *what the text of the U. S. Constitution prohibits is covenantal Christianity.*

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64. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

66. Rushdoony, "U.S. Constitution," p. 43.

67. Gary North (ed.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House Books, 1976), pp. 141-46.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

There can be no permanent ultimate dualism in a covenantal document. It either serves the God of the Bible or some other god. There can be no neutrality. Constitutions are inherently substantive; their ethical foundations are manifested in their procedural stipulations. Rushdoony built the case for biblical law in society by arguing that every covenant requires a unique law structure that reflects its concept of ultimate authority, i.e., *sovereignty*. Rushdoony rejected as “heretical nonsense”<sup>69</sup> Calvin’s guarded affirmation in the *Institutes* of a universal law of nations in preference to Mosaic law — a position which Calvin rejects in his sermons on Deuteronomy 28:70 (Rushdoony has never been a shrinking violet when it comes to pronouncing anathemas of varying degrees of intensity against important Christian figures, past and present. )<sup>71</sup>

### *Rushdoony’s Dualism*

So, following his lead, I cannot but conclude that his distinction — indeed, dualism — between the Constitution’s supposedly neutral

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69. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 9.

70. Calvin wrote: “I would have preferred to pass over this matter in utter silence if I were not aware that here many dangerously go astray. For there are some who deny that a commonwealth is duly framed which neglects the political system of Moses, and is ruled by the common law of nations. Let other men consider how perilous and seditious this notion is; it will be enough for me to have proved it false and foolish.” *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV: 20:14. Ford Lewis Battles translation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 1502. He was speaking here of revolutionary Anabaptists who denied the legitimacy of non-“Hebraic” political commonwealths. A few pages later, he referred to the notion of *equity*, which he left conveniently devoid of specific judicial content: “It is a fact that the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men. Consequently, the entire scheme of this equity of which we are now speaking has been prescribed in it. . . . Whatever laws shall be framed to that rule, directed to that goal, bound by that limit, there is no reason why we should disapprove of them, howsoever they may differ from the Jewish law, or among themselves. . . . For the statement of *some*, that the law of God given through Moses is dishonored when it is abrogated and new laws preferred to it, is utterly vain. For others are not preferred to it when they are more approved, not by a simple comparison, but with regard to the condition of times, place, and nation; or when that law is abrogated which was never enacted for us. For the Lord through the hand of Moses did not give that law to be proclaimed among all nations and to be in force everywhere. . . .” *Ibid.*, pp. 1504-5. Nevertheless, in his sermons on Deuteronomy 28, he reaffirmed the Old Testament’s penal sanctions: *The Covenant Enforced: Sermons on Deuteronomy 27 and 28*, edited by James B. Jordan (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

71. Anathemas without sanctions are, of course, expressions of personal opinion rather than actual covenantal statements. Only a person who expects the Church to enforce his anathemas in history, and God to enforce them at the day of judgment, should issue them publicly.

procedural law and the supposedly implicit Christian religious foundations of America is simply nonsense. It is an affirmation of neutrality that cannot possibly exist, if Van Til is correct. Constitutional procedure is the **covenantal** development of the religious foundation of that covenant: in Church, State, and family. To argue that a system of **covenantal** procedural sanctions is anything but a judicial development of the underlying **covenantal** law-order is to adopt a domestic version of the natural law (equity) of nations, and we know what Rushdoony used to think of that idea! <sup>72</sup>

Rushdoony today admits that there is nothing in the U.S. Constitution to protect itself from the transformation from substantive (ethical) law to procedural (bureaucratic) law. "The U.S. Constitution gives us no substantive morality, only a procedural one."<sup>73</sup> This worldwide legal transformation is the crisis of Western civilization, writes Harvard legal historian Harold J. Berman, <sup>74</sup> yet Rushdoony says that the U.S. Constitution is inherently powerless to do anything about it. Saying this of the U.S. Constitution — that it is only a procedural document — is the same as saying that logic is only procedural, or liturgy is only procedural, or Church government is only procedural, or that family government is only procedural. In short, he is saying what Van Til denied: that form can be segregated from content, ethically speaking. Rushdoony wrote in the *Institutes* that "The basic premise of the modern doctrine of toleration is that all religious and moral positions are equally true and equally false."<sup>75</sup> This is exactly the worldview which the Framers wrote into the Constitution when they abolished a religious test oath for holding federal office.

I cannot avoid the obvious conclusion: if a defense of the U.S. Constitution as being somehow inherently Christian, or in some way fundamentally conformable to Christianity, is the position of the Christian Reconstruction movement, this means the suicide of Christian Reconstructionism. Rushdoony said it best: "The modern concept of total toleration is not a valid legal principle but an advocacy of anarchism. Shall all religions be tolerated? But, as we have seen, every religion is a concept of law-order. Total toleration means

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72. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 9.

73. Rushdoony, "U.S. Constitution," p. 36.

74. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), Introduction.

75. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 295.

total permissiveness for every kind of practice: idolatry, adultery, cannibalism, human sacrifice, perversion, and all things else. Such total toleration is neither possible nor desirable. . . . And for a law-order to forsake its self-protection is both wicked and suicidal.”<sup>76</sup>

### Defending Madison

Rushdoony correctly observes that politicians understand that each group votes its conscience and/or its pocketbook; the politicians know that there is no neutrality. Factions are a denial of the myth of neutrality, he argues. <sup>77</sup> This is a correct observation. He calls the politicians hypocrites. This is an unfair accusation. If they are hypocrites, then anyone who defends the U.S. Constitution while also denying neutrality is equally vulnerable to this accusation of hypocrisy. In the American political tradition, factions are an institutional affirmation of neutrality.

