

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

THE BIENNIAL JOURNAL OF THE KUYPER FOUNDATION

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EDITORIAL

WE have received the following two pieces of sad news of relevance to our readership.

THEODORE P. LETIS 1952–2005

It was with very great sadness that we learned of the death of Ted Letis on June 24, 2005. Ted died in a car accident near Atlanta while he was driving back home from a gig (he was a keen musician as well as a historian and theologian). He was 53. Ted had a Ph.D in ecclesiastical history from the University of Edinburgh, an honours M.T.S. (magna cum laude) from Emory University and completed graduate studies at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, and Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. He also had a B.A. in history and Biblical studies from Evangel College. He was the President and Executive Director of the Institute of Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies. He is survived by his wife, Susan and two children, Grace and Ted, and many other beloved family and friends.

It was my privilege to know Ted and consider him a friend. I first met him at a theological study group at Rutherford House in Edinburgh many years ago and he subsequently attended one of our conferences in London in the early 1990s. He gave a fascinating and stimulating talk to

a meeting of our association of supporters, the Kuyper Association, in Doncaster a few years later and wrote a number of articles for *Christianity & Society* over the years, the most recent being in the October 2004 issue. His contribution was always stimulating and challenging.

His major interest was in the providential preservation of the Ecclesiastical Text of Scripture. It was his intention to have his Ph.D dissertation published as a book but to date I believe this had not happened, though the last time I asked him about it I think he said that there was some prospect of it. It is to be hoped that it will be published. His work on the Ecclesiastical Text was in my judgement very important and I personally benefited from reading his writings on the subject and discussing the issues with him. I consider his death to be a great loss not only to his family and friends, but to the Church.

PETER HAMMOND EXCOMMUNICATED

In *C&S* Vol. XII, No 1 (Jan. 2002) we ran a series of articles promoting the ministry of Peter Hammond and Frontline Fellowship, the organisation that he heads. We have now received information that necessitates our withdrawal of the endorsement of Dr Hammond and his ministry given in that issue. It has come to our attention that the Church of Christian Liberty in Arlington Heights, Illinois, of which Dr Hammond was an affiliate member under the authority of the Church oversight, has excommunicated Dr Hammond.

The grounds given for the excommunication by the Board of Elders of the Church of Christian Liberty were stated as follows in an open letter published by the elders of

THE ECCLESIASTICAL TEXT: TEXT CRITICISM, BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND THE POPULAR MIND

by *Theodore P. Letis*

The Ecclesiastical Text provides solid documentation illustrating a post-critical revival of interest in the Byzantine text of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Probing the implications of Brevard Childs' "canonical approach" to biblical exegesis, the author suggests ways and a rationale for catholic and confessional communities to rediscover their own textual traditions within their respective ecclesial and historical contexts. It is also a sober study of the multi-dimensional problems that have arisen since the arrival of the corporate boardroom Bibles. These essays address how the "inerrant autographs" theory set evangelicals on a course towards a crippled approach to biblical criticism, while destroying their own Reformation and post-Reformation approach to the sacred tasks of editing and translating Holy Scripture, the latter of which the author advocates should be reclaimed in a post-critical way.

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the Church of Christian Liberty on October 22, 2003: (1) lying about his military career; (2) mismanagement of members of Frontline Fellowship and vilification of former members of Frontline Fellowship; (3) violating oaths taken before the board of enquiry into the allegations against him and falsely reporting the details of the hearings; (4) physical sexual misconduct with a woman and lying to the Board of Elders of the Church of Christian Liberty about the matter; and (5) claiming ordination by two separate groups in South Africa that did not ordain him and claiming to be under the oversight of another organisation that exercised no such role.

The Board of Elders of the Church of Christian Liberty have stated that they have lost all confidence in Peter Hammond's ability properly to perform his missionary duties with integrity and that the Church of Christian Liberty has rescinded its ordination and commission of Peter Hammond as a missionary to the people of Africa. They also exhorted him to, (1) spend time fasting and praying for

repentance, (2) resign as Director of Frontline Fellowship and any other organisation in which he holds a position of leadership, (3) cease from all missionary, teaching and preaching endeavours, and (4) confess his sins to those persons and organisations he has harmed or offended.

In a subsequent letter dated June 2004, the elders of CCL, noting his failure to heed their warnings and exhortations to repent, have excommunicated Peter Hammond.

In view of the action taken by the Church of Christian Liberty we therefore withdraw our endorsement of Peter Hammond and his ministry, given in Vol. XII, No 1 (Jan. 2002) of *C&S*, and advise and urge our readers to honour the findings of the Board of Elders of CCL by upholding the excommunication and withdrawing their support from Peter Hammond and his ministry, Frontline Fellowship.

If you wish to obtain more information about this matter please contact the elders of the Church of Christian Liberty, 502, West Euclid Avenue, Arlington Heights, Illinois 60004, USA.—SCP.

The Traditionalist

The Traditionalist is a wide-ranging Christianity-based quarterly which seeks to play a part in establishing a Christianity-based society. It is nondenominational, non-party-political, and unconnected with any group or organisation. Reader participation is welcomed.

There is no annual subscription, but small sums towards production and distribution costs from time to time are not refused.

Further details from the Editor:
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THE SCOTTISH SCHOOL OF COMMON SENSE PHILOSOPHY

by David Estrada

PART II: THOMAS REID

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Reid is regarded as the founder of the Scottish School of Common Sense Philosophy. However, as we already indicated in our introductory essay,¹ some ideas on the concept of “common sense knowledge” had already been advanced by previous thinkers—mostly Scottish; hence it cannot be properly said that they originated with Thomas Reid. The originality and merit of Reid resided in his having further developed these ideas and in his having given them a coherent systematic structure. The other two great contributions of Reid in the realm of thought were his forceful critique of the traditional “*theory of the ideas*”—as the immediate object of knowledge—and his vigorous refutation of the sceptical thesis held by David Hume, which so negatively threaten the basic tenets of both philosophy and theology. Reid’s philosophy must be understood in the general context of Scottish theology. Common sense philosophy was forged in the intellectual ambit of a country strongly imbued with the biblical vision of reality and the principles of Reformed theology. Consequently, theology is always a latent factor in Reid’s philosophical thought. In all matters of discussion, God was an inescapable reality, as Professor Broadie affirms: “Reid refers to God on practically every page of the *Inquiry* and the two sets of *Essays*.”²

In this article we will endeavour to present a summary of the basic ideas of Thomas Reid’s common sense philosophy that, in our estimation, are still relevant for Christian philosophical thought and Christian apologetics. Besides the theological substratum that underlies much of Reid’s thought, a close study of his writings will also uncover a definite *apologetic motivation* on his part. In his common sense philosophy, and by a constant appeal to basic principles of knowledge that are *inherent* to man’s constitution by divine creation, Reid aimed to prove how false the starting principles of modern philosophy were in making “the powers and ideas of

the mind” the original source of all knowledge, and even of the sceptical conclusions, as in the case of Hume. In Reid’s own words: “As Hume’s sceptical system is all built upon a wrong and mistaken account of the intellectual powers of man, so it can only be refuted by giving a true account of them.”³ Modern thought has lost anchorage in God’s created reality and has plunged itself into the abyss of solipsism. On this account an insuperable cleavage has been established between the mind and the world. Reid was well aware of the negative consequences that the solipsistic tendencies of his time were to have for theology and philosophy, and earnestly sought to counteract them with principles of common sense epistemology and cosmology. In what we can call an indirect apologetic method, by meeting his antagonists on their own philosophical grounds, and by showing the inconsistencies in their reasoning, Reid aimed at building a system of thought compatible with the biblical vision of reality. It is our conviction that Reid’s system of thought has much to offer to those who wish “to give a reason of their faith” in a world of shifting values and sceptical inclinations.

It is an extremely difficult task to summarise Reid’s thought in the limited space of a few pages. We will attempt to do so to the best of our abilities. From the start we wish to apologise to the reader who is not well versed in philosophy for the difficulties he may encounter in comprehending the meaning of some of the concepts contained in the text, and for the specialised language through which some of these ideas are expressed. We hope that our benevolent reader will earnestly confront these difficulties, and at the end will find that his effort was worthwhile. There is much good material in Reid’s writings for the enlightening of the mind and the edification of the soul.

1. *Christianity and Society*, Vol. XV, No. I, pp. 34–41.

2. Alexander Broadie, “The Scottish Thomas Reid,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 3.

3. Thomas Reid, *Practical Ethics—Being lectures and papers on Natural Religion, Self-Government, Natural Jurisprudence, and the Law of Nations* (Edited from the manuscripts, with an introduction by Knud Haakonssen, Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 107. The centre-piece is an edition of Reid’s manuscripts on practical ethics, which are preserved in the Aberdeen University Library in Scotland. Hereafter *Practical Ethics*.

REID'S LIFE AND CAREER⁴

Thomas Reid was born on April 26, 1710, at Strachan, about twenty miles from Aberdeen. His father, the Rev. Lewis Reid, was minister of the place for fifty years. He was descended from a succession of Presbyterian ministers. His mother was Margaret Gregory, of Kinnairdie, in Banffshire. On both sides were persons who had risen to eminence in literature and science. James Gregory was the inventor of the reflecting telescope; David Gregory was a renowned professor of astronomy at Oxford, and an intimate friend of Sir Isaac Newton. Two other Gregorys were professors of mathematics at St. Andrews and at Edinburgh. No doubt such family ties must have given a powerful stimulus towards literature and science to a thoughtful youth like Thomas Reid. He began his studies at the Kincardine parish school, and after several years at the Aberdeen Grammar School, in 1722 he entered Marischal College, Aberdeen. Just before Reid's arrival, the College had undergone a considerable intellectual renewal. All the staff, except the principal, were recent appointees. Of the young and newly recruited teachers, George Turnbull was to exercise a strong influence on Reid. Turnbull held a providential naturalism, according to which a scientific analysis of the phenomena of this world would show the hand of Providence in the regularities exhibited. An eloquent example of this, he held, was Newtonian physics; and as Newton himself had pointed out, divine naturalism could and should be extended from physical phenomena to moral phenomena—the completion of which was natural theology. Reid graduated in 1726, and five years later he was admitted to the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

From 1733 to 1736 he worked as librarian of Marischal College, which gave him the opportunity to enlarge his university studies. At the end of this appointment he took a lengthy tour of England, visiting London, Oxford, and Cambridge. By this time he had already evinced great proficiency in classical languages and in humanistic disciplines, particularly in philosophy. From an early age he developed a strong taste for mathematics and physics and read with avidity the writings of Newton and other men of science. As we already mentioned in our first article, the leading common sense philosophers made important incursions in the sciences of the day. Before teaching philosophy, Thomas Brown had been a prestigious physician and done physiological studies on the brain and on the nerves. William Hamilton made multiple experiments on the brain, and helped to cast aside phrenology—a science very much in vogue in Glasgow. Philosophical interest and scientific concern go hand in hand with the expositors of common sense thought. Reading his *Correspondence*, we discover that Reid

4. The first biography of Reid was an anonymous pamphlet published in 1796, the year of his death, entitled *Sketch of the Character of the late Thomas Reid*. The next and by far the most influential biography was Dugald Stewart's *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid*, first published in 1803. Much of Stewart's biographical material reappears in James McCosh's *The Scottish Philosophy* (1875). In the Introduction of Thomas Reid's *Practical Ethics*, Knud Haakonssen, the editor, in a very succinct form presents valuable biographical material. A more complete biography of Reid is very recent: it is found in the doctoral dissertation of Paul B. Wood, *Thomas Reid, Natural Philosopher: A Study of Science and Philosophy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (University of Leeds, 1984). Reid's letters constitute also an important source of biographical information.

was also well acquainted with optics and physiology. He often stated that the study of the mind by consciousness might be aided by complementary research on the nervous system.

In 1740 Reid married his cousin Elizabeth, the daughter of his uncle Dr. George Reid, a physician in London. They formed a happy family, although death was a constant visitor with the Reids: of their nine children only one survived him, four dying in infancy and four in early adulthood. In 1737 he became minister of New Machar. The appointment lasted fourteen years. Not much is known of his pastoral activities. The obligations of this small and peaceful parish were not demanding, which enabled Reid to divert much of his time to other activities—more in line with his intellectual preferences. He must not have spent much time in preparing his sermons, for according to McCosh: “for the first seven years he was in the way of preaching the sermons of others, a practice very obnoxious to the people.”⁵ For his part Paul Wood affirms that, in line with the position of the “moderates” in the Scottish Kirk, Reid's sermons were “more moral than theological.” According to other sources, though not distinguished as a preacher, he was successful in winning the affections of his people. We are of the opinion that at New Machar Reid reached the conviction that, more than pastoral, his real calling was professorial, and that through philosophical pursuits his labours could be more profitable in the kingdom of God than by shepherding a peaceful flock of believers. It was during his stay at New Machar that Reid began to lay the foundations of the basic structure of his philosophical edifice. There he wrote his *Essay on Quantity*—a brief criticism of Francis Hutcheson's attempt to introduce a mathematical calculation on subjects of morality.⁶ According to Dugald Stewart, the origins of the *Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* lay in Reid's years as a country parson in New Machar (1737–51), when the publication of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739 turned his attention to philosophy and to the defence of Christian thought.

Reid was deeply versed in philosophy and in many other fields of scholarly pursuits. This concern grew not merely from the requirements of his teaching, but also out of his belief that it was the philosopher's task to explore the providential order of Creation in all its realms. He was well acquainted with the great authors of Western thought and he often enters in discussion with their views in the process of establishing his philosophical system. Although now and then he will refer to scholastic thinkers, it seems that his knowledge of Thomas Aquinas and other Catholic philosophers was rather limited. This is regrettable, since it seems that on some points a certain parallel can be established between Thomism and common sense philosophy. At King's College, among other authors, he showed a particular

5. James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy, Biographical & Critical, from Hutcheson to Hamilton* (London: Mcmillan, 1875), pp. 183–185. (Hereafter *Scottish Philosophy*).

6. The title of the essay, as it was customary in those days, is very long: *An Essay on Quantity, occasioned by reading a Treatise in which Simple and Compound Ratios are applied to Virtue and Merit*. “I suspect,” writes McCosh “that Hutcheson meant this to be little more than an illustration, and did not seriously propose to apply mathematical demonstration to moral subjects” (*op. cit.*, 186). John Locke, however, had previously held, in his *Essay concerning human understanding*, that “morality is capable of demonstration as well as mathematics.”

interest in Joseph Butler's works.⁷ As we read his *Letters* we become aware of the varied fields of interests that captivated his intellectual interests. Besides philosophy and mathematics, he was interested in chemistry, botany, medicine, jurisprudence, political economy, and even mechanics. In this last science, for instance, he followed closely the engineering career of James Watt and greatly praised the improvements he introduced in the steam engine.⁸

In 1751, he was appointed professor of philosophy at King's College, Aberdeen, where he was surrounded by an able body of colleagues. He was a founding member and first secretary of the prestigious "Aberdeen Philosophical Society." Among its members were John Gregory, David Skene, Alexander Gerard and James Beattie. To that society he contributed with a series of papers that contained most of his views on common sense philosophy. Apart from teaching, he was active in the College administration. Philosophy of the Mind was one of the important subjects taught by Reid at King's College. All his theoretical inquiry revolved around this theme and constituted the core of his common sense philosophy. Towards the end of 1763 he received the call to the chair of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, which had been previously occupied by Adam Smith. Ten years later, in 1783, Edmund Burke, the Rector of Glasgow University, appointed Reid Vice-Rector of the University. By then he was also Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He loved teaching but deeply abhorred staff meetings. In a letter to his friend Dr. David Skene, of Aberdeen, he wrote: "There is no part of my time more disagreeably spent than that which is spent in College meetings, of which I have often five or six in a week."⁹

Another of his detestations was to have students of a low intellectual level in his classes. In a letter to Andrew Skene, of Aberdeen, he wrote: "The most disagreeable thing in the teaching part is to have a great number of stupid Irish teagues who attend classes for two or three years to qualify them for teaching schools or being dissenting teachers. I preach to these as St Francis did to the fishes. I don't know what pleasure he had in his audience, but I should have none in mine if there was not in it a mixture of reasonable creatures."¹⁰ Reid's classes were always well attended. According to his own testimony, his classes of Moral Philosophy were attended by "many preachers and students of divinity and law of considerable standing."¹¹ As lecturer his style was conversational rather than declamatory. According to Dugald Stewart, "silent and respectful attention was accorded to the simplicity and perspicuity of his style and the

gravity and authority of his character." Following a Latinized pattern of expression, in his writings he expounded his ideas with clarity and vigour. It is true that sometimes he becomes repetitious, but this is part of his pedagogical method: to insist reiteratively on the basic points of his system.¹²

As to his character and personality all the evidence points to the fact that he was a man of strong will and determination. He knew that he had something important to say in the sphere of ideas, and firmly upheld the principles of his system against the sceptical tendencies of the time. He was unhesitatingly persuaded that in the common sense principles he expounded and defended lay the most effective antidote against the views of David Hume—with all its negative consequences for Christian thought and theology.

Reading the letters of his correspondence we discover some interesting traits of character. Striking us from the beginning is his good humour and his refined tone of caustic irony—often applied to himself and to his own circumstances.¹³ The *Correspondence* portrays a man of serene control of everyday events, occasionally broken by an outburst of affection, such as when his friend Lord Kames died. "I have lost in him"—he wrote to his widow—"one of the greatest comforts of my life. A man whose talents I admired, and whose virtues I honoured."¹⁴ Even in a letter to David Hume, his great antagonist, Reid shows a restrained tone of friendly respect and admiration, as we can judge from statements such as: "I shall always avow myself your disciple in metaphysics. I have learned more from your writings in this kind than from all others put together . . . I never thought of calling in question your principles until the conclusions you draw from them in the *Treatise of human nature* made me suspect them . . ."¹⁵

We know little about Reid's personal religious life and activities. According to McCosh, "underneath the calm, unpretentious demeanour, there was a deep fountain of devout feeling ready to burst out on certain occasions. We are told that, in dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he could not refer to the love of Christ without tears running down his eyes."¹⁶ Within the Scottish Kirk Reid belonged to the group of the "moderates" and defended a balanced equilibrium between mind and sentiment in the expressions of the Christian faith. He very much opposed the outbursts of emotionalism among some Evangelicals. In his opinion, "a rational piety and devotion towards God is the

12. Reid's "Latinised style" received some criticism. David Hume did not share these censures, and in appreciation for his comments Reid wrote the following: "Your judgement of the style indeed gives me great consolation, as I was very diffident of my self in regard to English, and I have been indebted to Drs Campbel and Gerard for many corrections of that kind" (*Correspondence*, 31).

13. In *The Correspondence of Thomas Reid*, of the 131 letters collected 21 are addressed to Reid, and 103 are from him. In the list of these letters we find the names of George Turnbull, Hugh Blair, Lord Kames, David and Andrew Skene, William and James Gregory, Dugald Stewart, Jeremy Bentham, David Hume, and Lord Monboddo. In the list we find more than twenty letters addressed to Lord Kames.

14. Letter to Mrs. Drummond, *Correspondence*, 161.

15. Written from King's College, Aberdeen, 18 March, 1763. *Correspondence*, 31. In the last paragraph of this letter Reid writes: "Your friendly adversaries Drs Campbel and Gerard, as well as Dr. Gregory return their compliments to you respectfully. A little *Philosophical Society* here, of which all the three are members, is much indebted to you for its entertainment. Your company would, although we are all good Christians, be more acceptable than that of Saint Athanasius."

16. *Scottish Philosophy*, 185.

7. Butler's *Analogy of Religion* reinforced the providential naturalism to which Reid had been introduced by Turnbull at Aberdeen. In his own way, and to a certain degree, Reid followed Butler in his rational approach to God through the "argument" of nature. However, he warns us, we ought to be cautious in the use of Butler's analogical method. "By this method, things less known, but which keep a certain similitude with others better known, a certain degree of probable knowledge is reached. But since this kind of reasoning can afford only probable evidence at best, so unless great caution be used, we are apt to be led into error by it" (*Intellectual Powers*, 52, 53). Butler's *Of the nature of virtue*, appended to the *Analogy*, made even a stronger impact on the young Reid. In this treatise Butler levelled a vigorous refutation of hedonism and the notion that self-interest is a decisive factor in human conduct. Undoubtedly, the inspiring ideas of Butler's thought can be traced in much of Reid's moral philosophy.

8. *Correspondence*, 43.

9. *Ibid.*, 46.

10. *Ibid.*, 45.

11. *Ibid.*, 36.

most powerful motive to virtue.”¹⁷ He judged the religiosity of some sectors of the Kirk as narrow, gloomy and “enthusiastic.” Writing to his friend Dr. Andrew Skene, of Aberdeen, he judged the religiosity of the people in Glasgow in these terms: “I think the common people here and in the neighbourhood greatly inferior to the common people with you. They are Boeotian in their understanding, fanatical in their religion, and clownish in their dress and manners. The clergy encourage this fanaticism too much, and find it the only way to popularity. I often hear a gospel here which you know nothing about; for you neither hear it from the pulpit, nor will you find it in the Bible.”¹⁸ For many years Reid acted as university representative at the General Assembly of the Scottish Church—first of King’s College and later of the University of Glasgow. He was a Whig and a Presbyterian. He was active in charitable causes and in social reforms. He supported the new Glasgow infirmary and the prison reforms of the city. He also joined efforts with William Wilberforce in the antislavery movement.

For some time he was a sympathizer of the French Revolution, and even contributed financially to the National Assembly. This, of course, was judged scandalous by many of his fellow countrymen, including some of his colleagues at Glasgow University. Some of his political views were also polemical and were contested by some of his contemporaries. Although he was always firm in his conviction that “a state must depend upon God no less than an individual, and can prosper only by his blessing and favour,” later in life, his view of society as “a scramble for money” drove him to advocate utopian ideas of the State, which he finally discarded on account of the fallen condition of men. “Therefore” he wrote “let us not expect perfection in individuals, in societies, or in governments. We are conscious of many imperfections in ourselves. Those who hold the reins of government are men of like passions and have great temptations.”¹⁹ Although we greatly value his contributions in the field of philosophy, we cannot, however, accept *in toto* his ideas in other disciplines. No doubt we can learn much from Reid’s political thought, but in this field he is not certainly a recommended leader to follow. Besides, as he himself recognised, this was not the specialised sphere of his vocational studies.

Reid retired from teaching in 1780, at the age of seventy—apparently because he was losing his hearing and because he wanted to write up a more complete account of his philosophy.

After his wife died in 1792, he wrote to his friend and disciple Dugald Stewart: “By the loss of my bosom-friend, with whom I lived fifty two years, I am brought into a kind of new world, at a time of life when old habits are not easily forgot, or new ones acquired. But every world is God’s world, and I am thankful for the comforts He has left me . . . I have more health than at my time of life I had any reason to expect. I walk about; entertain myself with reading what I soon forget; can converse with one person, if he articulates distinctly, and is within ten inches of my left ear; go to church, without hearing one word of what is said.”²⁰ He often repeated that, “in distress and affliction, the firm persuasion that nothing befalls us but by the appointment or permission of our Father in heaven, is the truest source of

consolation to a pious mind.”²¹ In a letter to his friend James Gregory, at the death of his wife, he wrote: “all the blessings of this world are transient and uncertain; and it be but a melancholy scene if there were no prospect of another.”²² At the thought of death he found a calm expectation of victory in the promises of his Christian faith: “Death is an evil which we must all undergo. And while a man fears death it is impossible he can be happy. This enemy lurks in every corner of his body. It is carried about by every element. And he is liable to its attack every moment. No man therefore can enjoy real tranquillity of mind until he has overcome the fear of death.”²³ After repeated strokes of palsy he died October 7, 1796, and was buried in the family plot in the College Church yard, Glasgow.

REID’S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

The treatises

“Common sense, is part of our natural constitution; its truthfulness is therefore part of the providential arrangement of nature.”²⁴

The basic ideas of Thomas Reid are contained in two main works: *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, and *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*.²⁵ The first of these treatises, of nearly 500 pages, appeared in 1765 and, as already mentioned, the origins of it lay in Reid’s years as a country parson in New Machar (1737–51), when the publication of Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739 prompted him to elaborate a refutation of the theses held by his fellow countryman. In his “Dedication” to the Earl of Findlater and Seafield, Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, Reid states that “there was a necessity to call in question the principles upon which the *Treatise of Human Nature* was founded in order to combat the threat of human scepticism.”

In all his works Reid submits Hume’s “arguments against the uncertainties and contradictions of reason” to a severe criticism. To affirm, he says, that all demonstrative knowledge is only probability and leaves at last no evidence at all, is real insanity. “To pretend to prove by reasoning that there is no force in reason does indeed look like a philosophical delirium. A common symptom of delirium is to think that all other men are fools or mad. This appears to have been the

21. *Practical Ethics*, 119, 120.

22. *Correspondence*, 168.

23. *Practical Ethics*, 136.

24. *Ibid.*, 42.

25. Besides these works, we will occasionally refer to his *Practical Ethics*, his *Correspondence*, and other miscellaneous writings. The *Practical Ethics* are “lectures and papers on Natural Religion, Self-Government, Natural Jurisprudence, and the Law of Nations,” edited from the manuscripts preserved in the Aberdeen University Library, and with an introduction by Knud Haakonssen (Princeton University Press, 1990: hereafter *Practical Ethics*); *The correspondence of Thomas Reid*, edited by Paul Wood (Edinburgh University Press, 2002: hereafter as *Correspondence*). As secondary writings by Thomas Reid, mention must be made of the following works: *An Essay on Quantity*; *A Brief Account of Aristotle’s Logic*; *A Statistical Account of the University of Glasgow*; *Philosophical Orations of Thomas Reid*—delivered at graduation ceremonies in King’s College, Aberdeen. *The Birkwood Collection* (MSS. 2131/1–8), of the Aberdeen University Library, comprises over 800 items relating to the writings and teachings of Thomas Reid. The manuscripts range from fair copies of papers on specific topics to miscellaneous research notes, abstracts of works read, and occasional mathematical calculations. Reid’s lectures on natural theology do not seem to have survived.

17. *Practical Ethics*, 256.

18. *Correspondence*, 40.

19. *Practical Ethics*, 255, 286, 298.

20. *Correspondence*, 230.

case of our author, who concluded ‘that all those are certainly fools who reason or believe any thing.’” As we shall see, Reid firmly held that the natural faculties by which we distinguish truth from error are not fallacious. “These faculties are marvellous endowments given by God to man.”²⁶ Although the *Inquiry* revolves around the main theses advanced by Hume, the scope of Reid’s argumentation includes also substantial references to the views held by Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, Berkeley and other thinkers on the subject of knowledge.²⁷

In 1785, twenty years later, appeared the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, a voluminous work of 651 pages. In the *Dedication* of this work Reid writes: “the substance of these essays was delivered annually, for more than twenty years, in lectures to a large body of the more advanced students in the University of Glasgow, and for several years before in King’s College” (Aberdeen, 1751–64).

Many of the themes developed in the *Inquiry* reappear in the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, but besides a repeated reference to the senses, the epistemological sphere is enlarged with the inclusion of the themes of memory, imagination, judgment, and reasoning.²⁸ In the “Preliminary” of the *Intellectual Powers* Reid employs more than twenty pages in the “Explication of Words,” since, according to him, “there is no greater impediment to the advancement of knowledge than the ambiguity of words.” Sophistry, he adds, has been more effectually excluded from mathematics and natural philosophy than from other sciences, mathematicians having had the wisdom to define accurately the terms they use, and to lay down as axioms the first principles on which their reasoning is grounded. Accordingly we find no parties among mathematicians, and hardly any disputes. “When men attempt to define things that cannot be defined, their definitions will always be either obscure or false. The most simple operations of the mind are intuitively known and admit to no logical definition; all we can do is to describe them.”²⁹

In the “Preface” of the *Essays* Reid also deems it necessary to advance the view that “human knowledge may be reduced to two general heads, according as it relates to the body or to the mind—to things physical, or to things intellectual.” “The branch which treats of the nature and operations of the mind has by some been called Pneumatology. And to the one or the other of these branches the principles of all the sciences belong.”³⁰

His works, though expository throughout, have all along a polemical front, but always bearing a calm, a polite, and benign aspect. He claims credit in regard to two points: in establishing the grounds for a solid theory of sense perception, and for giving final form to the principles of common sense knowledge.

26. *Intellectual Powers*, 562, 563.

27. Our quotations and references to the *Inquiry* are from the reprint edition of Thoemmes Antiquarian Books Ltd Bristol, 1990 (hereafter *Inquiry*). In this work Reid always refers to Hume as “the author of the *Treatise of Human Nature*,” and never by name.

28. Our quotations and references are from the reprint edition of the Edinburgh University Press, 2002, based on a copy of the only edition of the *Intellectual Powers* published in Reid’s lifetime in 1785 (hereafter *Intellectual Powers*). In this essay Hume is mentioned by name.

29. *Inquiry*, 367; *Intellectual Powers*, 17, 19.

30. *Intellectual Powers*, 11, 12, 13.

The role of reason

“Our rational and moral powers, which are the glory of the human nature, are a faint image of the Deity, and by them it is that we are capable of resembling him in some degree as well as of knowing him.”³¹

For Reid reason holds the secrets and treasures of human wisdom. According to him, man must honour God by exercising his rational powers in the knowledge of himself and in the knowledge of the world around him. In the title page of all his works appears the biblical question of Job 38: 36: *Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?* The mind of man is the noblest work of God that our reason discovers to us, and therefore on account of its dignity deserves to be known. Our intellectual powers are wisely fitted by the Author of our nature for the discovery of truth, as far as suits our present state. Error is not their natural issue, any more than disease is of the natural structure of the body. Yet, as we are liable to various diseases of body from accidental causes, external and internal, so we are, from like causes, liable to wrong judgements. “It is true that Revelation teaches the truths of natural religion, as well as other truths which reason could not discover. But it is no less true that reason as well as Revelation comes from God. Both are lights afforded us by the Father of Light, and we ought to make the best use of both, and not to put out one that we may use the other. Revelation is given to us as *reasonable* creatures, not to hide the use of reason, but to aid and encourage it. As the best things must be abused, so Revelation itself when men lay aside the use of reason may be made the tool of low superstition or wild fanaticism.” For Reid, philosophy and all other intellectual pursuits fall within the noble activities God has reserved for a being created in his own image. Against the sceptical attitudes about the capabilities of reason to achieve truth, Reid counteracts by insisting that “we are born under a necessity of trusting our reasoning and judging powers.”³²

On the senses and perceptions

“By perception I understand that immediate knowledge which we have of external objects by our senses. This I take to be the proper meaning of the word in the English language. And I would wish that philosophers to keep by this meaning. The knowledge we have immediately by our five senses is of a particular kind, and deserves a particular name, and I know no name so proper as that of perception.”³³

According to Reid’s own illustration, all that we know of reality may be compared to a tree, which has its root, trunk, and branches. In this tree of knowledge, perception is the root, common understanding is the trunk, and the sciences are the branches. In the *Inquiry* Reid deals extensively with the senses as original inlets of knowledge. He goes over the senses one by one, beginning with the simpler: smell and taste, and goes on to the more complex: hearing, touch, and seeing. We perceive no external object, but by means of certain bodily organs which God has given us for that purpose. We perceive no object unless some impression is

31. *Practical Ethics*, 117.

32. *Practical Ethics*, 105, 108, 109; *Intellectual Powers*, 11, 12, 13, 527, 480–483, 487.

33. *Correspondence*, 107.

made upon the organ of sense. Sensations are “the signs of external objects.” “The Supreme Being has seen fit to limit the power of perception; so that we perceive not without such impressions; and this is all we know of the matter. Our perceptions and sensations correspond to those impressions.” Perception is applied only to external objects, not to those that are in the mind itself. When I feel pain, says Reid, I do not say that I perceive pain, but that I feel it, or that I am conscious of it. Thus perception is distinguished from consciousness. The immediate object of perception must be something present, and not what is past. We may remember what is past, but do not perceive it. Perception is most properly applied to the evidence that we have of external objects by our senses.³⁴

God has given man some intelligence of his works by what our senses inform us of external things, and by what our consciousness and reflection inform us concerning the operations of our own minds. “Whatever can be inferred from these common informations, by just and sound reasoning, is true and legitimate philosophy. But what we add to this from conjecture is all spurious and illegitimate.” The evidence of sense needs no proof. No man seeks a reason for believing what he sees or feels; and if he did, it would be difficult to find one. But though he can give no reason for believing his senses, his belief remains as firm as if it were grounded on demonstration. “Shall we say then that this belief is the inspiration of the Almighty? I think this may be said in a good sense, for I take it to be the immediate effect of our constitution, which is the work of the Almighty.”³⁵

According to the fundamentals of common sense philosophy, in the perception of an external object we not only have a notion more or less distinct of the object perceived, but also an irresistible and immediate conviction of its existence. This conviction is not by a train of reasoning and argumentation. Perception commands our belief upon its own authority, and disdains to rest its authority upon any reasoning whatsoever. No man thinks of seeking a reason to believe what he sees; and before we are capable of reasoning, we put no less confidence in our senses than after. This instinctive belief is one of the best gifts of God. “I thank the Author of my being who bestowed it upon me, before the eyes of my reason were opened, and still bestows it upon me to be my guide, where reason leaves me in the dark. And now I yield to the direction of my senses, not from instinct only, but from confidence and trust in a faithful and beneficent Monitor, grounded upon the experience of his paternal care and goodness.”

In all this argumentation Reid endeavours to show also how groundless the thesis of those that cast a shadow of doubt on the testimony of the senses are. Descartes, for instance, held that the testimony of our senses, and of all our faculties, excepting that of consciousness, ought not to be taken for granted, but ought to be proved by argument.³⁶ In a letter to Henry Home—Lord Kames, Reid writes that the “sole purpose of perception is to give us information of things

about us. But sensations, besides the purpose of giving us pleasure and amusement, answer another great purpose: they are signs by which we learn to distinguish things about us. We no sooner feel the sensation, than, as it were by inspiration, we have that conception and knowledge of the external object that we call by the name of perception. In some cases the perception is connected with the sensation by our constitution, previous to all experience. This I call original perception. Sometimes the sensation is connected with the perception by experience and custom. This I call acquired perception. Thus [when] I hear a drum, originally, I should only have a certain sensation of a sound, but by custom I perceive it to be a drum.”³⁷

Operations of the mind

“Human knowledge is like the steps of a ladder. The first step consists of particular truths discovered by observation or experiment. The second collects these into more general truths. The third into still more general. But there are many such steps before we come to the top, that is, to the most general truths.”³⁸

George Turnbull, Francis Hutcheson, and Reid were the first to avow, and declare, that the laws of the human mind were to be discovered only by internal observation, and that mental philosophy consisted in the elaboration of these laws. They held that consciousness—an internal sense—was as much to be trusted as the external senses; and that as we can form a natural philosophy out of the facts furnished by the one, we can construct a mental philosophy by the facts furnished by the other.³⁹ In another letter to Lord Kames, Reid writes: “You observe justly that philosophers cannot be too accurate in the use of terms. Yet I apprehend that in speaking of the operation of the mind, the vulgar are more accurate than the philosophers. The vulgar consider conception, perception, memory, and consciousness as different operations of the mind, and as these have different names, we rarely find any ambiguity in those names but among philosophers. On this account I charge Mr. Hume to corrupt the English language to a much greater degree than any of his predecessors. Mr. Hume has taught us to call these and all other operations, both of understanding and will, *perceptions*. He speaks of the perceptions of memory and the perceptions of imagination. This I think is an adulteration of the language; and I think he might as well speak of the hearing of sight or the smelling of touch. I agree with your Lordship that nothing can be more absurd than David Hume’s doctrine on this subject; I am apt to think he has been led into it, *first*, by giving the name of perception to all the operations of the mind. From this it must follow that belief is either a perception or the modification of perception. *Secondly*, by confounding the operations of the mind

37. *Correspondence*, 113.

38. In a letter to Lord Kames, *Correspondence*, 93.

39. “But while the Scottish school held by the principle of induction, in common with Newton and all inquirers into material phenomena, it had two other principles by which it separated from all physicists. It observes the operations of the mind by the inner sense—that is, by consciousness. In this philosophy consciousness, the perception of self in its various states, comes into greater prominence than it had ever done before.” James McCosh, *The Princeton Review*, Vol. 2, July–Dec. 1882, p. 32.

34. *Inquiry*, 382; *Intellectual Powers*, 74, 76, 226, 227, 192, 22, 23.

35. *Intellectual Powers*, 230, 231.