Rushdoony knows very well where the theory of the “politics of faction” comes from: James Madison’s *Federalist 10*. But his love of the Constitution makes him a necessary supporter of Madison. In one of the most startling about-faces in intellectual history — page 68 vs. page 73 — he assures us that Madison did not believe in neutrality.<sup>78</sup> “First of all, Madison denied the doctrine of neutralism. He denied the Enlightenment faith in the objectivity of reason, which, in Christian terms, he saw as inalienably tied to self-love. Man’s reasoning is thus not objective reasoning; it is personal reasoning and will thus be governed by ‘the nature of man’ rather than an abstract concept of rationality.”<sup>79</sup> This, quite frankly, makes no sense. If you doubt me, read it again. If taken literally, it would lead to a dead end for all public policy, institutional paralysis in the name of Constitutional law. If a civil government makes any decision, it must do so in terms of a particular moral and legal framework. It usually does so in the name of the common good. There is no such thing as *neutral* common good. Madison hated the churches, hated Christianity, and self-consciously devised the Constitution to create multiple factions that would cancel each other out. But he obviously had to make a crucial though unstated assumption: that whatever remains after the

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>77</sup> Rushdoony, *Nature of the American System*, p. 68.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

factions have cancelled themselves out is the common good – the *religiously neutral* common good.

The fact that Madison did not appeal to an abstract concept of rationalist y is irrelevant; the Framers, both **individually** and as a faction, always balanced their appeals to abstract rationality with an appeal to historical experience. **This**, as Van Til argues, is what covenant-breaking men have done from the beginning. **This** is the old **Parmenides-Heraclitus** dualism. Madison appealed to reason, experience, common sense, morality, and any other slogan he could get his hands on. “The free system of government we have established is so congenial with reason, with common sense, and with universal feeling, that it must produce approbation and a desire of imitation, as avenues may be found for **truth** to the knowledge of nations .”<sup>80</sup> So did his colleagues. There men were **politicians**, first and foremost. If a slogan would sell the Constitution, good; **if** an brilliant idea would, excellent; if a convoluted or improbable argument would, fine. It was **allgrist** for their Unitarian mill. Christians should not be deceived, especially self-deceived.

James Madison was a covenant-breaking genius, and the heart and soul of his genius was his commitment to religious neutralism. He devised a Constitution that for two centuries has fooled even the most perceptive Christian social philosophers of each generation into thinking that Madison was not what he was: a Unitarian theocrat whose goal was to snuff out the civil influence of the Trinitarian churches whenever they did not support his brainchild. For two centuries, his demonic plan has worked.

Rushdoony’s equating of Enlightenment rationalism with *a priori* rationalism, and then his denial that the Americans ever affirmed a *priori* rationalism, is at the heart of his general myth that there was never a serious Enlightenment in colonial America. It is also at the heart of the traditional conservatives’ myth that Burkean conservatism was not part of the Enlightenment. Both views are myths. Burke adopted and promoted the social evolutionary worldview of the Scottish Enlightenment. The Scots were all intellectual colleagues. They were all members of the right **wing** of the Enlightenment, just as F. A. Hayek is. There was no one left on either side of the Atlantic who was publicly preaching the Puritan view of the covenant, meaning

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<sup>80</sup> Cited in Adrien Koch, *Power, Morals, and the Founding Fathers: Essays in the Interpretation of the American Enlightenment* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, [1961] 1975), p. 105.

covenant law and covenant oaths. They had all returned to the leeks and onions of Egypt.

The point is, in order to make public policy, there must be a concept of the common good. Biblically, there are only two choices available: a covenant-keeping common good or a covenant-breaking common good. The best that can be said for a covenant-breaking common good is that it may correspond outwardly to God's revealed law's standards for public policy. It is therefore a common *grace* common good. But as Christianity fades in influence, and as covenant-breakers become more consistent, this element of common grace will necessarily fade. This is what has happened all over the world as Christianity has been replaced by either right wing Enlightenment empiricism-experimentalism or left wing Enlightenment a *priorism*. It does not make any long-term difference whether the legal system is based on humanistic common law or humanistic Napoleonic law; the end result is humanism. *There is no neutrality.*

### The Question of Sovereignty

Rushdoony's rewriting of U. S. history has gone on from the beginning. In the *Institutes*, he says that "The presidential oath of office, and every other oath of office in the United States, was in earlier years recognized precisely as coming under the third commandment, and, in fact, invoking it. By taking the oath, a man promised to abide by his word and his obligations even as God is faithful to His word. If he failed, by his oath of office, the public official invoked divine judgement and the curse of the law upon himself."<sup>81</sup> This is Presidential mytho-history.

Rushdoony's view of U. S. political history is heavily influenced by a bizarre idea that he picked up in a speech by President John Quincy Adams," who shared his President father's Unitarian theology. So far as I know, no one else has maintained the following interpretation: the U.S. Constitution rests on no concept of God because the Framers believed that only God has legal sovereignty. In his brief chapter on "Sovereignty," Rushdoony writes of American thought in the 1780's, "*Legal* sovereignty was definitely denied. . . ." <sup>83</sup> He says this distrust of legal sovereignty "was both early medieval and Cal-

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81. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 111.

82. Cited in Rushdoony, *This Independent Republic*, p. 38.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

vinist.” He offers no evidence for this statement. The thesis is sufficiently peculiar that some reference to primary source documentation is mandatory, but none is offered. He refuses to define what he means by “legal sovereignty,” which makes things even more difficult. He cites some historians on Americans’ opposition to the sovereign State, but it is clear from the context that their hostility was to a centralized, monopolistic sovereignty, which is not the point Rushdoony is trying to make.

The question Rushdoony has been attempting for three decades to avoid answering from the historical record is this one: Why did the Framers refuse to include a Trinitarian oath? If the states had such oaths — and they did — and the Patriot party regarded the colonies as legal, sovereign civil governments under the King, which is the thesis of *This Independent Republic*, then why not impose the oath requirement nationally? The presence of an oath is basic to any covenant, as Rushdoony knows. The question is: Who is the identifiable sovereign in the federal covenant? And the answer of the Framers was clear, “We the People.” Not we the states, but “We the people.” It is right there in the Preamble.

### *We the People*

Patrick Henry had been invited to attend the Philadelphia convention, but he had refused. He recognized what was implicitly being asserted in the Preamble. In the Virginia debate over ratification in 1788, he spoke out against ratification. He warned against the implications of “We the People”:

Give me leave to demand, what right had they to say, “We the People,” instead of We the States”? States are the characteristics, and the soul of a confederation. If the States be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great consolidated national government of the people of all the States. . . . Had the delegates, who were sent to Philadelphia a power to propose a consolidated government instead of a confederacy? Were they not deputed by States, and not by the people? The assent of the people, in their collective capacity, is not necessary to the formation of a federal government. The people have no right to enter into leagues, alliances, or confederations: they are not the proper agents for this purpose: States and sovereign powers are the only proper agents for this kind of government. Show me an instance where the people have exercised this business: has it not always gone through the legislatures?. . . . This, therefore, ought to depend on the consent of the legislatures.

Henry said emphatically of the delegates to the Philadelphia Convention, "The people gave them no power to use their name. That they exceeded their power is perfectly clear."<sup>84</sup> Rushdoony, for all his praise of Henry's Christianity, has steadfastly refused to discuss the religious and judicial foundation of Henry's opposition to ratification. This is not an oversight on Rushdoony's part. He knows exactly why Henry objected. Henry recognized that the Constitution rested on a revolutionary break from American law. It was a broken covenant.

The Constitution was ratified under the presumption of the sovereignty of the people. But this was more than mere presumption: it is right there at the beginning of the document. Here is why there is no Trinitarian oath in the Constitution: the Framers were operating under the legal fiction that the sovereign People, not the God of the Bible, had authorized the new national covenant.<sup>85</sup> "We the People" were not the vassals of the Great King in this treaty; "We the People" were the great king, and there shall be no other gods beside "We the People." Thus, the Framers outlawed religious oaths. *Outlawed!* Yet this crucial Constitutional provision is rarely mentioned today. The humanist defenders of the Constitution automatically assume it, and the Christian defenders either do not recognize its importance or else do not want to face its obvious implications. Instead, the debate has focused on Congress and the freedom of religion. This provision is not the heart of the Constitutional covenant; it is merely an application of it. The oath is central in any covenant.

### *Only Earthly Sovereignty*

It was hardly the case that the Framers had no concept of earthly legal sovereignty. It was that they had *only* a concept of earthly legal sovereignty. They announced a divine right — not of kings, not of legislatures, but of the People. The divine right of kings doctrine meant that no one and no institution could appeal any decision of the king; he was *exclusively* sovereign under God. This was exactly what the oath of Article VI, Clause 3 was intended to convey: *no appeal*. The national government was the final voice of the people, for it operated

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84. I am using the version in Norine Dickson Campbell, *Patrick Henry: Patriot and Statesman* (Old Greenwich, Connecticut: Devin-Adair, 1969), p. 338. This statement appears in *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in 1787*, edited by Jonathan Elliot, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippencott, [1836] 1907), III, p. 22.

85. Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988).



under the treaty of the great collective king: the Constitution. This was why the Framers insisted on requiring an oath of allegiance to the Constitution that made illegal any judicial allegiance to God by federal officers. The oath made the federal government sovereign. This is exactly what Hamilton announced in *Federalist 27*.<sup>86</sup> Yet Rushdoony is still using this bit of mytho-history regarding the idea of sovereignty in the early American period in order to justify his defense of the Constitution. "The Constitution is unique in world history in that there is no mention of sovereignty, because sovereignty was recognized as being an attribute of God."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, it truly was ' seen as an attribute of God, and the Framers identified this god: the People.

The transformation of Rushdoony's biblical judicial theology of the early 1970's into a theological defense of judicial neutrality in the late 1980's was accurately predicted . . . by Rushdoony: "If a doctrine of authority embodies contradictions within itself, then it is eventually bound to fall apart as the diverse strains war against one another. This has been a continuing part of the various crises of Western civilization. Because the Biblical doctrine of authority has been compromised by Greco-Roman humanism, the tensions of authority have been sharp and bitter."<sup>88</sup> No sharper and no more bitter than in the remarkable case of *Rushdoony v. Rushdoony*.

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86. Rushdoony has pointed to an incident late in Hamilton's career that indicates Christian faith, Hamilton's call to create a Christian political party just before he was killed. He relates this in his taped lecture on Leviticus 8:1-13.

What Rushdoony is referring to is Hamilton's 1802 call for a "Christian Constitutional Society." This society was not to be a separate political party, but a means of challenging atheism in politics generally, especially the Jeffersonians. It was to be a network of political clubs. He also proposed the creation of charitable societies, a Christian welfare program. Hamilton's biographer Jacob Cooke points out that this concern for Christianity came only after he had lost all political influence nationally. "Perhaps never in all American political history has there been a fall from power so rapid, so complete, so final as Hamilton's in the period from October, 1799, to November, 1800 ." Cooke, *Alexander Hamilton: A Profile* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), p. 246. While Cooke believes that Hamilton was actually transformed internally, he ties this to his loss of political influence. In short, when he had power, Hamilton was not a Christian, and he helped to destroy the remaining Christian civil foundations of the national government.

87. This was his reply to Otto Scott's comment about the U.S. being the first nation to establish itself without reference to God. Q & A, Leviticus sermon, Jan. 30, 1987.

88. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 213.

### Conclusion

Rushdoony begins *The Nature of the American System* with this observation: "The concept of a secular state was virtually non-existent in 1776 as well as in 1787, when the Constitution was written, and no less so when the Bill of Rights was adopted. To read the Constitution as the charter for a secular state is to misread history, and to misread it radically. The Constitution was designed to *perpetuate* a Christian order."<sup>89</sup> He has never retreated from this position; indeed, he has escalated his commitment to it — so much so, that he has now undercut the covenantal foundation of *The Institutes of Biblical Law*.