36. *Intellectual Powers*, 97, 99; *Inquiry*, 374. “Reason, says the sceptic, is the only judge of truth . . . Why, sir, should I believe the faculty of reason more than that of perception; they came both out of the same shop, and were made by the same artist; and if he puts one piece of false ware into my hands, what should hinder him from putting another?” *Inquiry*, 369, 370.

with their objects. When I perceive, I must perceive something; when I believe, I must believe something. But in his system, the mind that perceives or believes, the act of perceiving or believing, and the object perceived or believed, are not three different things, they are all one and the same thing, and called by one name. Aristotle often made distinctions where there was no difference. Our friend David Hume attempts to abolish distinctions, which common sense has led all mankind to make, and which are interwoven in the structure of all languages."⁴⁰

What Reid has to say on the operations of the mind is important in order to refute fundamental principles held by the empiricists: "I cannot reconcile this immediate knowledge of the operations of our own minds with Locke's theory that all knowledge consists in perceiving the agreement or disagreement of ideas. Neither can I reconcile it with Hume's theory that to believe the existence of anything is nothing else than to have a strong and lively conception of it. The operations of our minds dispose us to the least doubt of their real existence; they fall within the dictates of common sense. For from this source of consciousness is derived all that we know, and indeed all we can know of the structure, and of the powers of our own minds; from which we may conclude that there is no branch of knowledge that stands upon a firmer foundation; for surely no kind of evidence can go beyond that of consciousness." Hume, affirms Reid, confounds all distinction between the operations of the mind and their objects. To perceive without having an object of perception is impossible.⁴¹

On apprehension, judgement and reasoning

By the *mind* of man we understand that in him which thinks, remembers, reasons and wills. By the *operations* of the mind we understand every mode of thinking of which we are conscious. The *faculties* of the mind point to those powers that are inherent in our constitution. There are other powers that are acquired by use, exercise or study, that are not called faculties, but *habits*. There must be something in the constitution of the mind necessary to our being able to acquire habits, and this is called *capacity*. By attending to such operations of the mind as thinking, memory and reasoning, "we perceive that there must be something which thinks, remembers and reasons, which we call the mind. When we attend to any change that happens in nature, judgement informs us that there must be a *cause* of this change, which had power to produce it; and thus we get the notions of *cause* and *effect*, and of the relation between them. When we attend to body, we perceive that it cannot exist without *space*."⁴² The powers of the mind are many and various. The basic powers of *judgement* and *reasoning* are preceded by *apprehension*: "Without apprehension of the objects, concerning which we judge, there can be no judgement; as little can there be reasoning without both apprehension and judgement. These three operations, therefore, are not independent of each other. The second includes the first, and the third includes both the first and second. But the first may be exercised without either of the other two. The second operation in this division is *judgement*, by which objects of thought are compared and some relation of agreement or disagreement is

established. Truth and falsehood are qualities which belong to judgement only."⁴³

The power of *reasoning* is very nearly allied to that of *judgement*; and on this account, the same name is often given to both. Yet there is a distinction between reasoning and judging. Reasoning is the process by which we pass from one judgement to another which is the consequence of it. But judgements are distinguished into intuitive, which are not grounded upon any preceding judgement, and discursive, which are deduced from some preceding judgement by reasoning. "In all reasoning, therefore, there must be a proposition inferred, and one or more from which it is inferred. And this power of inferring, or drawing a conclusion, is only another name for reasoning; the proposition inferred being called the *conclusion*, and the proposition, or propositions from which it is inferred, the *premises*. Reasoning may consist of many steps—the first conclusion being a premise to a second, that to a third, and so on, till we come to the last conclusion. A process consisting of many steps of this kind is so easily distinguished from judgement that it is never called by that name. But when there is only a single step to the conclusion, the distinction is less obvious, and the process is sometimes called judgement, sometimes reasoning." Reasoning is linked with abstraction. The simplest objects of sense appear both complex and indistinct until by abstraction they are analysed into their more simple elements; and the same may be said of the objects of memory and of consciousness. Without the powers of abstraction and generalisation, it would be impossible to reduce things into any order and method, by dividing them into genera and species. The power of reasoning is justly accounted one of the prerogatives of human nature. We can conceive an understanding superior—superior to human—to which that truth appears intuitively, a truth that we can only discover by reasoning. For this cause, though we must ascribe judgement to the Almighty, we do not ascribe reasoning to him, because it implies some defect or limitation of understanding.⁴⁴

Memory

Memory is an original faculty given us by the Author of our being, of which we can give no account, but that we are so made. The senses give us information of things only as they exist in the present moment; and this information, if it were not preserved by memory, would vanish instantly. Therefore memory must always have an object. Every man who remembers must remember something, and that which he remembers is called the object of his remembrance. In this memory agrees with perception, but differs from sensation, which has no object but the feeling itself. We perceive material objects and their sensible qualities by our senses; but how they give us this information, and how they produce our belief in it, we know not. "We know many past events by memory; but how it gives this information, I believe is inexplicable. *Our original faculties are all unaccountable*. Of these memory is one." The testimony of memory is immediate; it claims our assent upon its own authority.⁴⁵ The notion of *duration* is a result of memory. As soon as we remember any thing, we must have a notion of duration. Duration is

40. *Correspondence*, 106, 109.
42. *Ibid.*, 20, 21, 422.

41. *Intellectual Powers*, 471, 26.

43. *Ibid.*, 65, 66, 411, 414.

45. *Ibid.*, 253, 257, 258, 474.

44. *Ibid.*, 543, 388, 542.

indissolubly linked with time. Without *time* there can be nothing that has duration. All limited duration is comprehended in time, and all limited extension in *space*. Without *space* there can be nothing that is extended. “To me nothing seems more absurd than that there should be extension without anything extended; or motion without anything moved; yet I cannot give reason for my opinion, because it seems to me self-evident, and an immediate dictate of my nature.” Time and space, “in their capacious womb, contain all finite existences, but are contained by none. We are at a loss as to what category or class of things we ought to refer time and space to. They are not beings, but rather the receptacles of every created being without which it could not have had the possibility of existence.” “Extension,” adds Reid, “seems to be a quality suggested to us, by the very same sensations that suggest other qualities. The notion of extension is so familiar to us from infancy, and so constantly obtruded by everything we see and feel, that we are apt to think it obvious how it comes into the mind; but upon narrower examination we shall find it utterly inexplicable.”⁴⁶ Reid distinguishes between *consciousness* and memory. Consciousness is only of things present. To apply consciousness to things past, which sometimes is done, is to confound consciousness with memory. What never had an existence cannot be remembered; what has no existence *at present* cannot be the object of perception or of consciousness; but what never had, nor has any existence, may be *conceived*—we may conceive or imagine what has no existence. It is as easy to conceive a winged horse or a centaur, as it is to conceive a horse or a man. Consequently, to *conceive*, to *imagine*, to *apprehend*, when taken in the proper sense, signify an act of the mind which implies no belief or judgement at all; it is an act of the mind by which nothing is affirmed or denied, and therefore can neither be true nor false.⁴⁷

Will

In discussing the human *will* as a natural faculty, Reid includes it among the inherent first principles of our constitution. “A first principle of our nature is that we have some degree of power over our actions, and the determinations of our will. All power must be derived from the Fountain of power, and of every good gift. Upon his good pleasure its continuance depends, and it is always subject to his control. Beings to whom God has given any degree of power and understanding to direct them to the proper use of it, must be accountable to their Maker.” As to the powers of the will and of the understanding, says Reid, we are not to think that they are independent from each other. There can be no act of the will that is not accompanied with some act of understanding; and there is no act of the understanding that is not also accompanied with some act of the will. The will must have an object, and that object must be apprehended or conceived in the understanding. It is therefore to be remembered that in most, if not all operations of the mind, both faculties concur, and we range the operation under the faculty that has the largest share in it.⁴⁸ Writing to Lord Kames, Reid says: “the word *will* is ambiguous being sometimes put to signify desire, sometimes command. Besides this it is sometimes the power or faculty of willing, sometimes to

signify an act or exertion of that power. The like ambiguity we find almost in every word by which we express our mental powers. What then is volition? I cannot define it. But I think I may call it an exertion to effect something which I believe to be in my power.”⁴⁹

The Trojan horse of the ideas

“In the history of philosophy, the theory of ideas, like the Trojan horse, had a specious appearance both of innocence and beauty: but if those philosophers had known that it carried in its belly death and destruction to all science and common sense, they would not have broken down their walls to give it admittance. To argue from hypothesis against facts, is contrary to the rules of true philosophy”⁵⁰

Reid has made a special contribution to philosophy by removing these confusing intermediaries of knowledge which are called *ideas*. McCosh is correct in his evaluation that “the service which Reid has done to philosophy by banishing these intermediaries between perception and its external object cannot be overestimated.”⁵¹ We believe that for this contribution alone Reid deserves prominent recognition in the history of philosophy. The word *idea* occurs so frequently in modern philosophical writings that it is necessary to make some observations upon it. In popular language the word *idea* signifies the same thing as conception, apprehension, notion. To have an idea of anything, is to conceive it. Sometimes in popular language a man’s ideas signify his opinions. Idea, according to a long philosophical tradition, does not signify that act of the mind that we call thought or conception, but some *object* of thought. It was Plato who introduced the word *idea* into philosophy. According to him *ideas* are the only objects of true knowledge. From Plato to Hume all philosophers agree that we do not perceive external objects immediately, and that the immediate object of perception must be some image present to the mind. According to Locke—whose views on the subject resemble the Platonic allegory of the cave—“ideas are nothing but the immediate objects of the minds in thinking.” Knowledge for him is nothing else but “the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas.”⁵² Many are the philosophers of our time that take for granted that external objects are not immediately perceived by us, but only by ideas. According to them, the external “thing” is the remote substratum of the image of that object in the mind—or the *phenomenon*, as Kant would call it. Taken in this sense, argues Reid, “*ideas* are nothing else but a mere fiction of philosophers.”⁵³ “Bacon had said that philosophic speculation needs weights rather than wings. Reid thought that philosophy had been injured rather than promoted by the genius of its investigators.”⁵⁴

Descartes patterned the modern scheme of thought by building his whole system on the idea of the *cogito* (the “I think” of consciousness). Upon this foundation he proceeded to prove the existence of matter and spirit—and even the very existence of God. According to George Berkeley, the Bishop of Cloyne, there is no such thing as matter in the

46. *Ibid.*, 218, 258, 259–261; *Inquiry*, 120, 121.

47. *Intellectual Powers*, 478, 64–65, 24. 48. *Ibid.*, 64–65, 478.

49. *Correspondence*, 131, 134.

50. *Inquiry*, 150–151.

51. James McCosh, *Scottish Philosophy*, 195.

52. John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, I.1.8, p. 47; II.xii.17, p. 163.

53. *Intellectual Powers*, 27, 28, 29, 31.

54. J. McCosh, *The Princeton Review*, Vol. 2, July–Dec., 1882, p. 328.

universe; sun and moon, earth and sea, and our own bodies, have no existence when they are not the objects of thought; all that is in the universe may be reduced to minds, and ideas in the mind. The creation of the world consisted in the production of ideas in the minds of finite spirits. By reaching this ridiculous conclusion, comments Reid, Berkeley clearly showed that the doctrine of the ideas could not lead us to a safe harbour. "It may perhaps seem strange that Locke, who wrote so much about ideas, should not see those consequences which Berkeley thought so obviously deducible from that doctrine. Locke was not willing to accept that the doctrine of ideas should be thought to be loaded with such consequences."⁵⁵ Hume adopted the theory of ideas in its full extent, and, in consequence, he held that there is neither matter nor mind in the universe, nothing but *impressions* and *ideas*. What we call *body*, he says, is only a bundle of sensations; and what we call the *mind* is only a bundle of thoughts, passions, and emotions, without any *subject*, or *self* to claim the property of impressions and ideas.⁵⁶ Perception, according to Hume, is every operation of the mind: love, hatred, desires, commands and doubts are perceptions. "This, affirms Reid, is an intolerable abuse of language, which no philosopher has authority to introduce. The structure of all languages is grounded upon common notions, which Hume's philosophy opposes and endeavours to overturn."⁵⁷ We see that Locke was aware, no less than Descartes and his followers, that the doctrine of ideas made it necessary, and at the same time difficult, to prove the existence of an external material world, because the mind, according to them, perceives nothing but a world of ideas. The existence of a material world, and of what we perceive by our senses, is not self-evident.

*"The wisdom of philosophy is set in opposition to the common sense of mankind. I despise philosophy. Let my soul dwell with common sense; let scholastic sophisters entangle themselves in their own cobwebs; I am resolved to take my own existence, and the existence of other things upon truth, and to believe that snow is cold, and honey sweet, whatever they may say to the contrary."*⁵⁸

In an attempt to solve the consequences of the absurd theses around the world of the ideas, Descartes ended up by founding the veracity of sense information on the assumption that God, who has given us our senses, is no deceiver, and therefore the senses cannot be fallacious. Nicolas de Malebranche agreed with Descartes that the existence of a material world requires proof, but being dissatisfied with Descartes' argument from the perfection of the Deity, thought that the only solid proof is from "divine revelation." "If it be not admitted as a first principle, that our faculties are not fallacious" affirms Reid "nothing else can be admitted." "The first reflection I would make on this philosophical opinion is that it is directly contrary to the universal sense of men who have not been instructed in philosophy. When we see the sun or moon, we have no doubt that the very objects that we immediately see are very far distant from us, and

from one another. We have not the least doubt that this is the sun and moon which God created some thousands of years ago, and which have continued to perform their evolution in the heavens ever since. But how are we astonished when the philosopher informs us that we are mistaken in all this; that the sun and moon which we see, are not, as we imagine, many miles distant from us, and from each other, but that they are in our own mind; that they had no existence before we saw them, and will have none when we cease to perceive and to think of them; because the objects we perceive are only ideas in our own minds, which can have no existence a moment longer than we think of them."⁵⁹

On the first principles of common sense knowledge

*"... But are we to admit nothing but what can be proved by reasoning? Then we must be sceptics indeed, and believe nothing at all."*⁶⁰

Reid held a providential naturalism with regard to many important concepts. In Reid's usage, the expression "common sense" refers to original principles implanted in our minds by the Creator. According to him, *all knowledge and all science must be built upon principles that are self-evident, necessary and universal*, and of such principles every man who has common sense is a competent judge. Self-evident truths, such as the axiom of *causality*, are to be exempted from critical inquiry; they are primary data of intellectual thought. The principles of common sense are inescapable or incontestable, and are the ultimate foundation of all true knowledge.

Because common sense is part of our natural constitution, it is—like nature in general—instituted to fulfil its ostensible function in Creation by helping us to survive and lead human lives with knowledge. Its truthfulness is, therefore, part of the providential arrangement of nature. The truth of the principles of common sense is above and prior to our observation of them. When Newton established the law of gravitation nobody imagined that he created the law, that he made the law in any sense; he simply discovered it. It existed before he discovered it, and he discovered it because it existed. So it is with fundamental mental principles. They are in the mind just as gravitation and chemical affinity are in the earth and heavens, whether we take notice of them or not. Being there, we are able to discover them, find how they work, and to generalise their operations and express them in laws.

These fundamental principles being combined, unfolded, and expressed, constitute mental philosophy, which is true so far as these are properly observed and formulated. In a matter of common sense, affirms Reid, every man is no less a competent judge than a mathematician is in mathematical demonstration; and there must be a great presumption that the judgement of mankind in such a matter is the natural issue of those faculties which God has given them. "Who can doubt whether men have universally believed the existence of a material world? Who can doubt whether men have universally believed that every change that happens in nature must have a cause? Who can doubt whether men have universally believed that there is a right and a wrong in human conduct, some things that merit blame, and others

55. *Inquiry*, 172–173; *Intellectual Powers*, 149.

56. *Intellectual Powers*, 32, 126, 127, 161–162, 163. What other authors, from the time of Descartes, had called *ideas*, Hume distinguishes into two kinds, *impressions* and *ideas*, comprehending under the first all our sensations, passions and emotions, and under the last, the faint images of these, when we remember or imagine them.

57. *Ibid.*, 532.

58. *Inquiry*, 131, 18, 31.

59. *Intellectual Powers*, 128, 516–517, 172.

60. *Inquiry*, 138.

that that are entitled to approbation?" To doubt this, affirms Reid, is "metaphysical lunacy."⁶¹ "What can fairly be deduced from facts duly observed, or sufficiently attested, is genuine and pure; it is the voice of God, and no fiction of human imagination."⁶²

The subject of common sense, maintains Reid, is inseparable from the general *laws of nature*. "The laws of nature are the rules by which the Supreme Being governs the world. We deduce them only from facts that fall within our own observation." "There is but one way to the knowledge of nature's work: the way of observation and experiment." In a letter to Lord Kames, Reid writes: "All that we know of the material world must be grounded upon the testimony of our senses. Our senses testify particular facts only. From these we collect by induction general facts which we call laws of nature, or natural causes. Thus ascending by a just and cautious induction from what is less to what is more general, we discover—as far as we are able—natural causes or laws of nature. There is no principle in natural philosophy better established than the universal gravitation of matter.

But can this be demonstrated? By no means. This belongs to the realm of self-evident truths."⁶³ The method of *induction*, according to Reid, is the appropriate way to attain any knowledge of nature's work. Taught by Lord Bacon, "who first delineated the strict and severe method of induction, it was reserved for Sir Isaac Newton to point out clearly the road to the knowledge of nature's works."⁶⁴ In a letter to Dugald Stewart, Reid wrote: "I do not think that Lord Bacon has received from posterity a higher degree of admiration than he deserves . . . Did not his *Novum organum* give birth to the art of induction? Was there ever a book in the world that delineated so important an art so justly, and so minutely before that art had an existence? Has not Newton in his optics and in his astronomy followed his precepts, step by step? I think Bacon is too little studied. All the world knows his faults, but few his perfections."⁶⁵ In the method used in their philosophical inquiries, writes McCosh, lays the great difference between the Scots and the Germans: "the Scotch follows the *inductive method*; the German has created and carried out the *critical method*—that maintains that things are not to be accepted as they appear; they are to be searched and sifted. The philosophies that have followed that of Kant in Germany have been a series of criticism, each speculator setting out with his own favourite principle, say with the universal ego, or intuition, or identity, or the absolute, and, carrying it out to its consequences, it has become so inextricably entangled."⁶⁶

First principles are of great significance in the path of truth, and play a decisive role in the structure of common sense philosophy. The first principles, affirms Reid, "are really the dictates of common sense." They are self-evident and do not admit of proof. Their evidence is not demonstrative, but intuitive. Such principles are parts of our constitution, no less than the power of thinking. Reason can neither make nor destroy them; nor can it do any thing without them. All reasoning is from principles. The want of first principles, as in the case of Hume, leads inescapably into scepticism. In ancient thought

the disposition was not to oppose first principles, but to multiply them beyond measure. The tendency in modern thought has been just the opposite: to reduce their number. Descartes offers a remarkable example of extreme reduction. From the existence of his thought—the *cogito*—he infers his own existence and the existence of a supreme and infinitely perfect Being. And from the perfection of the Deity, he infers that his senses, his memory, and the other faculties that God had given him, are not fallacious. The followers of Descartes set out from the same principle, and follow the same method, admitting no other first principle with regard to the existence of things, but their own existence, and the existence of those operations of mind of which they are conscious. From the single principle of the existence of our own thoughts—objects Reid—very little, if any thing can be deduced by just reasoning, especially if we suppose that all our other faculties may be fallacious. Instead, affirms our Scotsman, the first principles include "the existence of *everything* of which I am conscious." *Consciousness*, on the other hand, is an operation of the understanding of its own kind, and cannot be logically defined.⁶⁷

METAPHYSICAL FIRST PRINCIPLES

The subject of our perceptions and our thoughts

Besides the first principles already referred to, the refutation of Hume's sceptical views demanded a strong defence of the so called "metaphysical first principles." Reid used his best intellectual weapons to dismantle with rigour and logic the theses of his fellow countryman.

The *first* of the metaphysical principles that had been called in question by David Hume centred on the *subject* of our perceptions and our thoughts. According to Reid the qualities that we perceive by our senses must have a subject that we call *body*; and the thoughts we are conscious of must have a subject that we call *mind*. It is a natural principle, not deduced by reason, that our sensations of touch indicate something external, extended, figured, hard or soft. We take it for granted that there are certain things that cannot exist by themselves, but must exist in something else to which they belong—as qualities or attributes. Thus motion cannot exist but in something that is moved. In like manner, hardness and softness, sweetness and bitterness, are things that cannot exist by themselves: they are qualities of something that is hard or soft, sweet or bitter. All these qualities belong to a subject—to a substance. That every act or operation supposes an agent, that every quality supposes a subject are things which we do not attempt to prove, but take for granted. "Every man of common understanding discerns this immediately, and cannot entertain the least doubt of it. The belief of it, and the very conception of it, are equally parts of our constitution. If we are deceived in it, we are deceived by Him that made us, and there is no remedy." "It is not more evident that two and two make four, than it is that figure cannot exist, unless there be something that is figured, nor motion without something that is moved. I not only perceive figure and motion, but I perceive them to be qualities: they have a necessary relation to something in which they exist as their subject." "And I believe no man, however sceptical he may be in speculation, can talk on the

61. *Ibid.*, 42, 31, 18, 133, 131.

63. *Correspondence*, 141.

60; *Inquiry*, 2, 455, 266–267, 284, 497–499.

65. *Correspondence*, 211, 212. In Reid's opinion, Bacon was "a great reformer in philosophy." *Ibid.*, 225.

66. *The Princeton Review*, Vol. 2, July–Dec. 1882, 338.

62. *Intellectual Powers*, 121.

64. *Intellectual Powers*, 121, 51,

67. *Intellectual Powers*, 515, 517, 518, 519, 525, 470, 39.

common affairs of life for half an hour without saying things that imply the belief of the reality of these distinctions.” “We say, it must be so, it cannot be otherwise. This expresses only a strong belief, which is indeed the voice of nature, and which therefore in vain we attempt to resist. The difficulty which some have found in admitting this is entirely owing to the theory of ideas.”⁶⁸

Personal identity

On identical grounds Reid develops his views on *personal identity*—that is, our thoughts and sensations must have a subject, a *self*. “Every man of a sound mind finds himself under a necessity of believing his own identity and continued existence. The conviction of this is immediate and irresistible; and if he should lose this conviction, it would be a certain proof of insanity, which is not to be remedied by reasoning.” This conviction is indispensably necessary to all exercise of reason. The operations of reason are made of successive parts. There can be no memory of what is past without the conviction that we existed at the time remembered. From this it is evident that we must have the conviction of our own continued existence and identity as soon as we are capable of thinking or doing any thing, on account of what we have thought, or done, or suffered before; that is, as soon as we are reasonable creatures. Our personal identity, therefore, implies the continued existence of that indivisible thing which we call myself. “The thoughts and feelings of which we are conscious are continually changing, and the thought of this moment is not the thought of the last; but something which I call *myself* remains under this change. If a man asks a proof of this, I confess I can give none; there is evidence in the proposition itself that I am unable to resist. Shall I think that thought can stand by itself without a thinking being?”⁶⁹

Causality

“A final cause is a hymn of praise to the Creator of the world, and therefore every good man will delight in discovering final causes.”⁷⁰

The *second* metaphysical principle that Reid discusses amply is that of *causality*; that is, whatever begins to exist, must have a cause which produced it. Whether things that begin to exist must have a cause was repeatedly called in question by Hume and his followers.

According to Hume, when we have noticed an occurrence usually preceded by another occurrence, we may on discovering the one look for the other. But when we have never seen the events together, we have really nothing to guide us in arguing from the one to the other. We can argue that a watch implies a watchmaker, for we have observed them together; but never having had an experience of the making of a world, we cannot argue that the existence of a world implies the existence of a world maker.

On Hume’s grounds the biblical and traditional philosophical cosmological and even the teleological arguments for the existence of God are left groundless. Reid replied that

traces of design in God’s works point to an intelligent cause. In an exercise of “indirect apologetics,” Reid held that in the operations of the mind, as well as in those of bodies, we know that *certain things are connected*, and invariably follow one another, without being able to discover the chain that goes between them. “When we say that one thing produces another by a law of nature, this signifies no more, but that one thing, which we call in popular language the *cause*, is constantly and invariably followed by another, which we call the *effect*, and that we know not how they are connected. There are laws of nature by which the operations of the mind are regulated; there are also laws of nature that govern the material system. When we hear an unusual sound, the sensation indeed is in the mind, but we know that there is something external that produced this sound. The sensations of touch, of seeing, and hearing, are all in the mind, and can have no existence but when they are perceived. How do they all constantly and invariably suggest the conception and belief of external objects, which exist whether they are perceived or not? No philosopher can give any other answer to this, but that such is the constitution of our nature.”

It is acknowledged by all, that when we have found two things to be constantly conjoined in the course of nature, the appearance of one of them is immediately followed by the conception and belief of the other. The former becomes a natural sign of the latter; and the knowledge of their constant conjunction in time past, whether got by experience or otherwise, is sufficient to make us rely with assurance upon the continuance of that conjunction. All experience is grounded upon a belief that the future will be like the past. The laws of nature are the rules according to which the effects are produced; but there must be a cause that operates according to these rules. “The wise Author of our nature governs nature by fixed laws, so that we find innumerable connections of things which continue from age to age. Without this stability of the course of nature there could be no experience; or, it would be a false guide, and lead us into error and mischief. God hath implanted in human minds an original principle by which we believe and expect the continuance of the course of nature, and the continuance of those connections that we have observed in time past. It is by this general principle of our nature, that when two things have been found connected in time past, the appearance of the one produces the belief of the other.”⁷¹ “Causality stands on the very foundation of the inductive principle. In all ages those who have been unfriendly to religion, have made attempts to weaken the force of the argument for the existence and perfections of the Deity, which is founded on this principle.”⁷²

71. *Inquiry*, 258, 259, 264, 265, 434–438; *Intellectual Powers*, 489. Hume—says McCosh—argues with great force and ingenuity, as Kant did after him, that we are compelled to seek for a cause of every thing; we must also seek for a cause of the Divine Being. In his *Dialogues on Natural Religion* Hume states that we know nothing of cause, except that it has been observed to be the antecedent of its effect. There is no effective way of answering this objection, but by maintaining that an effect necessarily implies a cause. It was on this ground that he was met by Reid, who argues that traces of design in God’s works argue an intelligent cause. Kant deprived himself of the right to argue in this way by making the mind itself impose the relation of causation on events, so that we cannot argue that there is a corresponding law in the things themselves. Kant certainly did not meet the scepticism of Hume in a convincing manner when he supposed that the connection of cause and effect was given by forms of the mind. *Scottish Philosophy*, pp. 135–136.

72. *Intellectual Powers*, 508, 509.

68. *Ibid.*, 43, 44, 463; *Inquiry*, 140, 141–142, 495–496, 497.

69. *Intellectual Powers*, 262, 263, 264, 265, 476.

70. Thomas Reid in a letter to Lord Kames, *Correspondence*, 154.

In the subject of causality the necessary connection between cause and effect is the result of “a light of knowledge by which we see immediately the evidence of it.” “When we attend to the marks of good contrivance that appear in the works of God, every discovery we make in the constitution of the material or intellectual system becomes a hymn of praise to the great Creator and governor of the world. And a man who is possessed of the genuine spirit of philosophy will think it impiety to contaminate the Divine workmanship, by mixing it with those fictions of human fancy called theories and hypotheses, which will always bear the signatures of human folly, no less than the other does of Divine wisdom. But in all ages those who have been unfriendly to the principles of religion, have made attempts to weaken the force of the argument for the existence and perfections of the Deity, which is founded on this principle. That argument has got the name of the argument from final causes; and as the meaning of this name is well understood, we shall use it. The argument from final causes, when reduced to a syllogism, has these two premises: *First*, that design and intelligence in the cause, may, with certainty, be inferred from marks or signs of it in the effect. This is the principle we have been considering, and we may call it the *major* proposition of the argument. The *second*, which we call the *minor* proposition, is that there are in fact the clearest marks of design and wisdom in the works of nature; and the conclusion is, that the works of nature are the effects of a wise and intelligent cause. One must either assent to the conclusion, or deny one or other of the premises.”

According to Reid, causality stands on the very foundation of *the inductive principle*. In causality the appearance of a sign is followed by the belief of the thing signified. “Upon this principle of our constitution, not only acquired perception, but all inductive reasoning, and all our reasoning from analogy is grounded; and therefore, for want of another name, we shall beg leave to call it *the inductive principle*. It is from the force of this principle that we immediately assent to that axiom upon which all our knowledge of nature is built: that effects of the same kind must have the same cause. A child has found the prick of a pin conjoined with pain; hence he believes and knows, that these things are naturally connected; he knows that the one will always follow the other. If any man will call this only an association of ideas, I dispute not about words, but I think he speaks very improperly. For if we express it in plain English, it is a prescience, that things which he has found conjoined in time past, will be conjoined in time to come. And this prescience is not the effect of reasoning, but an original principle of human nature, which I have called *the inductive principle*.”⁷³

LANGUAGE, ETHICS, AND AESTHETICS

Language

The other first principles that according to Reid are also of pivotal importance centre around the subjects of *language*, *ethics*, and *aesthetics*. To these principles Reid devotes lengthy reflections.

Language, writes Reid, “is like a tree, which, from a small seed, grows imperceptibly, till the fowls of the air lodge

in its branches, and the beasts of the earth rest under its shadow. *The seed of language is the natural signs of our thoughts*, which nature has taught all men to use, and all men to understand. But its growth is the effect of the united energy of all who ever did use it.”⁷⁴ There is a much greater similitude than is commonly imagined, between the testimony of nature given by our senses, and the testimony of men given by language. Language is the express image and picture of human thoughts. What is common in the structure of languages indicates a uniformity of opinion in those things upon which that structure is grounded. Whatever we find common to all languages must have a common cause, must be owing to some common notion or sentiment of the human mind. “For in all languages men have expressed thinking, reasoning, willing, loving, hating, by personal verbs, which from their nature require a person who thinks, reasons, wills, loves, or hates. From which it appears that men have been taught by nature to believe that thought requires a thinker, reason a reasoner, and love a lover.” In the testimony of nature given by the senses, as well as in human testimony given by language, things are signified to us by signs. The signs in the natural language and in the language of original perception “have the same signification in all climates and in all nations; and the skill of interpreting them is not acquired, but innate.”⁷⁵

Ethics

The principles of morals, affirms Reid, “must be ranked under the class of necessary truths.” By our moral faculty we have an immediate perception of right and wrong in like manner as we have a perception of black and white in visible objects. If a man had not the faculty given him by God of perceiving certain things in conduct to be right, and others to be wrong, and of perceiving his obligation to do what is right, and not to do what is wrong, he would not be a moral and accountable being. If man be endowed with such a faculty, there must be some things, which, by this faculty, are immediately discerned to be right, and others to be wrong; and therefore there must be in morals, as in other sciences, first principles, which do not derive their evidence from any antecedent principles, but may be said to be intuitively discerned. “The evidence of these fundamental principles of morals appears to me to be intuitive rather than demonstrative . . . in a manner more analogous to the perceptions of sense than to the conclusions of demonstrative reasoning.” “Conscience which is in every man’s breast, is the law of God written in his heart, which he cannot disobey without acting unnaturally, and being self-condemned.” “Right sentiments of the Deity and of his works, not only make the duty we owe to him obvious to every intelligent being, but likewise add the authority of a divine law to every rule of right conduct.”⁷⁶

Aesthetics

In *The intellectual powers of man*, Reid devotes more than fifty pages to the question of aesthetics, or *taste*, as it was

73. *Ibid.*, 508, 509; *Inquiry*, 441–443, 446; *Intellectual Powers*, 457, 497, 498–499.

74. Letter to James Gregory, Professor of mathematics at Edinburgh, *Correspondence*, 192.

75. *Intellectual Powers*, 56, 465, 466, 472, 473; *Inquiry*, 375, 421, 422, 432.

76. *Practical Ethics*, 57, 144; *Intellectual Powers*, 552, 553, 554, 638–639.

usually called in those days. Here also the first principles are operative. “The fundamental rules of poetry and music and painting, and dramatic action and eloquence, have been always the same, and will be so to the end of the world. So there are axioms, even in matters of taste.” “Taste may be true or false, according as it is found on a true or false judgement. And if it may be true or false, it must have first principles.”⁷⁷

Dealing with the subject of the aesthetical *grandeur*—also called the *sublime*—Reid adopts an eulogistic tone of praise at the “contemplation” of divine attributes: “Of all objects of contemplation, the Supreme Being is the most grand. His eternity, his immensity, his irresistible power, his infinite knowledge and unerring wisdom, his inflexible justice and rectitude, his supreme government, conducting all the movement of this vast universe to the noblest ends, and in the wisest manner, are objects which fill the utmost capacity of the soul, and reach far beyond its comprehension. The emotion which this grandest of all objects raises in the human mind, is what we call devotion; a serious recollected temper which inspires magnanimity, and disposes to the most heroic acts of virtue.”

With Francis Hutcheson—whose aesthetics he follows closely—he also maintains that we derive pleasure from the beauty of “uniformity, order, arrangement and imitation.” The sense of beauty is natural to humans and leads us to the conviction that regularity is due to design rather than chance. The beauty of design leads to a purpose and to a cause. In all this we are led to the existence of God, “the benevolent Author of nature.”⁷⁸

CONCLUSION

How many times in this brief exposition of Reid’s thought have we not found a reiterative appeal to the principles of knowledge that by God’s creation are inherent to human nature? By God’s creation there is a marvellous interrelation

77. *Intellectual Powers*, 494, 495.

78. *Intellectual Powers*, 551, 552, 554, 582. Thomas Brown (1778–1820) retained the fundamental doctrine of the Scottish school on the existence of indemonstrable first principles. But more than any of his predecessors he believed that Reid’s list of principles could be restricted in number. We agree with Brown’s observation. Besides the first principles already mentioned—plus the ones of language, ethics, and aesthetics—Reid enlarged the list. “Another first principle appears to me to be that there is a certain regard due to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion. The wise Author of nature has planted in the human mind a propensity to rely upon this evidence before we can give a reason for doing so. This, indeed, puts our judgement almost entirely in the power of those who are about us, in the first period of life; but this is necessary both to our preservation and to our improvement.” “The natural principles by which our judgement and opinions are regulated before we come to our use of reason, seem to be no less necessary to such a being as man, than those natural instincts which the Author of nature hath given us to regulate our actions during that age.” The *principle of credulity*, as Reid calls it, is another original principle implanted in us by the Supreme Being. By it we are led to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us. It is unlimited in children, until they meet with instances of deceit and falsehood, and it retains a very considerable degree of strength through life. “It is the intention of nature, that we should be carried in arms before we are able to walk upon our legs; and it is likewise the intention of nature, that our belief should be guided by the authority and reason of others before it can be guided by our own reason.” *Intellectual Powers*, 480, 482, 483, 487, 488; *Inquiry*, 430–431, 433.

between man’s mind and the reality of the senses. The world is not a mere reflection of *ideas* in the mind, nor a phenomenon of phantasmagorical evanescences. We are what we are by God’s creation and we know what we know by God’s creation. “Common sense” affirms and reaffirms Reid “is part of our natural constitution; its truthfulness is therefore part of the providential arrangement of nature.”⁷⁹ On the principles of common sense philosophy, there is no room for Humean sceptical extravagancies that lead to agnosticism, nor for the solipsistic “creations” of an autonomous Ego. Could we find a better commentary of Romans 1, 19–20, than that afforded by common sense realism on the self-evident principle of causality and design?

It was not Reid’s purpose to construct a complete system of thought as we find, for instance, in the idealist philosophy of Hegel or in the Scholastic *summae* of Thomas Aquinas. Reid’s main preoccupation was not in the *super-structure* of a building but in the *foundation* that supported the whole construction. *This is the great merit of Reid’s philosophy that gives permanent solidity to his principles of common sense thought.* Hegel’s system is nothing but a masterpiece of logical construction erected on shaky feet of clay. A logical system derived from false foundational premises cannot sustain an edifice of truth; and this is so with Hegel and with the legion of thinkers that, like him, have erected their philosophies on the sandy terrain of the autonomous Ego, and not on the rock of biblical creationism.

Against the subjective and relativistic tendencies of long decades of spiritual uncertainty, the *realism* of common sense constitutes a strong bastion of biblical objectivity and a solid refutation of all those theories that have lost anchorage in the factual world of God’s Creation and that try to erect a building of thought solely on the autonomous world of *ideas*. Common sense philosophy stands for a solid endorsement of reason as a God-given faculty to be exercised in all the areas of divine Creation. At a time when large sectors of Christianity have made of *superficial sentimentality* the shaky foundation of faith, a dose of rational common sense philosophy would be an appropriate cure for the intellectual ailments of the day.

There is of late in Europe and in America a renewed interest in the philosophy of Thomas Reid. Evidence of this is the long list of prestigious scholars that are active members of the “Thomas Reid Society” and who are earnestly engaged in organising international congresses and seminars on the Scottish thinker. The increasing number of publications, essays, and articles on Reid that are seeing the light in our day constitute also a promising sign of interest in the great expositor of common sense philosophy. The sad fact that overshadows this revival of interest in Reid is the absence of Reformed thinkers and theologians among the students of his thought. The name of Reid does not appear in the writings of contemporary Reformed scholars. Are there any reasons that explain or justify this silence? Does this silence imply an overall rejection of Reid’s common sense philosophy; or is this silence simply a symptom of regrettable ignorance? *C&S*

79. *Practical Ethics*, 42.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ESMOND BIRNIE

DR ESMOND BIRNIE is a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly. He was educated at the University of Cambridge and the Queen's University of Belfast, where he taught economics until his election in 1998. He has just completed the draft of a political thriller set 40 years in the future. *Christianity & Society* caught up with him in the Members' Bar at Stormont.

C&S: Tell us about your novel.

EB: I am tracing trends that I don't like, both within the UK and Northern Ireland and Europe as a whole, and pointing out where things might end up. I suppose it's a cautionary tale. One way to describe it is as an unnatural union between Tom Clancy and Walter Scott, though I'm not claiming I'd be as good as either of them. It does, I think, have a Christian underpinning in the way so many novels written before 1900 did have in that it reflects on how individuals can grow in good character and act with moral responsibility when caught up in a crisis. It does reflect some of my strong political beliefs, including a warning against increased European integration.

C&S: Your list of political heroes includes such figures as Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Burke, Chalmers, Kuyper, Lincoln, Cromwell, Thatcher, von Stauffenburg, Adenauer and Wilhelm Röpke. What holds this selection together?

EB: An interesting question, which then begs the subsequent question as to what should be the criteria for determining an acceptable hero or person of influence. Should such, for example, be clearly Christian? Indeed, should they subscribe to Reformed theology and thinking in particular?

I would say it would certainly be desirable if they were Christian and Reformed but possibly not essential. I do believe in the possibility of common grace so sometimes non-Christians and non-Reformed people can be enabled, under the working of God's providence, to do good things. Biblical examples could include Cyrus (releasing the Jews) and some of the Roman officials that Paul dealt with (as recorded in Acts).

Here are some more recent examples. Churchill is still rightly regarded as having "saved" (humanly speaking) this country in 1940. His own personal religious beliefs remain somewhat obscure. He did once describe his position on the Church as like that of a flying buttress; supporting it from the outside. Abraham Lincoln would be another political hero of mine. Anyone who reads his speeches will find interesting and profound reflections on the role of divine providence in shaping events in a time of national crisis. There is, however,

a continuing debate about the nature of Lincoln's personal faith. Indeed, was he even a Trinitarian?

Beginning with those most clearly from a Christian and Reformed position, like other "Christians in politics" I have a lot of regard for Lords Wilberforce and Shaftesbury (the former seems to have been quite a wit—one story has him saying something like "I slept and dreamt I was in hell . . . I could not get to the fire for all the bishops!"). Both these nineteenth century leaders showed great perseverance in their causes. They withstood a lot of ridicule. In the case of Shaftesbury the mid nineteenth century English industrial treatment of children was often so horrendous that some degree of regulation was necessary (whatever the demerits of excessive labour market interventions in contemporary society). I am aware that not all features of these two Lords will "map" well onto modern politics in an era of "spin" and mass electorates.

My political ideology could probably be labelled "nineteenth century liberal conservatism" or "conservative liberalism" (I'm not entirely sure which) or, which probably means much the same, "liberal unionism," the latter being a reference to those Liberals who agreed with Gladstone on free trade and reform but parted from him on Home Rule (one interesting example of the liberal unionists was Thomas Sinclair who was a leading light in both the Irish Presbyterian Church and Ulster unionist politics at the turn of the nineteenth century).

Edmund Burke was perhaps the first and maybe the greatest liberal conservative/conservative liberal. Like many others involved in politics I find his writings and example a continuing inspiration. There is a debate as to the nature of his religious beliefs (see the biography by Conor Cruise O'Brien), but I think they were broadly Christian in that he accepted human fallibility and was also committed to fairness. I have found Burke's strictures against abstract statements of rights, particularly in the context of the 1789 Revolution, still resonate today as the whole of the EU, and Northern Ireland in particular, labour under some poorly thought out pieces of human rights and equality law. The human rights "project" and "industry" has become a secular Mosaic law. (I think Alexis de Tocqueville and Lord Acton stand in the tradition of Burke.)

Moving on a couple of decades, one finds the first Conservative Party Prime Minister Robert Peel. I admire Peel as a conservative liberal who put country before party (and not many politicians have done that!) by pushing through the end of the Corn Laws (I have learned that it is

a good rule of thumb that free trade is generally the most desirable economic policy and those who oppose it, whether in the 1830s or 2000s, generally do so because of some selfish sectional interest).

The most recent “nineteenth century conservative liberal/liberal conservative” was probably Margaret Thatcher and like other people who grew up in the 1980s I have certainly been influenced by her. Her apparently more intuitive than intellectual approach to identifying the right course for policies often led her to conclusions which I would agree with. She admitted a Judeo-Christian bias (once saying to the former Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovitz something to the effect of, there are only two religions which matter, yours and mine) and in her late 1980s so-called “Sermon on the Mound” or address to the Church of Scotland I think she was often closer to the mark than her many critics within the established Churches on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish Border. (Wealth, like a cake, has to be made before it can be divided up and so as much priority should be given, morally speaking, to the production of wealth as its distribution.) That all said, her Premiership was marked by many mistakes (quite apart from the Single European Act and the Anglo-Irish Agreement!) because in many cases the notional commitment to Christian values never came through into the legislation (quite the contrary; wider Sunday trading, the beginnings of embryo experimentation). Sadly, the current occupant of Number Ten seems to find it similarly difficult to translate a reputation for personal religiosity into a legislative record which bears any such marks.

Notwithstanding some earlier remarks, I am certainly not “anti-European,” simply opposed to the EU, and so I have a number of Continental influences. Kuyper’s worldview way of thinking was a revelation to me and he seems to be one of the few Christian leaders in the last few hundred years who have combined careful thinking with political action (a writer of big theology books *and* Dutch Prime Minister *and*—even!—a journalist!). A contrasting influence is provided by Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of post-war West Germany from the late 1940s until 1963, who probably shows the conservative Catholic approach at its best with its reliance on natural law and the need to preserve the family as a fundamental unit of society which can be a rock against totalitarianism (the Catholic writer Paul Johnson makes the case for Adenauer in his excellent history *Modern Times* but I would part company from most of Continental “Christian democracy” in its support for ever closer European union. Moving back through German history a few years, I greatly admire von Stauffenburg and many of the other leaders of the resistance to Hitler (especially those moved by Christian ideals). Mid-twentieth century German history provides a cautionary example to all of us as to how wrong thinking can eventually produce horrific actions. Indeed, it is a warning as to how easily the demonic could take over in *any*, apparently well educated and cultured, Western society.

If I could go beyond the political but to linked areas of influence; I trained as an economist and because I did this at Cambridge University the Keynesian influence was very strong. However, I did come to react against this emphasis on government intervention in the economy (the argument, to put it crudely, that it was always possible to “spend your way out of a recession”) because this seemed to be misapplied during the 1950s-70s and certainly was not working well in the 1970s. I am grateful to my university course for forcing

me to read the “greats” in western economics; Adam Smith, Marx, Keynes, Joseph Schumpeter (when listening to some of the clergy making “sub-Marxist” comments on the Third World or Globalisation I have come to feel it is better to go to the horse’s mouth—Karl, himself, even when wrong usually put the arguments much better). Two strong influences on me in terms of trying to develop a Christian approach to economics have been the Scot Thomas Chalmers (who, it should be remembered, was a Professor of economics as well as theology and is actually quoted in J. M. Keynes’ 1936 *General Theory*) and the German Wilhelm Röpke (he made the valid point that a market economy was unlikely to be able to operate well without the moral capital provided by widespread acceptance of Christian values).

Like others of a broadly “conservative” political viewpoint, I have been influenced by a range of philosophers; notably, Hayek, Popper and Isaiah Berlin and especially their demolition job against Marxism. However, I add a cautionary note because I have wondered how far their strictures against a “total” or deterministic system might be turned against Christianity (particularly Reformed theology)? Perhaps there is a future *Christianity & Society* article in this field but I suppose the similarity between a Marxist (if there are any left!) and a Calvinist is that both believe history has a definite plan. The Calvinist, however, believes that plan resides in the mind of God and is therefore accessible only in part to fallen and flawed human beings. As Cromwell said, “I beseech thee in the bowels of Christ, think it possible ye may be wrong.”

So far we have focused on intellectual truth in a propositional form allied to the extent to which politicians and other leaders can give practical expression to such a worldview. I would want to recognise that Christian truth can be applied in this world in an even wider way and especially through art and architecture. This point was, for example, well made by Francis Schaeffer. These areas of human activity may leave monuments behind pointing up to God which will be there long after any particular political reputation or regime has crumbled. So I am happy and proud to be operating within a worldview, broadly Christian and Reformed, which in the past produced such beautiful things as J. S. Bach’s music, seventeenth century Dutch landscape painting (e.g. Ruisdael) or nineteenth century German romantic painting (e.g. C. D. Friedrich or K. F. Schinkel). Man does not live by bread alone and politics and the good society cannot just be about economics.

If I could be provocative (what have I been so far?) I might call my general approach one of “Christendom Calvinism.” In the Mediaeval, pre-Reformation period there was some recognition that all society should be saturated by Christianity. All cultural activities were shaped by that. The flaw in this old Christendom model was that the institutional Church tried to be the medium of command and control. What if, however, the broad approach of Christendom could be yoked to a Calvinist emphasis on divine sovereignty and the authority of the Bible in each of the spheres of human activity? It is at least a vision even if not one which is likely to be realised any time soon. I suppose the critic might argue that the old Christendom was at least partly totalitarian (Popper argued this in his *The Open Society and its Enemies*). The dilemma for the Christian in politics trying to recover a sense of the authority of Christ over all areas of society is one of how far a recognition of such authority would be compatible

with our current liberal democratic practices. It should be said, however, that the practical Christian influence within the UK has become so weakened that it will be some time before we face that dilemma in practice (and I would rather have the danger of the Christian becoming illiberal than persist with the current position where we simply wave the white flag in front of the advance of secularism and moral corruption).

C&S: Your defence of the Constantinian State, outlined in *C&S*, is not a defence of any revived Constantinian empire through the medium of Brussels, even with a potential reference to God in the EU's constitution?

EB: I wonder whether we need a constitution at all. I am not an uncritical Constantinian—if there is such a word! That article was written partly to provoke people because there has been too much of a swing in evangelical thought towards saying that all of what Constantine did was irredeemably evil, corrupting us all as Christians by bringing us into the bosom of the State. This view is too defeatist! Christians should be transforming government and society, and to that extent I approve of what Constantine and Eusebius were aiming towards, even though his methods and conversion could be questionable.

C&S: You mentioned your enthusiasm for a “transformational” approach to politics. How does that relate to your listing of Cromwell, Britain's only successful republican?

EB: I have been fascinated by Cromwell for a long time. He is a much maligned figure. There is much to regret; the sackings of Drogheda and Wexford are often remarked upon (though not always in a well informed manner and much less attention is paid to a number of equally bloody sieges in England and Scotland during this period). Nevertheless, his victory in civil wars did provide the basis of the development of Parliamentary democracy—even though Cromwell, as Protector, himself found it hard to live with parliaments. Secondly he stood for religious toleration, by the standards of his time. He did not want to see the State Church persecuting persons outside of it. He attempted to create a compromise by establishing a broadly Reformed State Church while allowing toleration of private worship by Anglicans, Baptists, Quakers and even Catholics. He was trying to hold on to two things in tension—signalling what he believed to be the truth, and recognising that institutionally, but at the same time not using State power to prohibit other forms of worship. I like that balancing act. Maybe in the past evangelicals went too far in one direction, trying to use the State to bear down heavily on those with whom they had doctrinal disagreement, but that's wrong, and cannot be supported if you take the Bible as a whole. Cromwell's balance is also better than the modern preferred option, which is State-enforced pluralism which is practically relativism, which many evangelicals have bought into.

C&S: These are a fairly eclectic range of influences. How did they impact the development of your own Christian politics?

EB: Coming from a Presbyterian background, the idea of God's sovereignty was foundational. I haven't found that approach too common. In my case I began to realise that you had to apply that principle of divine sovereignty into all the spheres of life—that was a political jump. That's why the Kuyper arguments and the Jubilee Centre—while there are reasons to be critical of them—were very refreshing and quite novel. I give the Jubilee Centre credit for introducing

me to “derived norms” from the Old Testament and their application to public policy. Growing up on this side of the Irish Sea, I had never seen that approach before.

Then a number of things happened. One was the impact of studying economics. I have become much more favourable to market economics—which is not a common view in Christian circles on either side of the Irish sea or, indeed, on this side of the Atlantic. There is still quite a lot of economic ignorance in evangelicalism; people make economic judgments with little factual knowledge. Another factor was the experience of being in politics, and recognising that compromise is inherent to politics. Again, a gulf often exists between those involved in politics and those outside who don't understand that. I've also begun to appreciate some of the virtues of alternative forms of Christian politics, e.g. the Christian democratic one.

C&S: Some of your writing has been hesitant about the idea of theonomy. Is that something that has changed?

EB: It has changed. I came fresh to theonomy in the early- to mid-1990s. Initially I thought it was the “magic bullet” that would integrate the Bible and practical policy. But the more I looked at it, I began to feel that whilst there was a lot to be learned from theonomy, broadly defined, things were not as simple as some of their protagonists would argue. I then lost some of the enthusiasm for it, but I'm glad I looked at the literature (though I'm not claiming I looked at it all!). The theonomists may divide the Old Testament law into just two categories: the ceremonial (which was a pointer to Christ and therefore no longer applicable) and all the rest (to still be applied). A judgment must be made as to which category to put which law into. A classic Reformed position, at least as presented in the Westminster Confession, exercises a threefold division into ceremonial (as in theonomy no longer applicable), civil (applicable in terms of the general equity thereof) and moral (still standing). However, in practical terms the difference may not be all that great. I think it has served a purpose of being a wake-up call to a more sleepy, complacent, undefined, vague evangelical approach to looking at biblical law-economics-politics interaction. But I don't think they have the magic bullet.

C&S: Is it significant in that respect that neither Bahnsen, Rushdoony, or their peers were themselves politicians?

EB: Yes, I think that is a good question. There is a division of labour in this, as in all areas of life. It's good to have people in the Christian community who will go deep into thought and write profound, big books; but equally in the larger scheme of things there will be others who will have to go out and apply it. There is a danger that those who are doing the writing ignore the difficulties of those who have to do the applying. Probably the most common danger is that those who do the activity ignore the theoretical stuff, but it needs to go two ways. We're not called to be individualist Christians, but are part of a body; the Church. If we try to do these things as freestanding individuals, we will get it wrong. If we do it as the Church, we're more likely to avoid obvious errors.

C&S: In your *C&S* article, you describe your sympathy for a national confessional position. Is this drawn from a Presbyterian sense of Covenant?

EB: Possibly. Old and New Testaments taken together imply that under God there is a rough, though not exact, cause and effect between national righteousness and national prosperity and greatness. In contrast, evangelicalism

today has a very individualistic approach to obedience to God. To the extent the covenant is emphasised at all it is also often taken in an individualistic sense—it's to you and to your children. I think we as Irish Presbyterians have largely stopped expressing our thought in terms of the covenant.

C&S: Is it ironic, then, that an elder in the (non-established) Presbyterian Church in Ireland is supporting establishment of the Church?

EB: Why should it be? My understanding of chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession is that this is the Presbyterian position—not that the chapter is necessarily easily understood! It would be difficult to apply all of its detail today.

C&S: Let's talk about the practice of Christian politics. The ideas of presuppositionalism imply that the Christian politician must persuade people into his worldview. How does the practice of the Christian politician differ from the practice of the Christian evangelist?

EB: You might argue that there isn't a difference of principle, but rather of division of labour. In a way we're all working in the economy of salvation, but people have different jobs. Yet there is an overlap. I think I appreciate that and try, imperfectly, to work it out. In my experience, if you are trying to adopt good, wisely-based public policy, there is often the sense that we apply sticky plasters to deep wounds. To more fundamentally deal with these issues, we do need the life-changing experience of widespread conversion. Some of the great periods of evangelical social witness coincided with a religious revival, a stronger intensity of Christian life in the British nation or elsewhere.

C&S: So your success as a Christian politician presupposes the necessary success of the Christian evangelist?

EB: I would say that to achieve any widespread or lasting success, the two need to go together. I hesitate to answer, because I would also feel that you can always do some good, even if it's negative, standing in the gap in wider conditions of social decline (to use the image employed in Jeremiah). But to go beyond that, certainly, you need the two to go together.

C&S: That being the case, why is the Church slow to speak about the political arena?

EB: I think there are a variety of possible answers. There has been a loss of confidence, a feeling that there isn't anything to say, and no-one will listen anyway. There is pessimism, a fear that we are locked into a downward trend, that we are inevitably secularising, and this is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Also I think we have privatised the faith and made it intensively individualist, having lost the corporate sense of having an obligation to wider society.

C&S: That being the case, is your political philosophy "Christian" or "Reformed"?

EB: I hope it is both!

C&S: Does that then provide for a wider coalition that reaches across broader ethnic/cultural backgrounds to embrace others with similar "Christian" concerns?

EB: I think the answer has to be "yes"—although that answer has to be qualified and cautious. We do have some historical precedent, in nineteenth century Dutch history, e.g. Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party working in cooperation with Catholic social theorists. They had to do that, because Kuyper's position would never get more than 20–25% of the vote. Because I accept there is a degree of the divine image left in the unregenerate, enabling us to argue with and persuade people who don't accept biblical revela-

tion, I think we can and should build practical alliances—cobelligerence—with, in the first instance, people coming from within a broad Christian tradition even with those who don't necessarily put the Bible first. This would allow for work with the old Catholic approach, but not the liberationists. Beyond that, obviously we have quite a lot of overlap with Judaism. Islam is the tricky one at the moment, but there are still areas of overlap, e.g. life issues like abortion and some aspects of family law, but there are other big areas of difference.

There are two key ideas we have to hold in tension. The first is a common grace approach, in which we should expect the Holy Spirit to move people who may themselves never become Christians. This allows us to enter the public arena, to build case-by-case alliances with people who may never share the wider cause. But, secondly, we also have to hold this in tension with the idea of antithesis. Modern evangelicals are stronger on the common grace side than the antithesis side, but the danger is that we will lose our identity, and eventually end up indistinguishable from the broader mass; sadly this seems to have been the fate of much of the so-called "neo-Calvinism" post-Kuyper.

C&S: How do we move from this broad sense of commonality into an exclusive sense of established Church?

EB: I think you can, provided that you do not use the established Church as a stick with which to persecute people. I believe in the principle of establishment, and that means something in terms of the funding of the Church, though I haven't worked out what that means in practice (it is worth remembering that under current UK practice some Churches and Christian movements get very considerable public funding and others almost none). You hold on to the establishment as a signal of what the ideal is, but you also allow room for wider liberty.

C&S: So what should the Christian do when the powers that be do not appear to be ordained of God?

EB: This is an area of immense difficulties. There have been problems historically, especially as to how Reformed Christians have attempted to apply those verses in Romans 13. Some Dutch Christians perhaps read this part of Scripture in isolation from others and advocated obedience—full stop. So in 1940, they accepted the Nazi occupying powers, and if they demanded you join the Waffen SS, many of them obeyed. Why did this happen? I think it's partly the problem of not having any antithesis, and lacking that critical appreciation of Romans 13. We are called to obey, but that command is always qualified by Acts 5, where we are to obey God rather than men.

C&S: When should that qualification of obedience lead us into opposition, and what form should that opposition take?

EB: There would be a lower threshold test for non-violent resistance, but the hardest case is for violent resistance. Well, I do think the old Christian approach to the just war is valid. Admittedly, it applies in the first instance to situations between States, but it can be read across, with modifications, to force against the State. It is a valid approach, because it lays down criteria. A theoretical case could exist for tyrannicide, revolution, or other forms of violent resistance, but you would have to weigh up whether you will achieve a greater goal by armed action rather than by accepting the regime. In most cases, the answer will be not. This is an immensely difficult question and I find it hard to see myself in a situation where it will apply.

Scottish Presbyterian thought has emphasised the duty of the intermediary or “lower” magistrate as the legitimate leader of rebellion. Today, however, the theoretical right to resistance goes all the way down, and in a modern democratic society, we are all “lower magistrates,” because we have all been given the vote. We no longer have autocracy, but the practical qualification to all that is the evil of anarchy, against which Luther and Calvin wrote eloquently. Do not leap into the darkness of plunging a country into civil war; the anarchy of civil war is often worse than the evil of unjust government. That’s why you have to set high thresholds before you revert to violent resistance.

C&S: In *C&S*, you wrote of your fear that pluralism will lead either to chaos or authoritarianism. Where do you see the UK in that cycle?

EB: It’s hard to say, but we may be heading more to the authoritarian side. We have a widespread sense of fear about rising crime and social disorder. The pendulum swings back from that to more draconian criminal justice, and that has frightening possibilities.

C&S: What is the long-term future of religious toleration within the UK?

EB: That’s a good question. It’s becoming more of a live issue, because the legislative framework, partly reflecting

European input, is progressively moving away from the nineteenth century harmonisation with Judeo-Christian understanding. Take, for example, two very recent examples—civil partnerships legislation, which allows de facto marriage between people of the same sex, and the gender recognition bill, which moves away from the Genesis 1–3 understanding of sexuality. Alongside that legislative change is social change, and the rise of political correctness. Now, if you are true to your convictions and speak out about them, you will not only be perceived as intolerant and judgemental, but you will also be breaking the law. This is quite a new situation, and one that is very challenging. The high degree of religious liberty that we have enjoyed in these islands and have taken for granted is being ratcheted down, and it could get worse. That will create the challenge of how we respond—by going quiet, and seeking the quiet life, or by speaking out, and inviting persecution.

C&S: Your novel plays with some of these possibilities?

EB: Yes, I think this is a very real challenge for the Church, and one that up to now we have not wanted to face. But legislative and social changes are not irreversible. Standards of personal and social righteousness can be renewed. The Bible shows that this is possible as does British history in recent centuries. *C&S*



THE WISDOM OF MEN:

AN EXPOSITION OF I CORINTHIANS 1:1 TO 2:5*

by Stephen C. Perks

PAUL was an apostle to the Gentiles. In the Graeco-Roman world into which Paul was sent as an apostle of Christ philosophy, rhetoric and oratory were very important. The Greeks were obsessed with these things and with the “wisdom of men.” When Paul went into this world he did not fit the expectations that the Greeks had of a philosopher and a teacher of wisdom. He also fell short of their expectations in terms of rhetoric and oratory skills. They were dissatisfied with him. In particular he did not have the charisma—what actors call “stage presence”—that they had come to expect of those to whom they looked for guidance in wisdom and understanding.

This is clear from the complaints that the Church at Corinth made against him: “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10; cf. 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1, 4). He was considered “rude in speech” (2 Cor. 11:6). The word translated as “rude” here (*ἰδιώτης*) means “1. a private person as opp[osed] to the State or an official . . . 2. one without professional knowledge, unskilled, uneducated, unlearned.”¹ “It also means the ‘layman’ as compared with the expert”²; in other words one who is “unskilled in any art,”³ the arts in question here being the Greek arts of rhetoric and oratory (it is this Greek word from which we derive our English term *idiot*). What is in view here, therefore, is not the message itself, the content or subject matter of Paul’s preaching, since Paul says immediately “yet not in knowledge.” It was not that Paul did not understand the gospel or that the content of his message was rude or unlearned. Everyone recognised that the content of his message was powerful and weighty. Rather, what was considered rude, or unprofessional, was the *style* in which he delivered the message; i.e. his lack of rhetoric and oratory skills and his lack of charisma. Paul’s message, the content of his preaching and teaching, was powerful, but his lack of charisma irritated the Corinthians and they abhorred the style in which he presented the message because it did not

kowtow to Graeco-Roman ideals regarding what constituted good philosophy, wisdom, and rhetoric. In other words they did not consider him a “gifted speaker.” Paul had to defend himself against this accusation in both of his letters to the Church at Corinth. It is obvious from reading these letters that Paul had come under severe criticism and that his ministry was being disparaged and deprecated by those who had made an idol out of the “gifted speaker” who embodied the Greek ideals of wisdom and rhetoric. He was being judged in terms of the world’s ideals and standards concerning charisma and speaking abilities.

This is also a problem that the modern Church faces. The Graeco-Roman heritage regarding these matters is very strong in Western culture, and this heritage has always exercised a strong influence upon the Western Church. We need to pay attention, therefore, to how Paul deals with this. It is a major theme in his letter to the Church at Corinth.

The gospel was foolishness to the Greeks (v. 22). Why? Because of its content. The Christian worldview is the complete antithesis of the non-believer’s view of reality. The central message of the gospel is Creation, Fall and Redemption. These three truths are the foundation of the Christian faith and they stand as a great bulwark against the non-believing world. All three doctrines stick in the throat of the non-believer. The non-believer will not accept them and will do everything in his power to overturn and hold down these truths. All three doctrines were considered foolishness to the Greeks.

First, the gospel teaches that the Creation is the handiwork of God and that it is a “good” Creation. But the Greeks found this unacceptable. In the Greek worldview the physical world, matter, is inferior to the spiritual world. For the Greeks the supreme God could never have stooped so low as to create a physical world. The creation of matter was for the Greeks the real problem with the world, not ethical rebellion against God. As a result they considered the physical world to be the creation of a lesser god, the demiurge. This was also the religion of Gnosticism, which infiltrated the Church early in its history and has continued to exert a disastrous influence in the Church right up to our own day.

Second, the Christian gospel teaches that the Fall of mankind was ethical, not metaphysical. For the Greeks man’s Fall was metaphysical. His spirit has become trapped in the physical world of the human body and salvation is deliverance from this physical body. Man’s problem is not

*The substance of this essay was a sermon preached at West Buckland, Taunton, on Sunday 12 September, 2004.

1. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1986), p. 218.

2. Heinrich Schlier, “ἰδιώτης” in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Wm B. Eerdmans, 1965, trans. G. W. Bromiley), Vol. III, p. 215.

3. J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1901), p. 297a.

that he has offended a holy God by his rebellion and come under eternal condemnation as a result. His problem rather is that his spirit, which is the divine spark, is trapped in the body. The Christian gospel teaches that the physical body is created by God and good. The problem is man's *will*, his desire to be as God, to be his own God. The Greeks rejected this. For them salvation was deliverance from physical matter, the body. It was the imprisonment of the spirit in the body that they considered evil.

Third, therefore, the Christian doctrine of redemption was foolishness to the Greeks. Christianity taught the resurrection of the physical body. Nothing seemed more absurd to the Greeks than this. If the Fall of mankind was the imprisonment of the spirit in the physical body, salvation must necessarily mean escape from the world of physical matter. But the Christians believed that matter was good and that the human body would be redeemed and resurrected. When the early Christians recited the Apostles' Creed they thumped their chests when they came to the statement about the resurrection of the body to emphasise their belief that the human flesh that God created good will be resurrected on the day of judgement. Thumping the chest when reciting these words was like thumbing one's nose at the religious beliefs of the Greek world.

In all these things, Creation, Fall and Redemption, the beliefs of the Christians stood out like a sore thumb against the religious worldview of the Greeks. The gospel was an offence to the Greeks, foolishness. But on top of this Paul was no clever orator. Clever speaking was a Greek ideal. God does not call men to be silver-tongued orators for the gospel. The Christian ideal is speaking the truth plainly with grace. But the Greeks wanted "gifted speakers" who would come up to their ideals and expectations in terms of rhetoric and wisdom. Paul consistently gave them the opposite of this. He made a decision that he would not present the gospel in this way (1 Cor. 2:1–5). Why not? Because this could not bring them salvation. The word of God is what the Holy Spirit uses to bring men to faith in Christ, not the clever rhetoric and oratory of men. Rhetoric and oratory may produce false conversions, but not genuine ones. Genuine conversion is produced by the renewing of the mind of man through the application of God's word by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:2).

Today in Western culture we face a very similar situation to that faced by Paul in the Graeco-Roman culture of the first century. In Western culture, increasingly, *style* is what matters, and it takes precedence over content.⁴ Hence we have today a media culture obsessed with inane "sound-bites"—one sentence answers to the world's spiritual and economic problems that sound clever but are quite shallow, misleading and ultimately useless. The population is virtually force-fed on a diet of politically correct sound-bytes that discourages independent thinking via the influence of the media, the State-education system and the political system, which seems to be held captive to, perhaps even paralysed by, its obsession with creating and maintaining political correctness in all spheres of life. In addition, however, there is in modern Western culture a process of dumbing down that has produced an intellectual deficit in society.⁵

4. See further, Stephen C. Perks, "Spiritual Anorexia" in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (October 2003), p. 2ff.

5. See further, Stephen C. Perks, "Illiteracy" in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, (July 2003), p. 2ff.

The combination of these two trends has been extremely detrimental to Western culture and the Church has been affected by these deleterious influences just as much as any other institution, and this has vitiated her witness to the faith and her ability to provide moral and cultural leadership in society. Those who create a good impression by their charismatic style are promoted to positions of leadership regardless of their maturity in or understanding of the faith. The Church is obsessed with those who are "gifted speakers" and "gifted communicators." The smooth operators with charismatic personalities and gifts in "communication skills" are doted upon as the answer to the Church's decline by congregations and denominational leaders alike. Yet the Church still continues to decline and atrophy under this absurd prioritising of style over content. I wish I had a £1 for every time I have heard Christians say such and such is a "gifted speaker" or a "gifted communicator." But it is not the content that counts; rather it is merely the style of the speaker. In fact such speakers could be talking complete rubbish, even heresy, and often are—but, well you see, such and such is a "gifted speaker" and so we must listen to him expounding his doubts with such skill. If you get one of these "gifted speakers" to your church the chances are he will be full of his own importance, and it will be his own *personality* that dominates the message, not the content of the gospel, and more than likely it will be because of the force of his personality that he will be considered to speak with "authority," regardless of what he teaches.⁶ The modern Church has lost discernment in this matter.

Is this God's way? Is it what God wants for his Church? No. Paul contradicts this whole emphasis in the most forthright way. God has chosen to do things differently. He does not call silver-tongued speakers, smooth operators, demagogues full of their own importance with personalities to match their inflated egos to preach his word (1:26–29). Why? "That no flesh should glory in his presence."

Now, let us be honest. Our great preachers, those worthies of the pulpit to whom so much attention is paid and on whom so much honour is lavished—who is glorified? God or men? Let's be honest. Think of the best. Let us not restrict ourselves here merely to the charlatans who are out to serve themselves only. Let us consider those who are renowned as great preachers, genuine Christians who are orthodox in their theology and also considered "gifted speakers." Who ultimately gets the glory? God or men? Let us take two of the best examples. I pick them not because they are heretics or unorthodox, but because they represent what so many in the Church consider to be the best of preachers.

6. For a discussion of the problem of popular preachers teaching heresy see Stephen C. Perks, "Dealing with Heresy" in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. XIV, No. 4 (October 2004), pp. 10–21. This problem has existed for some time. The Church I first attended after I became a Christian in 1974 regularly had the principal of one of the denominational colleges to preach because the Church supported the college. He was considered a "heretic" by many in the denomination. His communication and speaking abilities were renowned and undeniable, but wherever he spoke he left a trail of doubt and dissension. Eventually at the Church meeting a discussion was had about why this speaker was repeatedly asked to fill the pulpit in view of his supposed "heresy." After some heated discussion the pastor of the Church stood up and said "You cannot say he is a heretic because he believes this or that. He is so confused that he does not know himself what he believes. I know because I was at college with him and I know him" (or words to that effect). Nevertheless, he was an excellent communicator of his doubts and led many down the road of doubt.

If there are problems with these men, how much more so with the heretics and charlatans who are “gifted speakers”?

First, let us look at David Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He was a Christian, Reformed, an orthodox Calvinist in his theology. He preached salvation by faith in Christ through grace alone. And I do not doubt that many were helped by his ministry. I myself gained much from reading his books as a young Christian. But who got the glory in the end? So many who came to Christ under his preaching and ministry, or who came under his influence, became paralysed by their idolatry of the man. “The Doctor said it”—*ergo* it must be the truth. I have heard this said and preached both by well-known and respected speakers in Reformed/evangelical circles and by lesser mortals. He may not have wanted it himself. But he got it because he deliberately and self-consciously prioritised *style* as an essential component of true preaching. He championed rhetorical oratory. He may not have used these words precisely, but this is what he promoted and championed—a *performance* in the pulpit, preaching as an *art form*.⁷ Jesus and Paul would have scored very low in terms of the Doctor’s criteria for what constituted good preaching because they did not use their whole bodies. How do we know this? Because the Bible tells us that they sat down to preach, a major failing in the Doctor’s school of preaching. But preaching today in Reformed circles is what the Doctor did, not what the Bible teaches. Preaching and much else is judged by the Doctor’s standards among certain communities in the Church today, not by the standard set forth in the Bible. The Doctor has been idolised, and this has done much harm to the Church. Why? Because the glory goes to man, not to God.

Second, let us consider Robert Murray M’Cheyne. At least this man recognised that there was a problem, though he realised what was happening too late to stop it. He was associated with revival in Scotland in the nineteenth century. He was a “prince of preachers,” a gifted speaker. But in the end he acknowledged that it troubled him that so many attended church to hear *him*, not God’s word, that people were attracted to *him* and doted on *him*, not Christ—many who flocked to hear him never became believers. These facts came out in the course of his pastoral work and they troubled him. He was the one that many people came to hear, not Christ speaking in his word. The flesh of man was glorified in this. Of course he did not want this. It grieved him. But it is what happened.⁸

This sort of thing happens on a small scale as well among men who are not internationally renowned speakers, who are not known to posterity or written about in history books, but whose emphasis on style in the pulpit has resulted in the

same glorification of men rather than God. The pastor of a Church I attended as a young Christian was a “gifted speaker.” People attended church to hear him. You will probably have never heard of this man, but in his circles he was considered an outstanding *preacher*, a “gifted communicator.” Before his appointment the Church prayed for a “real preacher without note-pad.” That was what was paramount to them: preaching style, oratory. Perish the thought that the preacher should have notes to follow in the pulpit! That would distract them from the real business of the pulpit, the *performance* of the preacher. And the Church got their prayers answered, a man who “preached without note-pad” and used his whole body. They were proud of their comet preacher. He was good. He walked up and down the aisles among the people and pressed the rhetoric home. What a performance! But it was all rather short on content and substance (I seem to recall that whatever text was announced it usually turned out to be John 3:16 in the end). He was a good, sincere and genuine Christian. Do not misunderstand me. But this is just my point. People often came to church to see *him*, not Christ. He was regarded by many in the community as a model speaker and they came to church to learn his rhetorical techniques, not to listen to God’s word explained.

The Church is subtly taught to look for the wrong things by this kind of thinking: men with charisma and great communication skills—pulpiteers. But there are no pulpits in the Bible. The pulpit is a concept foreign to biblical Christianity. In the Bible authoritative teaching is done from a *seated* position—hence Christ criticised those who sit in the seat of Moses and teach the law but do not obey it themselves (Mt. 23:2–3). Jesus preached from a seated position both in the synagogue, where it was the custom to stand to read the Scriptures then sit down to expound them (Lk. 4:16–21), and in the countryside, for example in the sermon on the mount (Mt. 5:1) and from the fishing boat (Mk 4:1). Paul, as he entered the synagogues on his travels, would have followed the same procedure that Christ followed in the synagogue. This tradition passed into the Church. The bishop’s teaching is done from a seat, the *cathedra*, which is Latin for seat. The building in which the bishop’s *cathedra* is housed is the cathedral. Even the Pope is only considered to speak infallibly when he speaks *ex cathedra*—from his throne. But what we have today in our churches is the centrality of the pulpit. The word pulpit comes from the Latin word *pulpitum*, meaning “a staging made of boards, a scaffold, platform, pulpit, for public representations, lectures, disputations; and esp[ecially] a stage for actors.”⁹ There you have it. The pulpit is a stage for actors, and when it is made the centre of the Church’s life the result will be that the Church is dominated by men who are primarily actors, great performers. The whole life of the Church will begin to revolve around them, not around Christ and his word. In other words, the Church will become dependent on the preacher and take on the character of the preacher. And when the preacher leaves the Church will flounder until a new performer can be found around whom the life of the Church can revolve. This is what happens repeatedly in Church life, especially in Free Churches.