The problem with the U.S. Constitution was and is polytheism. Rushdoony has described the problem of political polytheism: "Modern political orders are polytheistic imperial states, but the churches are not much better. To hold, as the churches do, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Calvinist, and all others virtually, that the law was good for Israel, but that Christians and the church are under grace and without law, or under some higher, newer law, is implicit polytheism."<sup>90</sup> But he has always refused to identify the obvious polytheism of the Constitution. Thus, he has had to explain modern political pluralism as a deviation from the Constitution rather than its inevitable product.

The ratification of the U.S. Constitution in June of 1788 created a new nation based on a new covenant. It placed the new nation under a "higher, newer law." The nation had broken with its Christian judicial roots by covenanting with a new god, the sovereign People. There would be no other God tolerated in the political order. There would be no appeal beyond this sovereign god. That collective god, speaking through the federal government, began its inevitable expansion, predicted by the Antifederalists, most notably Patrick Henry. The secularization of the republic began in earnest. This process has not yet ceased.

Nevertheless, the surrender to secular humanism was not an overnight process. The rise of abolitionism, the coming of the Civil War, the advent of Darwinism, the growth of immigration, the spread of the franchise, the development of the public school system, and a host of other social and political influences have all worked to transform the interdenominational American civil religion into a re-

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<sup>89</sup> Rushdoony, *Nature*, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

**ligion** not fundamentally different from the one that **Jeroboam** set up, so that the people of the Northern Kingdom might not journey to Jerusalem **in** Judah to offer sacrifices (I Ki. 12:26-31). The golden calves may not be on the hilltops, but the theology is the same: religion exists to serve the needs of the State, and the State is sovereign over the material things of this world. "There are many forms of idol worship. The worship of the U.S. Constitution has been a popular form of this ancient practice, especially in conservative Christian circles.

The sanctions of the pre-Constitutional colonial covenants are still binding in God's court. One cannot break covenant with the Great King. He will bring additional negative sanctions unless those original covenants are renewed. This, however, requires that we break covenant with the present god of this age, the People. The People are under God as legally protected vassals. If this is not acknowledged **covenantally** and formally, then the common people will eventually find themselves under tyrants as legally unprotected vassals.

#### *Anabaptism or Covenantalism*

Why has Rushdoony steadfastly refused to see this? The easiest explanation is **covenantal**. He has always refused to acknowledge the ecclesiastical aspects of theocratic civil government. He has correctly seen that the institutional Church should not give orders to the State, but he has never faced the hard question of the suffrage: How can non-Trinitarians be allowed to vote in a theocratic nation? Obviously, they would not be allowed to vote. Those not under the covenant cannot be allowed to impose civil sanctions.

This raises the question of *which* **covenantal** authority, or more to the point, *authorities*? Who is to determine whether a person is a Christian? There can be only one Bible-based answer: a Trinitarian local assembly or synod. A person can be regarded as a Christian only if he is a member in good standing in a local assembly or presbytery. Everyone else is outside a church covenant and therefore cut off from the sacraments and the discipline of excommunication. Judicially speaking, a person who does not have legal access to the sacraments is not a Christian, nor is someone who refuses to take the sacraments. Men cannot lawfully search other men's hearts; they must make public decisions and judgments in terms of other men's professions of faith and their outward obedience to God's law. God's law requires people to be baptized, to subordinate themselves to a

church, and to take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. Those who refuse are outside the Church covenant. Therefore, in a theocratic republic, they would not be entitled to impose civil sanctions.

This raises the other question that he has always avoided: the State must identify which churches are Trinitarian and therefore whose members are authorized to vote. A Christian republic inevitably must face the question analogous to the one today disturbing the state of Israel: Who is a Jew?

On this dual point – the question of civil sanctions and ecclesiastical sanctions — Rushdoony has remained conspicuously silent throughout his career, but his actions in recent years indicate that he sides with the Baptists and Anabaptists in American history: Church membership has nothing to do with voting or holding civil office. This conclusion leads him straight into the pluralistic arms of Roger Williams. There is no permanent halfway house between John Winthrop and Roger Williams. There is no permanent halfway covenant. There is no neutrality.

Instead, there are Church sacraments. These are the foundation of Christian civilization — not the franchise, not the gold standard, not the patriarchal family, not the tithe to parachurch ministries, and not independent Christian education. *The sacraments*.<sup>91</sup> Deny this, and you necessarily deny the biblical Church covenant as well as the biblical civil covenant. Rushdoony has, at the very least, implicitly denied both. The sign of this denial is his life-long designation of the U.S. Constitution as an implicitly Christian covenant, meaning a halfway national covenant. That was what the Articles of Confederation constituted; the Constitution is apostate.

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91. Understand, I mean the sacraments as covenant sealing (baptism) and covenant-renewing (Lord's Supper). I see the sacraments as judicial, in opposition to both Protestant nominalism (memorials) and Roman Catholic realism (infusions of grace).

The nature of the Masonic God is best seen in their favorite title for him: the Supreme Architect. The Masonic God is first of all a deistic God who is found at the top of the ladder of Masonic wisdom. From God emanates a rational order for the universe, which includes a moral order for the affairs of humanity:

Nature is order ruled by immutable and absolute laws laid down at the beginning of the universe as it is so ordained by the Supreme Architect. Civilizations, so long as they are in complete accord with nature and its laws, can survive.

The divine design for political life is summed up perfectly in the Constitution and Bill of Rights which represent the order of law by which all other governments and historical periods are judged. The Declaration of Independence, while of great importance, plays a secondary role in the *New Age* interpretation of the founding of the nation. There are substantially more *New Age* articles referring to the Constitution (160) than to the Declaration of Independence (96).