So, I ask again, is this God’s way? Is this what God wants for his Church?

From one end of the Bible to the other, from Moses to

7. See D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Preachers and Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971). See also “The Implications of the Information revolution on the Christian Church” in Stephen C. Perks, *Common-Law Wives and Concubines: Essays on Covenantal Christianity and Contemporary Western Culture* (Taunton: The Kuyper Foundation, 2003).

8. See further David Estrada, “Robert Murray M’Cheyne: The Shining Light of Scotland” in *Christianity & Society*, Vol. xiv, No. 4 (October 2004), pp. 28–37. Professor Estrada writes that “Towards the end of his ministry, he became peculiarly jealous of becoming an idol to his people, for he was loved and revered by many who gave no evidence of love to Christ. This often pained him much” (p. 31b) and “. . . he saw backsliding, and false professions of salvation. Observing also that some were influenced more by feelings of strong attachment to their pastor personally than by the power the truths he preached, he became reserved in his dealings with them” (p. 34a).

9. C. T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 1490a.

Paul, you will find that God did not choose those who were “gifted speakers.” Those whom God chose as his prophets and spokesmen were almost invariably not the obvious choice in terms of the criteria that men think are important. It seems that God deliberately chose those who were not “gifted speakers.” Indeed it seems he chose those people who found it difficult, for one reason or another, to speak for God and who were not naturally endowed with the abilities necessary for a career in being a “gifted communicator.” This was deliberate. There is a reason for it, and Paul spells it out here: “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*” (2:1–5). Paul deliberately avoided the very kind of preaching that so many seem to think is essential today, precisely so that he might avoid the false conversions that have so often accompanied the performances of “great preachers.”

The obsession with “gifted speakers” and “great preachers” that seems to beset so many in the Church is a worldly infatuation that is sinful and needs repenting of. After all, it is “gifted speakers” and “smooth operators” who lead congregations astray and fleece them for all they have, deluding them with impossible promises of wealth and success in return for complete devotion to the cult of their own leadership, not those who are considered “rude in speech” and held in contempt because of their lack of charisma and rhetoric. And as we have seen, even where “gifted speakers” are genuine Christians with a real concern to preach the gospel there is the problem of false conversions and the idolatry of men rather than the glorifying of God.

So why do people look for these “gifts,” these “communication skills” in their preachers? What do *you* look for in a preacher? What does your Church look for in a preacher? What do you look for in the preaching? A great performance, or the word of God explained in such a way that it helps you to understand your duty in serving God? Preaching that thrills and excites you or preaching that equips you for service in the kingdom of God? Preaching that makes you admire the preacher and his wonderful “gifts” or preaching that calls you to make sacrifices for the work of the Kingdom? What matters to you? That you attend a church with a “gifted speaker” or that you attend a church where there is an ongoing programme to equip members of the Church for service in the world, which is our mission field?

The truth is, God does not have much to say about “gifted speakers” in the Bible. God can, of course, use “gifted speakers” to bring people to faith in Christ, but he does so not because they are “gifted speakers,” but rather in spite of this. As we have already seen, genuine conversion is produced by the renewing of the *mind* of man through the application of God’s word by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:2), not by the clever rhetoric and oratory of men.

Well, what are the results of the “gifted speaker” ministry? Unfortunately, we find often that “gifted speakers” do the devil’s work, not God’s. Paul refused to use such rhetorical techniques *because* it made the cross of Christ of *no effect*. I did not make this up. Paul said it himself: “For Christ sent

me . . . to preach the gospel: not with the wisdom of words, *lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect*” (1:17). It is interesting to observe that although Christ has equipped his Church with various spiritual gifts to enable her to fulfil her calling, there is no spiritual gift comparable to the abilities considered essential to being a “gifted speaker.” There is a gift of prophecy, but as we have seen, the prophets were often awkward speakers who did not naturally possess the abilities deemed necessary for being “gifted speakers.” There was also the gift of knowledge, but this is a different thing. Paul admitted to being “rude in speech” but not in *knowledge* (2 Cor. 11:6). The fact is that this quality of being a “gifted speaker” is nowhere in the Bible set forth as desirable or helpful, let alone essential, for the effective communication of the gospel. Rather the reverse, it is shown to be a hindrance to the effective communication of the gospel, producing false conversions.

Because of this we need to understand the psychology of this kind of “gifted speaker” ministry. Very often, indeed usually, when the “gifted speaker” comes along the congregation is whipped up into a state of emotional excitement by the rhetoric. The technique may make use of humour, involve grave seriousness, or inspiring language. But a state of emotional excitement of some kind is created. In such a state human beings are much more easily manipulated by suggestion. This is a fact of human psychology that has been investigated, explored and used in various contexts to induce certain types of behaviour.¹⁰

There is a definite technique to this. It can be learned. And this technique has been used very successfully by “revivalists” for a long time, ostensibly for good, but also for bad. The state of emotional excitement created by frightening people into converting to Christianity by dangling them over hell, for example, is well attested (Jonathan Edwards has often been accused of this because of his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”). In such a state of emotional excitement, possibly even emotional exhaustion, people are susceptible to all kinds of influences and ideas that they would not otherwise have been susceptible to. This technique produces a general state of suggestibility in which people are easily re-programmed to accept ideas, beliefs and *behaviour* that go against their previous better judgement. This is probably why there was so much fornication following the Great Awakenings.¹¹ Even in modern churches

10. See William Sargant, *Battle for the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing* (Heinemann, 1957), *passim*.

11. Sargant gives the following interesting example that throws much light on the subject: “Wesley appreciated the danger of stirring up crowds, reducing them to penitence, and then leaving others to do the work of reconditioning. While touring the Irish Catholic countryside in 1750, he was asked to preach at Mullingar, but refused because ‘I had little hope of doing good in a place where I could but preach once, and where none but me could be suffered to teach at all.’ In 1763, similarly, he wrote from Haverfordwest: ‘I was more convinced than ever that preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer (the Devil).’ When investigating a North Carolina religious snake-handling cult in 1947, it was easy for me to see what Wesley had meant. The descent of the Holy Ghost on these meetings, which were reserved for whites, was supposedly shown by the occurrence of wild excitement, bodily jerkings, and the final exhaustion and collapse, in the more susceptible participants. Such hysterical states were induced by means of rhythmic singing and hand-clapping, and the handling of genuinely poisonous snakes . . . brought several visitors unexpectedly to the point of collapse and sudden conversion. But a young male visitor—the ‘murderer’ incarnate—was

where such emotional excitement is created unscrupulous leaders and “gifted speakers” can use this as an opportunity to prey on emotionally confused people.

In such a state people can be influenced for bad as well as for good. The condition of such emotional excitement is non-specific. Just because this emotional condition has been created by a “gifted speaker” in a Church gathering does not mean that those subject to it are open only to Christian suggestions. They are not. They are open to all sorts of suggestions, and charlatans use these techniques to manipulate people for their own ends. They may preach the gospel but still use such a state of emotional excitement to manipulate people into doing their bidding, whether that is putting more money into the collection plate than they can afford, agreeing to become involved in immoral sexual behaviour, or putting themselves completely under the control of the “gifted” leader—and all such things happen too often for comfort. But the point is that even where good behaviour is implanted in the “convert” this is a psychological technique, not the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the “convert’s” life, though of course it will be attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit by the “gifted speaker,” the convert and the congregation. But the Holy Spirit does not work in this way. The Bible tells us that genuine conversion is the result of the renewing of the mind through the application of God’s word by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:2).

Now, add to this revivalist technique repeated drumming patterns, continuous loud and monotonous music and emotional abandon. All these things are very common elements in charismatic “worship.” Such things are very effective in creating this state of emotional excitement. Subject the congregation to this for an hour before the “gifted speaker” comes on and people are then already in a state of emotional excitement, possibly even emotional exhaustion, when the “gifted speaker” starts preaching. In such a state of emotionally heightened suggestibility people are much more easily manipulated by leaders and speakers whom they already idolise as “gifted speakers.” Reason does not count for much in this state of mind. It is abandoned, possibly even reversed. Indeed such techniques are used in brain-washing programmes and as part of interrogations aimed at inducing false confessions precisely because this is a known effect. This kind of technique was very useful in show trials in communist countries. The same technique is used. It is developed and adopted to different ends but it is the same technique.¹²

attending these meetings with the deliberate object of seducing girls who had just been ‘saved.’ The fact is, that when protective inhibition causes a breakdown and leaves the mind highly suggestible to new behaviour patterns, the conversion may be non-specific. If the preacher arrives in time to preach chastity and sobriety, well and good; but the ‘murderer’ [the devil] had learned that on the night that followed a sudden emotional disruption, a sanctified girl might be as easily persuaded to erotic abandon as to the acceptance of the Gospel message. However, on attempting to follow up his amatory successes a day or two later he found, as a rule, that the abnormal phase of suggestibility had passed, and the girl’s moral standards had returned to normal. Because he had not been continuously at her side to consolidate his victory, she might now indignantly rebuff him, and say that she could not understand what had come over her on the night in question. Two very opposite types of belief or personal behaviour could, in fact, be implanted at the close of a revivalist meeting: by the preacher or by the ‘murderer’” (*ibid.*, p. 217f.).

12. See the comments made on the use of Pavlov’s animal experiments in Soviet Russia in *ibid.*

But the question we must ask is this: is this what the Bible teaches? Is this what God expects of us and requires of us? Emphatically not. The Bible teaches that our worship should be *reasonable* worship, that it should involve all our faculties, and therefore that our *minds* should be fully working and engaged in worship. Without this our worship falls short of what God requires of us (Rom. 12:1–2). The Holy Spirit works through the *renewing* of the *mind*, not through the creation of an emotionally heightened state of suggestibility, which is a non-specific state of mind that opens people up to manipulation by anyone who is in a position to exploit it.

There is another important aspect to this that needs to be considered now. When someone is in this state of heightened emotional suggestibility something often happens that psychiatrists call “transference”; i.e. the person becomes emotionally dependent on the one guiding him, whether this is the psychiatrist, the preacher or even his “confessor.” I refer again to Robert Murray McCheyne and D. M. Lloyd-Jones as examples of this in Church life. The preacher or “gifted speaker” becomes more important than the message. He himself becomes the focal point, not the content of the message itself. As a result when the preacher or gifted leader leaves for better pastures the Church often declines and falls apart, or becomes a mere shadow of its former glory. Why? Because the focus was on the preacher or charismatic leader, not on God’s word. The congregation becomes *dependent* upon the “gifted” leader because a sufficient enough number of people in the Church experience “transference” while he is guiding the Church. When he leaves or dies the Church declines. Who gets the glory, God or men? If we are honest with ourselves we know it is usually men. We make idols of these “gifted speakers.” The last time I visited the Evangelical Library in London there was even a little shrine in the corner of the main reading room dedicated to D. M. Lloyd-Jones, and this was some time after his death.

I am not saying that God does not use these men. He does, but he does so in spite of their rhetoric and oratory and “gifts” not because of them. As already noted, the gifts we are talking about here are not the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but the natural abilities of men who are great orators and rhetoricians, men who gain a following by means of their natural charisma—all those things that the apostle Paul did not have and for lack of which he was so severely criticised by the Corinthians.

Do you find this difficult to accept? Well, what about “unction”? “Spiritual unction” is one of the most abused terms relating to preaching that there is. It is used as a substitute word for rhetoric by Christians who know that they should not idolise rhetoric and oratory in the pulpit. No, their heroes do not go in for rhetoric and oratory. They are far too spiritual for that you see. What they have is “unction”—and, well, as everyone knows, this is a divine gift. “Unction” is just another term for rhetoric and oratory cleverness used by delicate souls who are too pious to admit the truth about their idolatry of the men who use these techniques. The term “unction” can be usefully dispensed with. It need never be used. It has been the cause of much mischief.

It is the exegesis and application of the word of God that the Holy Spirit uses to bring men to faith in Christ, regardless of the rhetorical techniques employed or not employed by the preacher. It was the exegesis and application of the word of God that the Holy Spirit used in the preaching of men like

D. M. Lloyd-Jones and Robert Murray McCheyne, not the quality of their rhetoric or “unction,” which only hinders the message. And it was the exegesis and application of the word of God that the Holy Spirit used in Paul’s preaching, who lacked the charisma and rhetorical qualities considered so essential for great preaching by so much of the modern Church. The power of God is in the *content*, not the style of the preacher. Style gets in the way. It does not help. It hinders people from coming to God by drawing them to the speaker instead. This produces false conversions and “transference” in which the preacher or “gifted” leader becomes the focus of attention, the person around whom the “convert’s” new life revolves, instead of around Christ and his word. This is the polar opposite of what Paul wanted: “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*” (2:1–5).

I repeat and emphasise that the results of the kind of “gifted speaker” ministry that is so idolised today, in which style is prioritised over content, are detrimental to the work of the gospel, even where the speaker is orthodox and speaking the truth. It is not the style that the Holy Spirit uses but rather the content, the word of God, to bring men to conviction, faith and repentance. If you are obsessed by this idolatry of style you need to repent of it, abandon it. It is contrary to God’s explicit word as set forth by Paul in this passage of Scripture. To dote on these things is sinful. What good comes of it? It is “gifted speakers” with charismatic personalities who lead gullible congregations astray into false teachings, heresy, stupidity and the idolising of mere men, not the plain and straightforward teaching of God’s word, which is what God requires of those who preach the gospel. One need only look at the modern revival meetings and the latest charismatic circus to see the consequences of such idolatry of the flesh.

Now think about Paul’s strategy and personality. He deliberately attempted *not* to present himself as a “gifted speaker.” He was the very antithesis of what the Corinthians deemed a “gifted speaker.” I have heard preachers talk about practising their sermons in front of the mirror in order to perfect their style. What an obscene idea! Can you imagine Paul doing that? Can you imagine him giving advice to Timothy like that? “Take a little wine for your stomach’s sake, Timothy, and don’t forget to practise your preaching in front of a mirror. Charisma, style and rhetoric are so important if we are going to be effective communicators of the gospel of God.” How absurd! Such ideas go against the whole thrust of Scripture. God deliberately chose men who were despised by the world because they lacked these qualities of charisma and style, which are considered so essential by the world. They were not actors with “stage presence” but humble men who obeyed the call of God despite their often severe feelings of inadequacy in just those areas of personal charisma, rhetoric and “gifted leadership” that we are increasingly being told are necessary for effective gospel ministry. Why did God do this? So that the glory would go to God, not to men. But today we see this infatuation with giving glory to men.

Look at Paul’s appearance. He was weak, trembling, not a persuasive orator at all. In short, he was not a charismatic personality or a “gifted speaker.” His power was in the message, the content, that he preached. Why? So that the faith of the Corinthians would not be in the flesh, in the wisdom of men, human rhetoric, but rather in God.

But what is it that the Church wants today? Her faith is in the wisdom of men. The Church constantly looks to idols instead of to God’s word to guide her—comet preachers who more often than not fleece their sheep and bring them into a state of dependence on themselves, to serve their own ends, not those of the kingdom of God.

This infatuation with style over content is sinful because it goes against God’s word. God has not chosen the wise of this world, but rather those to whom the world shows such contempt, so that we should glory in God, not in human personalities. Our faith, Scripture tells us, is to be a *reasonable* faith, and our worship is to be *rational* and ordered worship (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 14:40), not an emotional binge. Why? Because emotional binges open us up to the manipulation of our minds by charlatans devoted to the wisdom of men, not the precepts of God’s word. Order and reasonable, rational worship concentrates the mind on God’s word, and it is through the *mind* that the Holy Spirit works in renewing us (Rom. 12:1–2).

If you insist on following and idolising “gifted speakers” and engaging in emotionally unrestrained worship you will be led astray. If this is what you want out of going to church you will miss what you need to grow in the faith. You will not be edified. You will remain a child in the faith able only to receive milk, as did the believers at Corinth precisely because of these things, despite their manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. Remember, it was the Church at Corinth that had the charismatic problem. Paul said they lacked no good gift, and yet they were immature, unable to be fed with meat, which was what they needed. Their idolatry of the wisdom of men ensured that they remained spiritually immature. And if there is one thing that adequately defines the modern Church in Britain, and probably the Western world generally, it is spiritual immaturity. Despite the pervasive obsession with spiritual gifts and claims for all kinds of manifestations of the Spirit, the Church today is more immature spiritually than it has been for centuries. Remember that babies do not fight in, let alone win, battles. This is why the modern Church is so defeated before the world. The Church is full of spiritual infants who remain immature and are therefore useless for the battles ahead.

Despite having every good gift the Church at Corinth was immature and beset by troubles. The believers there were incapable of being fed with the meat necessary for them to be equipped for the battle. They were put under disciplinary measures by Paul because of their disorderly and immoral behaviour (1 Cor. 11:17–34). The Christians at Corinth were obsessed with the wisdom of the world despite their spiritual gifts, and this was why they showed such contempt for Paul’s person (his lack of charisma) and his preaching abilities (his lack of those qualities considered necessary for one to be a “gifted speaker”).

Let us not follow their example and imitate the Church at Corinth. Let us seek instead to understand God’s word, focus on the content, and order our worship reasonably and rationally so that we are not led astray into error and the glorifying of men rather than God. C&S

CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AND CHANGING CULTURES

by Patrick Poole

PART II

3. WORLDVIEW AS WORSHIP

In the two previous sections we have investigated the nature of worldviews and their importance in how we live our lives. Our worldview guides our actions and serves as the matrix through which we interpret the world around us. But not all worldviews are created equal. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve lived their lives on the basis of an understanding of God, Creation and themselves that was given directly by God. Living according to this revealed worldview, they were called to fashion the world around them and relate to one another in harmony with the end God had ordained for all things. In this state they discerned the structure and direction of everything on the physical and spiritual plains in order to take dominion over Creation.

But the Fall of Adam corrupted this harmony and his understanding of the world. Living in a state of sin, God revealed that not only had a breach torn the relationship between God and man, but that Creation itself would work against Adam and his offspring as he followed this new worldview. Adam's ideas had consequences, not just for himself, but for all of us who have been born into sin and live our lives in agreement with the promise offered by the serpent in the Garden. As a punishment for their disobedience, Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden into a world that they not only would not, but could not, understand on their own.

But there was hope: before their expulsion, God restated the created order by putting the serpent, the woman, and Adam each in their respective places within that order. God also revealed to them the consequences of their rebellion, so there would be no confusion as they confronted the world on their own terms. Finally, God promised redemption in their seed that was to come (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 3:16). In a symbolic gesture, God clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of animals to hide their nakedness—a testament to the shedding of blood that would be necessary to cover, or atone for, their sin of trying to live in the world independently of God's revelation.

One aspect of the Creation story, as it relates to our understanding of the Christian worldview, that we have yet to focus on (Gen. 1:26–27) is man's creation in the image of

God. Even in sin we bear God's image in ourselves. It is marred, but it is not obliterated; it remains intact even as we remain in rebellion. Because all persons are created such, we have not lost our abilities or our ends, despite our sin. We have not lost the structure that our first parents were created with. But what about the direction? What end were we created with? The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* gives us a concise explanation for us to follow: "Question 1: What is the chief end of man? Answer: The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

Man's highest calling and capital endowment was worship of the Lord God our Creator. It is important to note that this was no slavish exercise, but the natural response to being able to live in harmony and utter fulfillment with both Creator and Creation. We were to see success in advancing God's call to "make the world Eden," i.e. transform the world around us and have dominion over it by discerning its structure and putting all things to use as directed by the their created end—to glorify God. As our chief end, both in the worshipping and enjoying, it informs all that we were to do.

This acknowledgement of God was to be not only the result of our harmonious dealings with physical Creation, but also of our relationships with others as we acknowledged the image of the Creator in everyone. Worship was to be the common expression and bond between everyone.

Man was created for this noble purpose—worship, which is a capacity and an inner drive by which we continue to live even in the state of sin. But the problem we all face is that our worship is naturally no longer directed towards God. The echoes of the serpent's words still ring in our ears—"You shall be as God." Fundamentally, the worship of fallen man is about worshipping ourselves. In worshipping man-made idols or gods we express our rejection of the Christian worldview given by God and profess our own divinity.

The reason why the issue of worship is so important to the study of worldview and culture is that what we worship and the manner in which we worship determines both who we are and the culture we try to build around us. Worship shapes us into the idea of what we believe the world and God to be about. It is for this reason that God, acknowledging our fall into sin, spoke to Moses to command the people

of Israel to model their lives after the image that they were created in: “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’” (Lev. 19:2).

God’s holiness was the model for them to live in holiness and worship before Yahweh. Even in revealing his divine name to Moses God indicated to man that his worship can only be self-directed and self-referential.

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Ex. 3:13–14)

“I AM WHO I AM.” In this thundering self-reference, God reveals to us his true nature and end. There can be no other motive in God higher than himself, because he would be remade into something other than himself, and commit idolatry. God worships himself, and we are called to that same object of worship. In that worship we are transformed into his likeness—expanding the image in which we were created. Man was created to follow a process of forever expanding and filling out the image of the Creator in himself. Because we are the creature, and he is the Creator, we can never become God or share in his being, but through our worship of him we eternally grow further into his image.

But what happens now that we are in sin? In truth, nothing has changed. In Christ, God the Father sets before us in flesh an image that we are to be conformed to, in order that we might achieve our created purpose. Our lives as Christians are about a constant process of bringing ourselves into conformity to the image of Christ to allow us to worship and enjoy God. The Apostle Paul says that this was God’s plan from all eternity: “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29).

This is what makes the doctrine of the Trinity and the full divinity of Christ such fundamental issues for Christians. If Christ is in any respect less divine than God the Father, or is divine in some other sense of his being, we are being remade into an image that falls short of our Creator and our created end. Our reference point for all that we do is less than God. Christ must be Creator as a full participant in the Godhead. If the doctrine of the Trinity—that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully distinct from each other as persons and yet of one essence—is denied, we have no hope of ever attaining to the true worship of God and living according to our created end. If Christ is not fully God, we cannot give him our worship and must reject conformity to his image. But since Christ is fully God, separate in person but one in essence with the Father and the Spirit, he is accorded full worship and it is his image that the Father wills that the Holy Spirit impress on our lives and conform us to.

Worshipping idols and false gods is nothing less than the worship of the works of our own imagination, and we quickly become conformed to the image of what we worship. Our idolatry reflects what we believe to be true of ourselves. Much like the deification of man seen in the hero-worship of ancient Greece, where men through their own achievements challenge and rise to the level of gods, all forms of idolatry and false worship are the ultimate expressions

of the self-worship that brought death into the world and prohibits man from ever living in accordance with his created purpose.

It is for this reason that God so readily commands us to direct our created nature towards his exclusive worship and to avoid any taint of idolatry, as is seen in the revelation of God’s Ten Commandments to Moses and Israel:

And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Ex. 20:1–6)

There are several elements to what God reveals to us here that are of the utmost importance for our understanding of worldview and culture. The first is God’s exclusive claim of ownership of his people. For Israel, Yahweh was the one that brought them out of the land of Egypt and defeated their enemies. In Christ, we are delivered from the captivity of sin and, in the resurrection, witness the defeat of death. Because of this redemption, God claims exclusive ownership of us. In saying, “I am the Lord your God,” Yahweh was not expressing the indicative, but emphasising the imperative. He is our God. On the basis of his ownership, his command of exclusive worship—“You shall have no other gods before me”—follows consequentially.

Another aspect that we should observe here is found in the Second Commandment. Here God re-emphasises the exclusive nature of our worship by extending the command comprehensively—there is nothing else, in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth, that is to rival Yahweh in our worship. Herein God expresses his jealousy for our complete devotion; there are to be no rivals for our affections.

Also contained in this commandment is God’s warning. Two words ought to stand out from what we have discussed already in this section: *image* and *likeness*. As Christians, we cannot be simultaneously conformed to the image of Christ and to the image of a false idol of the world. They are mutually exclusive. To worship anything other than the Triune God is to bring curses on ourselves; we cannot achieve our created end and we can never understand the world around us while worshipping idols. Subject to the curse of Adam, our labours can till the land, but bring forth nothing but thorns and weeds.

But in this commandment there is also a wonderful promise: attending to the proper and exclusive worship of God brings great blessings, because we operate in the world and in our relationships exactly how God intended. The curse of Adam and the threat of death holds no power over us as we labour in this world in Christ. The cycle that is created thereby is wonderful to contemplate: as we worship and are blessed in our vocation and in our relationships with both God and man, our devotion increases and our conformity to the image of Christ grows further, bringing even greater blessings and increasing our devotion in thankfulness all the more.

This is why the Creator prohibits the slightest bit of idola-

try—because we do not give him the devotion he deserves and demands, and we grow more distant from our created end (worship) and are forced to live with a view of the world that constantly pushes us further away from the reality of the world that God reveals. As we are conformed more and more to the image of our error, we are forced to wage war against the reality of God's Creation by attempting the impossible task of erasing the image of God within ourselves.

A passage of Scripture from the Apostle Paul we looked at in the previous section identifies this process, which makes it worth revisiting:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Rom. 1:18–25)

The Christian worldview, revealed to our first parents, Adam and Eve, and communicated to us today in the Bible, uncovers for us the stark reality for fallen humanity: in active rebellion against God, men can never escape his presence or the manifestation of his glory, for he is seen throughout the whole of Creation; forsaking truth, they are left with nothing but lies; in pursuing wisdom according to their alternative view of the world, they are condemned to foolishness. Indulging in the natural impulses and abilities they were created with, unredeemed man can only pervert and debase himself by lusting with a desire that can never be filled; and devoting himself to idols of his own making he becomes like those idols and thereby fails to conform to the image in which he was created to be completed and achieve his highest and most fundamental end. Added to this punishment, heaven and earth wage war against unbelievers. Man is alienated from God, other men, and the world around him in a state of terrible existence. As Christians, we must remember that this is the dreadful condition we were in when we were first brought to Christ, which ought to make us more worshipful and joyful for the redemption that is in Christ.

This passage from Romans highlights one of the most essential truths in life: *worldview is an integral part of worship*. This is exactly what we saw in the story of the Fall. Adam was confronted with the choice of following what God had said about the world, or subjecting himself to an alternative view of the world in his pursuit of self-worship. In his sin, Adam devoted himself to the worship of himself, rather than his created end, the worship of God. By departing from the exclusive worship of God, man supplements his self-worship with a self-constructed reality that might recognise the structure of creation and his vocation in the world, but can never be directed towards its proper end, resulting in cursing and futility.

Our intention with this section is to acknowledge that ideas have consequences and that our Christian faith creates commitments to additional ideas and actions that we must follow. This illuminates the additional point we have discussed, that *our worldview reflects what we worship*. Idolatry commits fallen man to be conformed to a deformed image of the world, and this false image informs everything that a man does or believes. In Christ, we must be fully devoted followers of God and allow ourselves to be conformed to his image, the image and likeness we were born to mirror, so that our labour and our beliefs are fully in accord with what God has revealed about himself, about ourselves and others, and about the world.

We must also look at the necessary corollary to these two important truths: *maintaining a false worldview is an aspect of idolatry*. Being conformed to the image of Christ commits us to a vision for our life and our work that follows the worldview that is laid out for us in Scripture; any departure from it or attempts to put the structure of Creation towards a direction other than that intended by God—i.e. his glory—manifests our spiritual rebellion and subjects us to foolishness and futility as we work and interact with others in the world. For this reason, we must thoroughly investigate the many dimensions of our worldview and how we apply it in our lives and in our mission as Christians. To do this, we must look primarily to the Bible—God's revealed word and worldview—to determine the extent to which we are living according to our ends in our exclusive and comprehensive worship of the Triune God.

As we have seen, the comprehensive nature of the Christian life and worldview is a component of the demand of exclusive devotion identified by God as the proper character of our worship. This theme can be seen throughout the whole of the Bible. In the Old Testament, the most definitive creedal statement of the Hebrew religion is encapsulated in Deuteronomy 6, known as the *Shema*, which begins with an expression of the essential unity of God, and follows with the command to reflect back to God that unity with a comprehensive and exhaustive devotion to God: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Dt. 6:4–5).

In the New Testament as well we see Jesus repeatedly confronting the Pharisees and Sadducees on their inability to see that the substance of a life in worship to God is not about living life in conformity to rules and regulations; it is about living in a total devotion to the Lord. In the midst of one of these great debates, Jesus was asked about what rule was the most important to keep. As we see, Jesus points them back to the *Shema* in reply:

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Mt. 22:35–40)

Here we see Jesus overturning the popular view that living for God is primarily about performance. Jesus sees it as something much more—a whole-hearted devotion to God. This devotion includes our will and our affections; and going beyond the text of the *Shema*, Jesus adds that this devo-

tion extends to the mind. In this, the entirety of religion (the Law and the Prophets) is rooted, Jesus says. The rules can never be primary or take precedence over devotion, because the law is an insufficient reference point to conform us to the image of Christ. It is Christ's image that we are conformed to, not the law; and only through the power of the Holy Spirit and our worship of the Triune God can that image be imposed upon our lives. The law has no power to transform us, so it must be that our obedience to God is fashioned from our devotion to God as we look in faith solely to Christ, not vice versa. Jesus makes clear for us that we are to worship God, not the law or any other idol of our choosing.

4. THE COMPREHENSIVE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

It is important for us to look to Scripture to observe the grounds for Christ's making this authoritative claim on the whole of our lives. The Christian life is not reserved for just what we do on Sundays, but it is expressed in all that we think and everything that we do at all times. To help in our understanding of Christian worldview and to justify the assertion that our worldview must inform all that we think and do without exception, we should be assured that Christ is a sufficient source to speak to every area of life.

First, we should look at the relation of Christ to creation to understand the basis for Christ's authoritative claims. If Christ indeed is the image we are conformed to as believers, this image must be active in Creation and be equated with the matrix imposed on the ethically innocent Adam as the image of God. In fact, this is precisely what we see recorded in the New Testament. In a restatement of Gen. 1:1 ("In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"), the Apostle John opens his Gospel narrative recognising Christ's divine presence and action in Creation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (Jn 1:1–3)

Illustrated for us in this passage is the agency of Christ in Creation. He is not just witness to it, but a full participant as Creator. As John makes clear here, nothing within the scope of the universe exists apart from Christ's creative initiative; and as the Word of God, there is nothing within the whole realm of Creation that Christ does not have authority over. He models all things and creates all things.

But Scripture goes even further than this. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews extends the agency of Christ, not just to the initial act of Creation, but to the constant and permanent sustenance of it as well. "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power . . ." (Heb. 1:3).

Here we can add to Christ's modelling and creation of all things his administration and providence over all things. The apostle Paul also emphasises this same point: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Christ was not just active at the beginning of Creation. He has been and is presently administering it ever since. The passage above from Hebrews identifies Christ's image and nature as the source of his universal empowerment.

The King James translation of that verse states that Christ is the "*exact image*" of God. But it is important to note that he has not placed his image on the whole of Creation; that privilege has been left exclusively to man. Man receives in Creation the image of God; no other part of Creation is created in God's image. And it is not the whole of humanity that gets to experience the fullness of conformity to that image, but only those that are found in Christ. As we have seen from the passage we have twice quoted from Romans 1, fallen man expends his efforts and creative energies in the impossible task of obliterating that image of God within himself. But Christians are subject eternally to being conformed to that image.

Continuing our investigation into Christ's present relation to Creation, let's look at an additional verse in order to understand better the scope of Christ's activity and authority in the world, from the apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col. 1:15–20)

This passage underscores that Christ is pre-eminent in Creation by virtue of his agency in the creation of all things. And here Paul also says that Creation itself has the same end as man—the glory of God: "All things were created through him and for him." Both mankind and the rest of Creation share a similar structure in being created through Christ, and have the same direction—Christ. As we will see later in this essay, the mission of reconciliation accomplished through Christ extends to all things in Creation, especially God's image-bearer, man, because Christ is the Creator and end of it all.

But another important element found in these verses gets to the heart of Christ's work in the world. In being the firstborn of Creation, the apostle Paul is not saying that Christ is an aspect of Creation—one of us. He speaks of his authority. He is superintendent of the Creation. All power and authority in the world today is derivative of Christ's universal sovereignty, which is an aspect of his office as Creator. No area exists outside of his dominion, because nothing exists apart from his power or possession: "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (1 Cor. 10:26).

Even in his incarnation Christ's authority or ownership is not diminished in any respect, because Jesus is no less divine, as was affirmed by the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.), which recognised that Christ is both fully God and fully man. In becoming man, Christ does not become less God. For this reason, Christ loses none of his authority in his earthly mission, as we see expressed again in Hebrews:

"You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honour, putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. (Heb. 2:7–8)

There are several important points to be understood here, but the most important for our purposes is to see that everything remains in subjection to Christ. In coming to earth and being made a man Creation was not allowed to slip away from his authority just because he was present in it. In the ministry of Jesus we see that sickness, disease and even the fundamental laws of physics remained subject to his command and control. This verse gives witness to the continued comprehensive scope of Christ's authority in Creation. Everything remains in subjection to him, and there is nothing left outside of his control.

This brings up another important point raised in this passage. Everything in Creation is subject to Christ, but at times it is difficult to see this administration. Here's where faith comes into our worldview. When all of the evidence seems contrary to our senses and our reason, will we believe that the entire world exists in the possession of and in submission to Christ? It is when we confront this ultimate problem that our worldview matters most. At that juncture we face the same dilemma as Adam: do we hold to the worldview revealed by God and submit to it, or do we reject God's claims and attempt to mould our own reality?

For those Christians who want to avoid the force of this dilemma and who do not believe that worldview has any relation to our life and work as Christians, there is one avenue of retreat that may be pursued: could it be that these statements emphasising the overwhelming present authority of Christ in the world are expressions of "irrational exuberance" on the part of the New Testament writers? Might the vision of the resurrected Christ and the promise of his return in triumph have caused them to overstate the case and transpose the future reality of Christ's dominion after the Second Coming into the present? Is it possible that focusing on the extensive authority that these Christians believed extended to the whole realm of Creation could deter us from the "gospel mission" that Jesus calls us to?

The difficulty with pursuing this avenue of retreat is that Jesus himself stakes an unmistakable claim on the scope of his dominion in the defining passage of what the "gospel mission" is for Christians, the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Mt. 28:18–20)

The words of Jesus identify for us that the Christian mission of evangelism is predicated on the comprehensive claims of Christ's authority over the both the spiritual and material realms. When it comes to our understanding of evangelism, our worldview should be predicated on this fundamental truth proceeding from the mouth of our Lord and constantly confirmed by New Testament writers. Our worldview will be utterly incomplete and idolatrous, and our desire for evangelism shallow and unproductive, if it is not rooted in these words from the resurrected Christ himself, which express his comprehensive claim over redemption.

We should recall the circumstances surrounding the pronouncement of the Great Commission. Jesus had risen from the dead and had been living amongst his disciples; death itself could not contain Christ. It was something he entered

into voluntarily to accomplish our redemption and verified his victory over death and the Devil. Having thus proved his triumph over all opposition, he was now giving them a final charge in language that reminded the disciples of the commission given to Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28) to assert as vice-regent the dominion of the Lord over all of Creation because God's sovereignty had already been expressed in his work of Creation. The Great Commission reaffirms that charge; and again, the mandate given to Jesus' disciples was not something simply asserted, but a reality established by his victory in both realms, the material (death), and the spiritual (Satan).

What is the relation of worldview to evangelism? The Great Commission clearly teaches us that a comprehensive Christian worldview that is rooted in the reality we receive by faith, namely that Christ possesses authority comprehensively in the spiritual and physical realms, should be our impetus for evangelism. In light of this truth, are there areas of our thinking or being that we can isolate from our work of asserting the lordship of Christ in the battle for the minds of men? Certainly not, because we have seen that as the superintendent of Creation, all things are made in accord with Christ and therefore everything that man contemplates must be informed by Christ.