Corresponding to the importance attached to the Constitution is the pre-eminent position given George Washington, clearly the most renowned of all American Masons. He is given exhaustive coverage in *The New Age* while proportionately little attention is paid to Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence. Almost thirteen articles are devoted to Washington's personal life, military career, Farewell Address, Masonic activities, and Presidency. The only other Founding Father who receives even half as much attention as Washington is Benjamin Franklin, another Mason.

Pamela M. Jolicoeur and Louis L. Knowles (1978)\*

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\*Jolicoeur and Knowles, "Fraternal Associations and Civil Religion: Scottish Rite Freemasonry," *Review of Religious Research*, XX (Fall 1978), pp. 14-15.

## Appendix C

### MASONS IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

This is not an easy topic to sort out. Masonic historians disagree among themselves. Two books deal in detail with this question, one by Ronald Heaton and the other by Philip Roth.

#### Ronald Heaton

The Masonic Service Association published Ronald Heaton's *Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers* in 1965.<sup>1</sup> This book contains detailed biographies of about two hundred men of the Revolution, of whom about a third were Masons, and a third may have been. He is judicious in naming the lodges and source documents for attributing membership to anyone.

He says that ten of the signers of the original continental Articles of Association were Masons, nine of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, nine of the signers of the Articles of Confederation, thirteen of the signers of the Constitution, thirty-three general officers of the Continental Army, and eight of Washington's 29 aides or military secretaries (p. xvi).

His list of Masons includes the following men:

Thomas Adams  
Benedict Arnold  
Hodijah Baylies  
Gunning Bedford, Jr.  
Edward Biddle John Blair  
David Brearley  
Jacob Broom  
Daniel Carroll

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1. Address: 8120 Fenton St., Silver Spring, MD 20910; reprinted in 1974 and 1988.

Richard Gary  
Richard Caswell  
James Clinton (father of DeWitt)  
Jonathan Dayton  
Elias Dayton  
John Dickenson  
William Ellery  
John Fitzgerald  
Benjamin Franklin  
Joseph Frye  
Nicholas Gilman  
Mordecai Gist  
John Glover  
John Greaton  
John Hancock  
Edward Hand  
Cornelius Harnett  
Joseph Hewes  
James Hogun  
William Hooper  
Charles Humphreys  
David Humphreys  
Rufus King  
Henry Knox  
La Fayette  
Henry Laurens  
Benjamin Lincoln  
James McHenry  
William Maxwell  
Hugh Mercer  
Richard Montgomery  
J. P. G. Muhlenberg  
John Nixon  
Robert Treat Paine  
William Palfrey  
Samuel Holden Parsons  
John Patterson  
William Patterson  
Israel Putnam  
Rufus Putnam

Edmund Randolph  
Peyton Randolph  
Daniel Roberdeau  
Arthur St. Clair  
Jonathan Bayard Smith  
John Stark Baron von Steuben  
Richard Stockton  
John Sullivan  
Jethro Sumner  
William Thompson  
James Mitchell Varnum  
John Walker  
George Walton  
George Washington  
George Weedon  
William Whipple  
Otho Holland Williams  
William Woodford  
David Wooster

To this should be added Joseph Warren and Paul Revere of Boston, whose lodge was closely associated with the Boston Tea Party. James Otis is missing. So is Robert Livingston of New York and John Paul Jones. Above all, so is John Marshall, who in the mid-1790's was Grand Master of Virginia (Beveridge, *Marshall*, II, 176-77).

#### Philip Roth

Philip A. Roth self-published *Masonry in the Formation of our Government* in 1927. He was the Past Master of Henry L. Palmer Lodge No. 301 and was at the time manager of the Masonic Service Bureau in Washington, D. C. The book provides biographies of key figures in the American Revolution, including English figures, and also includes some brief summaries of key events, such as the inauguration of President Washington. Roth was judicious; he did not claim that anyone was a Mason unless he could document the actual Lodge in which he was a member or was initiated. This list is probably less reliable than Heaton's, who had access to more complete records.

His list of Masons includes the following men:

Gen. Benedict Arnold  
Col. William Barton



John Blair  
Edmund Burke (British)  
Richard Caswell  
George Clinton  
Gen. James Clinton  
Gen. Johann DeKalb  
Gen. William Davie  
Gen. Mordecai Gist  
Benjamin Franklin  
Nathaniel Greene  
Richard Gridley  
Nathan Hale  
Alexander Hamilton (probably)  
John Hancock  
Gen. Edward Hand  
Nicholas Herkimer  
Gen. James Jackson  
John Paul Jones  
Jean Paul Lafayette  
Henry (Light Horse Harry) Lee  
Richard Henry Lee  
Morgan Lewis  
Gen. Benjamin Lincoln  
Robert Livingston  
John Marshall  
Gen. Hugh Mercer  
Jacob Morton  
Rev. John Peter Muehlenberg  
James Otis  
Gen Sam Parsons  
William Pitt (British)  
Gen. Thomas Proctor  
Israel Putnam  
Rufus Putnam  
Edmund Randolph  
Peyton Randolph  
Paul Revere  
Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler  
Roger Sherman (probably)  
Gen. John Stark Baron von Steuben

Gen. John Sullivan  
Joseph Warren  
George Washington  
Gen. Anthony Wayne (probably)  
Gen. Otho Williams  
Gen. David Wooster

One of the great points of controversy between [Abraham] Kuyper and [P. J.] Hoedemaker was the question whether the state can know and recognize the church *as church*; in other words, whether the church as such is a public juridical institution. Hoedemaker answered this question affirmatively. When he observed that the state recognizes only three kinds of legal bodies — associations, foundations, and corporations — he found no category for the church among these. And he wholeheartedly agreed with Kuyper who wrote:

That same God who instituted the Government and clothed the Government with authority as his servant, that same God has, by virtue of his sovereign omnipotence, brought the Church of Christ into this world and distributed her over all nations and peoples. That Church is not the product of human volition but God's own creation. Consequently the Government is not asked if it wishes to tolerate the Church; she exists *jure divino* (by divine right).