We should also note that the Great Commission does not limit the task of evangelism to "winning decisions" from the lost. Jesus clearly commands us to "make disciples" and to "[teach] them all that I have commanded you." A review of the four Gospel accounts, the historical narrative of the Book of Acts, and the various apostolic epistles, concluding with John's Revelation, indicates that Christian teaching covers much more ground than just "soul winning." To limit evangelism to making converts falls well short of the standard set by Jesus in the Great Commission. What exactly is the standard that is set? We are called first to be disciples ourselves, developing a devotion that pervades every aspect of our being, and then transmitting that way of life to others. Christ's comprehensive claim asserts his lordship over all that we are and all that we do, and this is expressed in our devotion and worship as disciples.

The act of baptism is also a crucial aspect of Christian discipleship, which is why it is identified as an active element of the Great Commission. It is important for us to understand the meaning of this initiatory rite in order to comprehend what it signifies to the Church and to the world. From the time of John the Baptist it was understood that baptism indicated a definitive change from one way of life to another; the baptism of John indicated a change from a life of sin to a life of repentance and faith; Christian baptism incorporated this theme and emphasised the putting off of our old nature of sin and death, and a new life in Christ.

Baptism marks for Christians an acceptance to a change in our allegiances, and a change in allegiances requires a change in methods and ends. A new regime means a change in the way things are done, and as Christians, how we do things is just as important as what we do. A contemplation of the change of methods and ends requires a re-evaluation and comprehensive adjustment to our worldview. To effect those changes is an indication of obedience and our continued allegiance to Christ. Baptism testifies to the Church and the world that there has been a change of ownership: we are followers of Christ, and it is his rule and administra-

tion that we now follow. Being identified with Christ in baptism, we confess to the watching world our commitment to conforming our understanding of the world to the vision of reality revealed to us by Christ and the Scriptures.

Baptism commits us to developing a comprehensive faith that is to be lived out through the whole realm of our Lord's dominion. And as we've seen throughout this discussion of the claims of Christ, his dominion is active and exhaustive of the whole of Creation. With such a comprehensive claim of authority by virtue of his identity and accomplishment, how could we ever say anything but that our worldview, our work and the whole of our lives must be informed by Christ? Should we not shout out with Abraham Kuyper, the great Dutch theologian, journalist, educator and politician: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign of all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"⁹

This proclamation of the comprehensive scope of Christ's dominion is not confined to affirmation from the earthly realm, but is the testament of the very hosts of heaven: "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever'" (Rev. 11:15).

Why is an investigation of Christ's claim of sovereignty important for our study of Christian worldview and changing culture? The answer is simple. How we view the ministry and message of Christ and the charge he gave us to keep determines how we live our lives in the world. The measure to which we incorporate this message of Christ's present universal administration and this mission of proclaiming Christ's pre-eminence over all things into our worldview is an indication of our level of commitment and devotion to the Lord. As we live out a life of worship, we reflect what we believe in our thoughts and our actions.

Christ stakes a definitive claim on our lives, and indeed, on the whole of our existence. In the face of such an overwhelming testimony, we must ask ourselves whether this is the truth that we live by, or is it a claim we reject by failing to conform our understanding of the world to the revelation of God's plans and purposes in Scripture and the demonstration and affirmation of Christ's dominion in the whole of Creation? Is the acknowledgement of Christ's Kingdom in the world a present reality that we daily live according to, or do we believe that the active work of Christ is reserved to a future period only after his Second Coming and of no immediate or relevant application to how we are living our lives in the world? How we answer this question determines how we live our lives and how effective we are as Christians.

For this reason the call to develop and implement a Christian worldview cannot be a demand for us to enclose ourselves in monasteries to contemplate the divine life and maintain our piety, but is a call for us to live the divine life in all areas of our existence to the glory of God. We have been given the command by Christ to actively take this divine life and see it reproduced in the lives of others. The Great Commission calls for the active promotion of the Christian life and worldview to the ends of the earth. Our worldview is an expression of our devotion to Christ, and as his dominion extends to both the length and breadth of heaven and

earth we must develop a worldview that recognises his work as Creator and his present administration and maintenance of the entirety of Creation. As part of our worship, Jesus sends us out into the world to fulfil the Great Commission to enlarge the application of the sovereignty that already exists. For us personally, to live a life in conformity to Christ means that we must interpret everything we encounter according to the reality revealed to us by God.

Following the unmistakable claims of Christ to their conclusion answers for us the question of where we are to live out our faith; if he is truly sovereign over the whole realm of our existence, and indeed, the whole of history, our worldview must be so permeated with the thought of Christ that we are left with no other option but to act on the reality of his provision and providence in everything that we do. To do such we must be proactive in both our thinking and our doing. In the Great Commission Jesus calls us to promote the whole counsel of God in every field of endeavour, which clarifies for us the arena of our activity, as Machen identifies for us in the passage below:

The field of Christianity is the world. The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavor. It must all be brought into some relation to the Gospel. It must be studied either in order to be demonstrated as false, or else in order to be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom must be advanced not merely extensively, but also intensively. The church must seek to conquer not merely every man for Christ, but also the whole of man.¹⁰

Machen recognises that the pervasiveness of the gospel has application on two quantitative plains: the whole of humanity (the nations) and the whole of man. And the application is not just quantitative, but qualitative. Narrowing the application of the gospel in our Christian worldview to something less than the entirety of human thought and action, both collectively and individually, falls short of the claims of Christ.

Correspondent to this conclusion is that to limit the development of the Christian worldview and the scope of application of the Christian faith is to limit the extent of Christ's redemption. This has profound consequences for our thinking (worldview) and our action (obedience). His role as Redeemer matches that of Creator and Superintendent. To counteract the effects of the Fall, the redemptive work of Christ must include man and man's habitation, or else Christ is not fully Redeemer. The earth that was cursed for Adam's sake must be included in the redemption accomplished by Christ, or the curse is not fully lifted from man. For the Christian faith to have any meaning and convey any hope, redemption must not only be personal, but cosmic, in scope:

The horizon of creation is at the same time the horizon of sin and of salvation. To conceive of either the fall or Christ's deliverance as encompassing less than the whole of creation is to compromise the biblical teaching of the radical nature of the fall and the cosmic scope of redemption.¹¹

9. James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 48.

10. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Civilization*, p. 50.

11. Albert Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 71.

This is an important message for us as we see culture crumbling and decaying all around us. Civilisations are crashing down throughout the world because they can no longer bear the weight of their worldview; the ideas of those cultures have grown so removed from revealed reality that they have exhausted their religious and intellectual resources. As Christians, this ought not to cause us to despair, but to rejoice. The opportunity to see the redemption of Christ applied not just to individuals, but entire societies and civilisations, should motivate us to act on the comprehensive claims of Christ throughout the horizon of Creation.

A worldview predicated in faith on the total accomplishment of Christ's redemptive work, viewing the curse lifted

from the Creation, and recognising Christ as the cosmic Creator, Superintendent and Redeemer, is a welcome relief to a world struggling under the weight of sin and darkness. The gospel brings liberation to those whose "thoughts are darkened" and are subject to being "futile in their thinking" by "worshipping the creature rather than the Creator."

By understanding how the unbelieving worldview of men and of cultures has failed them, and understanding how the Christian worldview is the sole remedy, we can face the prospect of engaging rotting cultures in the hope of recovering their structures and redirecting them to their proper end—the glory of God. *C&S*

NOTES ON READING CERVANTES

by Frances Luttikhuisen

PART I

THIS year the literary world commemorates the fourth centennial of the publication of Part I of Miguel de Cervantes' masterpiece, *Don Quixote* (Madrid: Cuesta, 1605). One of Cervantes' most admired literary skills is his use of ambiguities, puns, conceits and contradictions to make political statements that could not have been expressed any other way in seventeenth century Spain. His ingenious blending of poetic truth and historic truth has fascinated critics to this day. In the prologue of his collection of short stories, the *Novelas Ejemplares* (Madrid: Cuesta, 1613), he encourages the reader to discover his hidden mysteries¹: ". . . my tongue, which, though tied,² will be quick enough to tell home truths, which are wont to be understood even in the languages of signs . . ."³

Fleeting references to real historic characters and contemporary events seem to be the clue to some of his hidden mysteries. Today, these poetic distortions of history are often seen as charming literary devices, but for the discerning seventeenth century reader they held specific socio-political meanings. The purpose of this two-part essay is to analyse several of these references in order to show how Cervantes used them to vindicate, in his own way, religious tolerance. It is beyond the scope of this paper to summarise all that has

been said on the subject, therefore I have limited the present survey to a few less-studied examples of the many multi-levelled readings Cervantes' writings offer. Part I will deal mainly with the interpretations and reactions of three very different seventeenth century readers—a Catholic, an Anglican and a group of Anabaptists—and Part II will deal with my own personal readings of several episodes, taken from both *Don Quixote* and the *Novelas Ejemplares*.

Because the study and publication of literary criticism related to Cervantes' works is a relatively modern phenomenon, we must look for early reactions to his work in the prologues, dedicatories and even procedures of early editors and translators. One of these early readers was Francisco de Lyra, a printer-editor at Seville who in 1624 published an edition of the *Novelas Ejemplares*. The *Novelas* had become immediately popular and had already gone through eleven printings by 1624,⁴ promising to be an excellent business venture. Lyra was not a run-of-the-mill printer; he read and reread and composed the text with a very critical eye, as evidences a study of the variant readings that appear in his edition.⁵

In "La Señora Cornelia," for instance, there is a fleeting reference to the mother of one of the main characters: Alfonso II d'Este (1533–1597), the fifth and last Duke of Ferrara. In Lyra's edition, instead of the mother, the father

1. Or "subversive messages" as C. B. Johnson calls them. Carroll B. Johnson, "Organic Unity in Unlikely Places: *Don Quixote* I, 39–41," in *Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 2.2 (1982), p. 141.

2. According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, "tongue tied" can have multiple meanings and multiple causes ranging from a personal, physical impediment to an imposed impediment debarring one from speaking out.

3. Quotation from B.W. Iffe (ed.), *Exemplary Novels*, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1992, Vol. I.xii.

4. Pamplona 1614, 1615, 1617, 1622; Brussels 1614, 1625; Lisbon 1614, 1617; Milan 1615; Madrid 1617, 1622. For a complete study of these early editions, see Frances Luttikhuisen (ed.), *Novelas Ejemplares* (Barcelona: Plantea, 1994), pp. xxiv–xxx.

5. For a complete study of Lyra's variant readings, see F. Luttikhuisen, "¿Fueron censuradas las Novelas Ejemplares?" *Cervantes XX* (1997), 165–174.

comes into the plot. At first sight, the difference between *madre* and *padre* appears to be simply a typographical error,—though this could hardly have been the case in a day and age when composition was done manually—but the expression “the old duke” instead of “the elderly duchess” is certainly not a misreading of the original. What was Lyra’s purpose in introducing this change?

The story is actually a novelised re-write of the real duke’s domestic history. Cervantes gives him an heir and a happy married life,⁶ and he gives the duke’s mother a long and respected life in Ferrara. By giving Alfonso an heir, Cervantes poetically prolongs the rule of the Este dynasty—celebrated patrons of the arts—and gives new life to Ferrara. As long as the Este family was in control, Ferrara remained a city of refuge for persecuted Jews, Protestants and free thinkers. When the Estes fell out of power, the tolerant atmosphere rapidly deteriorated.

Another possible explanation for Lyra’s manipulation of the text is his desire for historical correctness, but a more plausible explanation is that Alfonso’s mother was Renée de Valois (1511–1575), daughter of Louis XII, King of France, known also as the Huguenot princess. In Cervantes’ story, the elderly duchess is highly respected and dies in Ferrara; in real life, she spent the last fifteen years of her life in her castle at Montargis exiled from Ferrara for her Calvinistic leanings. We can understand why Lyra would exclude her from his text, but why would Cervantes want to rescue her from her forced exile and give her a respected role in the political life of Ferrara? Ignorance cannot be alleged, for Cervantes himself must have passed through Ferrara some time between 1567 and 1569, and consequently must surely have known that she was no longer there and why. I am convinced that it was his way to pay homage to this intrepid daughter of the Reformation. Moreover, straightforward statements on matters of religious or political tolerance could have incurred the wrath of the Inquisition.

Another of Lyra’s subtle manipulations is found in “El amante liberal.” The protagonist, captive by the Turks in Cyprus, witnesses the instalment of a new viceroy. The ceremony begins with a proclamation that all those who wished to appeal against the conduct of the outgoing viceroy should come forward. The original text says that among those who came were “Greek Christians and a few Turks”; Lyra’s version says “Greeks and Christians and a few Turks.”⁷ As a prosperous entrepreneuring printer, Lyra was not about to incur in the disfavour of the Inquisition. His deliberate manipulation of what might seem to be but a minor detail stresses the fact that these stories were read discerningly—for better or for worse—and that nothing, not even minor details, were—or should be—overlooked.

Our second reader is James Mabbe, the first English

translator of Cervantes’ *Novelas Ejemplares* (London, 1640).⁸ In 1611, Mabbe joined John Digby, the English ambassador at Madrid, on a diplomatic mission to negotiate a marriage between Prince Henry and Felipe III’s daughter. In the four years Mabbe was in Madrid, he must have frequented the literary circles of the town where religious, political, and literary tolerance—or intolerance—must certainly have been the topic of the day, as well as foreign affairs.

This is reflected in “La española inglesa,” in which the central theme is the plight of crypto-Catholics within a non-Catholic society, a theme extendable to many “unauthorised” minorities in Europe at that time. The story begins with the raiding of Cadiz by the English. Clotaldo, the captain of one of the ships, kidnaps a beautiful young girl and takes her back to London.⁹ In Cervantes’ story, the captain is a crypto-Catholic. In time, the man’s son falls in love with the girl and wants to marry her, but this requires the Queen’s consent—normal procedure, for as head of the Church and of the State, it was the queen’s duty and privilege to give her consent to her officers’ choice for spouse. For the Queen to give her consent, the boy must show his worth by capturing a foreign ship returning from the Indies. The boy is torn between his love for the girl and the betrayal of his faith, for capturing a Spanish or Portuguese ship meant fighting against fellow Catholics. The reader’s attention is drawn to Queen Elizabeth’s tolerant attitude towards the girl and her crypto-Catholic “captor,” but in Mabbe’s English rendering all references to England, to London, to Catholics or Catholicism are carefully and systematically omitted. Mabbe may have had personal reasons to “falsify” names and places—as an Anglican and a staunch royalist, he could not consent to having his country spoken of as the home of pirates and plunderers, or his queen upholding secret Catholics in her army—but there may also have been political reasons. From the introduction of printing in 1476, to the abolition of the Licensing Act in 1695, all literary works printed in England were subject to censorship. On the other hand, Mabbe may have wanted to take Cervantes’ use of historic truth and poetic truth one step further. That is, by placing the story in some “famous northern islands” he moved the story from the local realm into the universal and by doing so he made rare, local acts of tolerance become universal acts of much wanting and much welcomed tolerance.

Our third group of readers, Dutch Anabaptists at Dortrecht, provide another example of how Cervantes’ “hidden message” was brought closer to home.

The seventeenth century, the Golden Age of Dutch letters, coincided with a period of greater political stability and increasing wealth and, with it, a refined taste for art, music and literature. Although peace would not be achieved in the Netherlands until 1648, the Twelve-Year Truce of 1609–1621 had already inspired many to believe that the

6. Although the real Duke married three times, each time with a clear political advancement in mind, he had no male heir. Through his first marriage (1558), to Lucrecia de Medici daughter of Cósimo I, Alfonso sought the title of grand duke; through his marriage (1565), to Barbara de Austria daughter of Ferdinand I of Hungary, he sought the throne of Poland; and through his third marriage (1579), to Margherita Gonzaga daughter of the Duke of Mantua, he hoped to inherit the Duchy of Mantua. The lack of a male heir brought an end to the Este dynasty in 1598, and the duchy passed under papal control.

7. Note how Lyra’s manipulation—“Greek [Orthodox], [Catholic] Christians and a few Turks”—clarifies his position in case anyone should question his stand on the principle prevalent at that time that each country should adhere to a single religion.

8. For a complete study of Mabbe’s contribution, see F. Luttkhuizen, “Don Diego Puede-Ser (James Mabbe’s English rendering of Cervantes’ *Novelas ejemplares*)” in D. Martínez Torrón y Bernd Dietz (eds.), *Cervantes y el ámbito anglosajón* (Madrid: SIAL, 2005).

9. The plot could be based on historic fact: according to Sephardim sources, in 1598 a beautiful Jewish girl was kidnapped by English corsairs as she and her family were on their way from Lisbon to Holland fleeing the Portuguese Inquisition. The young girl was taken to London and brought before the Queen who rode her around London in her carriage for the people to admire her exquisite beauty.

Netherlands was entering a splendid period of economic prosperity and spiritual well-being. It is in this context that the first Dutch translations of the *Novelas Ejemplares* and *Don Quixote* appeared.¹⁰ With the mass arrival of Huguenot, Waldensian and Flemish Anabaptist refugees at the close of the sixteenth century, the literary and intellectual life of the newly formed United Provinces of the North, had changed.¹¹ To a profound sense of patriotism and independence was added a deep love for the intimacy of the home. This is clearly reflected on the canvasses of Vermeer and other contemporary painters of interiors. A cosy, homely, private atmosphere, conducive to introspection, fostered a love for the written word to the point that a new saying was coined: “*met een boekje, in een hoekje*” [with a little book in a little corner]. By the mid-seventeenth century, nearly every Protestant home had a copy of the newly translated *Statenbijbel* and a copy of Jacob Cats’ *Trou-ringh* [the wedding ring], an illustrated treatise, or emblem book, on marriage in alexandrine verse.

It was at Dordrecht that, in 1657, the first Dutch translation of *Don Quixote*¹² was made. It was also at Dordrecht that William of Orange-Nassau had been elected leader of the rebel forces in 1572, that in 1619 the National Synod of the Reformed Church had authorised the official translation of the *Statenbijbel* which was to unify and standardise the Dutch language, and that one of the most influential Mennonite confessions, The Dordrecht Confession of Faith, was adopted in 1632.¹³

Although the majority of the population of Dordrecht at that time belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, there was also a substantial group of well-to-do, cultured Anabaptists of Flemish origin. The entire team responsible for the Dutch translation of the *Quixote*—Lambert van den Bos, the translator, Jacob Sav(ery), the editor, Jacob Braat, the printer, Salomon Savry, the illustrator; Samuel van Hoogstraten, the painter-poet who inserted a laudatory poem in the preliminaries, and the brothers Pieter and Dirck de Sondt, the two patrons to whom the work is dedicated—were Mennonites of the Young Flemish and Waterlander branches.¹⁴

The reason for the slow arrival of Spanish literature in Dutch translation has deep political roots. Their long struggle with Spain was not conducive to promoting Spanish authors. This is particularly true regarding the Anabaptists.

For their firm stand on adult baptism, separation of Church and State, and their radical pacifism, the Anabaptists had been brutally persecuted under the Spanish monarchs.¹⁵ It is therefore all the more surprising to learn that they were the early promoters of Cervantes’ main work. A close look at who they were and their end-product will help us to understand better the reasons that motivated them to put into the hands of their fellow countrymen a book that had already appeared several years earlier in French, Italian, German and English.

The editor, Jacob Sav(ery) III (1617–1666), moved to Dortrecht in 1652 and opened a bookshop at the Kasteel van Gent where, among other things, he published three works of Jacob Cats, two histories of the Anabaptist martyrs, and *Don Quixote*. The illustrator, Salomon Savry (1594–1678), father of the editor, was known for his copper-plate etchings. Salomon’s grandfather was a painter as well as his father, Jacob (II), and his two uncles, Hans and Roelandt. All three had studied at the famous academy of Carel Van Mander¹⁶ in Haarlem when they first arrived from Flanders in the early 1580s.

The translator, Lambert van den Bos(ch), was a gifted linguist who translated from the Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Spanish, and was himself also a prolific writer.¹⁷ The preliminary material inserted by the editor, the translator, and Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–1678), also a painter by profession, evidences the broad literary culture of these men. Both the frontispieces (for Part I and Part II)¹⁸ and the laudatory poem inserted by van Hoogstraten, which he titles “Don Quichot’s lineage, engraved on a rock in the mountains of Sierra Morena by the don himself, then in Arabic but now translated into the Dutch tongue,” are closely related to the content, and context, of the novel and show that these men had read the book thoroughly and were determined to facilitate the task for their compatriots.

The 24 copper-plate engraved insets were not meant to simply embellish the text, but, as is clearly implied in van den Bos’ “Prologue to the Reader” and the editor’s dedicatory to Pieter and Dirck de Sondt, these engravings had a marked didactic and pedagogical intention. In 1662, the Flemish editor, Juan Mommarte commissioned copies to be made of Savry’s engravings for his new Spanish edition of *Don Quixote* (Bruselas, 1662), but his reasoning—“so that not only the

10. For a complete study of the arrival of these works in the Netherlands, see F. Luttikhuisen, “Breve aproximación a la primera traducción neerlandesa del *Quixote*,” XII Coloquio Internacional de la Asociación de Cervantistas, Argamasilla de Alba, 6–8 mayo, 2005. (Proceedings forthcoming.)

11. Until the seventeenth century, literary life in Flanders and the Netherlands was mainly centered around the outdoor theatrical activities of the Chambers of Rhetoric. See Leonard Verduin, “The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptist Origins in the Low Countries,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 34. 1960. pp. 192–96.

12. *Den Verstandigen Vroomen Ridder Don Quichot de la Mancha*. Geschreven door Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. En uyt de Spaensche in onse Nederlantsche tale overgeset, door L.v.B. Dordrecht, Iacobus Savry, 1657. 2 dln. 120 met 2 frontispices en 24 platen door S. Savry.

13. Signed by fifty-one Flemish and Frisian Mennonite ministers, it served as a basis of union for the Frisian and Flemish bodies

14. These two groups merged in 1668. For an excellent survey on the history of these groups, see Alastair Hamilton, Sjouke Voolstra & Piet Visser (eds.), *From martyr to muppy. A historical introduction to cultural assimilation processes of a religious minority in the Netherlands: the Mennonites* (Amsterdam University Press, 1994).

15. Many of the atrocities committed appear in *Martyr’s Mirror*, compiled by T.J. Van Braght and printed at Dordrecht by Jacob Braat in 1660, three years after he printed van den Bos’s translation of *Don Quixote*.

16. Carel Van Mander (1548–1606), painter and theorist, known as the Dutch Vasari, was a Mennonite preacher of the Old Flemish group.

17. One of his most famous books was *Dordrechtsche Arcadia* (Dortrecht, 1662). The Dutch likened their land to arcadia, an idyllic paradise. In the 1630s a new literary genre—known as *Arcadiae*—appeared in the Netherlands, describing the Dutch countryside as if it were a mythic retreat. Lambert van den Bos’ descriptions of the surroundings of Dordrecht are strikingly similar in character to Albert Cuyp’s images of his native city. Despite their different forms of expression, Cuyp—also an Anabaptist—and Van den Bos both combine a profound sense of place and history with an idyllic atmosphere of peace and tranquility.

18. In the frontispiece of Part I, the enchanted Dulcinea appears young and beautiful, while Don Quixote has a grotesque air about him. In the frontispiece of Part II, Dulcinea, now unenchanted, appears fat and ugly, a true peasant woman, whereas Don Quixote, with the title of Knight of the Lions, appears triumphant with an air of Orpheus domesticating the animals, one of the Savrys favourite themes.

ears, but also the eyes could enjoy the story”—was far from the original purpose of the original illustrations, as we shall see.

Although no direct reference is made to the illustrations in the preliminary material, van den Bos' comment “. . . if ever enjoyment is mixed with usefulness, it has here been accomplished felicitously, so that you will enjoy while being taught, and will learn while enjoying” clearly reflects the rationale and literary philosophy in vogue in the Netherlands at the time, namely, the emblem book.

The genre began with Andrea Alciati (1492–1550), an Italian jurist,¹⁹ who compiled a series of Latin epigrams to which his printer added illustrations. The book,—*Emblematum liber*—which appeared in Augsburg in 1531, was soon imitated, especially in Protestant circles, for its potential of creating a universal code free of the corrupting and artificial intermedium of language. Alciati's contemporaries, the Italian aesthetic theorists Leonardo and Paolo Giovio, argued that pictures constitute the most unartificial, the purest, and least rhetorically compromised form of communication. Guillaume de la Perriere, a French writer of Emblem Books, explained: “Where oftentimes feeling and effectual words, though never so sensible, do pass the reader without due consideration, pictures that especially are discerned by the sense are such that they make words as it were deeds, and set the whole substance of that which is offered before the sight and conceit of the reader.”²⁰

Although Jesuit emblem books were numerous, mainly because of the importance of visual imagery to the Counter-Reformation, the emblem book was largely a Protestant phenomenon.²¹ It was designed to instruct by encouraging strenuous interpretive reading on the part of the individual, a practice akin to personal perusal and interpretation of the Bible. In essence, the emblems created silent sermons; they were speaking pictures.

With their great appeal to both the educated and uneducated members of society, emblem books were not only a safe business venture, but also a challenge to the writers or compilers. The traditional format consisted of an engraving, with an accompanying motto, or short verse, as well as a brief explanatory selection of prose, intended to inspire the reader to reflect on a general moral lesson derived from the reading of both picture and text together. A broader interpretation

19. John Calvin studied under Alciati. While still a child, Calvin received a canonry in the cathedral of Noyon to pay for his education. Although he commenced training for the priesthood, his father, because of a controversy with the bishop of the Noyon, decided that his son should become a lawyer, and sent him to Orleans, where he studied under Pierre de l'Etoile. Later he studied at Bourges under the humanist lawyer Andrea Alciati. It was probably while in Bourges that Calvin became a Protestant (see Walter Elwell [ed.], *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984).

20. The on-line Literary Encyclopedia (<http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=325>) Accessed 28–6–05.

21. The first Protestant emblem book, *Emblemnes, ou, Devises chrestiennes* (Lyon, 1571) was written by Georgette de Montenay (1540–1581) who belonged to a small group of French female poets. The dedication to Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre, clearly shows her Calvinist sympathies. For complete studies regarding this and other Protestant emblem books, see Paul Corby Finney (ed.), *Seeing beyond the Word: Visual Arts and the Calvinist Tradition* (Eerdmans, 1999); Alison Adams, *Webs of Allusion: French Protestant Emblem Books of the Sixteenth Century* (Geneva, 2003); Alison Adams, “The Emblemata of Théodore de Bèze (1580)” in Karl A. E. Enenkel & Arnoud S. Q. Visser (eds.), *Mundus Emblematicus. Studies on Neo-Latin Emblem Books, Imago Figurata Studies*, Vol. 4 (2003).

included many other types of illustrated books: Greek fables, Dance of Death books, books illustrating triumphs, voyages of discovery, etc. It is within this broader interpretation that we situate the 1657 Dutch translation of *Don Quixote*. The innovation of applying the popular format of the emblem book to a novel was a special literary challenge. Novels did not, at the time, count as significant literature, perhaps because “mere” prose writing seemed easy and unimportant. Undoubtedly, the addition of emblems helped place secular prose writing in a higher category in the minds of seventeenth century Dutch readers.

Emblems were often thought to be riddles or mysterious messages. Their interpretation and understanding relied on the wit, knowledge and ability of the reader to combine clues in the text and image to produce meaning. The illustrations tended to express a cultural—rather than a literal—meaning. They often presented the reader with a recognisable scene and the text then reoriented the reader's understanding of that scene to a new and unexpected message. The picture was potentially subject to numerous interpretations; only by reading the text could a reader be certain of the meaning intended by the author.

As we stated earlier, the Dutch Anabaptists, especially the Mennonite branch, were staunch pacifists, radically rejecting the oath and the sword.²² Their passive resistance to the world was not a total separation from the world, like the Amish, the Bruderhof and the Hutterites, who chose to separate themselves by making visible barriers with language and clothing, but a much more difficult stance: “To be in the world but not of the world.” They subjected themselves to the world but refrained from being engulfed by the world, a position that honours the central importance of the individual conscience and gives space for individual integrity and character that resists the corrupting influence of the world.

For these seventeenth century Mennonite literati, the “madness” of one taking justice into one's own hands was emblematised by Don Quixote, the “mad” knight, the self-proclaimed “righter of wrongs.” Moreover, the absurdity of Don Quixote's obsession that all those he encounters must swear that his Dulcinea is the “*más hermosa dama*” and his readiness to draw the sword on any who hesitated must have constituted such an excellent example of irony that they could not help but exploit it. And it is in this light that these men could easily turn Cervantes' novel into an emblem book. However, should the reader be misled by the comical situations in which Don Quixote finds himself, or Savry's comic images, in the preliminary material both the translator and the editor insist again and again on their serious intention and design.

The fact that they were Anabaptists would not necessarily deter them from bringing out non-religious works. This same team produced several historiographies,²³ several editions of Cats' works, some scientific texts and, now, because “almost all the parts of Christendom have wanted to hear this wise madman speak, and each in his own language, so that many sensible men unable to understand the Spanish

22. To the point that they refused even to carry a cannon on their ships for self defence. A. Hamilton, *et. al.* (eds.), *From martyr to muppy*. p. 150.

23. T.J. van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror* (1660); Flavius Josephus' *The Wars of the Jews* (1665).

language would not be bereft of this merry instruction” they took it upon themselves to render his “wise madness and mad wisdom” into Dutch. Moreover, if emblem books were used for instruction, it was certainly the aim of these men to set before their readers a new pedagogical manual, as Van den Bos, the translator, points out: “do not linger in the enjoyment of the narration, but examine the opinion of the author, and his moral teachings.”

In the lengthy dedicatory to Pieter de Sondt, Don Quixote is portrayed as “renowned for his wise madness, and mad wisdom, yet not so wise as to show us an upright madness, nor so mad, as to exert himself to teach us great wisdom . . . He who sees him depicted here, decked out in a ridiculous fashion (owing to his worn books of *Amadis*) will judge him to be a madman in *trina dimensione*; but he who hears him speak and lecture to his Sancho from the cathedra of his Rosinant, will take him for one of the Doctors of Salamanca.” As for the author himself,—Cervantes—Savry says, “Whether he who managed to bring together these two conflicting characteristics [*madness and wisdom*]²⁴ in the close

24. Brackets mine.

confinement of a skinny body is mad, I will leave to the judgement of your honour and that of all other sensible people.”

I should like to close with the editor’s words to Dirck de Sondt, the other patron: “we here finally bring to an end the unquiet wanderings of this wandering knight . . . these fantastic errors have been implanted far too firmly in the sober brain of our Don Quixote, to be extinguished by any lesser character. We hope the best of your honour’s approval, which will readily distinguish between the various opinions of our author and observe the end which he intended, by not lingering in something which would please only children, and ignore what requires the attention of grown men. This, my lord, is what I can say or do for this present work . . .”²⁵ C&S

25. I should like to express my gratitude to Cis van Heertum, director of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica of Amsterdam, for her generous help in translating into English for me the preliminary material of the 1657 Dordrecht edition.

THE CHRISTIAN CONFRONTED BY HOMOSEXUALITY

by *Jean-Marc Berthoud*

THE title of our paper comprises two terms. On the one hand we have the word “Christian,” and on the other “homosexuality.” What holds these terms together is the verb “confronts.” Before coming to terms with our subject, which will above all deal with the Bible’s teaching on the age-old phenomenon of homosexuality, it is necessary briefly to say a few words on the expression “Christian.” This will be the object of our introduction.

INTRODUCTION

What can be the meaning today of the expression “Christian,” when under that expression are affirmed the most contrary spiritual and doctrinal positions? If, in a still relatively recent past, Christians defining themselves within strongly distinctive denominational structures, had a certain facility in sending one another dogmatic anathemas, today the situation is very different. The vertical barriers between Christian denominations have largely fallen, with considerable doctrinal and spiritual confusion as a result. If the term “Christian” has become a vague expression, the same trend is to be seen—

as a result of the spread of the ecumenical mentality—in the sense of identity of the various Christian denominations. Today one no longer really knows what it means to be “Reformed,” or “Lutheran,” or even “Evangelical.” Everywhere one observes a loss of denominational identity. It has even become difficult for a practising Roman Catholic to know what can be the precise content of the faith he claims to profess, and this is in spite of the fact that the exercise of the Magisterium has, in that denomination, to some extent been maintained. This can, for example, be clearly gathered from the highly ambivalent text resulting from the discussions between Roman Catholics and Lutherans on the doctrine of justification. The same can be said of the agreements signed between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the same fields. Such examples could easily be multiplied. All parties to these dialogues seem to be at a loss as to their own denominational identity. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the Roman Church, in spite of the great confusion today in its midst, still maintains—at least with regard to a part of its hierarchy—a certain persistence in its traditional theological diplomacy aiming at attracting as many lost brethren as possible into the bosom of the Mother Church.

For those who wish to confess themselves Christians in a more or less coherent manner, this difficult quest for their true identity is aggravated by the powerful syncretistic movement which, in the last ten years, has so vigorously replaced ecumenicalism. Such confusion renders the treatment of our subject difficult, for on the question we are examining the greatest of confusion is indeed to be found among those who claim to be Christians. To speak only of my country, Switzerland, it would be very difficult (if not impossible) to make up one's mind, in a precise and coherent fashion, about what constitutes the homosexual phenomenon by basing oneself on the affirmations of all those who claim to be Christians. To realise the extreme variety and even blatant contradictions between the various positions which claim to be Christian on the subject of homosexuality it is only necessary to consider the very diverse "Christian" declarations made with regard to Gay Pride in the traditionally Catholic and conservative canton of Valais in the summer of 2001. The Catholic Bishop of Sion, after having set off the fireworks by calling this homosexual manifestation a "diabolical temptation," rapidly retreated under the violent pressure of the media and of the main political parties, which have been largely won over to the position defended by the homosexual lobby. He maintained his opposition in theory whilst proclaiming to all who would hear the great tolerance of the Church with regard to the rights of minority groups.

The Protestant Church of the canton of Valais (which calls itself "Reformed"), which was faithful in this to its moral and doctrinal pluralism, hastened to open its doors to a homosexual celebration. Evangelicals (whether charismatic or not) shone as usual by their lack of engagement, at least as far as could be observed.

The only vigorous and highly visible Christian opposition to this manifestation came from young laymen close to the Roman Catholic traditionalist movement founded by Mgr Lefebvre at the Saint Pie X Seminary in Ecône. They considered this Gay Pride an offense to God and a serious danger for the young people of their region, particularly as the explicit aim of the manifestation was to demand the introduction of "homosexual education" into the curriculum of the public schools of this canton. It is interesting that these traditionalists were joined in their protest against this public exposure of a perverse life-style by a little group of Christians, members of the small Reformed Baptist Church of Sion, whose Evangelical and anti-Catholic positions are well-known in the canton.

How can we recover our bearings in such confusion? Where is one to place the truly Christian point of view? For we remain convinced that on this particular ethical question—the importance and significance of the homosexual phenomenon—there without doubt exists a specific and precise (that is non-equivocal) Christian position in conformity to the clear, unchangeable and infallible teachings of the Bible. How then are we to discern such a doctrinal position in the confusion engendered by the great variety of opinions, all claiming to represent an authentic Christian standpoint?

It is evident that in the limits of this essay we cannot hope to answer such a question in any way exhaustively. But, in order to make the purpose of our remarks on this difficult and delicate subject understood, a few additional comments are necessary.

What do we mean by the word "Christian," which figures in our title? What in fact is this "Christianity" we

claim as ours? We are here forced to distinguish between what we call "the historic Christian faith" and what, for want of a better expression, we must call "modern Christianity." The distinction to which we here draw your attention is no longer that of a vertical (or confessional) differentiation between the different branches of the Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, etc.), but a horizontal demarcation which passes through all the elements of which the universal Church is composed. Within every Christian denomination you will find (in a great variety of proportions) the presence of partisans of the historic Christian faith and adepts of its "modern" version. How are we then to distinguish the historical faith from its modern version?

The essential question concerns the attitude of the "believer" with regard to the Bible. Is the Bible—the Jewish *Tanak* (known to us by the name of the Old Testament) and the *Apostolic Witness* (what we call the New Testament)—truly the inspired and infallible word of God, and as such the final authority for the teaching and practice of the Christian faith? Or is the Jewish and Christian Bible only a human word, no doubt spiritually and morally useful and an inspiration for our thoughts and actions, but, as is the case for all human endeavours, necessarily fallible? In the latter case it is no longer a final norm for all men, in every place and at all times.

This question of final authority is at the heart of every faith, even of the faith we have called "modern Christianity," where the locus of authority is placed in man's reason and in his feelings. Is this authority merely human, as is the case with the "modern" version of the Christian faith? Will it then have an exclusively "rational," "scientific," "experimental," in brief "critical" attitude to divine revelation, to the Bible? Or is the authority of the *Tanak* and of the *Apostolic Witness* recognised as fully divine, as the historic Christian faith maintains? With the latter position, the final authority with regard to faith and works, to intelligence and action, is inscribed in the very detail of the verbal texture of Holy Scripture. This is the faith of Eastern Orthodoxy (with John Chrysostom and Justin Popovitch, for example), of Roman Catholicism (with Thomas Aquinas and Pius X, for example), of Protestantism (with John Calvin and Cornelius Van Til, for example) and of the Evangelical movement (with John Bunyan and Louis Gaussen, for example). All, in spite of their evident differences, firmly hold, in conformity with the teachings of Holy Scripture, to the infallible divine authority of the Bible.

We present here four tests which will allow us to distinguish the historic Christian faith (which we confess is ours) from that which we consider its modern travesty:

Firstly, in the perspective of the historic Christian faith, the absolute criterion for defining what constitutes homosexuality, a criterion which will determine the attitude every faithful Christian will adopt on this question, is the specific teaching to be drawn from the Bible on this subject, as it is found in the *Tanak* and in the *Apostolic Witness*. Such a normative truth cannot be discovered, either in the tradition of the Church taken by itself, nor in the experience of man when he has abandoned himself to his own resources. It cannot be found either in the varied lessons of history, nor in the different points of view that can be drawn from sociology. I hasten to add that this in no way implies that we must neglect any useful information capable of facilitating our reading of the sacred text that can be gleaned from the various fields of human research. But for the one who bases

his beliefs on the norms of the historic Christian faith only Holy Scripture is, in the last resort, able to determine the significance and the importance of these empirical facts.

Secondly, the historic Christian faith we defend has a definitely historic character. What I mean by this is that from the beginnings of the history of the Church the constant confrontation between the historic Christian faith and errors which have continuously attacked it has led to a deepening of its understanding of its own doctrinal affirmations and a better discernment of the errors which have always sought to destroy it. It is thus that with a common voice the Christian Church confesses the essential symbolic texts of the Church at its beginning: the Apostolic creed, the Nicene creed, and the definitions of the Council of Chalcedon, all of which are faithful expressions of the content of the Scriptures, which, in the final count, alone remain normative. In our effort to come to a Christian definition of homosexuality and to demonstrate the true significance of this way of life, we must take into account the cumulative doctrinal wisdom carefully accumulated by the Church throughout its history. The attacks directed, especially today, against the position defined by the historic Christian faith on the matter of homosexuality force us to seek to understand better the nature, character and effects of this phenomenon.

Thirdly, the historic Christian faith bases itself on a realist epistemology. This means that the content of the Christian faith can be formulated in carefully defined concepts. Thus, if these concepts are dogmatically and logically true, the affirmation of their opposite must of necessity be false. With regard to homosexuality, it is thus possible, from the point of view of the historic Christian faith, to define precisely what the Bible teaches on the nature and effects of the homosexual phenomenon, both on the personal and social planes and in the physical and spiritual spheres.

Finally, the historic Christian faith does not simply consist in doctrine, but is also and inseparably a way of life, an ethical obedience, both socially and personally, an obedience received from God as a gift of his grace. Such a faith seeks thus to conform itself to the revealed will of God, to his normative prescriptions, to his law as it is contained throughout Holy Scripture, both *Tanakh* and *Apostolic Witness*. With the help of the grace of God it is possible to walk in growing faithfulness to the divine will. This means that, in the context of the historic Christian faith, what we discover in Scripture about the role and meaning of the homosexual phenomenon must lead us to acts of obedience, both personal and public, in our families and in our churches, but also with regard to the civil and criminal laws of the Commonwealth. It is this practical aspect of the historical Christian faith which makes it possible for those who find themselves imprisoned in the abnormal way of life that is homosexuality¹ to entertain the firm hope of being gradually and enduringly delivered from their obsessions by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is to this task of biblical discernment that we shall now turn.

1. Sébastien, *Ne deviens pas gay, tu finiras triste* (Paris: Témoignage, François-Xavier Guibert, 1998). See the following books for a realistic description of the homosexual movement and the lifestyle it promotes: Paul Cameron, *The Gay Nineties: What the Empirical Evidence Reveals About Homosexuality* (Franklin, Tennessee: Adroit Press, 1993) and Scott Lively and Kevin Abrams, *The Pink Swastika: Homosexuality and the Nazi Party* (Keizer, Oregon: Founders Publishing Corporation, 1995).

I. HOMOSEXUALITY EXAMINED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STRUCTURES OF CREATION

It is not possible to speak correctly of redemption or of morality without first considering the structures of reality as they were established by God in the beginning for the whole of that reality which we call nature or the universe and which the New Testament calls the world, the *cosmos*. It is one of the principal purposes of the first two chapters of the book of Genesis to describe God's majestic unfolding of this simultaneously cosmic and human order. It is only after having established the foundations of such a creational biblical metaphysics that one can construct a truly biblical ethic and a coherent doctrine of redemption.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:1–2)

From nothing—*ex nihilo*—God sovereignly creates all spiritual reality (the heaven) and all physical reality (the earth). But the earth was unformed and void of all creatures. That is to say, the universe, which by divine *fiat* came into existence at the beginning of the first day of Creation, did not then have its definitive form, nor was it peopled by God's creatures. It was the divine work of the six days for God to unfold the order of creation, to perfect it, to finish the work begun.² During these six days God ordered the universe and peopled the earth. This was a work of progressive differentiation. Light is separated from darkness. A space—the firmament-atmosphere—separates the waters below, the primeval ocean, from the waters in the clouds. Then the earth is separated from the waters to form the continents and the oceans. On this earth, separated from the primeval ocean, God causes plants to grow, each plant reproducing itself according to the divinely established stability of its species. Then in the firmament, in the heaven, God places the stars, the sun and the moon, each in its proper position. Then God peoples the seas with water creatures and the heaven with birds, all firmly established in their particular essence, each reproducing itself according to its species. Finally, on the sixth day, God shapes all the animals from the earth, fashioning them so as to enable each and every one to reproduce itself according to its species. God's creative acts culminate in the creation of man, the very image of God, the crowning gift of the whole Creation. God's ultimate creative action was that of woman.

If I have briefly described the Creation week, the labour by which God, by stable and progressive steps gradually differentiates his original creation, it is because these first two chapters of the Bible give us a concrete description of the divine categories according to which the whole Creation was definitively ordered. These categories have the very same

2. On this fundamental question of the divine unfolding of the universe in the six days of creation see the following two essential books: Oliva Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe According to Aquinas, a Teleological Cosmology* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) and Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles, I* (Oxford University Press, 1997); *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa Contra Gentiles II* (Oxford University Press, 2001). See also, Wolfgang Smith, *Cosmos and Transcendence. Breaking Through the Barrier of Scientific Belief* (Peru, Illinois: Sherwood Sugden and Company, 1990).

stability as the Word which brought them into existence. This creational order, this order of nature, does not change, cannot change until that day when it will be entirely renewed in the new Creation. Here, in the first two chapters of Genesis, we have the metaphysical foundations of the created order. If the original order of the universe has been profoundly affected by the cosmic effects of man's sin, this pristine order has nonetheless not been abolished. In its essence the created order has in no way been shaken by the effects of man's Fall. This is what God himself affirms in oracles given to the prophet Jeremiah.

Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light for the day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereon roar. The Lord of hosts is his name. If these ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. (Jer. 31:35–36)³

These words remind us of the promises God made to Noah after the Flood:

And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart: I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. (Gen. 8:21–22)

God thus categorically affirms the stability of his Creation, of that order which we have just seen to have been established by him during the six days during which were created the heaven and the earth and all they contain. And this divine order established by God for the whole universe includes that distinction of essence, that substantial difference, so fundamental to the very existence of the human species, the difference between man and woman.

Here is how our founding text deals with this question:

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, 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. (Gen. 1:26–27)

This account of God's ultimate creative act is placed at the end of the sixth day. It is completed in the second chapter of Genesis by the detailed account of the creation of woman.

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast in the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the

rib, which the Lord God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said: This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (Gen. 2:19–23)

This text establishes the fundamental metaphysical distinctions our argument requires. First it affirms the essential distinction between man and animals, for Adam could not recognise in any of the animals brought before him one capable of being his helpmeet, of corresponding truly to his own nature. In spite of certain similarities man belongs to a completely different order from that of animals. The woman, drawn from his side is truly similar to him, his helpmeet, and by this fact created in his resemblance. Very literally the woman is bone of man's bones, flesh of his flesh. The very name Adam gives to the wife God brings to him shows, at one and the same time, their essential unity and the radical difference which separates them. As a male, man is here called *Isch*; as a female the woman is called *Ischa*. We know that in biblical thinking the very act of giving a name manifests not only the authority of the one who gives the name over what he has named, but declares even more strongly the very nature of the object defined by the name given it. Thus Adam, in recognising in Eve his very counterpart, affirms both their resemblance and their difference. He affirms the permanent unity of the human race, of the human species whose every member is created in the image and resemblance of God, reproducing itself according to its kind; and he declares the essential difference between man and woman, their essential distinction, their blessed complementarity. The divine account of the creation of the woman continues: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

This text contains a founding metaphysical affirmation. It once and for all defines the creational order, the order of nature, as regards man and woman and the relations they must cultivate. The detachment of the husband from his parents and his attachment to his wife have as their purpose that together they be constituted one flesh. This signifies the conjugal union, both physical and emotional, but also the natural fruit of this union, the creation of the child which would normally be born from this carnal act. We now know, in the most decisive manner, that the child is constituted "one flesh" of the genes of his father and mother. In a sense he is his father and his mother. That is why honouring his parents is such a source of blessing for him. We here understand much more clearly why it is so criminal an act (and so contrary to nature) for man to separate what God himself has united. Man in leaving his father and his mother establishes a new home, i.e. a uniquely new institution. The woman for her part moves from the authority of her father to that of her husband, from paternal to conjugal protection. It is here that one finds established the definitive order between husband and wife, the essence, the very substance of the immutable created relation between man and woman.

These reflexions on the created order help us better to understand the precise nature of sin. The Bible defines sin in a number of ways: missing the goal established by God is one; another is to abandon oneself to impurity, to anything contrary to God's holiness; still another, better known to us, is any act of disobedience to God's commands. Another essential aspect of sin, one which we do not normally

3. See further in the same book, "Thus saith the Lord: If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them." (Jer. 33:25–26)

sufficiently consider, is that of rejecting God's order, of choosing the disorder which issues from the disordered imagination of man rather than from his willing submission to the divinely established order of creation. The apostle Paul refers to this when he writes to the Corinthian Christians: "For God is not the author of confusion [or disorder], but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33).

With this remark we are moving closer to our subject matter. For the text of Genesis does not say: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his husband; and they shall be one flesh." Nor does it affirm: "Therefore shall a woman leave her father and her mother, and shall cleave unto her wife; and they shall be one flesh." Yet this in fact is the pretension of those who not only defend the error of considering homosexuality as a normal and legitimate form of human love but in addition think that such a relation should be recognised institutionally as a legal form of "marriage." With such an inversion of the created order we have to do with a disorder concerning nature itself, a perverse act committed against the original order of Creation. Before being a sin, an immoral action, homosexuality is an act against nature, an act of revolt which raises its head against the order of Creation itself and, in the final count, against the One who conceived this order and created it, the Lord God Almighty, Creator of the heavens and the earth and all they contain.

2. HOMOSEXUALITY EXAMINED IN THE LIGHT OF THE TORAH, THE JEWISH LAW

With this perspective in mind, the legislation concerning homosexuality contained in the Torah becomes much more comprehensible. These drastic laws aim at repressing acts which are explicitly directed against the order of Creation, acts which subvert that order at the very base of human happiness and social peace. With this kind of disorder we do not have to do with ordinary sins, like theft or even adultery, noxious actions which manifest their capacity for harm within the order of Creation, but with acts which aim at subverting the created order itself.

What is homosexuality? How are we to define this disorder? Greg Bahnsen in his excellent book *Homosexuality a Biblical View*, gives the following definition, which we will make our own: "... the general term *homosexual* will be used here for any person, male or female (thus including lesbians), who engage in sexual relations with members of the same sex or who desire to do so. Homosexuality is an affectional attraction to, or active sexual relation with, a person of the same sex."⁴

Before examining the demands of the Mosaic law, which is an analogous revelation of the eternal law, that is of God's own thought, and a perfect echo of the natural law inscribed in the conscience of all men, we must say a word concerning those who suffer from homosexual temptations, whether they be men or women. We must carefully distinguish those who are simply subject to such temptations from others who abandon themselves to their fantasies and, even more, from those who engage in homosexual acts and become homosexual activists, fanatical propagators of the world-

wide gay revolution. Homosexual temptation is not in itself a sin as long as one does not abandon oneself to one's inner lusts and satisfy them with others. The Christian, as well as the non-Christian, can fight such tendencies and, as witness those who have struggled with them and come out of their narcissistic hell, it is possible to be victorious in such a battle. Far from judging and passing condemnation on men and women struggling against such temptations, the Christian Church should rather do all it can to come to their aid. We can be very thankful that here and there we can find groups of Christians who give their time and energy to helping men and women who, in considerable moral distress, struggle against such temptations.⁵

With regard to those homosexuals who openly practise their vice and strive to impose it on society as a normal expression of human sexuality, appropriate measures must be found to render their action ineffectual. No doubt, by the grace of God, such perverted men and women can also escape from this vicious circle but this will require of them true repentance, a lasting change in their lifestyle and a complete abandonment of that perverse ideology which was up to then the justification of their wretched existence. The blood of Jesus Christ, his pardon acquired for sinners at the cross, is fully sufficient to cleanse anyone from the worst sin.

What does the law of Moses have to say on this question? We shall now examine the teaching contained in chapters 18 and 20 of the book of Leviticus. After forbidding different forms of incest and sexual relations during a woman's period, we read the following injunctions: "I am the Lord. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith; neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto; it is a confusion." These laws receive the following commentary:

Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you; and the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgements, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you and the land is defiled), that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them, shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein; I am the Lord your God. (Lev. 18:21-30)

In the 20th chapter of the same book we read:

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbours wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an

4. Greg Bahnsen. *Homosexuality a Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 5.

5. Gérard J. M. van den Aardweg, *The Battle for Normality. A Guide for (Self-) Therapy For Homosexuality* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1977).

abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness; they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. (Lev. 20:10–16)

So much for the book of Leviticus. Let us now consider the teaching of the book of Deuteronomy on some other infringements of the statutes on sexual offences. These laws make us understand the great importance the Jewish Torah accorded to the protection of marriage and to the preservation of the purity of conjugal relations.

If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman so shalt thou put evil away from Israel.

If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife; so that thou shalt put away evil from among you.

But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her; then the man only that lay with her shall die; but unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death; for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter. For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.

If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. (Dt. 22:22–29)

The book of Exodus gives the following teaching concerning the last case: "And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins" (Ex. 22:16–17).

These different laws on sexual offences are carefully formulated case laws, the application of the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," to particular legal cases (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:18).

We see in these cases how God, in the legislation given by him to Israel, is concerned with the particulars of the application of the law. It is clear, for example, that the case of a young couple in love who, in sinful lust, sleep together before marriage by imprudence or excess of passion, is treated very differently from that of adulterous lovers whose illicit passion destroys the sacred covenant of marriage. Still more heinous is the case of those who, not only defy God's law, but uproot the very order of nature itself, by copulating with persons of the same sex, or even with animals. For the first case there is the obligation of marriage, with the payment by the bridegroom of the dowry this entails; for the latter two, the death penalty.

Let us now briefly consider what the statutes found in the book of Leviticus teach us concerning homosexual relations.

(1) Firstly, such publicly known acts are considered by Jewish biblical law to be of the greatest gravity. Like voluntary homicide, adultery, incest and bestiality, openly homosexual behaviour is considered a crime worthy of the death penalty. Why such severity? A comparison of biblical Hebrew law with the contemporary legal systems of ancient Near East

monarchies such as Assyrian, Hittite or Babylonian law, show a relative moderation in the Torah's application of the death penalty. As Roland de Vaux has shown,⁶ all the cases of the death penalty in Hebrew law can be summed up under one head: public offences against God. These include direct offences against God, such as public blasphemy, false prophecy, acts of magic and witchcraft etc. and indirect offences against God by way of an assault on the two expressions of the image of God in society: (a) the specific image of God, man, whose innocent integrity and life are to be protected by the death penalty, and (b) the family, the image of the heavenly family (the Holy Trinity) whose integrity and life are also protected by the capital sentence. It is in this perspective, i.e. with regard to the protection of the family, that in Hebrew law the death penalty is applicable to publicly known cases of homosexuality, adultery, incest and bestiality. These various perversions with regard to the biblical order relating to the family are thus severely repressed by divinely inspired biblical Hebrew legislation. Infringement of these laws thus led to exemplary punishments.

(2) The second point to consider is this. What are the consequences for a nation or a people who willfully ignore and reject the judicial implications of this legislation? The exemplary condemnation by the Torah of the most serious crimes attacking the family constitutes a system of judicial protection of the integrity of that foundational institution of society. In this way society protects itself from its own inherent tendencies to self-destruction. What our text tells us is that if such crimes are tolerated by any society, if they are covered by the leniency of law courts and, worse still, if they come to be legitimated by laws which institutionalise such crimes, the unavoidable consequence will be the destruction of the nation itself. Our text is here particularly clear: the earth itself will spew out the inhabitants of a land which tolerates such abominations on its soil. Such acts, affirms our text, incite the Creation itself to reject from its bosom a people which tolerates such practices. John Hartley's commentary is here particularly appropriate:

But for Israel a close bond exists between human behaviour and the fertility of the land. When the people obey God's laws, God blesses the land, and it bears abundantly. But if the people defile themselves by immoral, particularly sexual, practices such as the former inhabitants of the land practised, they will defile the land. The land will become so nauseated by such behaviour that it will vomit out its inhabitants. It is God himself who will administer the emetic causing the land to vomit out its inhabitants. Only by getting rid of that which is making it sick can the land recover.⁷

This biblical perspective, establishing an organic bond between the cosmos and men's behaviour, has become largely foreign to us since the disruption of Western thought by the seventeenth-century scientific revolution. For this new mental paradigm, which was quickly imposed by its advocates as the dominating intellectual norm of the whole of society, transformed the traditional mental framework of Christendom, positing a separation between what was deemed "scientific" and what was not. In this new worldview the only objective reality recognised as intellectually

6. Roland de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), Vol. I, ch. 10.

7. John E. Hartley, *Leviticus, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), Vol. 4 p. 298.

valid was that which submitted to the mathematical and statistical norms of the new science. This new mode of thought, which has deeply influenced every one of us, rid the modern world of the biblical perspective—the true perspective—of the covenant established by the Creator with his Creation. The biblical doctrine of Creation places man—for good or for ill—at the head of Creation as God’s vice-regent. Man’s moral or immoral actions will have an organic impact on the functioning of the universe. Contrary to the teachings of modern science, the moral behaviour of man has an objective (i.e. real) effect on the functioning of the created order; it interferes for good or ill with the functioning of the laws of nature. In such a non-reductionist perspective, moral norms and actions are no less objective than are scientific laws and the technology drawn from them.

Let us take a comparison drawn from modern medicine. When an organ is grafted from one living organism to another, the phenomenon of incompatibility and rejection is often observed. The organism cannot bear this intruder and rejects it. In a similar way the Creation defends itself, that is it defends its original organic order (this includes the moral dimension of this order) which God has given it, and rejects those people who drastically infringe the cosmic order established by the Creator. How does this happen? Often by the self destruction of a society that tolerates such perverse practices. It is clear that a society that accepts the systematic destruction of the biblically normative family—the foundational structure of any society—cannot long hope to survive. It is simply not possible to maintain a society (or anything else for that matter) when one goes against the very rules on which it is based.

It is, for example, perfectly clear that a society largely constituted of male and female homosexuals cannot reproduce itself physically for that parody of normal sexuality, practised between persons of the same sex, is by nature sterile. One of the causes of the demographic decline which strikes a long-term fatal blow at modern industrial societies the world over, can without difficulty be identified as being related to the general toleration found in these nations of those perverse sexual practices so vigorously repressed by the Jewish laws we are examining.⁸

(3) But there is more. Such perverse acts—which include homosexual behaviour—are, according to our text, considered by God to be “abominations.” The Hebrew expression used here is that of *to ebah*, whose root meaning is “to hate, to be horrified by.” In the Bible an abomination is something that is utterly repugnant to God, something that is hateful to him and provokes in him an emotion of horror. It is the *summum* of evil, the ultimate perversion of human action. It is because of this that such actions call forth God’s irrevocable judgement. If public authority does not repress such actions (it does not have the means of extirpating such tares) God will, by manifesting his judgement, extirpate such evil conduct. If the society has become so evil that it is materially impossible to suppress such actions, then the society is ripe for God’s judgement. This is the clear teaching to be drawn from the destruction of the ancient world by the flood at the time of

Noah; from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time of Abraham and Lot; from the extirpation of the heathen nations from Canaan by the armies of Israel at the time of Joshua; from the two destructions of Jerusalem at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and Titus. For it is not only nature, the ever constant order of creation, that spews out such utterly evil nations from the land given them for a time, but the holy God himself who holds them responsible for their evil deeds and, in his providential action, will reject them in utter disgust.

(4) Finally, our texts speak of bestiality (Lev. 18:23) and incest (Lev. 20:12) in terms of “confusion.” This notion of “confusion” applies to all the sexual deviations with regard to the created order that we are at present examining. The term “confusion” is, of course, not applied exclusively to sexually disordered behaviour, but to disorders affecting the originally perfect (“good”) order of creation. The biblical notions of purity and holiness are not used in Scripture according to the strictly rational moral categories we know today. They are related to the first principles of the created order and thus have a specifically metaphysical character. Holiness and purity consist in keeping separate what God has himself established as separate. Thus, impurity and profanation consist in mixing what should be kept separate. Here sin is considered under the angle of the destruction of the created order. This is what the Bible means by “confusion.” Josef Pieper carefully examines this characteristic of evil actions in his classic study of sin:

Prior to the rise of modernity everyone shared the common conviction that the first and most decisive standard for determining norms of conduct in the whole realm of human action must be *nature*: what man and things are “by nature” is what determines norms for good and evil. Moreover, the phrase “by nature” basically meant: by virtue of having been created, by virtue of one’s being a creature.⁹

Contrary to the positions defended by hyper-modern philosophers or theologians such as Roger Garaudy or Jurgen Moltmann—in this they are worthy disciples of Jean-Jacques Rousseau—human liberty does not start from zero, is not provoked by man’s actions *ex nihilo*. This view of human freedom has in fact a much older origin; it dates from the Fall of man, Adam’s will to determine as from zero, that is by himself alone and in opposition to God and to the order of nature, the founding categories of good and evil. The modern notion of freedom is thus nothing but a philosophical rehash of original sin. Moltmann and Garaudy, as typical moderns, seek freely to determine by themselves the difference between good and evil. In this they refuse to consider the existence of God, the manifestation of his revealed will in Scripture and the order of the universe which witnesses in such a clear fashion to the ordering action of its Creator. In answering this modern position, Pieper goes on:

In reality *everything* that we do of our own responsibility, whether or not we are Christians, can be set into motion *at all* only on the basis of this fundamental presupposition: that both world and man are beings called into existence by virtue of their creatureliness. Moreover, from just that same presupposition—our reality as creatures—we are presented with the standard, the boundaries, the

8. See, among many other studies, Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, Chpt. VII. “The Seventh Commandment” (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), pp. 333–447; Pitrim A. Sorokin, *The American Sex Revolution* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1956); Pierre Chaunu et Georges Suffert, *La peste blanche* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

9. Josef Pieper, *The Concept of Sin* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2001), p. 36.

norm for our decisions, decisions which are *not* drawn “from nothing,” but are decisions *of* the creature, *as* a creature.¹⁰

John Hartley, in his recent commentary on the book of Leviticus from which we have just quoted, indicates the necessarily creational—and thus never autonomous—structure which acts as an inescapable framework of every human action, whatever arrogant men may pretend: “The cosmology of the Old Testament [in our view the *true* cosmology] places barriers between the divine realm and the human realm and between the human realm and the animal realm; any mixing of these barriers is considered unnatural, a confusion. The confusion is both of species and of social roles”¹¹

We could indicate many hierarchical categories drawn from the creational order—husband/wife, old/young, masters/servants, elders/church members, teachers/students, officers/soldiers, sovereign/people, etc.—ignorance of which, through the idolatrous abuse of the mathematical notion of “equality,” leads us all frequently to commit this sin of confusion. The well-known anthropologist Mary Douglas in her classic study of impurity, gives us a remarkable analysis of this biblical principle, which demands of us that we conform our actions to the order defined by these original categories. We can without error consider these first principles as defining “the original metaphysical order,” the unshakeable cosmological structure of all reality as it came forth from God’s hands at the conclusion of the six days of Creation. This order still stands today. Mary Douglas writes in her classic study *Purity and Danger*:

The use of the word “perversion” [used sometimes to translate the word “confusion” we are here studying] is a highly significant mistranslation. The original in Hebrew is *tebhel*, which means “mixture” or “confusion” . . . We can conclude that plenitude or perfection is typical of holiness. It also requires that individuals conform to their class and that no confusion be found between distinct groups of objects . . . Holiness extends, according to other precepts, to species and categories. Hybrids and other confusions are thus abominations.

This shows us, among other things, the intrinsic impurity of the theory of evolution and of all forms of equalitarianism, which produce, in the fields of biology and social organisation, all kinds of mixtures and, as a result, utter confusion between species and social categories. Mary Douglas continues:

To be holy means to distinguish carefully between the categories of creation, that is to formulate correct definitions, that is to be capable of discrimination and order. In this way all the rules relative to sexual morality are examples of holiness. Incest and adultery [and *a fortiori* homosexuality and bestiality] (Leviticus 18:6–20) are the very opposite of holiness, as they go against order. Morality is thus in no way opposed to holiness, but the latter consists more in the separation of what must needs be separated than in the protection of the rights of husbands and brothers.¹²

She adds elsewhere: “. . . if what is impure is that which is not in its proper place, then we must examine its nature

from the point of view of the reality of order. What is impure, what is ‘dirty’ is that thing which cannot be included if one wishes to maintain a particular order.”¹³

From this discussion we can see that, according to the teaching of the Torah and following the metaphysical, moral and judicial definitions provided by the law of Israel, this sin, this metaphysical disorder, this moral and social perversion which is the very nature of homosexuality, merits the death penalty; that it will lead the nations who tolerate it to extinction, for the very soil will spue them forth; that it is a horror, an abomination in the eyes of God; and, finally, that it is a confusion which sets the very order of nature topsy turvy, muddling and disrupting the creational categories themselves. It is this last aspect that led Francis Schaeffer to characterise homosexuality (as is the case also for feminism) as being above all an intellectual, a philosophical disorder. He clearly perceived that this moral perversion is first of all a perversion in thinking, a confusion of terms, a categorial incoherence, a disorder of the mind with disastrous consequences. The homosexual plague is the rotten fruit of the whole thrust of modern philosophy since the fourteenth century: first the nominalist with Ockham, then the subjectivist with Descartes, the idealist with Kant, the dialectical with Hegel and finally the existentialist with Sartre. Based on this perverse philosophical tradition, this epidemic of the homosexual lifestyle is the consequence, on the one hand, of the separation at the heart of modern culture between science and metaphysics and, on the other, of the chasm between modern philosophy—at war with metaphysics and theology—and every thought of the Creator.

This is clearly brought out by the apostle Paul in the definitive analysis he makes of the homosexual phenomenon. Thus the very movement of our argument leads us naturally to examine what the New Testament has to say on our subject and, in particular, to the first chapter of Paul’s letter to the Christian Church in Rome.

3. HOMOSEXUALITY AS SEEN BY SAINT PAUL, THE DOCTOR OF ISRAEL AND APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

We read the following text in the first chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

13. *Ibidem*, p. 59.

10. Josef Pieper, *Ibidem*, p. 40–41.

11. John E. Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

12. We quote from the French translation (which we have retranslated), for this is the only text available to us. Mary Douglas, *De la souillure: Essai sur les notions de pollution et de tabou* (Paris: François Maspero, 1971), pp. 72–73.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. Being filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers; backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affections, implacable, unmerciful.

Who knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Rom. 1:18–32)

We find ourselves here confronted by a text which establishes the structure of the theological and metaphysical history of fallen man. In this history of sin the question before us, that of the significance of male and female homosexuality, finds a choice place. Our text teaches us that this particular moral phenomenon cannot be considered outside the general history of sin, apart from the history of the relations of a holy and just God with a humanity which has wilfully turned away from him. It is clear that we shall not here undertake a detailed study of such a rich text but we shall simply try briefly to indicate its fundamental orientations and decisive axes, so as to allow us better to understand the place of homosexuality in the history of the relations of God with men.

(1) *In the beginning God*

By the act of Creation, in making all things, God sets his seal on every creature thus marking their origin. Thus every being in the universe bears, we might say, the very sign and the precise reflection of the One who is its divine Creator. Thus, indicates our text, nothing in the universe is due to chance; everything speaks loudly and clearly of God the Creator. The truth of the divine origin and of the unfathomable wisdom and unlimited power of him to whom witnesses the smallest particle of his Creation is thus evident to every man who comes into the world. Man's sense and his intelligence have been given to him so that he might recognise the Creator of the cosmos through the clear and unambiguous witness of all his works and, in thus recognising him for the only true God, give him the worship, the honour and the glory which are his due.

(2) *After original goodness, sin and the fall of man*

But this first truth of God as Creator, Sustainer and End of all things was not kept by men. Instead of submitting to God, worshipping him and thinking their thoughts in accordance with the original divine categories of Creation (i.e. those of the word of God), they chose to imprison this truth by their unjust actions, that is, by actions that do not conform to the will of God the Creator as it manifests itself in the order of his good Creation, an order confirmed by his particular revelations. These actions of man's vain imaginations led to anarchy and death. Because they refused to acknowledge the clear evidences of their senses and the

right reasoning that should have followed, evidences and reasoning that should have led them to worship God, to express their gratitude for his goodness to them, God judged them inexcusable. He thus abandons men to their vain autonomous reasonings, i.e. to a way of thinking that has broken with the divine categories inscribed by the Creator in the cosmos and in the very functioning of human thought and infallibly revealed by the Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture. It is thus that man, thinking himself wise, has become intellectually and spiritually blind.

But their true condition is very different from that which, in their arrogance, they imagine to be theirs. Their intellectual and categorial emancipation from God's own thoughts has plunged them into darkness. Their heart has thus been deprived of that divine light, the *Logos* by which all things were made, in which they subsist and towards which they tend, which illuminates all things, the Creator's intelligence. In their unfathomable spiritual blindness, deprived of God's light, they have given themselves over to idols. Having replaced the divine creational categories by their own vain thoughts they replace the living God, Creator of heaven and earth, with mere creatures, corruptible man, birds, animals and reptiles.

Today we should speak of intellectual idols, of philosophical, cultural, scientific, technical and political idolatry. Today we have to do with sophisticated conceptual systems elaborated on the principle of man's first revolt against the original categories established by God to order his creation. In the modern world the systematised idolatry produced by this intellectual revolt has led to the creation of an artificial social, cultural and political order (in fact a systematised disorder) structurally opposed to God. This fossilised system holds us prisoners of artificial, anti-natural, immoral and impious structures, an inverted order from which the very thinking of God has been systematically excluded.

(3) *Man's morally disordered condition is the fruit of his categorial disorder and of the idolatry which it inevitably entails*

Having lost his intellectual bearings, having distanced himself from the truth, man has abandoned himself to his emotions, to his passions, which lead him in all directions. In the created structure of man's being truth holds the first place, the will follows and emotion crowns the accomplishment of what is good. In the disordered structure of sinful man, it is now emotion, passion that holds the first place; the will follows enslaved to emotions and to passions broken loose; and finally, autonomous reason (the truth of yesterday) serves as the ideological justification of evil's triumph.

Then God's judgement manifests itself on such men. He abandons them to their own schemes and gives them over to the impurity of their sinful hearts. They no longer know how to separate purity from impurity, holiness from profanity, good from evil according to the divine categories of the created order. God abandons them to disorder, to shameful passions, which break God's commandments, which are expressions of God's holy nature and an image of the order of Creation. But, having replaced the truth of God by lies, they are given up to all sorts of false categories of their own invention. In the end, like those politicians who make a pretence of governing us, they can no longer distinguish their right hand from their left.

(4) *Homosexuality, culmination of a long process of intellectual disorder, of impiety and of immorality*

The divine work of the six days of Creation was that of the establishment of order, the progressive organisation of God's masterpiece, the passage from an unformed and unfilled universe to the plenitude of its perfection. What Paul describes here is the very opposite. It is nothing less than the deconstruction by man of the created order. The deconstruction of this divine order began with man's refusal to recognise the power and the wisdom of God in the infallible witness of his works. Then man abandoned himself to idolatry; he replaced the only true God by imitations of his own fabrication. Finally, such a process led man to abandon himself, or rather for God to abandon him, to all sorts of sins. The homosexual phenomenon is thus the moral and social culmination of the perverse disintegration of a culture in the direction of spiritual, intellectual and moral deconstruction. Thus the homosexualisation of a given society is not simply the sum of its individual perversions. This is not just an individual and personal phenomenon. The very texture of society is changed. That is why the homosexual phenomenon is often associated with the destruction of the creational structures of the family: loss by parents of the sense of their sexual identity; abandonment by the husband of his role as head of his wife (the feminisation of men); the aggressive dominating masculinisation of the wife and mother, a parody of masculinity which is the true character of what has wrongly been termed the "feminist" movement.

This homosexualisation of the texture of society is the fruit of a long process by which a culture loses its theological, moral and metaphysical categories. This loss of intellectual order projects itself in the disappearance of order in the society at large. The respect of the creational order is replaced by what bears a striking likeness to social, political and cultural anarchy. The perfected cosmos as it issued forth from the fashioning hands of God, in all its goodness and beauty at the close of the sixth day of Creation, is substituted by what strongly resembles chaos. All things fall to pieces, everything loses its original order, all things fossilise into the fraudulent pretended order of antinomian, mechanical, life-stifling totalitarian systems. This is the "death in the city" of Francis Shaeffer, the "city of the dead" of Jan Marejko's technocosmos, the "culture of death" of John Paul II. We are not here simply confronted by the immorality of man's revolt against God's commandments, nor by an amoral indifference to divine laws. But here we have to do with fixed disorder, the anti-natural structure of a homosexual society which is blindly hurtling towards God's inescapable judgement. And we observe that the issue of such disorder, the culmination of such a growth in evil is not simply the result of the free choice of men. It is, in the final resort, in effect the direct intervention of God who, in his sovereign judgement, precipitates a situation in which society wilfully rejects him, more and more rapidly on the slippery slope of its eternal damnation. On this toboggan we no longer perceive those landmarks which formerly guided men. For men have gradually effaced from the range of their vision, not only the moral distinctions of God's laws, but also (and this is even more damaging) all those first categories which are the very foundations of the order of Creation. Man's revolt here culminates in a labour of de-creation.

When men (and women) who hold authority in the Church of God—as is the case with the successor in Calvin's

chair in Geneva, the woman Moderator of the famous *Société des Pasteurs*, Madame Isabelle Graesslé—come publicly to defend in the name of the Christian faith such homosexual and lesbian practices, they place themselves voluntarily under that solemn condemnation with which the text of the epistle to the Romans we have been considering closes: "Who knowing the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:18–32).

CONCLUSION

In a period increasingly characterised by conceptual disorders, it is of the highest importance that the divine landmarks, whether creational, theological or moral, are once again clearly brought to the attention of God's Church. Before proclaiming the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ to the lost, to those for whom not only the dogmas of the Christian faith and its moral norms have become incomprehensible, but who have lost all sense of the creational and biblical categories of which we have spoken, it is of the greatest importance to re-establish in the minds of our contemporaries the structures of God's creational order. This is what we have tried to do in this essay. Only then can we undertake the fundamental task of proclaiming the gospel of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ to the men and women of our time who are lost in the endless labyrinth of the metaphysical, spiritual and moral chaos which constitutes our so-called "post-modern" world. The way most of our contemporaries live manifests a worldview from which have disappeared those first categories, amongst which is that distinguishing men from women. The darkness which we today have to pierce is such that the proclamation of the order of creation must precede that of God's law and, still more, that of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For without this first metaphysical creational order, reflection on the thought and the character of God the Creator, neither the law of God nor the redemption of Jesus Christ can have any meaning.