“Excellent,” said Hoedemaker. “It could not have been said better.” But then he wanted Kuyper to go one step further by saying that the state must recognize the fact that God has formed the church. The criterion for determining whether a state is christian is this: do the government and the state's constitution (if we are dealing with a constitutional state) grant a public-legal existence to the church as revelation of the Body of Christ? Hoedemaker felt that to deprive the church of its public juridical status would be a denial of Christ by the government.

L. Kalsbeek (1970)”

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\*Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An introduction to Hennis Dooyeweerd's thought* (Toronto: Wedge, 1975), p. 231.

## Appendix D

### TESTIMONY OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA (1980)

#### Chapter 23: Of the Civil Magistrate

1. We reject the belief that civil government is unnecessary or essentially evil.

2. God has given the exercise of all authority to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the Divine Lawgiver, Governor and Judge. His will concerning the purpose of civil government and the principles regarding its functions and operation are revealed in the written Word of God. The Holy Spirit enables even unregenerate rulers to fulfill their proper functions. A true recognition of the authority and law of Christ in national life can only be the fruit of the Spirit's regenerating power in the lives of individuals.

Deut. 4:39; Dan. 4:25, 32, 35; Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:10; Eph. 1:22; Isa. 33:22; Deut. 17:18-19; Isa. 45:1-7; Ezek. 36:27.

3. God has assigned to people, both individually and collectively, the responsibility for establishing and maintaining civil government, and the people are accountable to Jesus Christ for the proper exercise of this responsibility.

Deut. 1:13-14; Deut. 17:15; 1 Sam. 8:22; 2 Sam. 5:3; Hos. 8:1, 4; Eccl. 10:16-17.

4. Every nation ought to recognize the Divine institution of civil government, the sovereignty of God exercised by Jesus Christ, and its duty to rule the civil affairs of men in accordance with the will of God. It should enter into covenant with Christ and service to advance His Kingdom on earth. The negligence of civil government in any of these particulars is sinful, makes the nation liable to the wrath

of God, and threatens the continued existence of the government and nation.

Phil. 2:10; Rem. 13:4; Ps. 132:12; Ps. 103:17-19; Ps. 2:10-12.

5. We reject the view that nations have no corporate responsibility for acknowledging and obeying Christ.

6. It is the duty of every Christian citizen to labor and pray for his nation's official and explicit recognition of the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Preserver and Ruler of nations, and for the conduct of all governmental affairs in harmony with the written Word of God.

1 Tim. 2:1-2; Phil. 2:9-10; Acts 2:1-39; Ps. 2:8-12; Esther 4:14.

7. We deny that constitutional recognition of Jesus Christ means union of church and state.

8. We reject the teaching that Christians should not seek the establishment of Christian civil government.

9. *No* particular form of civil government is commanded in the Scriptures. Any form of civil government which observes the duties and limitations set upon it by God in His revealed Word is acceptable to God.

Ex. 18:21-24; Prov. 29:14; Deut. 1:16-17.

10. We deny that simply having a democratic or republican form of government insures God's approval and blessing.

11. All officers and employees of a civil government are to be servants of God for good. They are responsible to God for the discharge of lawful duties rightfully assigned to them by human authority. Neither their official position, however, nor the orders of their superiors, nor the will of the people, exonerates them from blame for any unscriptural action or inaction.

Rem. 13:3-4; 2 Chron. 19:6-7; Prov. 29:26.

12. We reject the view that it is wrong to wage war in defense of life, liberty or religion.

13. Citizens cannot abdicate their responsibility to determine the moral legitimacy of a particular war and to govern their participation accordingly. Such decisions should be made prayerfully in the light of Scripture and with the counsel of the church.

Acts 5:29; 1 Sam. 14:44-45.

14. When justly administered, capital punishment is a scriptural application of civil authority.

Rem. 13:4; Gen. 9:6; Acts 25:11; Num. 35:29-34.

15. The Christian, when such action involves no disloyalty to Christ, ought to be involved in the selection of and to vote for civil rulers who fear God, love truth and justice, hate evil, and are publicly committed to scriptural principles of civil government.

Ex. 18:21; Deut. 16:18, 2 Sam. 23:3; Rem. 13:3.

16. It is sinful for a Christian to take an oath which compromises his supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ. It is also sinful to vote for officials who are required to take an oath which a Christian himself could not take in good conscience. Voting involves the voter in responsibility for any act required of the official as a condition of holding his office.

Deut. 10:20; Isa. 45:22-23; 2 John 1:11; 1 Tim. 5:22.

17. The Christian must profess publically and the Church must witness, that Christ is the Ruler of every nation. Whatever the official action of the civil government of a nation may be, the Christian in his civil actions must always exhibit his loyalty to Christ. The Christian must relinquish every right or privilege of citizenship which involves him in silence about, or denial of the supreme authority of Jesus Christ.

Matt. 5:13-14; Prov. 3:5-6; Ps. 37:7; Matt. 22:21; John 17:14-15; Mark 13:9.

18. We reject the portion of paragraph 3 after the colon. <sup>1</sup>

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1. This is the section in the Westminster Confession regarding the authority of the civil magistrate to punish blasphemies and heresies. It is this section that was repealed by the Presbyterian Church in America on May 28, 1788 – G.N.

19. Both the government of the nation and the government of the visible church are established by God. Though distinct and independent of each other, they both owe supreme allegiance to Jesus Christ. The governments of church and state differ in sphere of authority in that due submission to the government of the visible church is the obligation of members thereof, while due submission to civil government is the obligation of all men. The governments of church and state also have different functions and prerogatives in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The means of enforcement of the civil government are physical, while those of church government are not. Neither government has the right to invade or assume the authority of the other. They should cooperate to the honor and glory of God, while maintaining their separate jurisdictions.