God's people have always been confronted by the phenomenon of homosexuality. This was as true for the Church of the Old Testament as that of the New, for that of the Church of the Apostles and Fathers as for the Church of our day. For, as the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, we find ourselves today more advanced in the history of salvation than were our forefathers, i.e. closer to the day of judgement (Heb. 10:25). But we must today come to confront something new: the fossilisation, the hardening, what we must call the institutionalisation, of evil. This was unknown to our fathers, even in the most corrupt periods of human history.¹⁴ What I am specifically thinking of here is what is called in France the PACS, bastard legislation instituting pretended "marriages" between persons of the same sex, a judicial absurdity which our Swiss legislators also seek to impose on us.¹⁵

14. Jacques Bichot et Denis Lensel, *Les autoroutes du mal. Les structures déviantes dans la société moderne* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 2001).

15. See the *Réponse de l'Association vaudoise de parents chrétiens à la consultation fédérale sur la situation juridique des couples homosexuels en droit suisse*, which was sent by the AVPC to our federal authorities in a recent governmental consultation of concerned bodies on this question.

Such a situation places the most serious responsibilities before the Church of Jesus Christ: the truth of God, whether it be with regard to Creation, the law or the gospel, must today (as in the past) be proclaimed clearly and audibly, but in particular in such a manner as to answer the specific challenges of this time. *C&S*

[Editor's note: U-Turn Anglia is a Christian ministry in the UK that seeks to help homosexuals deal with this sin and adopt a repentant lifestyle. For more information contact George Harvey at U-Turn Anglia Trust, P. O. Box 138, Winesham, Ipswich, IP6 9EP. Tel. (01473) 785129. Email: gharvey@u-turnanglia.fsnet.co.uk—SCP]

THE REIGN OF SENTIMENTALITY

by Richard Terrell *

THERE is general perception among critically thinking people that the flood of “contemporary Christian fiction” novels appearing over the past 20 years is, in terms of its literary quality, suspect and problematic. Whereas in one sense it is a welcome sight to see that Christians are reading works of the imagination, questions linger as to the overall direction and character of the novels that now pack the largest sections of Christian bookstores. The questions raised are more than just concerns about the actual quality of writing evident in various individual authors. Like any consideration of fiction, secular or religious, one is going to see a wide range of writing. Contemporary Christian fiction (which will be subsequently identified in this article as “CCF”) includes a broad scope of novelists from Tim LaHaye (with Jerry Jenkins) and other “celebrity” writers to fine literary craftsmen like Walter Wangerin, although Wangerin and many other quality authors tend to distance themselves from the cultural context identified by the Christian Booksellers Association and the “Christian fiction” designation.

One hesitates to argue with a desire to foster “clean” entertainment. The absurd practices of contemporary novelists in resorting to gratuitous profanity and scatological language begs for an alternative, and the Christian marketplace has demonstrated that such an alternative can attract a wide audience and legions of fans. Nor can one assume that all contemporary Christian fiction is characterised by the sensationalism of the *Left Behind* series, which has both enthused and scandalised various Christian audiences in recent years. One can legitimately meet the challenge, “*Left Behind*? That’s what you mean by ‘Christian fiction’?” by referring a person to far better authors and craftsmen of the word, including Wangerin, Bodie Thoene, and Francine Rivers among them, and yes, Frank Peretti as well.

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The question pursued here, however, is whether there are considerations built in to the task of writing in the CCF context that inhibit the quality of such novels or require the authors to restrain healthy artistic sensibilities.

It is virtually impossible to give an exhaustive, or even substantial critique of CCF, for, since Frank Peretti’s wildly popular novels *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing The Darkness*, both appearing in the 1980s, the market for an explicitly Christian fiction has literally exploded. Prior to Peretti’s sensational success, evangelical authors were little known or noticed, and the fiction sections of Christian bookstores were small, with few authors of note beyond the traditional emphasis on works by C. S. Lewis and, perhaps, Charles Williams. Stephen Lawhead was breaking into print with his early fantasy/science-fiction novels, while the most prominent evangelical authors were Jeanette Oake and Bodie Thoene, authors of soft and safe romances.

Today, it is a much altered literary landscape. Fiction occupies the most extensive sections in Christian bookstores, with authors ranging from the more long-established authors mentioned above to what I like to call “instant novelists,” consisting of almost any Christian celebrity well-known enough to attract a sufficiently competent ghost-writer or co-operating author. The most obvious example of the latter is the Tim LaHaye/Jerry Jenkins co-authorship of the *Left Behind* books, but other “celebrity” novels have appeared carrying the names of just about anybody with an adequately visible ministry or who is otherwise notable, including Charles Colson, Larry Burkett, Hank Hanegraaff and Hal Lindsey among them.

The fictional genres have expanded as well. Joining the earlier romance novels of Oake, Lawhead’s fantasy fiction (inspired by Lewis and Tolkien) and Thoene’s historical novels are conspiracy novels, various Celtic-themed works (seemingly modelled after Henry Rutherford’s *Sarum*), horror stories and mysteries. There are literally dozens of authors sustaining these various genres, and it is safe to say that, in order to keep up on it all, one would have to do nothing other than to read CCF.

That is not a task that I, or anyone else I know of, finds

attractive. I am sure that there are numerous readers—people who truly enjoy this style of fiction and read it regularly—who have a broader knowledge of these novels than I do. But herein lies the difficulty. Those who read fiction for enjoyment but maintain a *critical perspective* are likely to tire quickly of the reading of contemporary evangelical fiction, whereas those who are true fans, whose reading is primarily focused on CCF, are likely to find their critical faculties drowned in the currents of their enthusiasm. Thus, my barber has read every one of the *Left Behind* novels, and assures me that they were *the very best books he has ever read!* And, it is not unusual to find enthusiastic “critical” acclaim in the form of quotes inside or on the backcovers of CCF novels, but with the quotes coming, interestingly, from other CCF writers or an anonymous reader selected from the fan base, as in “your book restored my faith; it is wonderful!”—Sally.”

My approach here will be to explore some fundamental difficulties with CCF, from the standpoint of what I have personally encountered and noticed from reading a number of representative examples, admitting that I felt myself “hitting the wall” a few years ago after getting through the LaHaye/Jenkins novel *Nicolae*, the third installment of the on-going saga of the *Left Behind* series. However, I recently resumed my reading of the series with *Soul Harvest*. Unhappily, after reading the first quarter of the book, wherein *nothing has happened*, the task of moving ahead with it is a bit discouraging. So far, the novel looks like a “filler” that exists for no other purpose than to keep the sales going.

There are some fundamental factors, I believe, that prevent the CCF phenomenon from giving birth to generally significant literature, at least inasmuch as “significance” may apply to the larger, general landscape beyond the evangelical cultural ghetto. All of these concerns operate under the conceptual umbrella provided by the title of this article: “The Reign of Sentimentality.”

“Sentimentality” involves the easy offering of emotion, and the smoothing over of the rough edges of the human condition, those outcroppings of sharp, painful, and grotesque elements in life. In popular visual arts much favoured by Christians, the phenomenon is readily seen in the immensely popular Thomas Kinkade paintings and the older, widely reproduced images of Warner Sallman. In the final analysis, evangelical novels have to be “nice.” By this I do not mean that they are void of conflict or exploration of good and evil, but that in the final analysis certain aspects of human life, like violent, evil actions and characters, sexual realities, or even a generalised consideration of the grotesque, receive smoothed-over treatments, assuring that the primary audience for this fiction—Christian women and teenagers—will not be offended or unduly upset. This problem is especially acute, it seems to me, in regard to villains or the symbolisation of evil through human characters. It is difficult to imagine, for example, a writer for the CCF market ever creating so memorable a character as a Hannibal Lector or Ken Follett’s “William” in his *Pillars of the Earth*.

In considering this question, we necessarily confront certain other principles that are deadly to art, such as *didacticism*, or the tendency to teach or preach via an artistic medium, or to justify the existence of a story on this basis. I would note, by way of interjection, that the preachy, didactic novel with thin characters is not the exclusive province of evangelical fiction, as any readers of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* or James Redfield’s new age *Celestine Prophecy* will

know. Yet recently published editions of certain evangelical authors now include “study questions” in the back of the books, indicating some thinking that a story must justify itself by its applicability to the Christian small group or Sunday school, or that there is a kind of *clarification anxiety*, born of the desire to make sure, absolutely sure, that the reader is getting the point. If contemporary Christian fiction is afflicted with artistic problems, it is likely that the affliction is grounded in a mixture of these pursuits, and these pursuits themselves are in the service of an over-riding goal that, in the final analysis, defines the primary audience for CCF novels—the necessity of bowing to an implicit demand to be “nice.”

Underlying the discussion is a recognition that, for the vast majority of Christian consumers of “Christian” products, it is the Christian book and gift store that defines the circumference of acceptable “culture.” It is largely the products that are found there that we have in view here.

An anecdote of an experience in one such “family” store will serve to set a context for the discussion following. A few years ago, I shopped around in the fiction section of the local evangelical bookstore for what I hoped might be an interesting read. My eye caught the title of a new work by Stephen Lawhead, a mediaeval adventure called *The Iron Lance*. What especially intrigued me, however, was a warning sticker affixed to the book cover and the covers of all the other copies. The warning indicated that readers should be aware that some passages of the book might prove “offensive” to some readers. Well, now, I thought, what have we here? An X-rated Christian novel? Not quite. Whereas Lawhead has been known to push against the boundaries of the “nice” on occasion, even to the point of arousing suspicious “concerns” among some Christian readers, his treatment of sex and violence during the crusade era in *Iron Lance* is remarkably restrained.

That the requirement to stay within the boundaries of “the nice” weighs on, and informs the work of serious Christian authors was made clear to me a few years ago when I was speaking on issues of Christian faith and popular culture at a retreat in Colorado Springs sponsored by a Christian arts group called Ad Lib Christian Arts. I indicated that Christian fiction, with its sentimental approach to emotion allied with the need to be, in the final analysis, nice, prevents contemporary popular Christian fiction from developing the kind of “edge” in description and characterisation that can authentically portray the grit and true pain of the human condition. I cited Ken Follett’s *Pillars of the Earth* as a kind of model for penetrating these barriers (Follett’s novel powerfully captures the spiritual struggles and rough-edged character of mediaeval life). One of the authors attending, a woman, expressed dismay, stating that she had to stop her reading of that novel because of one particular scene expressive of a villainous, even disgusting sexual encounter. She *stopped her reading*. In that little incident lies a tale of market analysis. Too much grit, no readership. Too much vividness, no sales (or at at least warning stickers?). Too much honesty, no publication.

In a similar vein, a reader review of Francine Rivers’ *A Voice in the Wind*, a story set in ancient Roman times, expresses profound disturbance at the author’s comparatively frank (for CCF) descriptions of sensuality and violence, positing her decision “never again” to read a novel by this author! Rivers challenges the evangelical structures of “nice” expression, and despite some irritating habits of word usage,

is a writer of considerable imagination and power, as most of her fans realise and affirm. Yet, one wonders how much the market for CCF is defined by that fearful reader, and how much those attitudes define what editors will look for and accept.

Lutheran author Walter Wangerin has attached the adjective “sedative” to much of the popular Christian fiction produced in recent years. “It benumbs us and reinforces stereotypes, doesn’t move us to new levels,”¹ he stated in an interview with W. Dale Brown for *Christianity and the Arts* magazine (August–October 1997). Wangerin is one of the very few Christian writers of literary fiction, as distinguished from CCF, whose works find open display in Christian bookstores. Yet, in many cases, Christian writers of nuance and subtlety shun the label of “Christian writer” because they fear the association of the term with mediocre and sentimental art.

Everything that is suggested by the thesis explored here is readily seen in the famous *Left Behind* novels. The action in these novels is carried out through a simplistic framework of scenes which seem to be set in place for the primary purpose of allowing certain characters to make, through their dialogue, theological points grounded in pre-millennial, Dispensationalist eschatological declarations. In this, the literary architecture of the novels is a bit similar to that of pornography, in which a plot exists primarily to carry the reader/viewer to a sex scene, although in *Left Behind* the “climax” is theological propaganda rather than sex.

As for the subject of sex, the novels give evidence of an observation made some years ago by James Wesley Ingles, who noted a clumsy evasiveness toward sexuality as a long-standing difficulty in evangelical fiction. Ingles asserted that explicitly Christian authors seem “almost as embarrassed in dealing with sex as is the non-Christian novelist in dealing with prayer.”² Although things may have changed a bit since Ingles wrote that assessment, it certainly does not show up in the *Left Behind* series, where the hearty and healthy young hero “Buck” is said to be attracted to the heroine “Chloe” on the basis of her firm handshake! Both characters are described as having lived quite worldly lives prior to the Rapture (the Rapture of the church being the catalyst for the action and story animating the series). They meet, fall in love, and get married. It turns out, however, that despite their worldly, God-rejecting lives prior to conversion, they are still virgins coming into their marriage. That is very “nice,” and certainly it is a touch that protects the moral sensibilities of the authors’ audience, but we may question its credibility, especially in the context of the rampant moral decay that characterises the last days according to the eschatology underlying the series’ story line, as well as the characters’ own alleged worldly behaviour.

But strange strategies for presenting sexuality are not confined to *Left Behind*, although the series is the most ready and celebrated example. Another oddity, a weird contrivance (in my judgment anyway), occurs in a recent novel by Paul L. Maier, *More Than a Skeleton*. Toward the beginning of the story, we find the hero Jonathan Weber thinking of a

woman, Shannon Jennings, who is described as a great friend and passionate lover, Jonathan’s soul mate, in fact. Later, they meet up in Israel, and Shannon is showing Jon around her apartment. Jon asks to see *her* bedroom, which she then declares, in revelatory fashion, to be *their* bedroom. (At this point the reader is thinking something like “hmmm? What is going on here?”) They are dryly described as undressing, and through oblique suggestion we understand that they make love. It is only afterward that we understand, through their conversation, that they are in fact man and wife. But, one may ask, why structure our understanding of this couple in this way? What purpose is served, other than to merely titillate the reader with the suggestion of illicit sex but then (sigh of relief), reveal that it’s all within the boundaries of piety? I would note, here, that even pornography maintains a certain honesty, as it does not seek to fool anybody. (It pains me to offer this critique of Maier’s novel, which is generally disappointing in other respects as well. The author, a professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University, has written other interesting fiction works blending intriguing theological, archaeological, and historical themes.)

Emotionally, *Left Behind* does little, if anything, to evoke or invite the reader’s own emotional empathy. Rather, the authors opt for dry, maudlin description. The main character, Rayford Steele (who has been left behind after the Rapture), discovers that his believing wife has, indeed, been carried away in the disappearances. Seeing her wedding ring on the pillow of their bedroom, he remembers that it rests in the very place where she always supported her cheek with her hand. He is described as being “racked with fatigue and grief,” but then, to pile easy sentimentalism yet higher, he finds a package from his wife. “Tearing it open, he found two of his favorite homemade cookies with hearts drawn on the top in chocolate.” Reflecting on the “sweetness” of his raptured wife, Rayford gathers her nightgown in his arms and is described as crying himself to sleep.³

Compare this approach to the empathetic and evocative treatment of human loss by Charles Williams, in his mystery masterpiece *All Hallow’s Eve*. Here we meet another man, Richard Furnival, whose wife has been killed in a plane crash, contemplating her loss and its meaning for him:

The most lasting quality of loss is its unexpectedness. No doubt he would know his own loss in the expected places and times—in streets and stations, in restaurants and theatres, in their own home. He expected that. What he also expected, and yet knew he could not by its nature expect, was his seizure by his own loss in places uniquely his—in his office while he read Norwegian minutes, in the Tube while he read the morning paper, at a bar while he drank with a friend. These habits had existed before he had known Lester, but they could not escape her. She had, remotely but certainly, and without her own knowledge, overruled all. Her entrance into all was absolute, and lacking her the entrance of the pain.⁴

The deeper issues here relate to what kind of cultural perspectives young Christians are likely to form if their reading practices and larger artistic sensibilities are shaped by the values embraced by CCF and the arts as defined by

1. W. Dale Brown, “Walter Wangerin Jr., Man of Letters,” *Christianity and the Arts* (August–October 1997), pp. 50–53.

2. James Wesley Ingles, “The Christian Novel and the Evangelical Dilemma,” in Leland Ryken, ed., *The Christian Imagination: Essays on Literature and the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 337–345.

3. See Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins, *Left Behind* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1993), p. 75–76.

4. Charles Williams, *All Hallow’s Eve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 24.

the world of the Christian Booksellers Association. Historically, Christian art is not altogether “nice.” In the visual arts, it includes some brutally tortuous altarpieces, the serenity of Raphael and the painful expressions of Matthias Grunewald. In fiction, it includes the quiet and reflective art of Wendell Barry and the unsettling, often grotesque characters of Flannery O’Conner or Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the frank psychological realism of Walker Percy and the darker moods of Tolkein, all of which indicates that the Christian artistic tradition and heritage is much deeper and more profound than what is to be found in “Christian fiction” sections of the average Christian bookstore. Young people should be encouraged to see this larger horizon and embrace its light and its storms alike.

Indeed, very interesting and creative fiction supported by a Christian worldview is to be found in the larger “mainstream” fields of fiction. Not everything in the broader secular culture is antithetic to Christian faith, although many imagine it to be so. Consider, for instance, a novel like Willa Cather’s classic, *O Pioneers!* (a novel that could well be sold in Christian bookstores, but isn’t, because it is not thought of as “Christian” literature). It is doubtful that, if Christian readers define their reading habits solely by concerns to remain in the safe cultural ghettos of pietistic acceptability, they will ever discover Cather’s rich humanity, heart-swelling descriptions of the natural environment, or, for that matter, the solid biblical worldview that underlies her story. Yet, the characters unveil a life in which the Bible and Church life are natural and are expressed with a keen sense of reality, and the tragic conclusion explores profound themes of redemption and forgiveness.

Cather’s ability to convey mysteries of personal character in concise, evocative statements, as well as her vivid, almost cinematic descriptions of nature, are, at least in my reading experience, generally absent from popular CCF novels. Here are a couple of striking examples of the power of Cather’s art. The context for the first example is a brother and sister returning to their prairie homestead from a journey into the town of Hanover on the Nebraska plain.

Although it was only four o’clock, the winter day was fading. The road led southwest, toward the streak of pale, watery light that glimmered in the leaden sky . . . The little town behind them had vanished as if it had never been, had fallen behind the swell of the prairie, and the stern frozen country received them into its bosom. The homesteads were few and far apart; here and there a windmill gaunt against the sky, a sod house crouching in a hollow. But the great fact was the land itself, which seemed to overwhelm the little beginnings of human society that struggled in its somber wastes. It was from facing this vast hardness that the boy’s mouth had become so bitter; because he felt that men were too weak to make any mark here, that the land wanted to be let alone, to preserve its own fierce strength, its peculiar, savage kind of beauty, its uninterrupted mournfulness.⁵

In the next scene, we read of a woman, Marie, who has come to the realisation that she is involved in a bad marriage, recognising yet also fighting against her growing sense of despair.

Marie . . . was always thinking about the wide fields outside, where the snow was drifting over the fences; and about the orchard, where the snow was falling and packing, crust over crust. When she went

out into the dark kitchen to fix her plants for the night, she used to stand by the window and look out at the white fields, or watch the currents of snow whirling over the orchard. She seemed to feel the weight of all the snow that lay down there. The branches had become so hard that they wounded your hand if you but tried to break a twig. And yet, down under the frozen crusts, at the roots of the trees, the secret of life was still safe, warm as the blood in one’s heart; and the spring would come again! Oh, it would come again!⁶

One might object that I am comparing the average “Christian novel” to a work that is a widely acknowledged classic, written by a literary artist of considerable power. Yet, it is this *kind* of language—language that paints memorable images in the reader’s mind, causing one to stop and say “that is beautiful,”—that one misses in the world of CCF. At least I have not found anything to compare to such description, even in books that have received the evangelical world’s fiction awards (the ECPA Gold Medallion awards, for example).

In this matter, the words of the nineteenth century painter, and Christian, Henry Ossawa Tanner are powerful reminders of the artist’s responsibility to be an *artist* beyond mere descriptiveness or function. Although he is remarking about the visual arts, the principles he sets forth are applicable to the literary artist as well.

To suppose that the fact of the religious painter having a more elevated subject matter than his brother artist makes it unnecessary for him to consider his picture as an artistic production, or that he can be less thoughtful about a color harmony, for instance [or word constructs?] than he who selects any other subject, simply proves that he is less of an artist than he who gives the subject his best attention.⁷

What is missing, in my experiences with CCF novels, is a literary engagement with a principle of creation itself, which I have identified elsewhere as the “substantial lavishness of God’s design.”⁸ Here, I look for literary art to take a cue from the nature of Creation itself. By “substantial lavishness” I mean to identify a quality of reality whereby the system and meaning of things is supported in ways that seem to move beyond mere necessity or requirement. Whereas it is true that the colours, textures, odours and sounds of our world can always be related to the survival function of living things, human beings, who bear the *imago dei*, experience these things as *beautiful* or *grotesque* apart from utilitarian considerations. They are the occasions of aesthetic apprehension. Applying this principle to the arts, we note that the bare bones of a story’s activity can be told through the driest forms of description. But language does more than just move a story forward. Language sets moods, evokes the ambience of action, or suggests the actual substance of a character. In the Bodie Thoene novel *Twilight of Courage* (a World War II romance, and recipient of the ECPA Gold Medallion award), we read minutely detailed battle scenes that inform us of the style numbers and specific identities of weapons (thereby showing forth the novel’s trenchant research into historical facts), but they are never presented with a real sense of the

6. *Ibid.*, 104

7. Cited by Albert Boime, “Henry Ossawa Tanner’s Subversion of Genre,” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. LXXV, No 3 (September, 1993): 439.

8. See Richard Terrell, “Christian Fiction: Piety Is Not Enough,” in Ryken, Leland, ed., *The Christian Imagination* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2002), 251–254.

5. Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books; orig. published in 1913), 10.

battle itself, its power, its horror. Mere description, correct as it may be in every informative detail, never moves. That this particular novel received the evangelical world's highest fiction award is interesting, as it is a deeply flawed work, drowning in niggling details and characters so numerous that none are really developed. The book was even a disappointment to a number of Thoene fans, and perhaps even to the author. The novel is not listed among the author's eight Gold Medallion awards, printed in the back of the most recent editions of her work.

Left Behind, however, is unmatched for dry, pale description. Toward the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to a female character who is the object of sexual temptation and who is unimaginatively characterised as “flat out gorgeous,” and the charismatic antichrist character is noted to look like a “young Robert Redford.” These bare and desiccated notations are essentially utilitarian statements that require little, if anything, from a reader, and caused one reviewer of the series to note its “petrified” prose. Similar criticism has greeted Frank Peretti's latest novel, *Monster*. Cindy Crosby, reviewing the novel for *Christianity Today*, notes: “Peretti relies on passages like these—‘Screams! Savage screeches! Howls!’—to frighten the reader, rather than creating an atmosphere of terror.”⁹

The cultural trends of our time would, sadly, seem to indicate that the kind of writing generally identified as “literary fiction” is on a declining slope. At the very least, we do not seem to see much of a tendency toward it in the contemporary Christian popular culture. By “literary fiction” I mean to identify writing that goes beyond an entertaining escape into an author's secondary world. I do not mean, here, to denigrate the *entertainment value* of art, be it fiction or some other vehicle. But, what I do have in mind is writing that invites reflection and a return path, where there is something, a presence in the words, that calls one back for a closer look, that haunts or gathers us in beyond a mere temporary encounter. Our literary and fictional heritage abounds with such writing, which is found even in notable popular novels. Examples may be found in the opening scenarios of Chaim Potok's *The Promise*, Bram Stoker's description of vampiresses contemplating the possession of Jonathan Harker in *Dracula*, the oppressive sense of lurking evil in Caleb Carr's *The Alienist*, Ayn Rand's vivid word-painting of the intellectual and even moral dimensions of the design of a train engine (*Atlas Shrugged*), Dostoyevsky's searing description of Raskolnikov's act of murder in *Crime and Punishment*, Ron Hansen's presentation of a man's observation of a sundog in his novel *Atticus*, a passage reflecting on the nature of love in Wendell Berry's *Jayber Crow*, and in Charles Williams' transportive narrative of the evil magician Simon in the third chapter of *All Hallows Eve*, or in Willa Cather, as stated above.

We must be careful, however, about making too ready a general indictment of the literary quality of CCF. As in the general culture, the genre is often defined in terms of its most popular, but formally weak (or corrupt), examples. *Left Behind* is an easy target, and we would certainly not be dealing fairly with, say, New Age fiction by citing as its sole example James Redfield's artificial, contrived, but immensely popular novel *The Celestine Prophecy*. Exceptions to every

generality can be found in so large a market as CBA-defined “Christian fiction.” There are, to be sure, authors in the CCF arena whose works are ambitious and written at a level of craft at least comparable to the general fiction market, and a critical reader, such as myself, can always be met with a defensive reference to an author we have not yet encountered. We also recognise that no artists, of any kind, are consistently at their best. Despite the weaknesses of Bodie Thoene's award-winning novel cited above, it is an exception to the overall quality of her *oeuvre*. That it received the EPCA Gold Medallion award perhaps says more about the award and its standards than about the author.

Happily, one can find authors with vivid language and characters in the CCF world. Francine Rivers is one such author who brings them to life. I found reading the first novel in her *Mark of the Lion* trilogy (*A Voice in the Wind*) a refreshingly surprising departure.

The novel, and the larger series, is reminiscent of older classics like Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* and Lloyd C. Douglas' *The Robe*. Rivers' story is set within the context of the decadence of ancient Rome, beginning with the fall of Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. One is immediately invited to read further by the author's introduction, which effectively draws the curtain back on her drama:

The city was silently bloating in the hot sun, rotting like the thousands of bodies that lay where they had fallen in street battles. An oppressive, hot wind blew from the southeast, carrying with it the putrefying stench of decay. And outside the city wall, Death itself waited in the persons of Titus, son of Vespasian, and sixty thousand legionnaires who were anxious to gut the city of God.

Rivers' characters are sharply drawn, and serve to reveal with authentic sentiment, as contrasted to mere sentimentality, the dynamics of sin, faith, violence, and fortitude in the years of early Christianity. She recreates the bloody and decadent atmosphere of the gladiatorial arena with descriptive language, action, and character interaction that draws the reader into these situations with an almost cinematic power.

In fact, her story almost begs for an adaptive screenplay. Readers, if one is to judge by reviews posted on the amazon.com website, sense that there is something about Francine Rivers that stands apart from what they are used to in CCF novels. Beneath their frequent expressions of sheer enthusiasm, their intuitive praise, however, lies the element of literary craft. Note the quotation above. Not only is it informative, suggestive and evocative, but it has an abstract form that enhances and gives life to its descriptive element, creating a totality that is powerful. While expressing ugly realities, it carries a pleasurable rhythm to the reader's mind. I noticed this immediately as I began to read *A Voice in the Wind*, if for no other reason than that it is something one misses in many other CCF novels.

Today, more and more readers, Christians among them, desire things to come easy, at least insofar as encounter with art is concerned. To the extent that this desire defines markets, authors and publishers must take it all into account. The willingness to engage in intellectual work in regard to the act of reading is becoming a rare phenomenon. It is sobering to reflect on the fact that the most spectacular publishing successes of recent years have been the *Left Behind* novels and the absurd stories of Dan Brown, as evidenced in *The Da Vinci Code*. Yet, readers who opt for the easily digested

9. Cindy Crosby, “Issue Driven Fiction,” in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 49, No 6 (June, 24, 2005): 65.

story carried by simplistic characters, minus the poetics of descriptive, mood-arousing language, miss out on much that is unique to the experience of reading itself. Of deeper concern is the realisation that authors, who are under a requirement to meet the needs of a market defined by overriding concerns for piety and ultimately “nice” fiction, may find their own creative sensibilities held in bondage.

Many artistically accomplished Christian writers do their work outside of and beyond the evangelical CBA universe, and Christian readers (especially young people who may have literary talent themselves) would do well to get acquainted with them—authors like Frederick Buechner, Ron Hansen, Susan Howatch, and Walker Percy among them. Something of the peculiar contexts for the work of a serious Christian writer of fiction is seen in the experiences of Brett Lott, whose novels have been praised by *Publishers Weekly* and selected by Oprah Winfrey for her book club. Lott is as personally defined an evangelical as one could want—discernible, dated conversion experiences triggered by hearing a Josh McDowell presentation—the whole package. His first novel was *The Man Who Owned Vermont*, a story of love and marriage. However, Lott creates characters that act like real people. If they get angry, they don’t say things like “oh, heck!” They may not only be tempted by sexual sin, but actually commit it. Lott received a letter from a reader about his novel, from a woman who had, on the basis of a review, expected a “nice book.” However, she was displeased, for “somewhere in the first 100 pages, Lott—or, rather, one of Lott’s characters—had taken the Lord’s name in vain. ‘I’m praying for your soul,’ the woman from Wisconsin wrote to him.”¹⁰

Lott’s response to this is an effective critique of CCF and the expectations of its audience: “If we can’t portray sin . . . then how will we know it when we see it? Christ hung with the sinners. He knew what sin was. If we act like the only thing that ought to be portrayed with the written word is the ‘gee willikers’ type of bad guy, then we’re forgetting about the two robbers who died with Jesus. We’re forgetting the adulterous woman. We’re forgetting about the tax collector.”¹¹

In today’s context of “culture war,” the Christian world is often seen as little more than a censorious voice challenging the corruptions of a debased secular art. And there is a good rationale for such challenge when *gratuitous* profanity and an almost obligatory sexual frankness undermines the artistic integrity of novels and films. Yet, while Christians often criticise the larger society’s cultural product, we need to credibly answer a responding challenge that comes in the form of a question: “What is *your* idea of a good movie, film etc.?” If the average, pietistic evangelical novel is offered up as exemplary, it should not surprise us that those perspectives will not be taken seriously by those deeply involved in the broader arenas of cultural controversy.

10. Lauren F. Winner, “Brett Lott Is a True-Blue Evangelical Who Writes Literary Fiction that New York Takes Seriously (and that Oprah Loves)” in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 49, No 6 (June 24, 2005), p. 43–44.
11. *Ibid.*

Indeed, the larger challenge for the Church’s contemporary interaction with artistic endeavour demands a long look and renewed consideration of the great cultural heritage that is the Christian’s birthright and that, in fact, underlies so much of what is universal and enduring in our civilisation. In the words of the American painter Jack Levine, it is vital for an artist to “know what has been known” and allow oneself to be informed by that which has endured.

We no longer publish books simply because they may be worthy. Publishing today is market driven. The power of the market invites the seductive practice of seeing books as *mere product*. But the Christian mind, as Harry Blamires has reminded us, is shaped by many factors, including the arts, and in these matters it is not mere content that counts, but the very process itself and the relationship of artistic activity to the greater “cloud of witnesses” that shapes the profound heritage that is ours. Readers, young and older alike, need to see these farther horizons shaped by works that could be both popular and profound. To consider and take hold of that heritage is, for the artist, not only a creative process but an obedience as well.

This year has seen, happily, an event that could provide a much needed example of a better way for Christian writers than the usual fare promoted by the Christian Booksellers Association and the CCF world. That event is the awarding of a Pulitzer Prize for fiction to a novel with an openly expressed Christian worldview—Marilynne Robinson’s novel *Gilead*. A *Washington Post* review notes that the book

is so serenely beautiful, and written in a prose so gravely measured and thoughtful, that one feels touched with grace just to read it. *Gilead* possesses the quiet ineluctable perfection of Flaubert’s “A Simple Heart” as well as the moral and emotional complexity of Robert Frost’s deepest poetry. There’s nothing flashy in these pages, and yet one regularly pauses to reread sentences, sometimes for their beauty, sometimes for their truth.¹²

In a recent statement in his *Breakpoint* column, Charles Colson hailed Robinson’s novel as an indicator of a “resurgence” of Christian fiction. Colson, however, may be overstating the case. *Gilead* is published by Farrar Straus Giroux publishers, a mainstream publisher of literary fiction and non-fiction. The novel cannot really be claimed for the “Christian fiction” arena, as it originates outside that universe. However, it could possibly point the way for that arena if the evangelical publishing houses catch onto the possibilities and the reality of subtlety and nuance in art. Robinson’s achievement surely demonstrates that there is “higher ground” for aspiring writers of Christian conviction and vision. It may also give confidence that the broader culture beyond the narrow boundaries of a specific “Christian culture” is open and receptive to Christian themes conveyed in fiction that is written with literary integrity and aesthetic power. C&S

12. Michael Dirda, “Gilead,” in *Washington Post*, Sunday, No 24, 2004. Accessed at <www.washingtonpost.com/

POETRY STRETCHES OUR MINDS FOR WORSHIP

by Doug Baker

Our Minds as Muscles

At the end of the article in the last issue, we mentioned that the reader's intuitive awareness that the stretching of words will only be partially successful leads poetry to work within us to stretch our minds. Think of our minds as muscles: they can be strengthened by exercise and can also atrophy and stiffen if not used. A person who habitually lifts weights and becomes strong so that his muscles do not get sore from working out might still feel sore after cutting firewood or doing some other activity to which he is not accustomed. Likewise, the rough and rugged lumberjack will be put to shame if he tries to keep pace with a ballerina. I have heard of a hefty college football star passing out in choir practice from trying to hold a sustained note too long, while the petite girls around him had no problems. Our muscles are not simply strong or weak, they are trained to perform specific activities and only excel where they are trained.

But some activities train our muscles in ways which will easily translate into success in other activities. For the runner it can be useful to train not only in running but also in cycling, and the cycling training will automatically help their running.

So it is with our minds; a mathematical whiz may have no understanding of social interaction, while a high-school dropout who can barely add or subtract may be charming and delightful company. An artist may make the complex interactivities of colour and shape his plaything while not understanding about the nature of light and colour in terms of wavelength, and the physicist can comprehend all strange workings of light/colour as a wave/particle and still be completely unable to dress himself in clothes which match. Our minds are trained in certain areas and excel only where they are trained.

Just like our other muscles, though, training our minds in one area can overlap into practical training in another. When we teach our children to add, that training will assist in their interpretation of all symbols, such as letters for reading. And when we teach them to read that helps them understand how to express themselves in sentences.

Similarly, we are able to use poetry to train our minds for worship. I like to think of this as stretching our minds, because our goal is to take in larger and larger portions of the truth.

Mind Expanding vs Mind Stretching

Before we begin looking at poetry's mind stretching works, let me fill in one pothole on this road. The use of drugs has often been defended as being "mind expanding" in the sense that they give us experiences and an awareness that we might not have had otherwise. And drugs are just the tip of this "mind expanding" iceberg which includes: transcendental meditation, yoga, Zen Buddhism, sado-masochism, *ek ankar* (out of body travel), the many transient movements (which range from the whirling dervishes of the Middle East, through altered states of consciousness in revivalism, to the self hypnotic preparation for competition which is practiced by many athletes), mystery religions such as demonology, occult and Freemasonry, and the positive thinking movement which is so popular these days. Of course this list is far from complete but it will suffice to see wherein lies the difference between expanding our minds and stretching our minds.

Notice what are the foci of attention toward which the devotees move in these practices. The first three focus on nothingness or void, they are a content free meditation; sado-masochism, *ek ankar* and trances all focus on the self, mainly the mind/body relationship; mystery religions move us toward a point which is kept hidden so that the mind has nothing on which to focus except uncertainty; and in positive thinking the focus is always on a supposed inner power. If this seems a little complex the eggshell version is that all mind expanding religions and practices focus our thoughts either on nothingness or on our selves as the objects of worship.

Christianity is not free from focus, and our focus is certainly not on ourselves. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know" (John 4:22). As Christians we have a responsibility to know what and whom we worship. God, who made the whole universe and remains external and above and beyond all, is the focus of our attention and worship. Our worship must be focused far beyond ourselves toward him who fills all in all.

Therefore our worship is content based unlike the "mind expanding" drugs and cults, but the content of Christianity is far beyond our ability to comprehend. None of us can grasp who our God is and what the extent of his love toward us is. For this reason, we need to learn to take in more and more of the mind-boggling reality behind Christianity. Our

puny minds need to be stretched to take in things that they do not readily grasp.

This stretching differs from expanding primarily in its being focused on something outside of ourselves. We focus our meditation and worship toward this God who is beyond our comprehension, seeking to enlarge our minds to continually grasp more of his glory. And poetry helps to stretch our minds to take in more and more understanding.

Stretching our Minds

While the last issue's article dealt with the failure of words to convey full meaning, we are now considering the inability of our minds to embrace full meaning. The two subjects begin in similar places but proceed to different aspects of poetry and worship that will repay our investigation.

Poetry employs many means to triangulate and attempt to zero in on an image or concept that is too deep to be understood directly. Poetry attempts to direct our minds and hearts to see scenes that our minds are too small to comprehend and our hearts are too cold to embrace. It tacitly accepts that much of its content is beyond our understanding; but instead of walking away, it attempts to coax the mind's mouth to open wider to accept just a little larger bite than before. This is one reason that poetry (especially Scripture) is more awesome after repeated readings than after just one; on each reading our mind's mouth is open wider. This is also a reason that heretical poetry can be so dangerous.

Poetry points beyond itself in a worshipful manner, pulling arrows out of the quiver and firing them into the mist toward a place that they themselves can never reach. Only the imagination can stand at the end of an arrow staring in the direction pointed, watching and wondering what lies beyond the mists. In "The Sacrifice," George Herbert fires arrow after arrow at the target of the suffering of Christ in his crucifixion. Sixty-three times in this poem he has Christ detail different aspects of his suffering and ask, "Was ever grief like mine?"

In healing not Myself there doth consist
All that salvation which ye now resist;
Your safety in My sicknesse doth subsist;
Was ever grief like Mine?

Nay, after death their spite shall further go;
For they will pierce My side, I full well know;
That as sinne came, so Sacraments might flow;
Was ever grief like Mine?

As in verse after verse Jesus speaks to us from the cross, the dual aspects of his more than human suffering and his much more than human love begin to shine before our wet eyes which struggle to read. Each of the sixty-three verses is a well-aimed arrow that carries our imagination nearer to the heart of Jesus' passion than many of us had gone before.

The power of this poem lies in the coupling of the vivid descriptions with the oceanic rhythm's gentle yet forceful push and pull. Reading it is like lying in the sand and letting each incoming wave roll over you, and then pull you gently as it sweeps back out, almost taking you with it. The first is cool and refreshing, the second tickles, the tenth calms like a massage. As the waves continue, however, the outgoing wave begins to gain the pre-eminence in your mind. You

begin to notice how near each wave comes to picking you up and pulling you out. The thought of the depths and endless motions of the sea begin to play in your mind. You notice with surprise how strong even the tiny wave sucking back out to sea can be. Your mind extrapolates these motions into the power that the mighty breakers would have on your little body and your chest tightens in an unconscious fight or flight response. As you lie in the sand you begin to know the awesomeness and power of the whole of the ocean, while only being tickled with its fingertips.

In this way George Herbert gives us a glimpse of the magnitude of Jesus' suffering and his love, while we are yet on the shore of an ocean that will not be fully measured either in this life, or in the one to come.

Unsettling the Mists

George Herbert's poem above effectively stretches our minds to glimpse more than they would have been able to on their own. This opening of new sights is wonderfully described by Francis Thompson toward the end of "The Hound of Heaven":

I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.

Poetry is able to unsettle those mists for a moment, and though they wash round our vision again, we first have glimpsed far beyond what our unaided minds could have. To some extent this is like a microscope in that it lets us see things that always have been there; like a microscope it does not create but rather reveals. This revelation lets us see the magic of the very tiny for a moment, but as soon as we look away from the microscope we no longer see it. Nevertheless, we never lose the awareness of the mysteries that were revealed in the lens of that microscope. Just as our eyes are enlightened by the microscope, so our minds can be enlightened by a poem.

As a teenager Christina Rossetti became ill to the point that she was expected and expecting to die any day. During this illness she matured from being a typical little girl into a young woman whose eyes saw very deeply into her own heart and Christ's love. As she lay dying, as she thought, her hope for life became entirely a hope for a life to come. After her recovery she continued to treasure the sense of nearness to that other and greater life. More than any other poet I know of, Christina Rossetti guides us to consider how the longing to have one of our loved ones back from the grave would be viewed from their perspective.

Who would Wish Back the Saints?

Who would wish back the Saints upon our rough
Wearisome road?
Wish back a breathless soul
Just at the goal?
My soul, praise God
For all dear souls which have enough.

I would not fetch one back to hope with me
 A hope deferred,
 To taste a cup that slips
 From thirsting lips:—
 Hath he not heard
 And seen what was to hear and see?

How could I stand to answer the rebuke
 If one should say:
 ‘O friend of little faith,
 Good was my death,
 And good my day
 Of rest, and good the sleep I took?’

Rossetti’s having been so long in a fever, with parched and thirsting lips, we are struck by the words, “A cup that slips from thirsting lips.” She is mourning here not the lack of water during her illness, but her sense of loss at recovery, as we would call it, from her illness. The promise of final rest was to be a hope deferred. When taken *in toto* her poetry can lead one to long with her for the time when we too will hear and see what is to hear and see. With her we can glimpse, through the mists, that land which really is not as far off as it often seems. While one or two of Christina Rossetti’s poems may begin to open our eyes to the eagerness with which we may look forward to our wedding day, a wider Rossetti diet will begin to open our minds to hope with her this hope deferred. See how the following Rossetti poem echoes and builds on the one above, and together they begin to create new thoughts in our minds:

Lay up for Yourselves Treasures in Heaven

Treasure plies a feather,
 Pleasure spreadeth wings,
 Taking flight together,—
 Ah my cherished things!

Fly away, poor pleasure,
 That art so brief a thing:
 Fly away, poor treasure
 That hast so swift a wing.

Pleasure, to be pleasure,
 Must come without a wing:
 Treasure, to be treasure,
 Must be a stable thing.

Treasure without feather,
 Pleasure without wings,
 Elsewhere dwell together
 And are heavenly things.

The thoughts that were dearly won through her extended and discouraging illness are given to us at much lower price through the treasure of her poetry. While prose could have explained to us her perspective, through her poetry we are invited not only to see her but also to experience with her and to have our minds stretched to embrace hope as she did.

The Awful Truth

It is delightful to be given a clearer glimpse of the delights of God, but the Christian life also entails seeing ourselves more clearly. One of our perpetual human failings is that we find ways to see even our own failings in theoretical terms.

Our evil is difficult even for Christians to look at directly, so we often reformulate it into an external force that works against us and fail to claim it as the inner force that works in us against our Maker.

The poems of William Cowper and Francis Thompson set the blame where it belongs, and in the process help us to see clearly and not just agree in theory. Cowper’s “Truth” begins with the condemnation:

Man, on the dubious waves of error toss’d,
 His ship half-founder’d, and his compass lost,
 Sees, far as human optics may command,
 A sleeping fog, and fancies it dry land:
 Spreads all his canvass, every sinew plies;
 Pants for’t, aims at it, enters it, and dies!

Similarly Francis Thompson’s “The Hound of Heaven” draws into focus our active rebellion during God’s drawing us to himself.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
 I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
 Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
 I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

So begins this poem of God patiently and lovingly pursuing while Thompson flees in terror before him. With a little imagination most Christians will recognise that they also fled in terror before the love of “those strong Feet that followed, followed after.” Whether or not we have recognised the strength of our rebellion in theoretical terms before, “The Hound of Heaven” draws many pictures which will pull our lives out of theory and into the picturesque framework of the poem. There we see our own foolish and feeble flight from immeasurable love and we are able to own and abhor it at once.

Thus the poets can stretch our minds to embrace a larger God even while turning our eyes toward our own lowliness. In this way we are led to worship as spiritual people; and spirit and truth are united in our worshipping hearts. C&S

Forthcoming articles in *Christianity & Society*

THE SCOTTS: A MISSIONARY MINDED PEOPLE
by David Estrada

THE HALDANE BROTHERS (ROBERT AND JAMES)
by David Estrada

THE LOST MEANING OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
by Matthew Wright

“WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST:
 THE CRISIS OF WESTERN CIVILISATION”
by Ruben Alvarado

THE CONCEPTION OF LIBERTY
 IN SAMUEL RUTHERFORD’S *Lex Rex*
by Andrew Muttitt

Plus: *Christian Worldview and Changing Cultures* Part 3 (concluded) by Patrick Poole, editorials, books reviews etc.

Book Reviews

A CHRISTIAN CRITIQUE OF ART AND LITERATURE

BY CALVIN SEERVELD

Toronto Tuppence Press, 1995, paperback, 150 pages,
ISBN 0-919071-04-X

REVIEWED BY ALAN WILSON

In the resurgence of Reformed literature engaging cultural issues, especially how Calvinism interfaces with science and politics, there is one element which has received less than its due share, namely, the study of the relation between our religion and aesthetics. The Puritan spirit within Calvinist circles has meant we have had little time for aesthetics. We have never produced a Ruskin and we certainly haven't produced a Von Balthasar.

Nevertheless, some Calvinist scholars have made some telling contributions. Building upon Dr Kuyper's famous 1898 stone lecture "Calvinism and art" Calvin Seerveld, a Canadian with Dutch roots, is one such scholar. This book was one of his first, attempting to deal in detail with the problem of aesthetics from a specifically Reformed-Christian worldview. Most people in Reformed circles believe Hans Rookmaaker's "Modern Art and the Death of a Culture" was the book that truly opened up Calvinist scholarship into the area of art, but Seerveld's appeared two years previously in 1968. Any young Christian involved in the arts at art school level would do well to master both books, although it has to be said, Rookmaaker is more "reader friendly"!

I was certainly enthusiastic about receiving this reprinted copy of Seerveld's book because I had read him not long after my conversion when I was in my final year of art school, back in 1983. Much of what he wrote, however, went over my head back then, due to its difficult philosophical language. Like Rookmaaker, Seerveld is indebted to that major Dutch Calvinist philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd. It is therefore, difficult to follow a lot of what he is saying without some elementary knowledge of Dooyeweerd's cosmological philosophy: readers are expected to know about "modal spheres" and "nuclear moments" and "naïve experience" and this alone makes it difficult even for the intelligent reader to comprehend what Seerveld is saying in many parts of his book. Seerveld adds to this problem of communication with sentences that are far too long. Mix this with difficult Dooyeweerdian vocabulary and it becomes almost incomprehensible at times. I find that this type of thick,

aesthetic literary-philosophical jargon actually intimidates at times rather than clarifies. James Leach in his introduction does warn us to expect difficulty in this regard with Seerveld's "idiosyncratic stylings" and "adjective-heavy sentences" which take a lot of "effort to decode." Here is an example to highlight this difficulty: "Just as theoretical analysis evinces a particular node in human consciousness, so does imaginative symbolifying; this attentive, apprehending aesthetic objectification of meaning occurring in *Hineinlebenshaltung*, this imaginative operation displays a depth dimension (*diepedimensie*) of temporal human nature which is neither ethos order to naïve experience, nor the epoch ordering of sciences, but an important third, comparable phenomenon" (p. 86).

Did you get that? Neither did I, even when I read the context. I certainly didn't have a clue back in 1983 when I read it as a student, and I was a serious reader. It reminds me of the joke about Dooyeweerd—they've translated his book from Dutch into double-Dutch. This problem I find commonplace with books on art theory. Art critics have increasingly refused to write in direct prose, using common language that is lucid and open to comprehension. A Christian scholar writing about art and literature should at least make English readable. Why Seerveld feels it necessary to go into these long sentences with that kind of post-modern neologism I cannot understand. Even when we get to the key description of what constitutes a definition of art Seerveld makes it difficult for anyone not trained in aesthetics or cosmological philosophy to understand. On page 36–37 he repeats his formula four times, hoping it will embed itself and enlighten the reader: "Art is the symbolical objectification of certain meaning aspects of a thing, subject to the law of allusivity."

I remember Professor Estrada writing that he hadn't a clue what this meant. Now, if a professor of art history and aesthetic philosophy finds it difficult, how much more a young student of art, never mind a non-art person? Seerveld, in my opinion, could make his case far stronger if he avoided his myriad convoluted sentences. I say this because throughout the book he does have beautiful descriptions using prose in a way that is both enjoyable and incisive in analysis. And this is what we really need, art books that are readable!

I don't mean scholars should dumb down. There clearly is a place for technical language that is demanding, engaging the mind of the reader in profound aesthetic issues. And to be fair, Seerveld does engage my mind in most of this book. Even the quoted description of what defines art I have given above has grown on me over the years. My tentative, ongoing studies in Dooyeweerd has possibly helped. Unlike Dr

Estrada I think Seerveld's definition, no matter how baffling it sounds, has some mileage (although I did notice he had substituted the word "coherence" with "allusiveness" in the new edition, which seems quite a change). His "law of allusiveness" describes an artist's eye for the "dimension of nuance" within reality: how one thing can suggest another, or how a motif can suggest states of mind or theological realities. In art class for instance, I teach pupils about the potential of single lines to be suggestive, even before we employ them in a descriptive, pictorial way. But we can also "see" actual motifs themselves being suggestive. Recently I was in a former pupil's studio looking at his marvellous paintings of old piers: although rooted in objectivity before the visible world they all had a highly poetic expression. They had "allusiveness." They were evocative and suggestive images. He painted the wooden pillars of the pier being receptive to their visual appeal. Yet his eye for the texture of surfaces of this phenomenal world clearly had a great resonance for him: a frozen "nature mort": gravitas meeting transfiguration in old piers. I believe this is something of what Seerveld is on about. I hope so because I have been teaching this!

It is this kind of intuition for allusiveness that Seerveld calls "*Hineinlebenshaltung*." But the intuition is not enough. The artist must be capable of communicating by this "symbolical objectification." I take this to mean the actual language of the art or the "iconic" as Rookmaaker called it. In other words the so-called distortions an artist actually employs using the visual elements of line, tone, colour, texture etc. can, amazingly, help us see more clearly! For instance when I first saw Van Gogh's pictures of trees as a boy I could never look at trees in an ordinary way again—he opened up aspects of trees in a way that scientific, biological description could never have achieved. And he did it by lines, colours, shapes and textures through that unique "style" of his (and Seerveld believes "*art means style*"). Does that mean he would go as far as Clive Bell and see the essence of a work of art as merely "significant form"? I'm not totally sure, because the "law of allusivity" pregnant in reality seems to suggest that content is equally as important as form to Seerveld.

I have so far tried to touch on the core element of Seerveld's aesthetic concept. Now I want to give some general comments on the format of the book. The new edition has a most useful introduction giving the reader some background to the four chapters which were originally lectures. These are well laid out in the contents page with helpful sub-headings. As you would expect the opening lecture discusses the "necessity" of artistic and literary activity. Then the second opens up the "nature" of art and the "slant of Christian art." The final two concentrate on literature with a very good example of his theory applied to the work of Tennessee Williams.

Right from the opening he discusses how human "reason" must be in Christ. When reading this I recalled Gary North on the collapse of the Western Enlightenment rationalism. Obviously this is what Seerveld equally felt back in 1968 when counter-culture activity would have been happening on the campuses. However, unlike North, he makes this point not just because Western thinking has been moving into irrationalism but because there is actually a limit to "human reason" as a solo revealer of the truth about reality. As Polanyi says, "we know more than we can tell!" Seerveld is setting the scene for knowing through the aesthetic sphere,

as well as the scientific. He goes on to say that the discipline of philosophy, not theology, should be the sphere that helps "delimit the scope and interpret the various kinds of special Christian endeavour . . ." This is Dooyeweerd's clear influence on him. Nevertheless, I've never actually found that theology can ever be ignored in this respect, although I grant that philosophy is what specifically deals with the interrelating aspects of reality.

In lecture II he thunders against the concept of "beauty" seeing it as something we've inherited from Plato. To see beauty as an essential aesthetic element is to baptise humanism in Seerveld's opinion. I believe he makes too much of his desire to substitute it with his "law of allusiveness." Rookmaaker's idea of beautiful harmony does not need to be considered Greek in presupposition and aesthetic beauty is anything but a "curse" in my opinion. All great art is harmoniously beautiful, even when it has ugly subject-matter. We only have to look at the actual examples given in the book *Gruenewald's Crucifixion*, Rembrandt's slaughtered ox and Picasso's *Guernica*. All have an "aesthetic" beauty and internal visual logic. They have "unity-in-multiplicity" as Dooyeweerd said and which Seerveld would later reject as a necessary quality in his book *Rainbow for a Fallen World*. This, I believe, is not Platonic at all but ultimately Christian in presupposition—it is Plato who is stealing from us! This "trinity" (or unity in diversity) must be part of the Christian artist's "slant." In fact, it is inescapable because the triune God is Creation's primal context.

Nevertheless, Seerveld is right to point out that there has been a pseudo-Christian art dedicated to a sentimental ideal about beauty—that namby-pamby "so inoffensive it wouldn't hurt a Victorian fly" type of beauty! We've all seen these awful "twee" pictures of biblical scenes or evangelical kitsch and we would do well to take heed of Seerveld's warnings in this respect. And his use of Rembrandt (p. 53–65) in a way of contrast acts as the perfect foil for such misconstrued ideas of beauty. As he puts it, "A Christian style will be honest, self-effacing, serious in its gaiety, fresh, candid and confident in its naive immediacy." Ultimately the "slant" will be this: *art is biblically Christian when the devil cannot stand it*. Christian art is therefore not tied to making "beauty incarnate": we are not after beauty of Hellenistic classicism, but a beauty of truth. And by this comment I believe Seerveld means our aesthetic slant will expose sin and "unmask the devil." Rouault did this by painting the misery of prostitution whereas modern cinema makes illicit sex fun and enticing: both achieve their respective aims through composition, colour and style (i.e. the iconic).

The latter two lectures/chapters concentrate on literature. This time he warns us against the two extreme poles in dealing with the "imagination." We can idolise it, making it into a substitute revelation or dismiss it as mere fantasy divorced from reality and therefore insignificant. Rather, imagination has its roots in "the habits of ordinary perception." It is part of what it means to be human. From "habits of perception" we can shift into "*Hineinlebenshaltung* [a coinage meaning "a living-into-it attitude"]. This imaginative empathy will be expressed within a "structured objective realisation" whereby the artist will exaggerate or heighten aspects of interest as he moulds the stuff (his medium) to suit his vision. As an artist I can fully relate to this "lived-into" attitude; this deeper scrutiny. Jesus Christ said "Consider the lilies." Did Van Gogh "consider" his sunflowers with that

“lived into” attitude? Is Seerveld off the wall at this point? I don’t think so. I think this is one of the gems of the book. When we sit and pat a dog, stroke a cat, talk to the budgie—does this not involve a rapport, identification with the animal’s thought processes, being on its “wavelength”? What about Van Gogh and his stars? Or Rembrandt and his hanging ox? Or T. S. Elliot and his cats? For me, they all display this “living-into” attitude. This is a crucial aspect of any artistic arrangement: to quote partly from my previous difficult description, “this imaginative operation displays a depth dimension (dieptedimensic) of temporal human nature...an important third, comparable phenomenon.” And when this “lived-in” mentally-creative “imaginative operation” becomes incarnated in artistic form it should not be considered “fake”—it is “symbolified” reality. It is a “third, comparable phenomenon” by which we encounter the mystery of Creation.

This “symbolified objectification” will give us as viewers and readers an insight into the artist/writer’s worldview. We will be able to see through his eyes, although as Seerveld cautions, “as critic the Christian will do well to master all the extant work of the Author . . .” I recall Francis Schaeffer giving the same caution in this regard, saying a body of work needs to be engaged for a true picture and understanding of an artist’s worldview. It takes wisdom and careful study to fathom an artist’s worldview honestly. It is not straightforward by any means. For instance, are P. G. Woodhouse books Christian? What about the Scottish novelist Neil Gunn? What about Vermeer’s paintings? Or Morandi’s paintings? It is easy to see Milton’s poetry or C. S. Lewis’ novels or Durer’s pictures as specifically Christian; it is not so easy to see T. S. Eliot, Dostoyevsky or Cezanne in the same way. What makes the issue even more complicated is that all truth is ultimately Christian, even when non-believers acknowledge or discover it. Non-believers cannot live outside of reality which is theistic, and they will be inconsistent in living (and seeing) according to their atheist presuppositions. The closer they get to being consistent atheists the more obviously it shows in their art (although even this is not always the case). And the more inconsistent they are, the more sanctified their art looks. Compare Francis Bacon with Bonard to see what I am talking about. In other words, an artist’s thinking can affect how they see, but it can be vice-versa: how an artist lives can shape the ideological vision embodied in his art. Immoral behaviour can change a person’s thinking; this has been explored by the Roman Catholic writers E. Michael Jones and Paul Johnson. But we must thank God for common grace that makes us all inconsistent with the principle of sin.

Finally, I recommend this book to all serious minded artists or worldview thinkers who wish to develop a Christian aesthetic. For the ordinary non-artistic person who is interested in the arts I think you would do better reading Seerveld’s more recent and easier to understand book, *Bearing Fresh Olive Leaves*. I should say I was glad to see that Seerveld actually included illustrations in this recent edition. And I was also glad to see he translated the Dutch footnotes into English, which I never understood.

I’ll leave you with his challenging remarks: “The contemporary world must be positively confronted with our work. We must put significant Christian literature and art in front of their noses in the world arena.” I say “amen” to that! C&S

SHAMING THE DEVIL: ESSAYS IN TRUTHTELLING

BY ALAN JACOBS

Hardcover 231 pages, \$20.00 (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), ISBN: 080284894x

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HAYHOW

Books of essays and belles-lettres were once common, but are less so now. They were collections of essays, articles or disquisitions on given topics, collected into a single volume. Think of Samuel Johnson’s *Collected Writing* or McCauley’s *Essays* or the many collections of Hilaire Belloc or G. K. Chesterton’s weekly articles, ramblings and essays. Essay writing has been locked away in the academy, where it largely belongs. It is no longer a public art. We do not go searching for essays, but here is a collection that might revive our faith in and desire for belles-lettres.

The great benefit of collections of essays is that the reader can dip in here and there; they are great bedside table books. In the space of a half hour a topic has been covered, fresh thoughts exposed and something worthwhile has been taken in. The second thing about great essays is that they must be well written, belles-lettres. Style, form and engagement are basic to this form.

So, here is a set of essays that you will want to read and ponder from the professor of literature at Wheaton College. This is Jacob’s second volume of literary forays, the first was *A Visit to Vanity Fair: Moral Essays on the Present Age*.

The format of this book is that of extended book reviews. Into this Jacobs weaves his commentary, his many insights into the lives of his subjects. I liked this book because it surveyed some new areas, new people, new writers—at least to me. Jacobs takes us through W. H. Auden, Albert Camus, Leon Kass, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Iris Murdoch, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Wole Soyinka and others. But particularly interesting were the essays on Auden, Camus, Solzhenitsyn, Murdoch and Rousseau.

A few comments: on Auden, Jacobs faces the tension between Auden’s “conversion” to Christianity, but his continuing as a practicing homosexual, a tension that Auden himself felt, but never resolved. What do we make of this? Jacobs shows us that there is a profound understanding of Christianity in Auden after his conversion. However, I am not convinced by Jacob’s resolution of this “tension”: “. . . it is singularly unfortunate that, even if we judged Auden’s sins rightly, we should allow that judgment to disable us for the wisdom which his writings exhibit and proclaim” (p. 33). Jacobs borders on separating life and confession here. Does not the pattern of life also constitute the confession of faith? Rather does not Auden’s continued homosexual practice lead us to question the validity of his confession of faith?

Iris Murdoch fascinates. Her unbelief besides, her novels are deep and penetrating even if her worldview is abhorrent. Jacobs reminds us that Murdoch, whilst seeking the “good” (she was a Platonist), rejects the God who alone is good.

Next, Alexander Solzhenitsyn appears as a hero. Solzhenitsyn’s whole purpose after his conversion to Christianity was to expose to the world the horrors of the Gulag. This he did in his great cycle of novels. But Solzhenitsyn is

not beyond criticism for his treatment of his first wife, and his obsessive commitment to his work of writing. However, Jacobs reminds us that Solzhenitsyn is now a largely forgotten hero both in Russia and here in the West. I think this is true as a few years back I randomly asked a few work colleagues (people in their thirties and forties) if they had ever heard of Solzhenitsyn? Nearly all hadn't. This means that they are largely blind to one of the great horrors of the twentieth century and indeed of all human history—the great socialist experiment. Should not Solzhenitsyn be compulsory reading in the education of a new generation?

In summary, Jacobs offers us a Christian meditation on a series of authors and books, a number of whom I have never seen in a “Christian perspective” before, and for that alone I would recommend *Shaming the Devil*. C&S

FROM DARWIN TO HITLER:
EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS, EUGENICS,
AND RACISM IN GERMANY

BY RICHARD WEIKART

Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, hardback, 312 pages,
\$59.95, ISBN: 1-4039-6502-1

REVIEWED BY DOUG P. BAKER

MICHAEL POLANYI, the great twentieth century philosopher, spent decades asking the question, “Why did we destroy Europe?” Wisely, he refrained laying the blame on the doorstep of others, but he brought it home to all of us, “Why did *we* destroy Europe?” He saw clearly that there is a complicity in the roots of that devastating war that goes far beyond the military and financial backing that Hitler and Mussolini received.

Drowning in economic depression though it was, Germany at the outset of the second world war held the esteem of the rest of the world for being the home of the greatest scholars and thinkers on Earth. For two centuries Germany had continually been the home of the physics world. From Ohm, Kirchoff and Hertz, to Planck, Heisenberg and Einstein, the discoveries of Germany's physicists had paved the way for nearly every technological advance on earth. Likewise, the new field of psychology was led by Germans, from Fechner and Wundt to Ebbinghaus and Wertheimer. We could also list the greatest names in jurisprudence (Savigny), philosophy (Nietzsche), literature (Brecht, Goethe, Hesse), music (Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Schumann) or theology (Bultmann, Bonhoeffer) and we would see Germans dominate the lists during the century leading up to the rise of the Nazi party. Germany was no small barbaric State, forgotten by civilisation and culture. Germany led civilisation and defined culture. The Germans were who we all wanted to be.

How then did Germany fall to such a level as the extermination of millions of their own citizens, their friends and neighbours? Is it really a fall from “civilisation” to “barbarity,” or is it rather the overflow of pride of an overly civilised and overly educated nation? Is it that “professing to be wise, they became fools”?

In *From Darwin to Hitler*, Richard Weikart follows the

growth of a philosophy, and the death of another, from the moment that Darwin's major work hit the academy to the beginning of the implementation of its child, the Nazi death machine. This book is not a broad look at the social and moral implications of Darwinism, but a very narrowly focused tracing of the path that led directly from the publication of a text in theoretical biology to the national embrace of genocide in Hitler's Germany.

The history that I learned as a child in school portrayed a kind and gentle Germany, naively overcome by the oratorical powers of an antichrist, half duped and half ignorant of the atrocities going on throughout German controlled areas. Certainly, in my history classes, few of the kind folk from the land of Luther would have condoned the actions of the madman. Sadly, I did not learn history. I learned a milkop myth.

Germany elected Adolph Hitler, not in spite of his ambitions, but because of them. Germany had been prepared for genocide by the insinuation of a new philosophy, an evolutionary ethic, into the moral fabric of its society.

Weikart guides us through the almost instant translation of the concept of evolution from the realm of biology to the realm of philosophy. Its initial relevance was obvious: if we were not created, then there is no Creator to judge us. But the discussion quickly progressed beyond that point.

A major part of Darwin's theory lay in the idea that in order for a species to progress evolutionarily, only the best of that species could reproduce, and nature would prohibit the others. This, he argued, happened naturally, thus making evolution progress without outside interference. But, if the health of a species was maintained and advanced through the attenuating effects of survival of the fittest, then the struggle for survival was necessary for the common good. Therefore it would not be in the best interest of a species for the struggle to be alleviated such that even the weak, sickly, crippled, or in the language of the day, the “unfit,” could reproduce.

And, so evolutionary theory goes, humanity is merely a species of animal, trying to evolve, or at least not to devolve. In the interest of the higher good, the struggle must be maintained. But modern conveniences and softer lifestyles, not to mention the great evil of humanitarianism, get in the way of the natural effects of that struggle. Some people even go out of their way to aid the “unfit,” thus making it easier for them to reproduce, counteracting all of the benefits of evolution.

Thus, Christian charity became positively antisocial and evil to the evolutionary mind. If nature was no longer serving to limit reproduction in the human species, then intervention would be needed. At the least, for the good of society, the “unfit” should be prohibited from reproducing; even better would be to unburden society of them altogether.

Propounding such philosophies is clearly not the work of the lowest classes, not the work of barbarians. Rather, Weikart follows a trail that leads up from Darwin, through the highest echelons of intellectuals and cultural movers. It was no roving bands of skinheads who prepared Germany to undertake the “final solution”; it was the academy. Ivory tower book-heads, scientists (the gods of the age) and social engineers, intellectuals whose soft hands had never been made dirty by work, orchestrated and defined Hitler's bloody work long before he came to power to put their theories into practice.

Never have I read another book, besides the Bible, in which history and philosophy are so intertwined and so intensely pertinent to the present and to everyday life. The extreme speed with which genocidal and eugenic ideas caught on, permeated the academy, and took over whole societies from the lawmakers to the butcher's delivery boys, is quite disconcerting.

Among its many values, *From Darwin to Hitler* should alert us all to the need for solid Christians to be in the centre of every field of study, and in the centre of philosophical discourse. A little salt in the German academy might have preserved Europe. A little salt in America might deliver us from the abortion holocaust that has already dwarfed Hitler's evils. A little salt in England . . . *C&S*

THE HOLY TRINITY:
IN SCRIPTURE, HISTORY AND WORSHIP
BY ROBERT LETHAM

Presbyterian & Reformed, 2004, £24.99, 551 pages
(including indices), ISBN: 0-87552-000-6

REVIEWED BY STEPHEN HAYHOW

At last a full length discussion of the Trinity from a Reformed evangelical who interacts with the most recent developments in trinitarian theology and who understands the doctrine of the Trinity's implications for life, the world, worship and our faith.

Letham takes evangelicals to task for not centering their theology upon the revelation of God as the *Triune* God. Many of the systematic theologians start (and Hodge and Berkhof are examples) with long discussions of the "One God" and then only briefly turn to the "Three Persons." This has had the effect of pushing the Trinity into the background, making it a secondary truth to the fact that God is the One God.

But why is this important? Letham gives us a wealth of reasons in his concluding chapters: first of all, our worship must be self-consciously Trinitarian. If we survey the ancient hymns they are suffused with Trinitarian content. Letham suggests that many of our hymns dwell upon the "One God" and barely mention the Trinity. Letham might have added that modern songs seem largely to focus almost exclusively upon "Jesus," and lead almost to some kind of "Christo-monotheism." But the point is the same.

Next there are worldview implications. The fact that God is Triune provides us with an answer to the breakdown of modern culture and life: the ravages of Post-modernism. Post-modernism goes wholly in the direction of "diversity." There are no unifying truths, everything is in pieces. Letham reminds us that the Divine Trinity means that unity and diversity are equally ultimate, that God is a communion of Persons, and so community is at the heart of our faith. The Trinitarian faith holds diversity, but also unity, in equal measure, in perfect tension. Thus we avoid the smothering conformity of modernism and its totalitarian direction, but also the disintegration that is inevitable with the Post-modern onward march.

Then the fact that God is Triune has a great bearing on

how we address the new threat of Islamic expansion and its confrontation. Islam of course denies the Trinity. Letham says that the key point to make in the debate here is that the "One, Allah" cannot relate, and therefore cannot truly love. In Allah love is something that comes with the appearance of the Creation. In other words with Allah there is no "other" towards whom love can flow, prior to Creation. On the other hand, the Triune God is an eternal relationship of three persons in an eternal communion of love. Love is at the heart of what and who God is, as the Triune God. This cannot be so with Islam, and this is what we need to show to Moslems in word and deed.

There are also cultural implications, for example in the arts. Letham adds, "Bernard Lewis points to the aversion of the Islamic world to polyphonic music—where different performers play different instruments from different scores, which blend together as one musical statement. To this very day the Middle East—with the exception of some Westernized enclaves—remains a blank on the itinerary of the great international virtuosos as they go on their tours" (p. 445). One might also add that Islamic art never moved beyond the abstract, thus severely limiting its scope.

The bulk of the book is first a survey of biblical teaching, and then a detailed survey of the development of the doctrine throughout Church history. Starting with the early fathers, we are not exposed to cursory comments, but to often in depth analysis which interacts with the latest scholarship. This makes this work very valuable and informative.

There are some key points to note:

First, like many recent writers, Letham is prepared to challenge both the East and West in the way that they have approached the doctrine of the Trinity. In the East the Three Persons are placed at the front of the discussion of the nature of God. The Person of the Father is raised to being the "origin and cause" of the nature of the Son and the Spirit, with the obvious risk of subordinationism. Also, the East placed a strong line between the immanent and economic Trinity, with the result that the "real God" is always "behind" what is revealed. This leaves us asking: "Do we know God as he is after all?" On the other hand, and since Augustine in particular, the West moves from the one essence to the three persons, with the risk of modalism. Letham goes so far as to say that this is "endemic in Western Trinitarianism." Hence "the essence tends to be impersonal and the three persons problematic." Letham sees a route to the solution in the Cappadocian Fathers, and Gregory Nazianzen in particular. For Gregory the three Persons are the Monarchy, not the Father alone. ". . . his method of refocusing from the unity of God to the trinity of persons and back again, making knowledge of the one and three coincident, is a vital principle . . ." (p. 164).

Secondly, this brings us to the *filioque* controversy. Letham points to Gerald Bray's defense of the *filioque*. There Bray stresses that the two positions have led to two different views of salvation. The East has centered on deification by the Spirit and the West on the work of Christ. We see the Eastern view in Athanasius, who has little to say about the atonement. "The key for him is Christ, in the Incarnation, assuming our humanity and uniting it with God, thus healing it." The East stresses that death is the enemy, which brings sin; thus the resurrection is the defeat of death that brings salvation. Letham sees some light in the 1991 agreement between the Orthodox and Reformed Churches, and

Torrance's summary statement. "The procession of the Holy Spirit is seen in the light of the full homoousial and perichoretic relations" (p. 218f.). Letham concludes this subject with his resolution to this vexing question,

"The Cyrillian phrase *from the Father in the Son* seems to me to express the mutual indwelling of the three, avoids any residual subordinationism, and also directs us to Jesus' baptism. It also avoids the focus on the Spirit apart from

Christ, for we receive the Spirit *in Christ*. The West's concern for the relation between the Son and the Spirit is maintained, and the confusion of the *filioque* is avoided. The monarchy of the Father is also clear. Moreover, the focus is on the persons, rather than the essence, a move greatly needed so as to avoid the West's tendency to the impersonal" (p. 219).

There is much, much more in this book and I have barely done it justice. *C&S*

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Augustine, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes by Eric Plumer* (Oxford University Press, 2003), hardback, 294 pages.

James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, Editors, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), hardback, 1629 pages.

David Noel Freedman, Editor, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), hardback, 1425 pages.

Peter C. Glover, *The Politics of Faith: Essays on the Morality of Key Current Affairs* (Xulon Press, 2004), paperback, 193 pages.

Paul Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2004), hardback, 210 pages.

Peter C. Glover, *The Virtual Church and How to Avoid it* (Xulon Press, 2004), paperback, 299 pages.

Tom Holland, *Contours of Pauline Theology: A Radical New Survey of the Influences on Paul's Biblical Writings* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2004), hardback, 382 pages.

Russell Kirk, *Ancestral Shadows: An Anthology of Ghostly Tales* (Grand Rapids Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), hardback, 406 pages.
William Leader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament*

(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), paperback, 163 pages.

I. Howard Marshall, *The Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), hardback, 765 pages.

Michael Mendle (ed.), *The Putney Debates of 1647: the Army, the Levellers, and the English State* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), hardback, 297 pages.

Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, Vol. 5: *Moderatism, Pietism and Awakening* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004), paperback, 620 pages.

Peter G. Riddell, *Christians and Muslims: Pressures and potential in a post 9/11 world* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), paperback, 254 pages.

Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Leicester: Aopollos/IVP, 2004), 2 vols, hardback, 1,928 pages.

Matthew Scully, *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals and the Call to Mercy* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2002), paperback, 434 pages.

Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2004), hardback, 358 pages.

Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), paperback, 298 pages.

Michael Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century C.E.* (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2003), paperback, 214 pages.

Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven is a Place on Earth: Why Everything you do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004), paperback, 269 pages.

Christopher J. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 520 pages.

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