Rem. 13:1; Matt. 22:21; Col. 1:18; Acts 15:10; Ezra 7:10, 25-26; 2 Chron. 26:18-19; Matt. 5:25; 1 Cor. 5:12-13.

20. Though responsible for maintaining conditions favorable to the spread of the Gospel, civil government should never attempt to convert men to Christ by the use of force or by persecution. It should guarantee to all its subjects every human right given by God to men. It should, however, restrain and punish its subjects for those sinful actions which fall under its jurisdiction.

1 Tim. 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; Rem. 13:4; Ezra 7:26; Neh. 13:17-21.

21. *No* civil government which deprives men of civil or religious liberty, fails to protect human life, or proposes to force men to do violence to the spirit and precepts of the Christian religion or interferes unjustly with private ownership of property, can in such matters rightfully expect the submission of its citizens or the blessings of God promised for obedience to Him.

Acts 4:17,19,33; Deut. 27:19; Isa. 10:1-2; Ex. 20:15; Isa. 1:23-26; Dan. 6:13; Heb. 11:23.

22. Both the Christian and the Church have a responsibility for witnessing against national sins and for promoting justice. Amos 2:6-8; Amos 5:14-15.

23. The failure of a civil government, through negligence, ignorance, or rebellion, to recognize the authority of Jesus Christ does not

cancel its just authority. A civil government, though guilty of many sins, still has authority in so far as it furthers some of the scriptural ends of civil government.

Matt. 22:21; Rem. 13:1; Rem. 2:14; Acts 23:5; Ex. 22:28.

24. Due submission of all persons, cheerfully rendered, to civil officers and to civil government in general, is pleasing to God. No person, however, is required by God to obey civil authority when such authority demands that the citizen or subject do that which is clearly contrary to the law of God as revealed in the Scriptures. In such cases the duty of the Christian is to obey God rather than men. The Christian has a special obligation to render due submission to civil authority in order to express his loyalty to Jesus Christ, to prove his concern for the welfare of all men, and to bring honor to the name of Christ.

1 Pet. 2:13-14; Rem. 13:5; Acts 5:29; Titus 3:1.

25. The only submission which a Christian may promise to any civil government is due submission in the Lord. Any promise of submission or oath of allegiance beyond this is sinful. If and when the civil government of a nation requires, as a condition of civil service or of holding office, an oath which implies that civil allegiance transcends the swearer's convictions of conscience and obedience to God, it is the Christian's duty to refuse such an oath. It is within the corporate power of the Church, acting through its courts, to declare that facts or circumstances which may exist in a specific situation render the taking of a civil oath sinful.

Gen. 25:33; Matt. 22:21; Eph. 6:12; Matt 4:10; Deut. 10:20.

26. It is the duty of the Christian to ascertain whether any prescribed oath of allegiance to the civil authority involves acceptance of unchristian principles stated or implied in its constitution of government. If the oath of allegiance to civil authority explicitly or by clear implication requires support of anti-Christian, atheistic, or secular principles, then the Christian must refuse on these grounds to take the oath of allegiance.

Acts 5:29; Acts 4:18-20.



27. In the matter of taking oaths required by civil authority, the Christian should seek the guidance and support of the Church.

28. It is the duty of the Christian Church to testify to the authority of Christ over the nations, against all anti-Christian, atheistic, and secular principles of civil government, and against all sinful oaths of allegiance to civil governments. When the Church by orderly processes in her own courts determines that the oath of allegiance to a civil government compromises the Christian's loyalty to Christ or involves the Christian in the support of sinful principles of civil government, the Church must require her members to refuse such sinful oaths.

Acts 4:24-29; Eph. 5:11; Rev. 3:15-16; Acts 15:28-29; Rev. 2:13-14.

29. When participating in political elections, the Christian should support and vote only for such men as are publically committed to scriptural principles of civil government. Should the Christian seek civil office by political election, he must openly inform those whose support he seeks of his adherence to Christian principles of civil government.

1 Chron.16:31; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Chron.19:6-7; Dan. 2:48; Eph. 4:25.

30. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and the decisions of civil courts cannot determine for the Christian what is morally right and what is sinful. However, since civil government is an institution of God, it is within the legitimate province of the civil courts of a nation to determine what the nation's laws and required oaths of allegiance mean or do not mean. A decision of a civil court cannot legitimize sinful conduct, but it can place before a Christian a factual situation upon which a moral judgement can be made. It cannot be proper for the Christian to assume that an oath of allegiance implies sinful requirements, when the civil courts have explicitly contradicted such implication. Every oath must be understood in the sense intended by the authority requiring the oath. It is for the Christian and the Church to decide whether this sense involves sinful requirements.

Matt. 22:21b; Rom 13:5; Eccl. 8:4; 1 Thess. 5:21.

31. We reject any inference that civil government has jurisdiction over conscience.

Our mental image of the religious patriot is distorted because modern accounts do treat the political paragraphs as a series of theoretical expositions of Locke, separated from what precedes and follows. When these orations are read as wholes, they immediately reveal that the sociological sections are structural parts of a rhetorical pattern. Embedded in their contexts, these are not abstractions but inherent parts of a theology. It was for this reason that they had so energizing an effect upon their religious auditors. The American situation, as the preachers saw it, was not what Paine presented in *Common Sense*—a community of hard-working, rational creatures being put upon by an irrational tyrant – but was more like the recurrent predicament of the chosen people in the Bible. As Samuel Cooper declared on October 25, 1780, upon the inauguration of the Constitution of Massachusetts, America was a new Israel, selected to be “a theatre for the display of some of the most astonishing dispensations of his Providence.” The Jews originally were a free republic founded on a covenant over which God “in peculiar favor to that people, was pleased to preside.” When they offended Him, He punished them by destroying their republic, subjecting them to a king. Thus while we today need no revelation to inform us that we are all born free and equal and that sovereignty resides in the people – “these are the plain dictates of that reason and common sense with which the common parent has informed the human bosom” — still Scripture also makes these truths explicit.

Once this light is allowed to play on the scene, we perceive the shallowness of that view which would treat the religious appeal as a calculated propaganda maneuver. The ministers did not have to “sell” the Revolution to a public sluggish to “buy.” They were spelling out what both they and the people sincerely believed, nor were they distracted by worries about the probability that Jefferson held all their constructions to be nonsense. A pure rationalism such as his might have declared the independence of these folk, but it could never have inspired them to fight for it.

Perry Miller\*

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\*Miller, “From the Covenant to the Revival,” in *The Shaping of American Religion*, 4 vols., edited by James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), I, pp. 342-43.

## Appendix E

### THE MASSACHUSETTS CONSTITUTION OF 1780

This state constitution was the product of over four years a open debate, suggestions from towns, and suggestions from John Adams. Here I reproduce its section on oaths for public officials. It is taken from *The Popular Sources of Political Authority: Documents on the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780*, edited by Oscar and Mary Handlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 467-69. The oath was officially Christian, it invoked the name of the Congress of the United States, and it was supposedly an unbreakable covenant, all of which became important with respect to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and its outcome.

#### Chapter VI

*Oaths and Subscriptions; Incompatibility of and Exclusion from Offices; Pecuniary Qualifications; Commissions; Writs; Confirmation of Laws; Habeas Corpus; The Enacting Style; Continuance of Officers; Provision for a future Revision of the Constitution, etc.*

ART. I. – Any person chosen Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Counselor, Senator, or Representative, and accepting the trust, shall, before he proceed to execute the duties of his place or office, make and subscribe the following declaration, viz. —

“I, A. B. do declare, that I believe the christian religion, and have a firm persuasion of its truth; and that I am seized and possessed, in my own right, of the property required by the Constitution as one qualification for the office or place to which I am elected.”

AND the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, and Counselors, shall make and subscribe the said declaration, in the presence of the two Houses of Assembly; and the Senators and Representatives first elected under this Constitution, before the President and five of the

Council of the former Constitution, and, forever afterwards, before the Governor and Council for the time being.

AND every person chosen to either of the places or offices aforesaid, as also any person appointed or commissioned to any judicial, executive, military, or other office under the government, shall, before he enters on the discharge of the business of his place or office, take and subscribe the following declaration, and oaths or affirmations, viz. —

“I, A. B. do truly and sincerely acknowledge, profess, testify and declare, that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is, and of right ought to be, a free, sovereign and independent State; and I do swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the said Commonwealth, and that I will defend the same against traitorous conspiracies and all hostile attempts whatsoever: And that I do renounce and adjure all allegiance, subjection and obedience to the King, Queen or Government of Great Britain, (as the case may be) and every other foreign power whatsoever: And that no foreign Prince, Person, Prelate, State or Potentate, bath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, superiority, pre-eminence, authority, dispensing or other power, in any matter, civil, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this Commonwealth; except the authority and power which is or may be vested by their Constituents in the Congress of the United States: And I do further testify and declare, that no man or body of men bath or can have any right to absolve or discharge me from the obligation of this oath, declaration or affirmation; and that I do make this acknowledgement, profession, testimony, declaration, denial, renunciation and abjuration, heartily and truly, according to the common meaning and acceptance of the foregoing words, without any equivocation, mental evasion, or secret reservation whatsoever. So help me GOD.”

“I, A. B. do solemnly swear and affirm, that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me as ; according to the best of my abilities and understanding, agreeably to the rules and regulations of the Constitution, and the laws of this Commonwealth.” “So help me GOD.”

PROVIDED always, that when any person, chosen or appointed as aforesaid, shall be of the denomination of the people called Quakers, and shall decline taking the said oaths, he shall make his affirmation in the foregoing form, and subscribe the same, omitting the words *‘I do swear,’* “*and adjure,*” “*oath or,*” “*and abjuration,*” in the first oath; and in the second oath, the words “*swear and;*” and in

each of them the words “So *help me* GOD ;” subjoining instead thereof,  
<sup>u</sup> *This I do under the pains and penalties of perjury.*”

AND the said oaths or affirmations shall be taken and subscribed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Counselors, before the President of the Senate, in the presence of the two Houses of Assembly; and by the Senators and Representatives first elected under this Constitution, before the President and five of the Council of the former Constitution; and forever afterwards before the Governor and Council for the time being: And by the residue of the officers aforesaid, before such persons and in such manner as from time to time shall be prescribed by the Legislature.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary North received his Ph.D in history from the University of California, Riverside, in 1972. He specialized in colonial U.S. history. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on Puritan New England's economic history and the history of economic thought. A simplified version of this dissertation has been published as *Puritan Economic Experiments* (Institute for Christian Economics, [1974] 1988),

He is the author of approximately 30 books in the fields of economics, history, and theology. Since 1973, he has been writing a multi-volume economic commentary on the Bible, which now covers Genesis (one volume) and Exodus (three volumes). He is the general editor of the multi-volume set, the Biblical Blueprints Series, presently at ten volumes.

He edited the first fifteen issues of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction, 1974-81*. He edited two issues of *Christianity and Civilization* in 1983: *The Theology of Christian Resistance* and *Tactics of Christian Resistance*. He edited a *festschrift* for Cornelius Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* (1976).

He is the editor of the fortnightly economic newsletter, *Remnant Review*, and the publisher of three additional economic newsletters. He writes two hi-monthly Christian newsletters, *Biblical Economics Today* and *Christian Reconstruction*, published by the Institute for Christian Economics.

He lives in Tyler, Texas with his wife and four children. He is a member of Good Shepherd Reformed Episcopal Church, Tyler, Texas.